

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

INVESTIGATING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP  
PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS  
IN A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Improvement

Over the past few decades, the job of school leadership has become increasingly more demanding, creating a need to further understand how principals utilize leadership practices that support them on the job. The purpose of this study was to identify the extent to which principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools, the ways in which they distribute these responsibilities and tasks, and the extent to which teacher leaders are afforded opportunities to assume leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools. The study also explored the barriers and supporting factors that contribute to implementing distributed leadership practices at the school level.

This mixed-methods study utilized a web-based survey and semi-structured interviews to explore the following research questions: (1) To what extent do elementary principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their schools? (2) What structures,

processes, and tools do principals report using to distribute leadership in their schools? (3) To what extent do teacher leaders report assuming leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools? (4) What do elementary principals perceive as the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership in their schools?

During the 2018–2019 school year, 111 elementary school principals and 115 teacher leaders or Instructional Lead Teachers (ILTs) participated in the study. The principals and teachers were at comprehensive model schools serving grades PreK–5 and PreK–6.

Findings from the study revealed principals distribute leadership to a variety of leaders in their buildings, specifically assistant principals and ILTs. Principals and teacher leaders both describe implementing organizational structures, processes, and tools to support distributed leadership in schools. Principals identified in both the survey and interview portion of the study reported that a lack of time to develop the capacity of teacher leaders, and to allow teacher leaders to practice leadership skills, was a major barrier to distributing leadership in schools. Data from principals showed that district level support was beneficial in helping principals engage in distributed leadership practices by providing professional development and other systemic initiatives that were implemented in their schools.

INVESTIGATING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY  
PRINCIPALS IN A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family, my husband Hallie, who has always been my number one cheerleader, and my children, Jalen, Lauren, and Lindsay.

To my children, who have persevered and pushed through this journey with me, this is for you. To Roxy, my furry child, who spent the most time with me through this process laying right beside me every night. I could not have handled those long nights without you.

“Remember, there will be obstacles, there will be doubters, there will be mistakes, but with hard work, there are no limits.” ~ Michael Phelps

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To my three children, thank you for understanding that this was for you just as much as it was for me. To Lindsay, my “go get me some” ride or die, you made those long hours and late nights easier. To Lauren, I remember the night I opened my school journal and read the note you wrote to me, “Mommy I am so proud of you! You inspire me to always work hard.” At that moment, you made every sacrifice worth it. To my fellow Terp, Jalen, you have always made learning look easy and effortless. I was often reminded of this over the years. To my mom and dad, thank you for instilling in me a strong work ethic. Thank you for going to the store and cooking each week when it became just too much.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALPSS	Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success
APIP	Assistant Principal Induction Program
CPIP	Comprehensive Principal Induction Program
CSA	Causal system analysis
EBLL	Evidence-based Leadership Learning
EI	Emotional intelligence
ELA	English Language Arts
ESOL	English as a Second Language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ILT	Instructional lead teacher
NAEP	National Assessment for Educational Progress
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals
NASSP	National Association for Secondary School Principals
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NIC	Networked Improvement Community
PDLT	Professional development lead teacher
PDSA	Plan-Do-Study-Act
PSEL	Professional Standards for Education Leaders
RCPS	Rose County Public Schools
RISE	Resilience in School Environment
SAMs	School Administration Manager Project
TAG	Talented and Gifted
TSL	Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program
Val-Ed	Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education

## **Section I: Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift in the roles and responsibilities of school leaders (Lashway, 2003). The 21st-century leader must attend to traditional leadership roles like creating and ensuring a safe and orderly environment, overseeing the budget, and managing student behavior, as well as newly defined responsibilities that include leading the instructional program, and developing and sustaining external partnerships. In addition to these mounting tasks, principals are responsible for working with the entire spectrum of stakeholders: from students to school board members, parents to policymakers, teachers to local business owners, support staff to union officials (Mangin, 2007). With the inception of more rigorous standards-based learning, additional demands have been placed on leaders to raise achievement levels and close achievement gaps for all students (Cross & Rice, 2000).

The balancing of both instructional and managerial duties requires that principals not only live in both worlds, but that they do so in an efficient and effective manner. In 1985, Hallinger and Murphy suggested that effective principals had a positive impact on the schools that they lead. A decade later, Peterson et al. (1996) noted that the job of school leadership had become more complex and demanding, and that traditional school-level leadership models no longer could effectively sustain school improvement and increase student achievement. In 2000, Peterson et al. asserted that policy leaders and elected officials required school leaders to accomplish feats that schools and their leaders often are not equipped to handle, and the risk for everyone involved was high, particularly for students. In 2012, a Metropolitan Life Insurance Company survey revealed a decrease in principal satisfaction due to diminishing budgets and the

stress of meeting the individual needs of diverse learners and engaging parents and the community. These demands continue into the current decade. To be successful, principals must effectively demonstrate the ability to balance both traditional and contemporary leadership roles. Finding this balance becomes ever more difficult, as principals are expected to serve as managers of schools, spending a large majority of their day engaged in the task of overseeing “buildings, boilers, and buses” rather than developing as instructional leaders (Wallace Foundation, 2015).

This change in principal roles coincides with reform efforts created by policy makers that has brought about new demands in education. In April 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued the report, *A Nation at Risk*, which resulted in the evolution of more universal achievement testing and standards-based education reform. The report recommended that schools become more rigorous, that they adopt new standards, and that teacher preparation and pay be evaluated (U.S. Department of Education, 1983e).

Almost two decades later, the U.S. Congress adopted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 into law. NCLB held schools accountable for increasing achievement for all students. The act effectively launched the high stakes accountability era and addressed the need for school improvement (Clark et al., 2009). In 2015, Congress signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. ESSA was designed to replace NCLB and ensure equal educational opportunity for all students, while adequately preparing them for success in college and careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Each of these federal policies led to major reforms regarding school curriculum, academic assessments, and approaches to holding schools and school leaders accountable for raising the achievement of all students.

The progress of school reform can be seen in many areas, including graduation requirements, academic standards, testing, accountability, and arguably, the recruitment and

retention of effective teachers (The Hechinger Report, 2011). These substantial policy changes, coupled with a narrower focus on student achievement, have placed the role of the school principal under even greater scrutiny.

Throughout the last decade, researchers have revealed an abundance of information about effective leadership. In the past, district leaders may have judged a principal's performance solely on how well he or she kept the building running and ensured that the school stayed under the radar. Today, effective leadership is measured by much more than managerial duties (Mendels, 2012). In 2009, Brown and Wynn asserted that good principals must be able to attract, support, and retain quality teachers. In fact, Mitgang (2008) argued, "Pick the wrong principal and, over time, good teachers leave, mediocre ones stay, and the school gradually (or not so gradually) declines" (p. 3).

According to research conducted for The Wallace Foundation by the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto in 2010, principals also play a critical role in how students learn, particularly in schools with high poverty rates (Mitgang, 2013). These findings aligned with those of a study by Branch et al. (2013), found that within two to seven months, a highly effective principal can have a demonstratively positive effect on student success. An ineffective principal, conversely, can have a far-reaching, negative impact on students.

It is clear that principals play a role in student achievement and overall school success (Waters et al., 2003). In fact, researchers have consistently found that leadership is second only to teaching among school influences on student success—and the impact is larger in schools with the greatest needs (Branch et al., 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). In 2009, *New Leaders for New Schools* reported that more than half of a school's success is, in large part, due to teacher and principal effectiveness. Specifically, the study explained that 25%

of a school's success is due to principal effectiveness and 33% is attributable to teacher effectiveness. The study also noted that schools with effective principals were characterized by instructional competency, positive climate, and strong human resource components.

Despite the positive effect that good leaders can have on schools, the data show that, across the nation, school reform initiatives related to standards, assessments, and increased student achievement have been difficult to achieve and sustain (Bruhn & McDaniel, 2015). Over the past decade, researchers have conducted an increasing number of investigations into instructional leadership, specifically exploring the leadership behaviors and practices required to effect change that results in improved student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Over time, the focus on instructional leadership has shifted from a view of the principal as “an inspector of teacher competence” to one where the principal is “a facilitator of teacher growth” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 374) already mentioned. According to a 2013 study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), principals reported that multiple and conflicting priorities impact their ability to lead effectively. They serve students, teachers, parents, school board members, and superintendents, and, consequently, these varied constituencies add to the feeling that they are “on call” for a good portion of the day (NAESP, 2013).

**Summary.** Although effective leadership often equates to effective schools (Elmore, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2006; Mazano et al., 2005), job complexities and demands have increased in relation to school leadership over the past several decades (Fullan, 2013; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The core problem addressed in this study is that as the job of school leadership becomes more complex and demanding, it becomes *more challenging for the principal to lead the instructional program and support student achievement* (Peterson et al., 1996). This is a



national problem and also one that exists in the district examined for this research: a large, diverse, semi-urban, Mid-Atlantic district. The district will be called “Rose County Public Schools” (RCPS) in this report.

### **Scope of the Problem**

Policy leaders and elected officials require school leaders to accomplish intended goals when they are often not supported nor equipped to handle the competing demands placed on them. When principals struggle to manage the daily demands of their role, the risk for everyone involved is high, particularly for students (Elmore, 2000).

**Competing Demands.** Data clearly show that the roles and responsibilities of the principal have changed over time, and the workload of the position has increased to a point where it is an increasingly more difficult feat to face alone. Several researchers have noted that the increasing demands threaten to affect principals’ ability to lead schools to success, because school leaders are left with little to no time to implement their role fully (Budhal, 2000; Caldwell, 2002). As the job demands of principal’s increase, they are faced with a wide variety of tasks that compete with their ability to successfully lead. The demands often range from district, county, and state mandates to administrative duties and paperwork. All of these tasks compete with the principals’ most important role—instructional leadership. At the elementary level, some principals are without the support of an assistant principal, which makes their job, and its demands, even more challenging (Sherman & Crum, 2007). Even under effective leadership, public school systems, as they are presently designed, make it difficult for leaders to meet the increasing demands that they face on a daily basis.

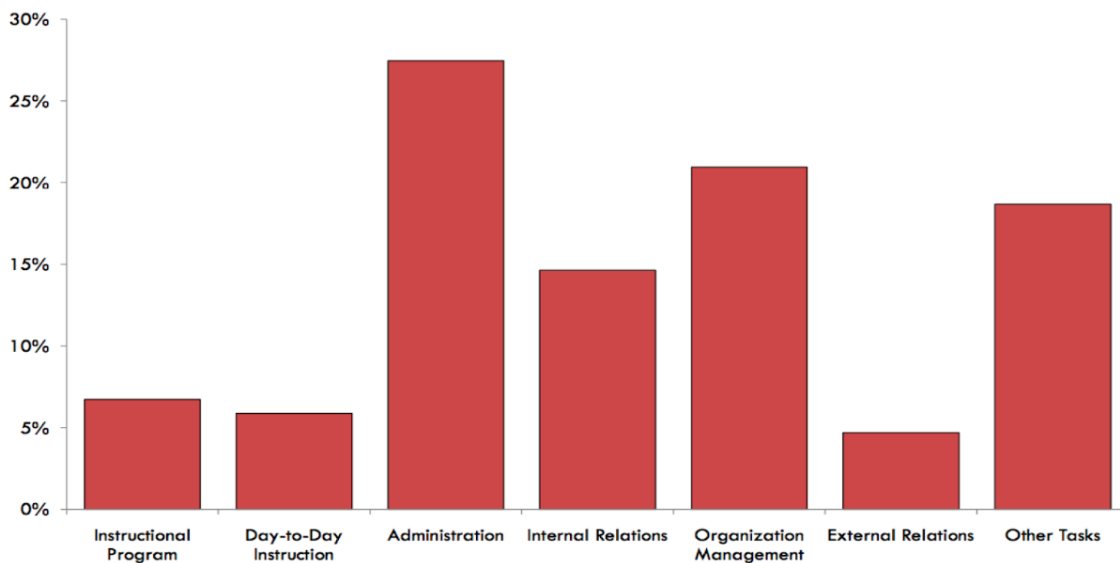
To better understand the work lives of principals, Horng et al. (2009) examined the daily work of principals and identified a variety of different tasks that school leaders engaged in daily.

Horng et al. (2009) indicated that principals spent most of their time overseeing student services, managing budgets, and dealing with student discipline issues, with almost 30% of their time spent on administrative duties (e.g., the supervision of students, scheduling, and compliance issues) and a little over 20% spent on organizational management tasks (e.g., personnel and budget matters). The findings also revealed that the principals spent less than 10% of their time on instructional-specific activities, like building teacher capacity and classroom observations (Horng et al., 2009).

The study was conducted in Miami-Dade County, Florida, one of the country’s largest and most diverse public school districts, in 2009. The study used observational time-use data for 65 principals, including the leaders of all 41 high schools, as well as a sample of 12 elementary schools and 12 middle schools. The data in Figure 1 detail the average percentage of the school day principals devoted to the six task categories.

**Figure 1**

*Principal Time-Use by Task Category (Source: Horng et al., 2009).*



The data suggest that principals spend the least total amount of time on instruction-related activities, including Day-to-Day Instruction tasks at 6% and more general Instructional Program responsibilities at 7%. Day-to-Day Instruction includes activities such as conducting classroom visits and informally coaching teachers, while Instructional Program includes activities such as evaluating the curriculum and planning professional development.

**Teacher Evaluation.** Instructional oversight is just one responsibility that takes up a significant amount of time for school leaders. The NAESP and the National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) conducted a survey of their members in February 2013 to examine the teacher evaluation process, arguably, one of the most critical roles of the principal. The study found that a quality teacher evaluation process requires approximately 11 to 15 hours per teacher over the course of a school year. On average, elementary principals manage 10 to 40 staff members in smaller schools and upwards of 60 personnel in larger schools. Conducting the evaluation process with fidelity and accuracy places large demands on principals' time and that task can sometimes take priority over other job responsibilities (NASSP & NAESP, 2013).

In closing, there is strong evidence that principal job demands and complexities are inhibiting school leaders from focusing on critically important instructional leadership tasks. At the national level, there have been studies and reports that confirm the wide scope of the problem and potential repercussions at the district and school level (Cooley & Shen, 2003).

### **Causal Analysis of the Problem**

To further explore the scope of the problem, a causal system analysis (CSA) (Figure 2) was conducted to identify possible reasons why the problem exists. Byrk et al. (2014) define a CSA as an improvement process that helps identify the initiating causes of a problem and can be useful for determining the root cause of a problem or challenge. For the purpose of this study the

researcher used elements of improvement science as outlined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Byrk et al., 2014) by engaging in a CSA.

A fishbone diagram was used for a deeper analysis of possible causes of the problem and to identify likely cause and effect relationships related to the problem. During the process, several potential causes unfolded that have an impact at both the national and local level.

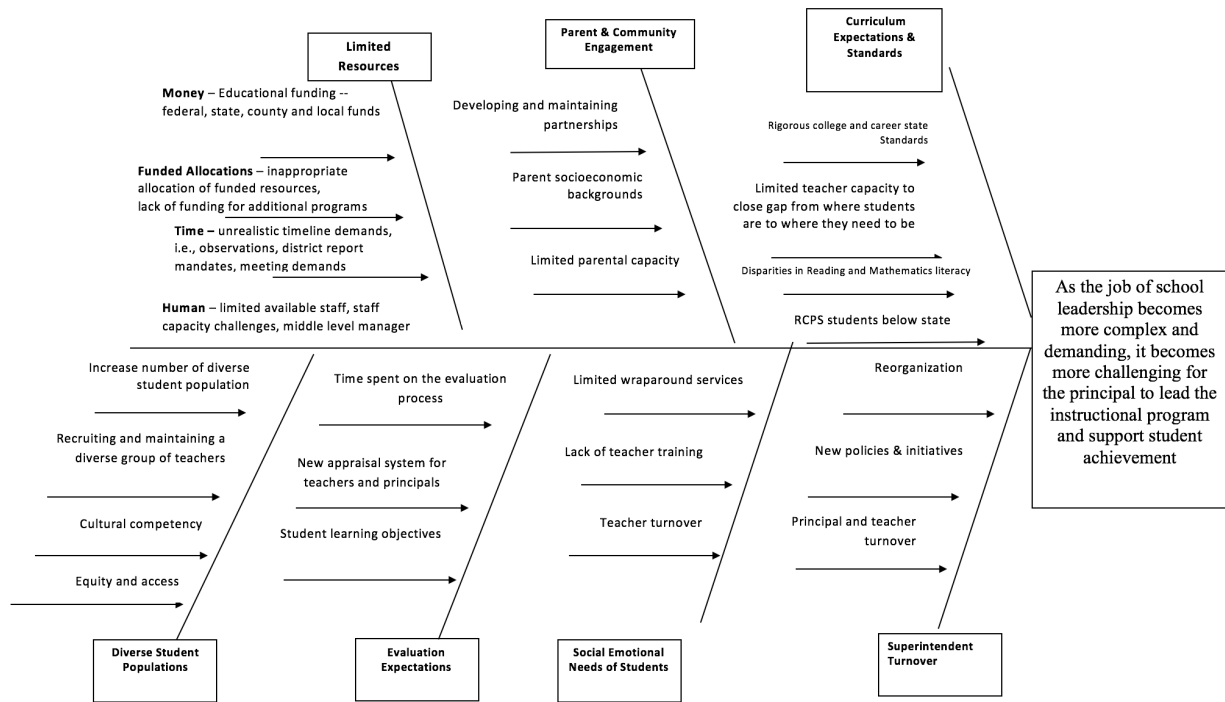
Specifically, Figure 2 delineates seven reasons why the identified problem could possibly exist:

- (1) limited resources
- (2) parent and community engagement
- (3) curriculum expectations and standards
- (4) diverse student population
- (5) evaluation expectations
- (6) social emotional needs of students
- (7) superintendent turnover

It is important to note that the researcher collaborated with practitioners in the field of education to brainstorm possible causes of the problem at both the national and local level. Following identification of the seven potential causes, the researcher reviewed evidence and data to confirm that these seven causes were in fact contributing to the problem. In Figure 2, a full CSA is reported followed by research and data supporting the areas identified.

**Figure 2**

*Causal System Analysis (CSA): Possible Reasons Problem Exists*



**Limited Resources.** A lack of resources and disparity among schools has attributed to the challenges that exist in education today (Condrón & Roscigno, 2003). The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Survey of the American Teacher (2010) revealed that strengthening programs and providing appropriate resources will help the “diverse learners” that exist within our schools. More than half of the teachers surveyed (59%) indicated that establishing the necessary supports and resources should be a school’s highest priority. Despite the dire need for increased support for school programs, Leachman et al. (2017) asserted that public school funding has experienced significant cuts over the last decade. If the U.S. economy wishes to

extend and expand opportunities for communities to develop and advance, an investment in public K–12 education is necessary (Leachman et al., 2017). In fact, in 2015 the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that 29 states provided less total school funding per pupil than they had in 2008; the state of Maryland was among those on that list (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). There has been a gradual improvement since 2015; however, states that made deep cuts after the recession still receive less support than are those that did not make such dramatic cuts (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). Leachman et al. (2017) revealed that during the 2017–2018 school year, “general” or “formula funding,” which is the primary source of state support for elementary schools, experienced cuts of 7% or more per student, according to state budget documents. With limited resources playing a factor in student achievement, appropriately educating our students can be complex (Greenwald et al., 1996).

Research shows that human and capital resources play a key factor in helping principals to manage the daily demands of their job. It is hard for principals to budget effectively when funding levels are uncertain, and it can be disruptive for students if staff assignments change after the school year has begun (Miles et al., 2003). Developing and managing school budgets can be complex and challenging.

**Parent and Community Engagement.** The principal sets the tone for positive home-school and community relationships and often must participate on planning teams to ensure the school’s active participation in school-family partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). These additional, albeit critical, tasks add to the high demands of the principal’s job. Typically, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have higher rates of involvement. Families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds usually participate at lower levels, causing additional challenges for school leaders, teachers, and the students they service (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). As Lacour and

Tissington (2011) suggest, the challenges are greater with students in poverty, students of parents with minimal formal education, students with limited English, and students from family structures that are not always stable. School districts and administrators have made efforts to address this mounting concern; however, schools must receive support from the community to make meaningful and sustainable improvements (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Price, 2008).

Administrators are required to lead and facilitate the community involvement in their school, which includes parent involvement and community partnership connections (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). This work must include identifying, implementing, and sustaining school partnerships that will have a positive impact on the school and its students (Price, 2008). RCPS has struggled with increasing and maintaining community engagement within its schools. Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (Val-Ed) designed a 360° assessment tool, which has been a part of the principal evaluation process in RCPS (2018), to provide feedback to principals incorporating input from all members of the school’s professional community. A two-year trended study indicated that community engagement practices utilized by RCPS principals fell in the “basic” to “below basic” area, and the district scored 50% or higher in community engagement practices and leadership behaviors that support community engagement, as noted by district Val-Ed data during school years 2015–2017 (Val-Ed, 2018).

**Curriculum Expectations and Standards.** In 2010, educational leaders began an increased focus on college readiness, emphasizing the importance for college-and career-readiness for all high school graduates. Politicians began an all-out effort to focus on academic preparedness, which resulted in an increase in curricular requirements and accountability measures (Barnes & Slate, 2013). These new mandates have led to a shift in classrooms across the nation to a renewed focus on college and career state standards. Mulford (2008) suggested

that school leadership plays a significant role in helping children to learn, achieve, and develop. Educational leaders have the task of guiding teachers and students through a complex academic environment that includes rigorous curriculum standards, achievement benchmarks, and various programmatic requirements. Principals must also address academic challenges related to student diversity, income disparities, physical and mental disabilities, and variations in learning capacities (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

**Diverse Student Population.** Over the last half century, the U.S. has experienced a shift in the demographic profile of the students attending its schools, specifically related to students' race and socioeconomic status (Clayton, 2011). As schools become increasingly diverse, leaders must respond to cultural conflicts that may occur among groups of students, parents, and teachers. Principals must also strive to create and maintain a learning community of a diverse group of teachers equipped to lead students from myriad backgrounds in the classroom.

In a diverse district like RCPS, principals must ensure that teachers are culturally responsive to the various demographics that make up county schools. Principals must also provide an environment where students gain exposure to culturally relevant lessons daily, which requires that school leaders be culturally proficient. Lindsey and Terrell (2018) asserted that culturally proficient leaders assess their cultural knowledge, manage and adapt to the dynamics of diversity, and encourage learning about other groups. They further suggested that this type of leader must also understand the subtleties that occur in groups due to cultural differences that exist between people within these groups.

According to Mabokela and Madsen (2005), efforts to prepare school leaders to work with diverse groups must focus on addressing conflicts around diversity. Leaders need to create an inclusive environment that retains teachers of color, and develop a culturally responsive



school image that engages parents of color. RCPS has begun to dig deeper into this relevant issue. The district acknowledges the importance of equipping their leaders with the skills to effectively address cultural competency as well as equity and access for all students. During the 2019 School Leadership Institute, an overview session entitled “Cultural Bias” was provided to all leaders.

**Evaluation Expectations.** To ensure that schools are meeting established benchmarks, district leaders have changed the ways that they evaluate teachers and principals. As Cosner et al. (2014) explained, in recent years the ways that districts evaluate teachers and principals have become more complex and require that principals spend more time on the evaluation process, thus adding to the burgeoning demands on their workday. Cosner et al. (2014) further indicated that new teacher and principal appraisal systems are changing the way principals lead and contribute to the success of teachers and students. These changes have prioritized student performance, and principals must develop new competencies with a focus on data, curriculum, pedagogy, and human capital development to meet the new expectations. In the current accountability era, the need has arisen for growth-based, results-driven systems that support and ultimately sustain effective principals.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education, school districts in Maryland, including RCPS, evaluate both teachers and principals using measures of professional practice and student growth measures. In 2018, the Maryland State Department of Education utilized Student Learning Objectives as one of the measures of student growth for the State Principal Evaluation Model, and it may represent 50% of a principal’s evaluation.

**Social Emotional Needs of Students.** According to Sax and Gialamas (2017), when teachers and school leaders prioritize the social and emotional needs of students, effective

teaching and learning can occur, positive relationships can flourish, and students can experience increased levels of achievement. Sax and Gialamas (2017) further asserted that students who report interactions that are unpleasant, lacking in meaning, or unhealthy oftentimes feel loneliness and fear in school; whereas, students who report feeling accepted, connected, and supported are more likely to be learning in the classroom, meeting their goals, and experiencing a sense of independence. When all staff in the school building, including administrators, work together, they can help to reduce students' negative feelings and increase their feelings of happiness and excitement (Sax & Gialamas, 2017). Gialamas (2014) stated:

We need to engage the minds of students, staff, faculty, administration, parents and friends of an academic institution with the underlying commitment to serve the family, community, the nation and the world. Innovation and authentic leadership approaches are the enabling objectives to provide students with a unique, meaningful, high-quality, holistic educational experience. Students will then use their academic knowledge to exercise wisdom in their decision making as they become the keepers of the future of the planet. (p. 72)

Furthermore, Gialamas (2014) suggested that if educational institutions assist students develop the wisdom necessary to transform static academic knowledge into social, ethical, economic, and environmental intelligence, then the quality of life can be greatly improved for people around the globe.

During the 2019 school year, RCPS took steps to prioritize the well-being of students and staff with the adoption of the Resilience in School Environment (RISE) Initiative. This initiative empowers schools to create safe and supportive learning environments by developing policies and practices that improve the social emotional health of all students and staff

([www.HealthierGeneration.org/RISE](http://www.HealthierGeneration.org/RISE), 2019). The social and emotional needs of students dictate that school leaders become well versed on how to meet the varying needs of these students. Leaders must support and oftentimes lead the effort to ensure the social and emotional safety of all students (Gialamas, 2014).

**Superintendent Turnover.** According to Renchler (1992), the problem of urban school superintendent turnover has reached crisis proportions, presenting yet another challenge to improving the quality of education in U.S. cities. There are, of course, many success stories of superintendents who have enjoyed long tenures in their positions, but the increasingly common circumstance is for large school districts to become involved in what one school board member referred to as the “revolving door syndrome” (Renchler, 1992, p. 2). When urban school superintendents lose their jobs, or quit in frustration, all levels of the district’s educational system feel the consequences—students, teachers, parents, and administration, as well as the curriculum and finance departments. Renchler (1992) further asserted that in the best of circumstances, students, teachers, and others in the educational community in a large urban area have to weather a transitional period while a new superintendent with new ideas and new policies becomes acclimated to the district’s educational, fiscal, personnel, and public relations departments. As a result of this transitional period, school districts suffer turnover, initiative incompleteness, and morale issues.

The revolving door syndrome holds true for RCPS. Over the past 15 years, the district has experienced 5 superintendents. The consistent change has had a great impact on the district regarding continuity with initiatives, student achievement, and teacher turnover. Regardless of the district’s efforts to provide innovative initiatives and prioritize arts integration, environmental and financial literacy, and language immersion, significant gaps in continuity remain a challenge

(Anthony & Shetley, 2017). Several challenges exist for principals when a district experiences high superintendent turnover. Academic challenges coupled with various other systemic challenges, both within and outside of the school, add to the demands of principals in their quest to successfully lead schools (Renchler, 1992).

### **Consequences of Not Addressing the Problem**

**Principal Turnover.** Research suggests that increasing job demands are leading to principal turnover. Further, principal turnover is connected to higher teacher turnover, which links to lower student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Fink and Brayman (2006) identified a heightened awareness in the research literature pertaining to principal turnover. The researchers attributed this increased focus to various factors, one of which is accountability and reform efforts that contribute to the complexities of the principal's role. These complexities often lead school leaders to perceive the principal's job as less attractive. Fink and Brayman (2006) also found that schools that experience high turnover rates reported a lack of shared purpose, doubt, questions about leadership's commitment, and a lack of school improvement sustainability.

National statistics relating to principal attrition clearly show that principal turnover has reached crisis proportions. Hull (2012) found that the average turnover rates for principals in the U.S. ranged from about 15% to 30%, but were even higher in the most challenging schools. Hertling (2001) cited various studies that posited about the reasons that principals leave their jobs and underscored the increasing demands of the job as one of the leading reasons:

Today's principal is faced with the complex task of creating a school-wide vision, being an instructional leader, planning for effective professional development, guiding teachers, handling discipline, attending events, coordinating buses, tending to external priorities

such as legislative mandates, and all the other minute details that come with supervising a school. (p. 1)

Kennedy (2000) identified five major reasons for the lack of principal retention in the nation's schools and for many principals' tendency to say, "It just isn't worth it." These reasons include the following: (1) the changing demands of the job, (2) salary, (3) time, (4) lack of parent and community support and the negativity of the media and students toward schools, and (5) lack of respect.

RCPS is one of the largest school districts in the nation, serving approximately 132,667 students and 209 schools (including 124 elementary; 24 middle; 23 high schools; 12 academies [PreK–8]; 13 special education regional centers; and 13 vocational, alternative, and charter centers). The ethnic composition of the district is 58% African American, 33% Latino of any race, 4% White, 3% Asian, and 2% other. Over 60% of the students in the district are on free and reduced meals. RCPS's goal and vision for the district is to graduate students who are prepared for college or to enter a career of their choice. Meeting this lofty goal requires that every stakeholder be engaged in this effort ([www.pgcps.org](http://www.pgcps.org), 2018).

A recent review of RCPS data reveals an overall increase in principal turnover between SY 2014 and 2018 (Table 1). In elementary school, the turnover reached its highest point in 2017, with the district reporting that 20 principals left that year; an increase of 15 from the previous year and an increase of 17 from 2014.

**Table 1***Principal Turnover Five-Year Trend Report*

Type of School	SY 14	SY 15	SY 16	SY 17	SY 18	Grand Total
Charter		1	1	3	2	7
Elementary	3	10	5	20	9	47
Middle	1	2	4	6	5	18
High	2	2	2	2	1	9
PreK–8	0	3	0	1	4	8
Regional Centers	1	0	0	0	3	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>93</b>

Failure to address the current job demands of principals may result in increased turnover and, ultimately, wider achievement gaps for students in the district.

**Student Achievement.** Principals play a vital role in closing the achievement gap that exists within school districts and across the nation. Closing achievement gaps among student groups has become a focus in education accountability, and schools and districts are mandated to disaggregate student test scores and other performance data by student characteristics to better inform comparisons between groups (Ansell, 2011). The National Center for Education Statistics produces the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures students' test performance in various subjects, primarily reading and mathematics, and provides reports about achievement gap patterns. In the early 1970s, the first NAEP assessments provided evidence confirming that a substantial gap existed between the reading and mathematics test performance of African American students and their White counterparts. From the 1970s through the 1980s, this achievement gap appeared to narrow in both reading and mathematics; however,

it began to flatten, and even increase (in mathematics) during the 1990s. The gap then narrowed again, slightly, from 1999 to 2004 and has flattened since 2004 (Barton & Coley, 2010). A study by NAEP (2009) revealed that African American students, on average, scored below White students by one standard deviation, which equates to the difference between the performance of a fourth grader and an eighth grader.

Conversely, Hemphill and Vanneman (2011) determined that the achievement gap between Latino and White students, which the NAEP began tracking in the 1990s, has remained largely unchanged. The researchers attributed this trend to the fact that both Latino and White students demonstrated academic gains at a similar rate (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). While general data on achievement reveals notable gaps occur along lines of race, Reardon (2013) discovered that the income achievement gap, defined as the achievement gap between children from low socioeconomic status families and those from high socioeconomic families, is even between African American and White students.

The achievement gap has resulted in a number of challenges for school systems across the country, particularly for districts like RCPS, that serve large populations of minority and low-income students. Schools in RCPS, particularly those in low-performing areas, are facing great academic challenges as they struggle to prepare students for the 21st century and address disparities in both reading and mathematics literacy that exist between students from various ethnic and socioeconomic groups. In 2018, Maryland State Report Card data (Table 2) revealed that RCPS lagged behind the state in both English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.

**Table 2***2018 RCPS and State Assessment Achievement Data (ELA and Mathematics)*

<b>2017–2018 RCPS &amp; State Assessment Achievement Data (ELA &amp; Mathematics)</b>					
<i>**Students who met or exceeded expectations (Level 4 and 5 combined)</i>					
	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>RCPS SY 17</b>	<b>State SY 17</b>	<b>RCPS SY 18</b>	<b>State SY 18</b>
ELA	3	24.8%	39.8%	24.3%	34.5%
	4	26.2%	41.9%	29.8%	51.1%
	5	26.7%	41.4%	28.5%	37.8%
	6	26.7%	38.4%	24.3%	38.7%
Math	3	25.4%	43.0%	20.3%	42.2%
	4	20.4%	37.4%	17.5%	38.8%
	5	16.1%	35.5%	17.6%	38.0%
	6	15.7%	32.2%	14.8%	27.1%

*Source: Maryland State Report Card, 2018*

Based on these clear and defined challenges, the district has identified literacy, across the content, as the foundation for student success and has placed great emphasis on helping students to find success in this area. In the RCPS 2018 Strategic Plan, district leaders highlighted their efforts to implement district-wide initiatives designed to advance literacy across all content areas. The role of the principal is to monitor and lead the academic program in their schools. As the demands increase and complexities grow, the reality of leading this effort becomes quite challenging, making it difficult for principals to focus on the academic challenges that exist.

### **Prior Attempts to Address the Problem**

The academic gaps create additional demands that school districts must address. A survey of the literature, along with a local and state policy review, indicates that nationally, there have been a variety of approaches to addressing the job demands of the principal. At the state and local level, districts, including RCPS, have also endeavored to address this issue. Educators and policy makers have developed a number of initiatives to deal with the increased job demands that



principals face daily. These initiatives include time management efforts coupled with principal leadership training and support. These attempts have been made at the national, state, and local level.

**Time Management Systems.** A research study conducted in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, a large school district in Florida serving approximately 125 schools, utilized a stratified random sample of schools to examine the time demands faced by school principals. The researchers shadowed school administrators for several days and collected detailed notes on how principals allocated their time. The researchers further explored the day-to-day instructional leadership activities (e.g., classroom walkthroughs, teacher coaching, instructional feedback) that may have had an effect on student achievement (Horng et al., 2010).

In 2013, RCPS invested in the School Administration Manager Project (SAMs), a time tracker tool program for principals. The SAMs system involves meetings between the principal and either an individual or team of school staff responsible for the SAMs. The group schedules instructional leadership time, reflects on the impact that task has had on their day, and develops a First Responder structure to utilize throughout the school day. The First Responder list is used to assign tasks as they arise to the appropriate staff, which then allows principals to focus on their intended goals for the day with minimal interruption. The RCPS budget for the 2014–2015 fiscal year included funding for the SAMs initiative for new principals in years 1–3 of their tenure as school leaders. Principals who wish to implement SAMs, but have more than three years of experience in the county, must purchase the system using their allocated funds. Several veteran district principals have taken the opportunity to implement the time-tracking system to assist in managing their daily tasks and prioritizing instruction-related responsibilities designed to improve teaching and learning.

**Principal Support and Development.** For over 15 years, The Wallace Foundation has endeavored to build and develop strong leaders to lead the nation's public schools. Using research to lead the way, The Wallace Foundation began the Principal Pipeline Initiative, a multi-year project designed to support districts as they develop programs and initiatives to train and support new principals. The initiative focuses on ways to improve the methods by which principals are trained, hired, supported, and evaluated (Wallace Foundation, 2015). In 2011, The Wallace Foundation sought to fund districts seeking to groom leaders in large school districts across the nation. At the conclusion of the process, six school districts received funding to support their leadership efforts. As a result of The Wallace Foundation funding, RCPS, one of several districts in the nation, that led leadership development efforts by identifying leaders and investing in their growth and development.

With support from the Wallace partnership, RCPS created and implemented a Principal Pipeline Initiative that included a homegrown leadership development program. The multi-year effort includes the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP), the Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS), Resident Principal Program, and Comprehensive Principal Induction Program (CPIP). APIP is a program that provides opportunities for novice assistant principals and administrators to engage in varied leadership experiences. In 2012, RCPS partnered with the National Institute for School Leadership to strengthen the pipeline. Moreover, since its development, ALPSS has become a significant part of the pipeline process as it addresses principal recruitment, selection, training, support, and practicum experience and is in some cases the last step in the pipeline process prior to participants being appointed principal. The program also provides online and face-to-face sessions, job-embedded shadowing, and mentoring experiences with a focus on organizational and leadership strategies geared toward

preparing participants to be effective school leaders in the district. RPP, another step in the pipeline process, provides opportunities for aspiring principals to spend a year shadowing an assigned principal, then applying that learning by leading the school community over several months. The CPIP supports first-year principals, and they are assigned a leadership development coach and job-alike principal mentor.

Over the past few years, RCPS has led numerous efforts to focus on strengthening leadership from the inside out. In addition to the pipeline initiative, the district has invested in providing its leaders and teachers with Arbinger Training. The Arbinger approach suggests that organizational change begins with individuals and promotes the idea that change occurs when the people who make up the organization change (Arbinger Institute, 2018). The district has provided extensive training designed to build the capacity of the leaders in the organization. After two years of training at the leader level, the district offered the training to school leadership teams and individual employees. The skills and methods obtained from the Arbinger Learning Series has helped shape the current climate and culture of the district. RCPS has invested in developing the talents of the leaders in the district by providing support and training around principals' strengths. The district has also invested in Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessment to ground the work around leadership productivity. This research-based assessment helps individuals identify, understand, and maximize their strengths (Gallup, 2019).

Additionally, district leaders recognized that an important part of the principal's job is the ability to provide effective feedback to teachers that can help them improve their practice and affect student learning in a positive way. To this end, RCPS has provided its leaders with training using *The Six Steps to Effective Feedback* by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, which have helped principals to grow and develop in this area. In 2017, RCPS was awarded a grant in the amount of

\$25,031,573 over a three-year period. The Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSL) grant from the U.S. Department of Education, was used to strengthen and support early-hire recruitment, best-fit deployment, evaluation and support, and retention of high-quality teachers and school leaders, particularly in high-need schools. In addition, the TSL supported investment in recruiting and retaining a highly qualified workforce that represents the diversity of the school district.

**Principal Supervisor Supports.** The role of principal varies widely from managing school issues to leading teachers with instruction. In the fall of 2012, the Council of the Great City Schools received a grant from The Wallace Foundation to investigate the ways principals are supported and evaluated in large urban school districts and districts that participate in the Wallace leadership initiative. The goal was to understand the ways principals were receiving support and undergoing evaluations in large school districts. Closely examining the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor, the investigators concluded that the support principals received from their supervisors was instrumental in their success and their contributions to improving student achievement (Davis et al., 2005). The authors further noted that the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors have shifted from operational manager to include that of instructional leader alongside the principals they support. In short, the emphasis has been placed on instructional leadership, holding both principal and principal supervisor accountable for student achievement.

Currently the district has worked to repurpose the role of principal supervisor. In 2014, district leaders tasked principal supervisors with devoting a large majority of their time in schools conducting side-by-side observations, analyzing data, and monitoring the overall progress of the schools with their principals. To accomplish this task, the principal supervisors

received training on a plethora of topics, including the provision of effective coaching and feedback practices to principals regarding their instructional leadership.

District leaders in RCPS have also attempted to craft schedules, restructuring and realigning the duties and responsibilities of the principal supervisor to alleviate some of the additional tasks that have kept them from being present in schools. In 2016, RCPS created the Ombudsman Office, designed to triage parent concerns prior to the principal supervisor stepping in to address the issue. Today the office does not exist; however, the role is still active at all three levels (elementary, middle, and high). These additional steps increase the chances that a situation can be resolved prior to reaching the principal supervisor's desk.

**Teacher Leadership Supports.** There are a multitude of ways that district and state leaders are supporting principals in finding success in their roles. To this end, educational leaders and policy makers across the nation have established a number of initiatives designed to produce teacher leaders who can positively impact school improvement efforts and student achievement. Across the nation, school districts have implemented supports that help aspiring teacher leaders obtain their National Board certification. Similarly, states have creatively identified incentives and rewards for teachers who embark on this prestigious certification. Incentives range from payment of assessment fees to earning various amounts of additional income. For example, South Carolina provides a \$7,500 bonus. Florida offers their National Board-certified teachers a 10% salary supplement if they agree to provide mentoring services for 12 days during the year (Berry et al., 2005). California offers a \$20,000 incentive award paid in four annual installments to National Board-certified teachers who teach in low-performing schools (Berry et al., 2005). National Board-certified teachers often serve as leaders in their schools and districts. They are

called on to assist administrators with mentoring and professional development, and may take on various leadership roles to ensure that the school is meeting established goals.

Research indicates that individuals in formal and informal school-level leadership roles play a pivotal role in developing teacher leaders in schools. According to the Illinois State Board of Education, it approved nine institutions that offer the new Illinois Endorsement on Professional Educator License: Teacher Leader. This endorsement prepares teachers for a number of key roles within schools, such as curriculum specialist, coach, or mentor; department chair or lead teacher, content specialist; or program leaders. Former Illinois State Superintendent Christopher Koch explained, “The Teacher Leader Endorsement Program will be helpful in retaining and developing high-performing teachers for leadership roles and in building the competencies necessary for high-quality leadership and decision-making in schools” (Fitzsimmons, 2016, p. 1).

Like Illinois, RCPS has prioritized hiring, recruitment, and talent match efforts over the past several years. RCPS has used the TSL grant funds to implement a systemic teacher leadership model that includes graduate education in teacher leadership; support in obtaining National Board certifications for teachers in high-need schools; and the prioritization of efforts to recruit, hire, and retain effective teachers in the district’s neediest population.

Additionally, the district has developed and invested in initiatives to support principals in their role as an instructional leader. These efforts have included the creation of teacher leader positions, such as professional development lead teacher (PDLT) and instructional lead teacher (ILT). In 2014, RCPS created the PDLT position dedicated to supporting systemic initiatives and providing professional development at the school level for all content areas. This was the district’s attempt to support the instructional needs and build the capacity of teachers and leaders

within the district. The ILT position was also created to further support teacher capacity related to instructional leadership. Schools could opt to purchase this position based on need and available funding. It was also created to lead and assist the instructional staff in the design of a high-quality instructional program that complements and supports the curriculum. Teachers in these positions actively participate as a member of the instructional learning teams, support curriculum initiatives, monitor instruction and assessment performance, and assist administrators in leading the school to success.

**Analysis of Prior Attempts.** The efforts outlined above represent substantial work to recruit, train, and support principals. However, these efforts, with the possible exception of teacher leaders, have not been directly related to reducing the workload or responsibilities of the principal, and more work in this area is needed.

### **Theory of Action**

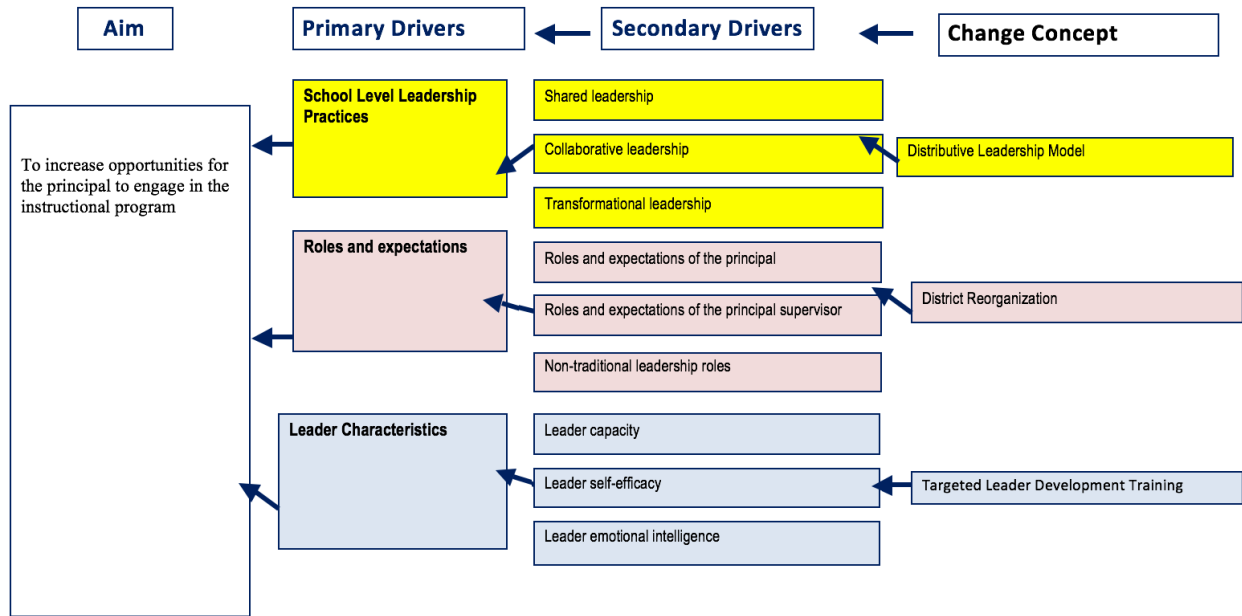
For this study, the researcher will be employing a driver diagram. According to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, a driver diagram provides a visual representation of a group's perceptions about the factors that drive the team toward an established goal. The diagram illustrates the relationship between an established goal, identified key drivers that enable the group to achieve the goal, the ancillary drivers that influence the primary drivers, and change concepts that aid in testing each ancillary driver (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2019).

The driver diagram is useful when exploring multiple drivers and change concepts to address the associated aim or problem of practice and identify a promising change idea. In this study, the driver diagram model (Figure 3) was used to explore the primary and secondary drivers of the aim. The primary and secondary drivers will be discussed in the following section starting with Roles and Expectations.

**Figure 3**

*Driver Diagram to Address Possible Solutions to the Problem of Practice*

**Problem:** As the job of school leadership becomes more complex and demanding, it becomes more challenging for the principal to lead the instructional program and support student achievement



**Roles and Expectations.** This driver focuses on how systems might change, redefine, or evolve principal roles and expectations to make them more reasonable and effective. The job description of the principal has undergone many changes over the years. In previous decades, the job description was limited to maintaining school operations, such as facility and building concerns (Fredericks & Brown, 1993). The newly revised role reaches far beyond that of building management leader to one of instructional leader. The job expectations of a current principal include multiple facets of accountability and require the principal to balance both managerial and instructional job duties effectively (Hallinger, 1992). As Shen and Hsieh (1999) noted, all of these new demands have contributed to a new perception that the job of the principal is less attractive than other roles.



The National Policy Board for Educational Administration adopted the Professional Standards for Education Leaders (PSEL) in November 2015, establishing new expectations for the revised role of principal. Based on a decade of educational leadership research (Murphy et al., 2017), the PSEL are a newly defined set of benchmarks by which districts evaluate school administrators. The PSEL replaced the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards. The new standards stress the importance of both academic rigor, as well as the support and care required for students to excel. The new standards include the following:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

The adoption of the new standards requires districts to consider the complexities that encompass the role of principal. The standards recognize the central importance of human relationships not only in leadership work but in teaching and student learning (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Weber (1947) explained that schools are bureaucratic entities structured using a hierarchy model of leadership that involves authority, division of labor, rules, and regulations. Researchers

have long suggested that such bureaucratic structures result in rigidities (Gouldner, 1954; Merton, 1957), and division among workers (Aiken & Hage, 1968).

In recent years, traditional models of school leadership have given way to more non-traditional models due to the notion that alternate paradigms may provide better support for the multiple demands placed on principals. Gilman and Lanman-Givens (2001) proposed that the ultimate goal of these alternative approaches was to decrease the turnover rate of principals and make the role of principalship more attractive, which might ultimately impact school reform efforts. Research supports the idea that non-traditional structures of leadership can be a productive way to support the increasing demands the role of principal entails (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Grubb and Flessa (2009) identified three alternative leadership models:

1. Co-principals – (1) two co-principals each operate a school largely independent of the other, or (2) two co-principals operate one integrated school;
2. Rotating principalship – individual serves as principal for three years while training an incoming principal, and then stays for a fourth year to serve as a mentor; and
3. Small school with no principal – teachers divide the principal’s tasks amongst themselves.

Although few systems have taken the plunge and settled into these more non-traditional models of leadership, research indicates that their impact can be beneficial for many reasons. Grubb and Flessa (2009) explored alternative approaches to non-traditional leadership models. The researchers examined a sample of leadership structures from a more expansive list of non-traditional models proven to provide potential benefits to schools. Grubb and Flessa (2009) concluded that alternative leadership models allow for an increased amount of time and attention

to instructional practices, address the overload principals often experience, and provide greater knowledge of what the position of leadership entails. In a similar study, Flessa (2003) found that the benefits of alternative leadership models centered around principals having more time and attention to devote to instructional practices, which was cited as an issue with traditional leadership models. The study further reported that additional benefits of alternative leadership models include more attention to support staff, and greater availability to students, teachers, and parents.

The role of principal has evolved significantly in recent years. District leaders and other educational advocates have begun to rethink what support looks like for principals in this new era. To support principals more effectively, district leaders have prioritized the kind of professional development, support, and organizational structures needed to address principals' varied needs (Casserly et al., 2013). These adjustments have resulted in notable changes to the role of the principal supervisor.

Casserly et al. (2013) reported that in school districts across the nation, the principal supervisor's role has expanded in recent years to include a more concentrated focus on supporting principals with instructional leadership. The newly designed role also includes the adoption of evaluation tools and practices, such as those used in Evidence-based Leadership Learning (EBLL). EBLL involves the use of performance evaluation and other data points to inform leadership learning (Lewis & Caldwell, 2005). Using this tool, supervisors support their principals by conducting side-by-side classroom observations and visits, analyzing and interpreting performance data, and building the capacity of their principals through targeted and meaningful professional development opportunities (Casserly et al., 2013).

In 2012, the Council of Great City Schools explored the ways that large urban school districts provide support to their principals. Funded by a Wallace Foundation grant, the study provided resources that allowed districts to examine closely the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors. The results suggested that principal supervisors played a critical role in supporting principals and increasing student achievement. The data further indicated that those who held the role of principal supervisor often had experience as principal, principal coach, and teacher. The survey also concluded that, on average, principal supervisors oversee 24 principals with limited support staff.

Casserly et al. (2013) further noted that to supervise principals effectively in this age of accountability and demand, principal supervisors must cultivate a safe space for principals to grapple with complex problems while helping them to produce results. Accomplishing this feat can be difficult because principal supervisors also serve as the principals' evaluators and may find it challenging to balance and separate these two competing roles (Casserly et al., 2013).

In addition to the roles and expectations of the principal, there are other factors that may positively contribute to principals' ability to manage the demands and complexities of their job. The innate abilities of principals may be a contributing factor to how they are able to meet the demands of leadership. The following section will explore potential solutions related to the characteristics that leaders possess.

**Leader Characteristics.** This driver focuses on identifying and developing key leadership characteristics that will improve principal capacity to address the complex set of tasks required for the job. Davis et al. (2005) stated that the job of principal can be overwhelming because it often dictates that leaders must possess myriad characteristics and skills to address the many challenges within the schools that they lead. Davis et al. (2005) further explained that, to

fulfill their role effectively, principals should be in tune with their servicing stakeholders and, above all, be adept at the high level of human relations necessary to deal with the many complexities that they encounter daily. Kavanaugh (2005) added that principals must also work to address conflicts and disagreements that arise among students, teachers, and other possible entities; deflect interruptions that may impact the autonomy of teachers; and maintain a school of order and excellence day-to-day. Such requirements add significantly to their already long list of priorities. To ensure that districts hire principals who can handle this extensive workload, school leadership policies dictate that recruitment efforts focus on individuals who are capable of meeting the comprehensive demands of the job (Keller, 1998; Olson, 2000).

In this era of high-stakes and accountability, educational stakeholders expect principals to possess a level of competency that may look different for each group within the learning community (Kress et al., 2004). Parents may want a leader who is capable of ensuring both high-quality instruction and a safe environment for all children, while overseeing and facilitating extracurricular and community events. More importantly, as Kress et al. (2004) assert, students require a principal who can support their social and emotional development needs, help them navigate complex situations, and aid them in developing the life skills necessary to become better learners.

As education evolves, expectations for the school principal shift, and ensuring that principals have the skills and strategies to address the complexities of the job becomes ever more important. Strengthening principal preparation training and programs, and finding avenues for preparing principals in different ways for their multifaceted role, may largely contribute to this effort to increase principal leader capacity (Copland, 2001). Good leaders are not only enthusiastic about their jobs and the potential achievements of the organization in which they

work, they also have a belief in their judgment and ability to meet goals and get the job done effectively (Copeland, 2001).

***Self-Efficacy.*** Research has confirmed that positive leadership efficacy beliefs are important to successful leadership (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Self-efficacy can affect the effort one puts into a task, as well as the goals one sets to achieve success (Bandura 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). McCormick (2001) suggested that leaders with a high level of self-efficacy often times create more positive and successful work environments. As Chemers (2000) noted, leaders' self-efficacy is key because it impacts the performance and attitude of their followers. Chemers (2000) further explained that leaders' level of self-efficacy beliefs can influence their followers' level of commitment to organizational tasks and overall engagement within the team. Although research provides a preponderance of evidence of the importance of self-efficacy, the concept of leadership efficacy has not received the attention necessary to lead efforts in changing the way we select and evaluate leaders (Hannah et al., 2008).

According to Hannah et al. (2008), effective leadership requires confidence and a belief that the job can be accomplished. Bandura (1997) developed the notion of self-efficacy, and defined it as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. Studies on leadership efficacy in education suggest that principals' self-efficacy is connected to how they adapt and function within their roles. Licklider and Niska (1993), for example, revealed that principals' level of self-efficacy determines the quality of their teacher supervision. Similarly, Osterman and Sullivan (1996) suggested that efficacious principals often are more steadfast in pursuing goals and adapt to changes effectively.

Research also indicates that principals with high self-efficacy experience higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction, and lower levels of stress and isolation (Federici, 2012;

Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Dimmock and Hattie (1996) also found efficacy to be a key factor in principals' ability to positively affect school improvement efforts. Conversely, Lyons and Murphy (1994) contended that principals who display inefficacious characteristics tended to use their power to force others into desired actions, while efficacious principals lead by example, which increases the desire for others to follow. The research is clear that principals' self-efficacy can be a determining factor in their ability to manage and meet school goals.

***Emotional Intelligence.*** Data reveals that, to achieve success, leaders today must possess a certain level of emotional intelligence (EI). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as an “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (p. 189).

Researchers agree that leaders who have a high level of EI typically have the ability to navigate change effectively and garner commitment among their staff, whereas leaders with low levels of EI may find it difficult to navigate change (Beavers, 2005; Buntrock, 2008; Moore, 2009; Moss, 2008; Patti, 2007). EI can equip leaders to develop relationships built on trust, employ empathy toward employees, develop collaborative work styles, and display skill in solving complex problems (Beavers, 2005). Sarason (1998) stated that “the turmoil associated with school reform cannot be avoided, and how well it is coped with separates the boys from the men and the girls from the women” (p. 49). For school improvement efforts to have a positive, sustainable impact on schools, leaders must demonstrate the EI necessary to meet the arduous task of implementing mandated reforms.

**School Level Leadership Practices.** This driver focuses on the implication of leadership strategies and practices that support change in an effort to reach the goal or aim. Effective

leadership skills and capacities are necessary but not sufficient to meet the increasing demands of school leadership, particularly those related to student achievement (Higgs, 2003). Meeting this goal requires addressing leadership practices that support the current educational needs.

Leadership practices and strategies that can be explored to support school leaders include transformational leadership, shared leadership, collaborative leadership, and distributed leadership. Each of these strategies is examined below.

***Transformational Leadership.*** Leithwood et al. (1994) determined that transformational leadership is a viable solution for schools facing numerous challenges. Burns (1978) described transformational leadership as the practice of engaging in working relationships and understanding organizational structures through participation by everyone who shares the same goal. Zamora (2013) concluded that transformational leaders work collaboratively with others within the organization to reach a common goal. Additionally, “The transformational leader creates a vision for the future of an organization and builds trust with his or her followers and collaborates with them in order to accomplish the set-forth vision” (p. 36). Zamora (2013) further noted that, to affect change and meet the complexities and demands of this new era of accountability, 21st-century schools must face the challenge of embracing transformational leadership styles. The transformational approach requires the support of leaders and an increase in their collaborative efforts as they work to help others reach their goals (Zamora, 2013).

***Shared Leadership.*** Shared leadership is established when every member of the team is fully engaged in the leadership efforts of the team. It is described as a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team, that includes the emergence of official as well as unofficial leaders. In other words, shared leadership may be characterized as an empowerment in teams (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Several studies have documented the importance of shared



leadership across a wide variety of contexts to include top management teams. In fact, several studies indicate that shared leadership is an even better predictor of team success than just leadership from above. Thus, the initial evidence points to an increasingly important role for shared leadership. The literature on how leadership can be shared in school suggests a variety of structures. Those structures include (1) co-principals, (2) rotating principals, or (3) no principal (dividing principal task among leaders in the building and the district.)

***Collaborative Leadership.*** School-level leadership practices have evolved significantly in recent years from more traditional leadership models to newer alternative models that prioritize collaboration. Hallinger (2004) explained that traditional leadership typically involves top-down leadership where principals set an expectation and require individuals in other positions to meet that expectation. This form of leadership is similar to a dictatorship where principals are the sole authority and decision makers. Hallinger (2004) further adds that principals who use the top-down approach expect their followers to take their orders with little to no discussion and feedback. The changing landscape of schools requires that leaders rethink this traditional approach when leading the complex schools of today. Finzel (2007) explained that successful organizations make the transition from a hierarchical authoritarian paradigm to a flatter structural model. According to Finzel (2007), organizations no longer embrace top-down leadership styles, which are often met with opposition from individuals who have a hand in the success of schools and student achievement.

Administrators can build strong teams when they empower individuals to collaborate, lead, and become a part of the decision-making process at the school level. Traditional hierarchical structures support self-protective tendencies, whereas non-traditional structures empower individuals to collaborate and embrace the creativity needed to have a positive effect

on school teams and on school improvement efforts (Goyne et al., 1999). Lucas (1998) suggested that in the collaborative leadership structure everyone has a certain amount of influence.

Conversely, the traditional organizational hierarchical structure often motivates people to use their power to self-protect rather than to affect organizational growth.

Pollak and Mills (1997) explained that when administrators encourage empowerment and autonomy among school faculty and staff, they can “capitalize on strengths that emerge from each group, allowing individual teachers to find a team unity with which they are comfortable, and encourage an atmosphere of creativity and risk taking” (p. 29). Creating strong teams produces strength, unity, creativity, collaboration, and cooperation, all of which can be beneficial for both teachers and administrators (Pollak & Mills, 1997). Principals operating under a traditional hierarchical structure, however, can find it difficult to share leadership because they have been the sole decision makers and are ultimately responsible for those decisions. Pollak and Mills (1997) noted that teachers also find it difficult to step outside of their comfort zone to begin making and collaborating on decisions that may ultimately impact school progress and student achievement. Pollak and Mills (1997) noted that when providing the environment, training, and support necessary to develop newly empowered teachers, principals must address both the hopes and fears of teachers and leaders.

***Distributed Leadership.*** Leaders across the nation routinely work to empower and support their staffs as they move toward meeting goals. Research suggests that distributed leadership is one of the more promising paradigms (Gronn, 2002). Although distributed leadership is not the silver bullet for fixing the challenges that exist with the role of principal, it may be considered an approach worth exploring. In a distributed leadership model, a leader moves beyond the heroic role of solo leader to one that transforms an organization by

empowering others to lead. Spillane et al. (2001) explained that this form of leadership involves distributing the tasks of leadership among many individual leaders who become key players in organization. Smylie et al. (2007) stated that distributed leadership is characterized by sharing, spreading, and distributing leadership tasks to “multiple actors across multiple roles and multiple levels of school organization” (p. 475). Distributed leadership focuses on the group goal versus the action of one (Copland, 2003; Gronn, 2002).

The level of shared responsibility involved in distributed leadership often requires a paradigm shift within an organization. The model forces everyone involved into a new way of thinking as individuals experience the redistribution of roles and responsibilities. Copland (2003) shared three preconditions for distributed leadership in the school environment: (a) a collaborative culture, (b) a consensus about the organization’s problems, and (c) an expertise in teaching and learning. Smylie et al. (2007) also stressed the importance of trust in an organization when engaging in distributed leadership practices, adding that successful distributed leadership models include factors like collaboration, communication, joint problem solving, and honest feedback.

Distributed leadership does not take the responsibility of leading the school from the principal. Most importantly, distributed leadership does not mean that there is no one responsible for the overall organization. Instead, it requires the principal to understand the relationship between leadership and organizational structures, school vision, and school culture (Elmore, 2000). Distributed leadership means that the job of an administrative leader is primarily about recognizing and enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization (Spillane, 2006).

The concept of distributed leadership has overlapping characteristics with other practices such as, shared, collaborative, and transformational leadership. Although there are similarities, distributed leadership is not synonymous with these leadership practices. When a principal delegates responsibility over tasks, individuals or groups charged with the responsibilities might not be perceived by staff as influential. Formal allocation of leadership responsibilities such as delegation does not necessarily include the use of consensus building, collaboration, and communication that are associated with the distributed leadership framework where *leadership practice is deliberately planned and implemented*.

For the purpose of this study, distributed leadership is defined as a practice in which principals' purposely and systemically utilize a process of sharing authority and decision-making where the central focus is on continued collaboration and problem solving designed to improve student achievement within the school (Riley, 2000).

**Summary.** After examining all of the primary drivers, secondary drivers, and change ideas, the researcher decided to focus on school level leadership practices in an effort to determine how this primary driver may reduce job demand and complexities of the principal role. The researcher offers the model of distributed leadership as a possible approach to positively impact the problem. The following theory of action statement was developed: *If school districts adopt a distributed model of school-level leadership, they will provide increased opportunities for principals to lead their schools instructional program.*

Because it has become clear that no one person cannot address the demands and complexities involved in running a school, in some school districts, principals have begun to explore a distributed leadership approach to facilitate school improvement efforts (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001),

distributed leadership may have revitalized the teaching profession while assisting school improvement efforts, because it offers a different method for schools to be transformed from bureaucratic control to collaborative leadership. Harris (2008) claims that distributed leadership has a positive impact on school improvement and student achievement. Distributed leadership relies on the guidance and direction of multiple human resources, allowing the organization to benefit from the combined expertise and joint interaction of school leaders and their followers. These groups utilize material and cultural artifacts to work in concert toward a common goal, so that the outcome is greater than the sum of their individual actions (Gronn, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 2005). Distributed leadership moves beyond the philosophy that leadership is generated solely by the role and position of the principal. Instead, it frames leadership as a practice that involves an array of individuals whose dynamic interactions mobilize and guide teachers in the process of instructional change (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005).

In conclusion, this study is focused on distributed leadership because, based on the research, the prior attempts by RCPS, and the researcher's own experience as a school leader, distributed leadership is a promising, achievable, and systemic way to help principals address the demands of the job and focus more time and energy on instruction and student learning.

### **Critical Review of Research on Distributed Leadership**

Educational leadership is a process that brings together the talents and efforts of teachers, students, and parents. To establish a clearer understanding of the complexities that exist with school-level leadership practices, an exploration of research is necessary. This literature review provides an examination of theories of distributed leadership, as well as the practices of distributed and transformational. The review also explores the roles that both principals and

teachers play in distributed leadership and offers a critical look at what the research states about the systems, structures, and components needed to implement an effective leadership model.

**Distributed Leadership Theories and Frameworks.** Educators often deal with challenges that require a team effort by all stakeholders to overcome (Hoyle, 1992). As such, it is reasonable to posit that a principal would need a team to manage the school improvement process effectively. Several researchers have noted that discarding traditional leadership structures in favor of more distributive views can positively impact principals' effectiveness in schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Spillane et al., 2001).

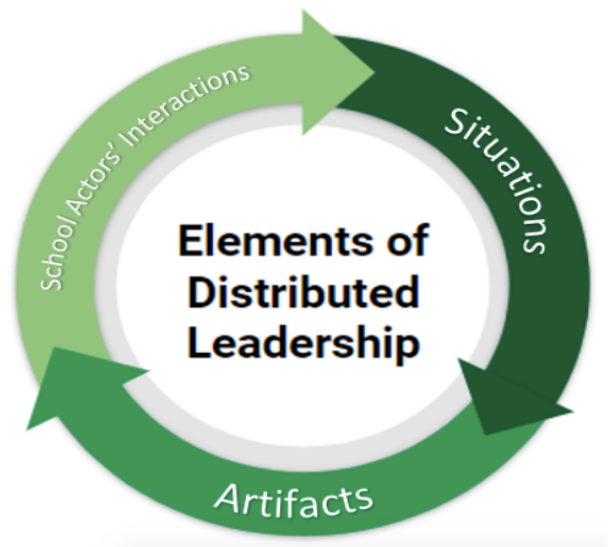
The works of Peter Gronn and James Spillane shed light on the concept of distributed leadership in educational leadership. Harris (2005) suggested that Spillane and Gronn made significant contributions to the field by refining and shaping their theory of distributed leadership, which involves the contributions, knowledge, and expertise of a body of individuals that works together toward the common goal of supporting and guiding teachers in school improvement. Gronn (2002) identified distributed leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals. Similarly, Spillane (2006) stated that, ideally, leadership should involve a number of individuals. The author explained that effective leadership is at its best when there is daily interaction among multiple leaders (Spillane, 2006). Spillane further asserted that both formal and informal leadership roles can be used because distributed leadership relies on expertise rather than traditional hierarchical authority. He further suggested that leadership manifests itself in relationships that emphasize individual leadership roles, responsibilities, and personal characteristics and qualities (Spillane, 2006). Spillane also based his notion of distributed leadership on activity theory. He and his colleagues valued the study of practice as an opportunity to explore the interdependence of individuals in their natural

environment.

Spillane (2006) suggested that distributed leadership theory (Figure 4) involves an active web of interconnected actors, artifacts, and situations. The interaction of school actors (i.e., school personnel) is one component of the theory, as is the ways that these actors utilize different artifacts or tools to engage in leadership practices that address instructional needs. The daily experiences and tasks completed by the actors as they use their different artifacts are identified as “situations” (Spillane, 2006).

**Figure 4**

*Elements of Spillane’s Distributed Leadership*



Gronn (2002) contributed to the research on distributed leadership by adding to the conceptual theory. He delineated between two forms of distributed leadership, the “additive” and “holistic” forms. Additive forms include uncoordinated leadership practices in which people

engage without considering the leadership activities of others in the organization. Holistic forms involve consciously existing and managed collaborative patterns that include some or all leadership sources in the organization. This form of distributed leadership assumes that the total of the work performed by leaders adds up to more than the parts, and that there are levels of interdependence among those engaged in work (Gronn, 2002).

Like Spillane, Gronn (2002) argued that leadership should be less of a solo affair and more about the interactive relational inner workings of leaders and followers in the school setting. Gronn agreed that the distributed process is no longer individually conceived. He suggested that most individuals lead organizations using a multiple leadership approach. Gronn also noted that utilizing some or all of an organization's members in concert, rather than individualized, is the best way to meet organizational outcomes. Gronn identified the following three forms of concerted action evident in distributed leadership practices: (a) spontaneous collaboration, (b) intuitive working relationships, and (c) institutionalized practices. Both Spillane and Gronn presented descriptive models that detail a coherent conceptual base for the idea of leadership.

**Distributed Leadership in Practice.** As the process of leading schools has become increasingly intricate over the past few decades, distributed leadership has gained increased attention. A distributed leadership model recognizes that more than one leader is needed to perform the various jobs and tasks within an organization (Spillane et al., 2001). The goal of distributed leadership is to focus on both informal and formal roles of leadership. Although distributed leadership is gaining popularity, the existing research has not developed past the conceptual or descriptive level (Harris, 2005).

O'Donovan (2015) used a phenomenological study to determine how leadership is



experienced from the inside, with the ultimate goal of identifying the real meaning of the leadership experience. Using the small-scale case-study on three post-secondary schools, O'Donovan (2015) explored the challenges and opportunities related to developing distributed leadership practice in Irish post-secondary schools. The researcher charged school leaders with examining existing hierarchical options and replacing them with participatory communities where collaboration was vital for successful leadership. The resulting data revealed three themes: (a) constructions of leadership, (b) managerial leadership, and (c) instructional leadership. The researcher also shared that variations in distributed models of instructional leadership practice exist, which enables school leaders to rethink their current perspectives on leadership.

According to O'Donovan (2015), school leaders and policy makers have been challenged to develop and implement systems and structures to re-culture schools, to develop teacher-leadership capacity, and to reflect on the new direction of leadership in Irish post-secondary schools. Research continuously supports the notion that school leadership should not take place in a silo (Spillane et al., 2004). The idea that the work of the school leader requires additional support from school personnel highlights the need for a distributed model of leadership.

The data is clear that the complexities and challenges of the school principals' role require that they obtain assistance and collaboration from other leaders, both internally and externally. Districts can support this effort by prioritizing initiatives around building the capacity of leaders in formal and informal settings (O'Donovan, 2015). By defining distributed leadership and making the value clear to all stakeholders, districts may increase the chances of buy-in. One limitation of the study conducted by O'Donovan (2015) is that the small-scale results may not be transferable to larger schools with a more diverse demographic. However, several additional researchers have argued that hierarchical leadership models are no longer a reality among school

leaders (Camburn et al., 2003; Day et al., 2001; Halawah, 2005; Kelley et al., 2005).

Leithwood et al. (2007) conducted a large-scale study investigating patterns of leadership distribution in a large urban-suburban district in southern Ontario that served more than 100,000 increasingly diverse students. The study involved a two-stage, multi-methods investigation, where the first stage included the collection of quantitative evidence in a small number of schools, and the second stage involved qualitative data measures. At each site, Leithwood et al. explored which individuals performed various leadership duties, the characteristics of non-administrative leaders, the factors that promoted and hindered the distribution of leadership functions, and the outcomes of distributed leadership. The researchers conducted interviews with the principal and an average of seven educators and one focus group at each of the selected schools.

Leithwood et al. (2007) noted that school and district leaders play a critical role in helping to develop and foster productive forms of distributed leadership, although perceptions and understanding of distributed leadership varied among respondents. The results indicated that the effectiveness of the distributed leadership model was dependent upon the focused and deliberate practice of the leader. The researchers found that most of the people who the respondents viewed as leaders in the school were also identified, in some manner, as leaders by the school or district. Leithwood et al. (2007) also noted that the staff members at the schools were willing to support and participate in distributed approaches to leadership when the principal set the expectations and provided a level of transparency and clear goals.

In contrast to the two previous investigations, Harris (2004) used empirical evidence from two studies of successful school leadership, along with recent studies of school improvement, to examine which forms of distributed leadership contributed to school

improvement. The two case studies reviewed in this article spanned 12 schools. Grade levels were not identified. Harris conducted interviews with parents, pupils, teachers, governors, senior managers, and head teachers at each school. Harris found that the most pressing barrier involved determining how to distribute responsibility and authority and assigning responsibility for distributing authority.

Harris (2004) concluded that although distributing leadership roles within an organization can lead to overall improvement, there is an increasing amount of evidence that building capacity of teachers as a means of development is equally, if not more, important in the role of improvement. These efforts are most effective when formal leaders in schools create and provide productive opportunities for distributed leadership practices to thrive. The exploration of distributed leadership reveals two key questions: Is distributed leadership a “top-down” or “bottom up” practice? Is distributed leadership a formal role, or is it one that occurs more naturally as the capacity of a teacher is built? The research is clear that principals acknowledge the need for assistance and look to distributed leadership practices as a means of support (Hartley, 2007; Hoy & Miskel, 2008). However, in addition to the support that it provides to school leaders, distributed leadership practices can also assist teachers in many ways. By using this model, principals highlight teachers’ expertise, allow them to become a part of the decision-making process, and provide them with leadership skills as a steppingstone to a formal leadership role in the future (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

**Role of the Principal in Distributed Leadership.** Harris (2011) cautioned that implementing systems of distributed leadership within a school requires the reexamination of, and in some cases a change in, the role of the principal. Harris (2011) explains that this change typically involves transitioning from a model where the principal is the pinnacle of the

organization, making all organizational decisions autonomously, to one where the principal steers efforts to develop the leadership capacity of others. Empirical studies of distributed leadership and organizational outcomes suggest that for the model to affect organizational change and improvement, principals must be willing to share some level of power and authority, view leadership as an interaction instead of a position, and build high levels of trust amongst their teams (Harris, 2011). As Leithwood et al. (2007) noted, when a principal includes other people in the planning and decision-making processes, they develop a sense of ownership and commitment to the organization.

MacBeath (2005) investigated the meaning that respondents assigned to distributed leadership in the everyday life of schools. This qualitative study focused on the formal leader's role in a distributed model of governance and took place in the Eastern Region British local authorities area, comprised of four secondary, two middle, three primary and two junior/infant schools. MacBeath used semi-structured interviews with head teachers to assess their progression over time, while shadowing and surveying them throughout the study timeline. The researcher categorized the respondents' progression into six areas: distribution formally, strategically, incrementally, pragmatically, opportunistically, and culturally (MacBeath, 2005).

The data revealed that more tenured head teachers were able to identify the leadership needs of the school and appropriately distribute tasks to the faculty on their teams (MacBeath, 2005). As trust increased, teachers were more willing to support one another and ultimately formed a sense of collective efficacy. Over time, the researcher observed a culture of performance throughout the schools that made distributed leadership practices the norm. The role of the head teacher evolved into one where the individual led the staff in the distribution of

leadership (MacBeath, 2005). This study reinforced the important role that the head teacher or principal can play in changing the culture of a school to one that values distributed leadership.

Smylie et al. (2007) investigated the role of formal leaders in establishing distributed leadership in urban middle schools. The three-year longitudinal comparative case study included six schools in two Mid-Atlantic states. The researchers selected the cases from ten schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas that had student enrollments between 500 to 1,500 students. The aim of the study was for the identified schools to establish a team to participate in distributed leadership practices within the schools. Using interview and document-based data, the researchers documented how the schools overcame cultural, structural, and professional barriers to create an organization where distributed leadership became the norm (Smylie et al., 2007).

Smylie et al. (2007) found that the principal played a key role as change agent throughout the process, and set the stage for the team to successfully implement distributed leadership by creating opportunities for teachers to lead. The researchers also noted that the principal needed to address structural concerns that freed new leaders to exercise their ability to manage and fulfill their assigned responsibilities and tasks. Teachers were able to identify and lead job-embedded learning opportunities to assist in developing and sustaining professional learning communities (Smylie et al., 2007).

Smylie et al. (2007) present an example of school teams that overcame a number of hurdles to implement distributed leadership successfully. The principals played a significant role in the effectiveness of the effort. As Louis and Kruse (1995) noted, the role of principal is to aid in development of teacher skills and foster teacher leadership. In doing so, principals create an environment that is ripe for the execution of a distributed leadership model.

**Role of Teachers in Distributed Leadership.** Harris (2003) examined the distributed model under the leadership of teachers. The researcher used a broad sampling range to include staff in various roles. The findings suggested that without careful and thoughtful consideration of how distributed leadership practices impact teachers, leaders could not positively affect teachers' beliefs, concepts, and school climate. The researcher did not share the specific type of correlational research used in the study, which could have an effect on how the correlations were determined. The study offers an effective distributed model as a roadmap for how schools can prioritize leadership to deliver on their goals of improving the quality of teaching and learning (Harris, 2003).

In a larger study, Pang and Miao (2017) explored the roles of teacher leadership in six schools in Shanghai, China. The study included three primary schools, two junior middle schools, and one high school. Using a protocol of pre-set questions, the researchers interviewed five principals, which lasted for approximately one hour per interview. Pang and Miao also interviewed 19 teacher leaders during a focus group discussion that lasted close to two hours. The researchers sought to address two questions. (a) What is the role of teacher leadership in the context of Shanghai schools? (b) What are the functions of teacher leaders in school improvement in Shanghai (Pang & Miao, 2017)?

The results indicated that effective teacher leaders inherited the title “backbone” teachers (Pang & Miao, 2017). The researchers identified three specific ways in which these teacher leaders contributed to school improvement: (a) supporting young teachers and professional learning, (b) leading curriculum development, and (c) facilitating collaboration. The spirit of collaboration and teamwork emerged as a key element in effective teacher leadership (Pang & Miao, 2017).

Pang and Miao's (2017) work indicates that the selected institutions realized the importance of leadership roles in schools. Principals agreed that the role of teacher leaders was to use their knowledge and skills to impact reform and change within schools. The Shanghai teacher leaders in this study had specific and detailed roles designed to support strong and sustainable school improvement. There were some variations in the participants' responses at each level, which provided a broader context for the study (Pang & Miao, 2017).

In a related study, Rutherford (2006) investigated the restructuring of school leadership and the impact the new organizational structure had on teacher leadership. The researchers examined the experience of stakeholders at a school in the southwestern U.S. as it made the transition from a traditional elementary school structure to become an Edison Charter School. The school had a population of 1,000 students from low socioeconomic households. The majority of the students were Latino (76.6%), while the remaining student population consists of White (12.6%) and African American (6.4%) students. An additional 4.4% of students were from other backgrounds. The researchers conducted over 50 interviews between 1999–2004. During this time, the research team made annual visits to the school to hold interviews with the school staff and district administrators. Interviews involved the use of semi-structured protocols that questioned participants about the initiation and implementation process and the impact the reform model had on student achievement and school culture. The respondents included teachers, school and district administrators, and support staff. Participants were interviewed multiple times, which resulted in over 50 transcripts for analysis (Rutherford, 2006).

The investigation revealed that the structure used in the Edison Model was vastly different from that of the traditional school (Rutherford, 2006). The Edison Model establishes a professional environment that supports collegial interaction and professional development

opportunities and encourages teachers to play a more significant role in the administration of the overall school. Information collected from the interviews suggested that there were opportunities for all teachers and parents to work collaboratively and lead within the school. The findings further indicated the key to effective distribution of leadership is providing the space and opportunity to make decisions within the school. Building the capacity of teachers by transferring knowledge and skills from teacher leader to teacher becomes a necessary component of distributed leadership (Rutherford, 2006).

The findings further suggest that specific elements should be in place to promote effective teacher leadership (Rutherford, 2006). Many schools have teacher leaders in formal and informal roles. However, teachers who play a larger role in decision making, provide professional development opportunities, and collaborate with other teachers to develop their leadership skills may have more success as teacher leaders. The results indicate that teacher empowerment has a direct correlation to teacher leadership. When teachers were able to take on leadership responsibilities, they felt empowered, which translated to the overall success of the school, its climate, and culture. The researcher's work spanned a four-year period, which allowed for in-depth interviews and ongoing school visits with participants. The study also provided a wide range of demographic data points on the respondents' various backgrounds (Rutherford, 2006).

The overall results of the studies indicate that school leaders are in need of support to impact overall school improvement and student achievement (Rutherford, 2006). The effectiveness of teacher leadership is dependent on the roles and functions teacher leaders play. The research consistently documented the importance of school leadership and its impact on the overall success of schools (Copland, 2001; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Leithwood et al., 1999;



Murphy, 1991; Murphy & Datnow, 2003). Assigning formal roles and responsibilities will remain a critical part of the educational landscape for principals. However, distributed framework models are gaining popularity because they allow teachers to work collectively in leadership roles within the school environment (Gronn, 2002; Muijs & Harris, 2006).

**Summary.** Policy mandates have required an increase in accountability evidenced by student performance on statewide assessments. These mandates have redefined the role of principals, and as a result, the job demands are at an all-time high. The expectation to meet these goals each year can no longer be accomplished by one leader alone (Elmore, 2000). The distributed leadership model is one of many approaches that has gained popularity as a leadership practice because it promotes an organizational structure that supports collaboration by all to meet expectations. The framework for distributed leadership provides opportunities for members of an organization to participate in leadership tasks while working toward a common goal.

This review of literature examined the organizational structure of schools, distributed leadership theories and practices, and the roles of principals and teachers in systems of distributed leadership. Most studies provided evidence that leadership tasks are in fact being distributed to other key players in schools (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2012; Harris, 2004). Additional studies revealed that distributing leadership practices has a positive effect on teacher and student progress (Camburn et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005). Most importantly, the reviewed research indicates that a positive relationship exists between distributed leadership, organizational improvement, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Despite these key findings, however, few studies have examined how to implement and address challenges that impact effectively distributing leadership in schools.

Research in the area of distributed leadership has resulted in positive results regarding the effectiveness of the model to transform schools, especially in the area of increasing teacher capacity (Leithwood et al., 2004) and student achievement (Camburn et al., 2003; Spillane & Diamond 2007; Timperley, 2005). However, there are still gaps in the research that should be addressed. What has not been explored in great depth are the perceptions of practicing elementary principals to determine if distributed leadership identifies sustainable leadership practices for school success. This researcher believes that elementary principals hold important knowledge concerning leadership reform efforts and are key to the success of implementing effective leadership practices. In addition, this researcher purports that barriers exist in schools that affect the implementation of distributed leadership. This concern can be explored through the principal's identification of where the barriers exist and if they can be overcome.

### **Investigation**

This study provides an examination of the extent to which principals are implementing distributed leadership practices in elementary schools and the barriers and supporting factors that may impact its implementation. The study also examines the extent to which teacher leaders have opportunities to assume leadership responsibilities in their schools.

This study hopes to expand the body of existing understanding of distributed leadership in elementary schools and how it can be successfully employed by school and district leaders. By adding to this body of knowledge, RCPS can improve upon its current leadership programs. The study can also assist the district in gaining a greater understanding of how distributed leadership supports principal practice. More specifically, the resulting data can equip principals with a research-based leadership practice that will support them in their job roles. Additionally, the

study provides RCPS with information on how to provide effective support for teacher leader development in distributed leadership.

## **Section II: Study Design**

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to address potential gaps that exist in the RCPS district by exploring the extent to which elementary principals report that they distribute leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools, the methods that these leaders employ when distributing key responsibilities and tasks, and the barriers and contributing factors that support distributed leadership. The study also provided insight into the extent to which ILTs have opportunities to assume leadership responsibilities and task in their schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions served as a foundation guide during this examination of distributed leadership practices in RCPS elementary schools.

1. To what extent do elementary principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their schools?
2. What structures, processes, and tools do principals report using to distribute leadership in their schools?
3. To what extent do teacher leaders report assuming leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools?
4. What do elementary principals perceive as the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership in their schools?

### **Research Design**

The researcher used a mixed-methods design to collect quantitative and qualitative data that described principals' and teacher leaders' implementation of distributed leadership in their schools, as well as the structures, processes, and tools that they employed during this

implementation. A mixed-methods approach employs quantitative and qualitative data together to gain a more in-depth understanding of the research questions (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) also suggested that using mixed methods can boost the overall strength of a study.

When using mixed methods, the researcher collects and analyzes not only numerical data, which is customary for quantitative research, but also narrative data, which is the norm for qualitative research in order to address the research questions defined for a particular study. For example, to collect such a mixture of data, researchers might distribute a survey that contains closed-ended questions to collect the numerical, or quantitative, data and then conduct semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to collect the narrative, or qualitative, data. This method is also useful to a researcher because the qualitative results further explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative phase.

Additionally, when using a mixed-methods approach, the researcher may conduct a survey to first collect quantitative data from a group. Members of that group may then be selected for interviews where they are able to explain further and offer insights into their survey answers. Talking with participants will enhance the study and provide a deeper understanding and clarity on the area being studied. This approach was an appropriate choice for the present investigation, because it allowed the researcher to use quantitative data to identify variables and determine the frequency among the variables as it relates to the study. Using mixed methods also provided an opportunity for the researcher and participants to delve deeper into their leadership practices to confirm or refute the data findings from the quantitative portion of the study (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009).

To collect quantitative data, the researcher administered an anonymous web-based survey to respondents. Qualitative data was gathered using an interview protocol process designed to collect information about the distributed leadership structures, processes, and tools principals used in their schools. The interview questions addressed principals' perceptions of the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership practices in their buildings. As shared in Section 1, Spillane (2006) explained that distributed leadership structures are defined as teams and committees that support how leadership practices are allocated. Spillane offered that distributed leadership processes involve routines that assist in the dispersal of leadership throughout the school and the interactions that exist between key actors to achieve established goals (e.g., observations, coaching and mentoring opportunities, and data analysis). He further suggested that tools of distributed leadership can include artifacts like meeting agendas, observation templates, and data collection forms used to shape leadership practices and interactions between individuals within an organization. The three constructs—structures, systems, and tools used in this study formed the basis of the research definition of distributed leadership. In the following section, the methods used to address the research questions are described.

## **Methods**

The research was conducted in a large urban/suburban school district with a diverse student population, including 62% African American, 31% Latino, and nearly 64% of the student population receiving free and reduced meals.

**Selection of Participants.** Participants in this study were principals and ILTs from 111 elementary schools in RCPS. Charter schools and specialty programs (e.g., language immersion, Montessori, and pre K–8 academies) were not included in this study. Elementary schools were

selected because the researcher has served as a principal at the elementary school level. The structure of elementary schools with a smaller staff on average makes studying leadership practices more practical. The ILT position was identified as the key informant for this portion of the survey. ILTs are designated as formal leadership positions and can serve as a proxy for teacher leaders and would most likely participate in distributed leadership activities in schools.

During the 2018–2019 school year, RCPS employed 111 elementary school principals in the pre K–5 and pre K–6 comprehensive models and in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) schools. RCPS employed 115 elementary ILTs who served within these same schools. Invited participants included all 111 elementary school principals and all 115 ILTs at the identified schools during the 2018–2019 school year. The number of assigned ILTs vary in elementary schools. Principals can opt to pay for the ILT position, therefore, schools may or may not have the position. There was no attempt to match responses between the principal of a specific school and the ILT in that building. The school data characteristics are detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*School Data Characteristics*

Type of School	Number of Schools
Comprehensive	117
TAG	7
Title 1	66
Non-Title 1	58
Smaller School (under 400 students)	47
Larger School (over 400 students)	77

**Survey Instrumentation.** The researcher used two instruments to collect data for this study. The first was a web-based, anonymous survey that explored the degree to which principals reported implementing distributed leadership structures, processes, and tools in their schools and the experiences teachers had with being involved in and fully leading distributed leadership practices within their schools. The second instrument contained protocols for structured interviews with a smaller group of principals to gain a greater understanding of the barriers and challenges that contributed to implementing distributed leadership practices within elementary schools.

The researcher modified and adapted the survey for both principals and ILTs from an existing tool developed by Ingrida Barker (2016) as part of her dissertation, *Implementation and Perceived Effectiveness of Distributed Leadership in RESA 1 Schools in Southern West Virginia in 2016*. The adapted survey was initially created for principals. Barker had the survey instruments and interview protocol validated by a panel who possessed an expert level of understanding regarding distributed leadership research. The panel included representatives from the state, district, and local area in which the research took place.

The survey instrument for this research was adapted and revised for both the principals and ILTs. Table 4 denotes the adaptations for the principal survey and interview made from the original survey and interview protocol.

The ILT survey closely aligned to the principal survey with the exceptions of Section B: Individuals/Groups, Section F: Potential Barriers to Distributed Leadership, and Section G, which were all excluded from the ILT survey. In addition, a request to participate in a follow up interview was not included in the ILT survey instrument.



**Table 4***Changes Made From Original Principal Survey and Interview Protocol*

Original Survey and Interview Items	Adapted Changes to Survey and Interview Items
Section A – Demographic Questions	Section A – Demographic Questions were changed based on the needs of RCPS
Sections B & C – removed references to faculty senate presidents, focus team leaders, and local school improvement chairs	Section B – Professional Learning Community, School Improvement Planning Team Section C – instructional walkthroughs with feedback (informal observations), learning walks, data analysis
Section D – removed any mention of the following: strategic planning, student assessments, and development and completion of school monitoring reports	Section D – added structures and processes, such as school improvement planning teams and learning walks
Section E – no deletions	Section E – added questions about data collection forms
Section F – no deletions	Section F – added a question related to challenges with resources
Section G – removed the following open-ended question: “What resources would best support the implementation of distributed leadership in your school?”	Section G – explored this question during the interview phase of the study
Interview Questions – removed the question: “Do you see any differences in the levels of leadership distribution based on grade levels, principal experience levels, or sex?”	Interview Questions – added the question: “What distributed leadership practices have you implemented most frequently at your school?”

The principal survey (see Appendix L) included 47 items in seven sections. Section A of the survey contained six background questions (e.g., participants’ years of experience in education and other identifiable information). Section B of the survey contained a list of nine individuals or groups and asked principals to rate the frequency with which they distributed leadership responsibility to the listed individuals or groups to in their school. Respondents scored each item using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “Never” to 5 = “Always”). Section C of the survey

provided a list of eight distributed leadership structures and asked principals to rate their level of implementation of each structure. This item also employed the 5-point Likert scale (descriptors ranged from 1 = “Never” to 5 = “Always”).

Section D of the survey asked the principal to rate each of nine the distributed leadership processes in terms of the current level of implementation in their school using the same Likert rating scale noted in Sections B and C. Section E of the survey provided principals a list of seven tools used to support the implementation of distributed leadership in schools. In this section, principals rated the levels at which they used each tool when promoting distributed leadership. This section utilized the same Likert scale described previously. Section F of the survey listed eight potential barriers to distributed leadership and asked principals to rate those barriers in terms of the extent to which each was a challenge to the implementation of distributed leadership in their schools. This item also employed the 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 0 = “Not a challenge” to 5 = “Major challenge”).

In Sections D through F participants had an “Other” option that they could choose to provide a self-selected response and then rate it using the same Likert scale in that section. Section G asked a final question of principals regarding an opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview to delve further into their leadership practices.

The ILT survey contained 28 items in four sections (Appendix M). Section A of the survey contained six background questions (e.g., What grades have you taught? and How long have you held your leadership role at your school?). Section B of the survey provided a list of seven organizational structures and teams and asked ILTs to rate the extent to which they assumed full responsibility in leading these teams. Respondents scored this item using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all” to 5 = “Fully”). Section C of the survey provided a list of eight

distributed leadership processes and asked ILTs to rate the extent to which they assumed full responsibility in leading these processes. This item also used the 5-point Likert scale descriptors described in the previous section.

Section D of the ILT survey included a list of seven tools used to support the implementation of distributed leadership practices. The ILTs rated the extent to which they assumed responsibility for creating, implementing, and utilizing each of the tools in their school. This item employed the same Likert scale as described previously. In Sections D through F participants had an “Other” option that they could choose to provide a self-selected response and then rate it using the same Likert scale in that section. The ILTs were identified to participate in the survey because their position was the most identifiable teacher leader position in the district.

***Survey Pilot.*** Before beginning data collection, the researcher conducted a pilot study to determine the validity of the survey questions. The specific goals of the pilot study were to obtain information from principals and ILTs in RCPS to (1) ensure the directions were clear, (2) understand how the respondents would interpret the questions, and (3) confirm that the participants were able to move from question to question without needing to ask follow-up questions to gain clarity. Principals and ILTs in the survey pilot did not participate in the actual study. The researcher provided the survey to two individuals who have held the role of principal in the district within the last three years, and to one ILT who held the position in the district during the 2019–2020 school year. The researcher provided the survey to the identified pilot participants via email. Feedback from the pilot participants was informative. Both the principals and the ILT stated that the survey needed no revisions. The pilot participants noted that the survey was easy to read, understand, and maneuver. No clarification was needed. Based on the

pilot, the principal survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete, and the ILT survey took approximately 10 minutes.

**Interview Protocol.** The second instrument, an interview protocol, guided several structured interviews conducted with principals who responded “yes” to the survey question in Section F: Follow-Up Interview Protocol (Appendix N). Principals were the only participants interviewed because, as the head instructional leader in their school, they have the authority and responsibility to share or distribute leadership responsibilities to other staff. The researcher also wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how principals lead efforts in their building to support distributed leadership practices. Additionally, the researcher sought to understand the potential barriers to implementing distributed leadership from an organizational perspective.

The interview protocol included four sections and 20 open-ended questions. The first set of questions included four background questions, followed by Sections A–C consisting of open-ended questions. The interviewer asked principals about the structures, processes, and tools that they used in their schools to distribute leadership among their faculty and staff. In addition, the interviewer asked about what barriers impacted their ability to implement distributed leadership practices in their schools, as well as what supporting factors assisted with the implementation of the practice. The researcher asked three closed-ended questions very similar to the ones asked in the survey to gather additional data regarding leadership practices. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes.

The researcher created a map to show the alignment between the research questions, survey items, and interview items. The alignment of all three data points is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Research Question Alignment Map*

Research Questions	Survey Items	Qualitative Interview Items
1. To what extent do elementary principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their schools?	Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school.</li><li>• How do you identify leaders at your school?</li><li>• How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?</li><li>• What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?</li><li>• How are these responsibilities developed?</li></ul>
2. What structures, processes, and tools do principals report using to distribute leadership in their schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.</li><li>• Rate each of the processes in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.</li><li>• Rate each of the tools in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.</li><li>• What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?</li><li>• How do these processes impact distributed leadership practices in your school?</li><li>• What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?</li><li>• How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?</li></ul>

Research Questions	Survey Items	Qualitative Interview Items
<p>3. To what extent do teacher leaders report assuming leadership responsibilities and task in their schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rate each of the processes in terms of the extent to which you assume responsibility in leading at your school.</li> <li>• Rate each of the tools in terms of the extent to which you assume responsibility in leading at your school.</li> </ul>	
<p>4. What do elementary principals perceive as the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership in their schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following is a list of potential barriers to distributed leadership implementation. Using the scale provided, rate each of the barriers in terms of a challenge in distributing leadership in your school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?</li> <li>• What factors act as barriers to principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?</li> <li>• What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?</li> <li>• How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in schools?</li> <li>• How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school?</li> </ul>

## **Procedures**

**Data Collection.** Before beginning data collection, the researcher obtained approval from both the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board and the Department of Research and Evaluation in RCPS. Following approval, the researcher used the RCPS website to obtain the email addresses of the 111 elementary-level principals and sent each an email inquiring about their willingness to participate in the study. The email included details about the purpose of the study, an overview of the survey, and information on how their responses would be used in the study. The email also included an explanation of how the researcher planned to ensure participant anonymity and a link to the online survey (Appendix E).

**Principal Survey Procedures.** The 111 identified principals received an email containing the survey. Once principals opened the survey, they were directed to the first page, which contained an informed consent form. The survey then asked the principal to agree or not agree to participate. If the principal agreed, the survey opened to Section A. If a principal disagreed, the survey closed with a thank you statement. To ensure timely responses, the researcher sent a follow-up reminder email at the beginning of weeks one and two (Appendices H and I). All principals who completed the survey were entered to win one of four \$25 Amazon gift cards. Data collection started on August 19, 2019 and concluded on September 18, 2019, a four-week period.

**ILT Survey Procedures.** After obtaining approval to conduct the study, the researcher, with the assistance of the RCPS Associate Superintendent for Elementary Schools, was provided with a list of the elementary schools that had an ILT on their staff during the 2018–2019 school year. The researcher used the RCPS website to collect the ILTs' email addresses and then sent an email directly to ILTs who held the role during the 2018–2019 school year. The email included

details about why they were selected, details about the purpose of the study, an overview of the survey, and information on how their responses would be used in the study. The email also included an explanation of how the researcher planned to ensure participant anonymity and a link to the online survey (Appendix F).

When the ILT opened the survey, they were taken to the first page, which contained an informed consent form. The ILT had the option to agree or not agree to participate in the survey. If they agreed, the survey opened to Section A. If they did not agree, the survey closed with a thank you message. The researcher sent a follow-up email at the beginning of weeks one and two to remind participants to complete the survey (Appendices J and K). ILTs who completed the survey were entered into a random drawing for a chance to receive one of four \$25 Amazon gift cards. In total, there were nine gift card drawings—four for the principal survey, four for the teacher survey, and one for the principal interviews. ILT surveys started on August 28, 2019 and concluded on September 27, 2019, a four-week period.

***Principal Interview Procedures.*** At the end of the principal survey, a final question asked whether a respondent would consider participating in a follow-up interview to go into more depth about their leadership practices. Principals who agreed to be interviewed were asked to share their contact information so that the researcher could schedule a follow-up interview over the next few weeks. Of the 82 principals surveyed, 46 agreed to potentially participate in a follow-up interview. The researcher interviewed 10 principals. The 10 principals were selected based on availability of the researcher and interviewees. The researcher made every effort to ensure a variety of principal characteristics and school demographics were represented in the interviews. The interview participant demographics are displayed in Table 6.



When the survey window closed, the researcher sent two emails to the 10 interview participants. The first email included the date and time of the individual interview, and the second email confirmed the date and time for each participant. The researcher conducted site visits to interview each principal. A digital recording device was utilized to conduct all interviews. Interviews were scheduled over a two-week period based upon the principal's and researcher's schedules. The interview times varied. However, on average, interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each, for a total of four hours within the week window. During the interviews, a definition of distributed leadership was not provided. The researcher assumed principals would operate from their authentic knowledge and their perception of the practice.

The researcher used the interview protocol to ask each question in order. In an effort to get confirmatory evidence, the researcher asked three open-ended questions that closely aligned and in one instance mirrored three questions from the principal survey. This was done to get an idea if the frequencies reported from the survey aligned with those reported in the interview. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked two open-ended questions in Section A that were closely aligned to the principal survey questions. The researcher also asked one open-ended question in Section B of the interview that was asked exactly like a question in the principal survey.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the survey results, the researcher used Qualtrics, a web-based program, to store all survey questions and responses. The researcher then used the Qualtrics platform to analyze the frequency of each variable used in the survey. The analysis included descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and variability and statistical significance. The

researcher used the Excel formulas and functions to determine the overall aggregate mean and standard deviation for both the principal and ILT survey data.

Qualitative analysis began after interviews were completed and as soon as the qualitative data from interviews were transcribed. The participant responses were digitally recorded after the researcher asked for the respondents' permission to capture the interview. Audio recordings of all interviews were transcribed using a software tool to prepare for a more accurate analysis. The participants were asked 20 questions from the interview protocol designed to address research questions one, two, and four. The researcher then coded and analyzed the transcripts to identify patterns and trends and emergent themes in the data. Three iterations of coding were employed to address research questions one, two, and four. The initial, first-level coding process identified general categories that were prevalent in the participants' responses from the first few transcripts. As a result of that process, a codebook was developed. The next level of coding, level two, involved identifying words or phrases from the remaining transcripts to find common groupings and employ the first level of interpretive coding. During this process, the emergent codes were linked to the research questions. The third and final level of coding identified themes that emerged based on the coding. Level three codes were eventually linked to other level codes within and across transcripts and became an important means by which the researcher defined themes within and across data sets (Kurasaki, 2000).

The analysis was performed using NVivo Qualitative Research Software. This software allowed for the use of participants' words to develop the initial categories to be coded. Through qualitative analysis, responses were not predetermined, rather responses were self-generated. In addition to the emerging themes, a few of the interview questions were crafted similarly to the

survey items. The researcher conducted these two methods simultaneously in a parallel manner and did not use one method to inform the other.

### **Confidentiality**

Prior to taking part in the study, the participants received an email providing details about the investigation. The email included the title of the study, the name of the researcher, the purpose of the study, procedures, study benefits, potential risks, promise of confidentiality, and details about participants' rights, including their right to withdraw from the study (Appendices E and F). All questionnaire data were stored on the Qualtrics website, which is a secured, anonymous site. The researcher assigned each participant a unique identification number to maintain confidentiality and only referred to participants using this number during analysis. The Qualtrics account and all surveys were deleted upon completion of the research and data analysis. Participating respondents were assured that their responses would be confidential.

**Summary.** In this section, the researcher detailed the mixed methodologies utilized in this study to answer the four research questions. This section also provided a discussion of the instruments employed in the study, the participant selection process, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing data. The next chapter will review the findings of the study.

## Section III: Results and Conclusions

### Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the data analyses that address the four research questions outlined in Section II and to discuss the implications for RCPS. This section is organized into three major parts: results, conclusions, and impact for RCPS.

*Analysis of Results.* After the survey was completed, the data and response rates were reported and the analyses were conducted. The section that follows provides the findings from the analyses of the principal and teacher survey as well as the interview results.

*Survey Participant Demographic Characteristics.* A total of 80 usable principal surveys were returned representing a response rate of 73%. In order to be included, respondents needed to answer all of the survey questions. In section A of the survey, principal participants were asked to respond to six demographic questions: the grade configuration they led, years of teaching experience, total years of full-time administrative experience, total years of administrative experience at current school, current school enrollment, and current school program status. Table 6 presents the demographic and background characteristics of principal respondents.

**Table 6***Demographic Characteristics of the Principals*

	Frequency	Percent
What grade configurations do you lead?		
PreK–5	53	66.3
PreK–6	26	32.5
<i>Not specified</i>	1	1.2
Total years of teaching experience		
1–3	5	6.3
4–9	23	28.7
10 or more	52	65
Total years of full-time administrative experience		
1–3	2	2.5
4–9	27	33.8
10 or more	51	63.7
Total years of full-time administrative experience at current school		
1–3	20	25
4–9	42	52.5
10 or more	28	22.5
Current school enrollment		
Under 400	25	31.3
Over 400	54	67.5
<i>Not specified</i>	1	1.2
Current school program status		
Title I	41	51.2
Non-Title I	39	48.8

$N = 80$

A total of 70 usable ILT surveys were returned, representing a response rate of 61%. In section A of the survey, the ILTs were asked to respond to six demographic questions: what grades are taught at your school, total years of full-time teaching experience, total years of teaching experience at current school, total years in the ILT position, current school enrollment, and current school program status. Table 7 presents the demographic and background

characteristics of ILT respondents.

**Table 7**  
*Demographic Characteristics of the ILTs*

	Frequency	Percent
What grades are taught at your school?		
PreK–5	42	60
PreK6	27	38.6
<i>Not specified</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.4</i>
Total years of full-time teaching experience		
1–3	1	1.4
4–9	5	7.1
10 or more	64	91.5
Total years of teaching experience at current school		
1–3	21	30
4–9	25	35.7
10 or more	23	32.9
<i>Not specified</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.4</i>
Total years in the ILT position		
1–2	17	24.3
3–4	33	47.1
5 or more	19	27.1
<i>Not specified</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.4</i>
Current school enrollment		
Under 400	18	25.7
Over 400	52	74.3
Current school program status		
Title I	45	64.3
Non-Title I	25	35.7

$N = 70$

The data captured on principal participant characteristics showed that 66% of the administrators worked in PreK–5 schools. Results also showed that 32% of the administrators were leading schools with a PreK–6 grade configuration, and 63% had been an administrator for more than 10 years. Almost a third—31% of the principals—led schools with an enrollment under 400. About half of the principals, 51%, were in Title 1 schools, and 48% led non-Title 1

schools.

Of the 70 ILT respondents, 27% of ILT respondents have been in that role for five years or more, and 74% were in schools with over 400 students. Sixty-four percent of the ILTs were in Title 1 schools, and 35% were in non-Title 1 schools. In the following sections, the survey results for items on the principal and ILT surveys are presented by research questions.

***Principal Survey Results.*** In section B of the survey, the principal participants were asked to rate how often they distribute responsibilities and tasks to other individuals and groups in the school. Table 8 provides summaries of the frequency by questionnaire items.

**Table 8**

*Frequencies by Questionnaire Items: Section B on the Principal Survey*

	N	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean(SD)
Assistant Principal	80	1(1.2%)	1(1.2%)	5(6.2%)	16(20%)	39(48.7%)	18(22.5%)	4.81(0.98)
ILT	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(6.2%)	33(41.2%)	30(37.5%)	12(15%)	4.61(0.81)
PDLT	80	1(1.2%)	3(3.7%)	21(26.2%)	33(41%)	19(23.7%)	3(3.7%)	3.94(0.95)
Leadership Team	80	0(0%)	2(2.5%)	16(20%)	39(49%)	23(28.7%)	0(0%)	4.04(0.77)
Grade Level Team Leaders	80	0(0%)	4(5%)	22(27%)	38(47%)	13(16%)	3(3.75%)	3.86(0.88)
Department Leaders	80	0(0%)	1(1.2%)	17(21%)	36(45%)	11(13.7%)	15(18.7%)	4.28(1.09)
Teacher Mentors	80	0(0%)	5(6.2%)	13(16%)	27(34%)	5(6.2%)	30(37.5%)	4.53(1.3)
Instructional Coaches	80	1(1.2%)	4(5%)	5(6.2%)	14(17%)	11(13.7%)	45(56.2%)	5.06(1.2)
Others	80	0(0%)	4(5%)	15(18%)	39(49%)	20(25%)	2(2.5%)	4.01(0.86)

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often, 5 = Always

Principals reported distributing leadership most frequently to assistant principals (M = 4.81, SD = 0.98) followed by an ILT (M = 4.61, SD = 0.81). Although some principals reported not having the positions of teacher mentor or instructional coach, the principals who did report having those positions distributed leadership to them frequently, with instructional coach (M = 5.06, SD = 1.2) higher than teacher mentor (M = 4.53, SD = 1.3). Principals reported distributing responsibilities and tasks least often to grade level team leaders (M = 3.86, SD = 0.88).

In sections C–E (organizational structures, processes, and tools) of the survey, the principal participants were asked to rate how often they implement organizational structures, systems, and processes to support distributed leadership practices in their schools. Principals used the following Likert scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always. Under organizational structure there were eight questions, the section on processes included nine questions, and the tools section had seven questions. As reported in Section II of this report, organizational structures are those teams and committees that support how leadership practices are allocated. Processes include routines that assist in the dispersal of leadership throughout the building and the interactions that exist between key actors to achieve established goals. Lastly, tools are those instruments and artifacts that principals and teachers use to shape leadership practices and interactions between individuals within an organization, such as meeting agendas, observation templates, and data collection forms (see Table 9).

**Table 9**

*Frequencies of Structures, Processes, and Tools on the Principal Survey*

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
<b>Organizational Structures</b>							
School Leadership Teams	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	6(7.5%)	28(35%)	46(57.5%)	4.50(0.64)



	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
Collaborative Planning Teams	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	12(15%)	28(35%)	40(50%)	4.35(0.73)
Professional Learning Communities	79	8(10.1%)	3(3.8%)	25(31.6%)	33(41.7%)	10(12.6%)	3.43(1.09)
Grade Level Teams	79	1(1.2%)	3(3.8%)	17(21.5%)	31(39.2%)	27(34.1%)	4.01(0.91)
Department Teams	80	7(8.75%)	5(6.25%)	25(31.2%)	28(35%)	15(18.7%)	3.49(1.14)
Professional Development Teams	77	7(9.09%)	2(2.6%)	23(29.8%)	33(42.8%)	12(15.5%)	3.53(1.08)
School Improvement Planning Teams	79	1(1.2%)	2(2.53%)	15(18.9%)	39(49.3%)	22(27.8%)	4.00(0.83)
Others	80	1(1.2%)	2(2.50%)	11(13.7%)	33(41.2%)	33(41.2%)	4.19(0.86)

### **Processes Supporting Distributed Leadership**

Peer Coaching	80	1(1.25%)	0(7.5%)	34(42.5%)	33(41.2%)	6(7.5%)	3.46(0.80)
Peer Mentoring	80	0(0%)	5(6.25%)	39(48.7%)	31(38.7%)	5(6.25%)	3.45(0.71)
Instructional Coaching	79	1(1.27%)	1(1.27%)	28(35.4%)	35(44.3%)	14(17.7%)	3.76(0.80)
In-House Professional Development	80	0(0%)	1(1.25%)	9(11.2%)	40(50%)	30(37.5%)	4.24(0.70)
Peer-to-Peer Observations	79	0(0%)	9(11.9%)	42(53.1%)	20(25.3%)	8(10.1%)	3.34(0.82)
Administrator Observation of Teachers	80	0(0%)	1(1.25%)	3(3.75%)	18(22.5%)	58(72.5%)	4.66(0.62)

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
(Formal Observation)							
Principal Walk-throughs With Feedback	80	0(0%)	1(1.25%)	4(5%)	33(41.2%)	42(52.5%)	4.45(0.65)
Learning Walks	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	18(22.5%)	41(51.2%)	21(26.2%)	4.04(0.70)
Data Analysis	79	0(0%)	0(0%)	8(10.1%)	42(53.1%)	29(36.7%)	4.27(0.64)

#### Tools Supporting Distributed Leadership

Meeting Agenda Templates	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(2.5%)	12(15%)	66(82.5%)	4.80(0.46)
Principal Walkthrough Templates	79	1(1.27%)	0(0%)	13(16.4%)	26(32.9%)	39(49.3%)	4.29(0.83)
Lesson Plan Templates	80	0(0%)	1(1.25%)	14(17.5%)	29(36.2%)	36(45%)	4.25(0.78)
Peer-to-Peer Feedback Forms	77	10(12.9%)	7(9.09%)	28(36.3%)	28(36.3%)	4(5.1%)	3.12(1.08)
Data Collection Forms	78	0(0%)	3(3.65%)	14(17.9%)	35(44.8%)	26(33.3%)	4.08(0.8)
Teacher Mentoring Documents	77	13(16.8%)	16(20.7%)	23(29.8%)	19(24.6%)	6(7.7%)	2.86(1.19)
Communication Tools	78	0(0%)	1(1.2%)	2(2.5%)	18(23%)	57(73%)	4.68(0.59)

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

*Organizational Structures.* The principals reported that collaborative planning teams (M = 4.35, SD = 0.73) and school leadership teams (M = 4.50, SD = 0.64) were used most

frequently to support distributed leadership. School improvement planning teams ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), grade level teams ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), and other structures, such as school instructional and individual education plan teams ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ), were used less frequently. Professional learning communities were the least often used ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ).

*Distributed Leadership Processes.* Participants were asked to rate the levels of implementation of 9 distributed leadership processes in their schools. Among these, two processes had the highest mean score, principal walkthroughs and feedback and administrator observation of teachers, ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) and ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ), respectively. Peer mentoring ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), peer coaching ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ), and peer-to-peer observations ( $M=3.34$ ,  $SD =0.82$ ) were the least often used.

*Distributed Leadership Tools.* Findings from the analysis showed that principals reported most often using meeting agenda templates ( $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and communication tools ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) as tools for communicating with staff and parents. This was followed by using principal walkthrough templates ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), lesson plan templates ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), and data collection forms ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ). Peer-to-peer feedback forms ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) and teacher mentoring documents ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) were reported to be used least often.

The mean and standard deviation for each of the ratings within the three areas (organizational structures, processes, and tools) are represented in Table 10.

**Table 10***Aggregate Mean and SD for Structures, Processes, and Tools: Principal Survey*

Category	N	Mean (SD)
<b>Organizational Structures</b>	8	3.93 (0.91)
<b>Processes</b>	9	3.96 (0.71)
<b>Tools</b>	7	4.01 (0.82)

Principals reported using all three methods to support distributed leadership fairly equally, with tools being slightly higher ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ).

In section F of the principal survey, respondents were asked to rate how often a specific factor presented a challenge when attempting to implement distributed leadership in their schools (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always), Table 11 presents the results.

**Table 11***Frequencies of Barriers to Distributed Leadership on the Principal Survey*

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
Community expectations of the principal as being the sole person in charge	80	6(7.5%)	12(15%)	23(28.7%)	29(36.2%)	10(12.5%)	3.31(1.10)
District office expectations for the role of the principal as being the sole person in charge	79	4(5%)	12(15.1%)	20(25.3%)	27(34.1%)	16(20.2%)	.49(1.12)

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
Changing school culture to a collaborative environment	80	5(6.2%)	18(22.5%)	21(26.2%)	24(30%)	12(15%)	3.25(1.15)
Willingness of teachers to assume leadership roles	80	5(6.2%)	17(21.5%)	31(38.7%)	21(26.2%)	6(7.5%)	3.08(1.01)
Time for the development and practice of teacher leadership skills	80	1(1.2%)	9(11.2%)	32(40%)	33(41.2%)	5(6.2%)	3.40(0.82)
Scheduling/time constraints (finding time to plan and/or build the capacity of teachers)	80	1(1.2%)	6(7.5%)	33(41.2%)	27(33.7%)	13(16.2%)	3.56(0.89)
Resources to support the instructional program and overall school improvement	80	3(3.7%)	13(16.2%)	31(38.7%)	25(31.2%)	8(10%)	3.27(0.97)
Staff turnover	80	7(8.7%)	34(42.5%)	29(36.2%)	6(7.5%)	4(5%)	2.58(0.93)

1 = Never; 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

*Potential Barriers to Distributed Leadership Implementation.* The data revealed that scheduling and time constraints, i.e., finding time to plan and/or build the capacity of teachers (M = 3.56, SD = 0.89) was the most frequently encountered barrier to distributing leadership in schools. However, this was followed closely by district office expectations for the role of the principal (M = 3.49, SD = 1.12) and time for the development and practice of teacher leadership

skills (M = 3.40, SD = 0.82). The barrier that principals identified as least frequent was staff turnover (M = 2.58, SD = 0.93).

**Teacher Survey Results.** In Sections B–D, teacher leaders were asked to rate the extent to which they assume specific leadership responsibilities in their schools (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always). The results from the ILT surveys are shown below in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Frequencies of Structures, Processes, and Tools on ILT Surveys*

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
<b>Organizational Structures</b>							
School Leadership Teams	70	9(12.8%)	7(10%)	11(15.7%)	17(24.2%)	26(37.1%)	3.63(1.41)
Collaborative Planning Teams	69	1(1.4%)	1(1.4%)	7(10.1%)	25(36.2%)	35(50.7%)	4.33(0.83)
Professional Learning Communities	70	7(10%)	6(8.5%)	10(14.2%)	29(41.4%)	8(25.7%)	3.64(1.24)
Grade Level Teams	69	7(10.1%)	11(15.7%)	17(24.6%)	22(31.8%)	15(21.7%)	3.43(1.24)
Department Teams	69	6(8.7%)	6(8.7%)	11(15.9%)	22(31.8%)	24(34.7%)	3.75(1.27)
Professional Development Teams	70	3(4.2%)	3(4.2%)	10(14.2%)	27(38.5%)	27(38.5%)	4.03(1.05)
School Improvement Planning Teams	70	6(8.5%)	5(7.1%)	12(17.1%)	23(32.8%)	24(34.2%)	3.77(1.24)

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
<b>Processes Supporting Distributed Leadership</b>							
Peer Coaching	70	2(2.86%)	2(2.86%)	17(24.2%)	27(38.5%)	22(31.4%)	3.93(0.98)
Peer Mentoring	70	3(4.29%)	2(2.86%)	14(20%)	32(45.7%)	19(27.1%)	3.89(0.98)
Instructional Coaching	70	1(1.43%)	2(2.86%)	11(15.7%)	29(41.4%)	27(38.5%)	4.13(0.98)
In-House Professional Development	70	1(1.43%)	0(0%)	12(17.1%)	29(41.4%)	28(40%)	4.19(0.82)
Peer-to-Peer Observations	70	3(4.29%)	10(14.2%)	15(21.4%)	25(35.7%)	17(24.2%)	3.61(1.12)
Instructional Walk-throughs With Feedback	70	2(2.86%)	3(4.2%)	11(15.7%)	31(44.2%)	23(32.8%)	4.00(0.96)
Learning Walks	70	1(1.43%)	1(1.43%)	11(15.7%)	29(41.43%)	28(40%)	4.17(0.84)
Data Analysis	67	1(1.49%)	1(1.49%)	6(8.9%)	30(44.7%)	29(43.2%)	4.27(0.80)
<b>Tools Supporting Distributed Leadership</b>							
Meeting Agenda Templates	69	1(1.45%)	3(4.3%)	12(17.3%)	27(39.1%)	26(37.6%)	4.07(0.92)
Walkthrough Templates	69	4(5.8%)	9(13%)	13(18.8%)	26(37.6%)	17(24.6%)	3.62(1.16)
Lesson Plan Templates	69	8(11.5%)	9(13%)	17(24.6%)	21(30.4%)	14(20.2%)	3.35(1.26)
Peer-to-Peer Feedback Forms	69	9(13%)	12(17.3%)	14(20.2%)	23(33.3%)	11(15.9%)	3.22(1.27)

	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
Data Collection Forms	69	2(2.9%)	5(7.2%)	17(24.6%)	22(31.8%)	23(33.3%)	3.86(1.05)
Teacher Mentoring Documents	69	9(13%)	8(11.5%)	18(26%)	20(28.9%)	14(20.2%)	3.32(1.28)
Communication Tools	69	4(5.8%)	6(8.8%)	15(22%)	22(32.3%)	21(30.8%)	3.74(1.16)

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

*Assuming Responsibility of Structures That Support Distributed Leadership.* Teacher leaders reported that the two most frequently used structures to support distributed leadership were collaborative planning teams ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) and professional development teams ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). These were followed by school improvement planning teams ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) and department teams ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). The least-used structure by ILTs was grade level teams ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ).

*Assuming Responsibility of Processes That Support Distributed Leadership.* ILT respondents reported most frequently assuming responsibility for data analysis ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ). In-house professional development ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), learning walks ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) and instructional coaching ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) were utilized about the same amount of time. The least frequently used process was peer-to-peer observations ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).

*Assuming Responsibility for Tools That Support Distributed Leadership.* Respondents were asked to rate the frequency at which they assume responsibility of implementing seven distributed leadership tools in their schools. The tool that respondents reported using the most frequently was meeting agenda templates ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). Data collection forms ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) and communication tools ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) were used about the same



amount of time. The tool that respondents report using the least was the peer-to-peer feedback form (M = 3.22, SD = 1.27).

The mean and standard deviation for each of the ratings within the three areas (organizational structures, processes, and tools) are represented in Table 13.

**Table 13**

*Aggregate Mean and SD for Organizational Structures, Processes, and Tools: ILT Surveys*

<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
<b>Organizational Structures</b>	7	3.79 (1.17)
<b>Processes</b>	8	4.02 (0.92)
<b>Tools</b>	7	3.59 (1.15)

Similar to the principal survey results, the mean ratings of the ILTs within each of the three areas (organizational structures, processes, and tools) were used fairly equal. The ILTs used processes slightly more (M = 4.02, SD = 0.92) than the other methods.

**Interview Results.** Ten principals were interviewed following administration of the survey in order to gain a deeper understanding of what principals perceived as barriers and supporting factors to implementing distributed leadership in their schools. Section II describes the process by which the 10 principal interviewees were selected. In an effort to obtain some representation of the principals who responded to the survey, the researcher intentionally selected 10 principals using the following demographic considerations: gender, ethnicity, school size, school program, and years of experience. The interviews consisted of 20 questions (Appendix N), and each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

***Interview Participant Demographics.*** Participants in the interview portion of the study were asked at the beginning of the interview to provide their years of experience, type of school, school size, and ethnicity. Table 14 provides the demographic profile of each interview participant. Note that each principal has been given a pseudonym

**Table 14***Demographic Participant Profile*

<b>Name (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Program Title 1</b>	<b>Program Non-Title 1</b>	<b>Years of Experience at Current School</b>
<b>Susan</b>	F	Caucasian	Over 400		✓	4–9
<b>Laura</b>	F	African Am.	Under 400		✓	1–3
<b>David</b>	M	Caucasian	Over 400		✓	4–9
<b>Nancy</b>	F	African Am.	Under 400	✓		4–9
<b>Michael</b>	M	African Am.	Under 400		✓	4–9
<b>Amy</b>	F	African Am.	Under 400	✓		1–3
<b>Stephanie</b>	F	African Am.	Over 400		✓	4–9
<b>Paul</b>	M	African Am.	Over 400	✓		4–9
<b>Robert</b>	M	African Am.	Over 400	✓		1–3
<b>Mark</b>	M	Caucasian	Under 400	✓		1–3

Interviewees included 5 males and 5 females, 7 African Americans and 3 Caucasians, 5 schools with an enrollment under 400 and 5 schools with an enrollment of over 400, 5 Title 1 schools and 5 Non-Title I schools, 4 principals with 1–3 years of experience and 6 with 4–9 years of experience in their current school. The following section is a more in-depth description of each of the principals who were interviewed.

**Susan.** Susan is the principal of a large elementary school in the district, servicing over 750 students. She has been an administrator for 14 years, serving as principal at her current school for 7 years. Susan brings a variety of educational experiences to her school. She has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, instructional specialist, and instructional director, prior to becoming a principal. Her efforts to build teams and distribute leadership have been a focus as principal. During the interview, she shared the importance of having a “growth mindset” and the ability to work well with others, coupled with strong organizational skills.

**Laura.** In her second year, as principal at her current school, Laura has seven years of administrative experience at both the elementary and middle school level. Principal Laura has covered significant ground over the past two years. Her supervisor has provided a variety of supports and guidance on building and sustaining effective teams, as well as how to help teachers understand their data and how to use it for instructional purposes. As a result, she reported having put strong systems and structures in place to include building the capacity of others to lead. She shared that it is all still a work-in-progress, but she feels confident that they are the right track.

**David.** As the principal, he takes pride in the transparency in relation to the school’s instructional practices. Principal David boasted that everything they do in the school is centered around the academic, social emotional well-being, and growth development of children as scholars.

**Nancy.** Nancy is a seasoned principal with a total of 14 years of administrative experience and eight years at her current school. She has been working alongside her assistant principal for the entire eight years. Her continuous efforts to distribute tasks and leadership responsibilities to her assistant principal has been a challenge, but she is seeing some improvement. Principal Nancy’s school academic data revealed challenges in both mathematics and reading, as well as low performance of English as a Second Language (ESOL) and special education students. These circumstances were also challenging because attendance at her school has been a concern. She was strong on culture and relationship-building with staff. Her number one goal continued to be the academic success of students, while providing feedback that would result in pushing teacher practice to improved levels.

**Michael.** A veteran principal in a large elementary school with over 400 students, Principal Michael led a school where the staff rarely leaves. He took pride in the community partnerships he developed in support of the school vision and mission. He kept in the forefront of his mind that, “We cannot do it all.” This motto helped him to work with teachers on the importance of everyone doing their part, which included community and parents. His ESOL population increased significantly over the past three years, from 20% to 35%.

**Amy.** Principal Amy shared that she was excited to be in her second year as principal and attributed her previous success to the multitude of experiences that her former administrator provided. This year, the staff had to apply and be interviewed to be a part of

the leadership team. There was a total of 12 members on the team. Both the principal and assistant principal served on the team, as well as a lead from K–5, a resource lead, a special education lead, a reading specialist, and the bus coordinator. Amy’s school is a Title I school and serves approximately 400 students. It should be noted that the school has a very transient population, and about 30% of the students are English language learners.

**Stephanie.** A veteran principal of a large elementary school with over 700 students, Principal Stephanie has worked each year to build the capacity of her leadership team. She had a challenging year because of an assistant principal who did not embody the same values and beliefs. This situation really had an impact on her school climate and ultimately impacted the teams that lead within the school. She continued to embrace and embody a servant-leader mentality, which allowed her to prioritize building her teachers and administrators each year, “By any Means Necessary.”

**Paul.** Paul is a seasoned principal who has held the position at his school for eight years. He and the assistant principal have worked together for over the past six years. Principal Paul led a Title 1 school where he invested in purchasing positions to support teachers instructionally. He stressed the importance of getting teachers to “believe in” versus “buy in” to your vision, mission, and core values that support teacher development and student achievement.

**Robert.** Robert is a 19-year administrator veteran. He spent a large majority of that time—16 years—as an assistant principal. Robert was settling into his fairly new role of principal for the past three years at his current school. He valued school culture and clearly articulated the benefits the school community and students reap as a result of prioritizing culture. His assistant principal was an administrator in the school well before Robert took over three years ago.

**Mark.** Mark was an administrator at his school for the past five years and in administration for six years. As a leader in a small Title 1 school, Principal Mark has coined the phrase “Leading by Example.” He consistently established systems and structures to do the work. Leading without an assistant principal, he made certain to build relationships and develop trust to support the school’s continuous improvement efforts. He proudly proclaimed, “I’m a people person.”

***Principal Interview Results.*** As outlined in Section II, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts were analyzed to determine themes. Based on the initial coding, the researcher identified key words and phrases and then created a codebook. I analyzed the number of times these words or phrases were referenced directly or indirectly. For example, as shown in Table 15 below, the use of data analysis to determine the needs of the school was

mentioned 10 times (note that one individual could have mentioned this theme more than once).

Themes were then aligned with specific research questions. Table 15 presents the interview questions, examples of responses, and alignment to research questions.

**Table 15**

*Principal Interviews: Emergent Themes Aligned to Research Questions*

Research Questions	Emergent Themes	Number of Times Referenced in Interview
To what extent do elementary principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their schools?	● Data analysis used to identify the needs of the school	10
	● Principal observation of staff's influence among peers	18
	● Principals implement & distribute a variety of leadership responsibilities	18
What structures, processes, and tools do principals report using to distribute leadership in their schools?	● Principals implement processes of distributed leadership to develop teachers	10
	● Principals develop various tools as a part of distributed leadership practices	17
	● Principals use communication & peer-to-peer feedback tools	16
What do elementary principals perceive as the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership in their schools?	● Not enough time	10
	● Self-efficacy	4
	● Teacher turnover	10
	● Trust	14
	● Relationship building	6
	● Multi-level support	7

**Analysis of Research Question 1.** To answer Research Question 1, the researcher used the results from an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. The specific items used to address this particular research question are provided below in Table 16.

**Table 16**

*Research Question 1 Data Sources*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
To what extent do elementary principals report distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their schools?	Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school.	Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school.
		How do you identify leaders at your school?
		How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?
		What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?
		How are these responsibilities developed?

**Analysis of Survey Results.** The findings from the survey results identified the extent to which principals distribute leadership to individuals and groups in their buildings. Overall, principals distributed leadership tasks to other individuals and groups at a consistent rate, meaning that they reported often or always distributing various tasks or responsibilities. Tasks or

responsibilities were most frequently distributed to assistant principals ( $M = 4.81$ ,  $SD = .98$ ), ILTs ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .81$ ), and leadership team members ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). Grade level team leaders, department leaders, teacher mentors, and instructional coaches did in fact assume leadership responsibilities but with less frequency.

***Analysis of Interview Results.*** Principals were asked to rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities were fully distributed to those individuals and groups in their schools, how they identified leaders at their schools, how they knew that these leaders would be influential among their peers, what leadership distribution responsibilities had they implemented most frequently at their schools, and how were these responsibilities developed. These questions were phrased broadly and were meant to address all aspects pertaining to principals distributing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in their building. The themes that emerged from these research questions were that principals reported using data analysis to identify the needs of their schools, observing individual staff's influence among peers, and implementing and distributing a variety of leadership responsibilities. The emergent themes and frequencies as aligned to each research question are displayed in Table 13.

***Analysis of Closed-Ended Questions Results.*** Principals were asked three closed-ended questions that were taken directly from the principals' survey but without the rating scale. They were also asked one question that closely aligned to a survey question. Because the principal survey was anonymous, these questions were not intended to verify accuracy of responses but rather to provide some confirmation of findings from the principal survey. Based on the interviewees' responses to these three questions, principals indicated that they consistently and frequently distribute leadership tasks to other staff in their building. Principals distributed leadership tasks most frequently to the assistant principals, ILTs, and PDLTs. In terms of



structures that respondents reported using most often, school improvement teams, leadership teams, and department teams were the most frequently used.

According to most of the 10 principals interviewed, the selection of staff who would be assigned leadership tasks relied on their feelings and personal observations. For instance, Amy shared, “I look at teacher practice and how they are viewed by their peers, and what their strengths and challenges are coupled with the needs of the building to see how they can fit into a specific leadership role.” All of the principals interviewed also reported that they weigh individuals’ attitudes, personality traits, and on-the-job performance to help them identify potential leaders. For example, Mark confirmed that he “observe[s] to see how they are leading their peers. Is it a positive relationship, are they getting answers for questions they had and do they view this person as someone safe to talk to?” Most of the principals also stated that they observed the interaction between potential staff leaders and their peers. They noted that potential leaders must appear to be knowledgeable and influential among peers, exhibit informal authority, and take initiative. As such, Paul noted, “I observe, watching their interaction with peers, how are they relating to them, are they a voice in sort of the informal authority?”

Principals reported that they used school level data to determine what responsibilities or tasks might need to be assigned to others. Paul shared, “And of course, we look at our data as it relates to instruction and our MCAP math data, reading, and how our children are performing.” Laura added, “So, the responsibilities are developed based on the needs of the school, but I mean I think in terms of providing a synopsis, we’re looking at the needs of the school, and then identifying were they closely aligned in terms of position, and experience, and ability to support?” Additionally, principals explained that this reliance on data analysis helps to identify

where resources are lacking and if goals are being met. In this way, they are able to distribute leadership responsibilities to staff. Robert supported this idea by sharing that,

Based on data, looking at data. The data is going to drive instruction. I think last year, my reading resource, it was her first year, so she was learning her role, and my math ILT, they're both in classrooms, so I developed schedules for them. Well, they developed their schedules and we discussed them. So now they're supporting small group. Small group is really going to drive our data.

The 10 elementary school principals also reported using a variety of strategies to assign leadership responsibilities among their staff. Some principals reported being more successful in these efforts than others. For example, Paul said,

We push everything out. I allow people to literally run their niche. One of my ILTs for math runs the math department. She does collaborative planning. She meets with those individuals and we sort of—my administrative team sort of facilitates those conversations and provides some thinking about and pushes her thinking around how to lead people.

Susan supported this statement by sharing,

We try to do as much as possible since this is such a large school, so it's a lot of work that needs to be divided. So, professional development opportunities, grade level, grade level chairs and department chairs, committees. We have various committees that meet, so we want the leaders of those committees to lead. Grade level chairs within grade level departments, and then administrative teams. It's a work in progress. We actually developed a distributed leadership flow chart and it helps us to identify all the tasks and responsibilities that have been distributed and let by others in the building. This helps us keep track since there are many.

Both of these principals provided insight that this work was a process that evolved over time and was something they had to prioritize to get the results of distributed leadership that currently exist in their school. Other principals talked about distributing tasks and responsibilities as much as they can within the context of their schools.

Overall, principals reported that they often take note of teachers interacting with their peers and the level of knowledge and expertise particular teachers have and can impart to others, when identifying individuals to assume leadership roles. Also, principals utilized various ways to ensure that tasks and responsibilities were distributed to different leaders in the building.

**Analysis of Research Question 2.** To answer Research Question 2, the researcher used data from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The specific data used are outlined below in Table 17.

**Table 17**

*Research Question 2 Data Sources*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
What structures, processes, and tools do principals report using to distribute leadership in their schools?	Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.	Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.
	Rate each of the processes in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.	What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? How do these processes impact distributed leadership practices in your school?
	Rate each of the tools in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.	What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

### **Interview Questions**

How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Analysis of Survey Results.* Principals reported the highest levels of implementation of school leadership teams ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = .64$ ), and collaborative planning teams ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) to implement distributed leadership. Study results confirmed that these collaborative teams can bring about a wealth of expertise, making a school's principal highly dependent on the knowledge and skills of the team members (Pierce & Conger, 2003). Using teams to identify leadership roles and responsibilities for tasks, and for planning and engaging in strategic efforts to develop a common distributed leadership structure is recommended by researchers (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Principals' survey data indicated lower levels of implementation of processes that support distributed leadership practices through professional learning communities ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and department teams ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ). Leithwood et al. (1999) and Hargeaves (1994) asserted that instructional leadership development among staff members can play a major role in the overall instructional and organizational effectiveness at schools. Further, providing leadership responsibility to key players in the building often results in the development of professional learning communities within schools (Morrisey, 2000). More recently, distributed leadership has been an important factor in influencing and sustaining professional learning communities (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

Survey data suggested that tools are used by principals and teacher leaders to communicate instructional practices in support of teacher development. Survey respondents reported high levels of implementation of various templates, such as meeting agenda templates

(M = 4.80, SD = 0.46), communication tools (M = 4.68, SD = 0.59), and walkthrough templates (M = 4.29, SD = 0.83). These tools for communicating and documenting responsibilities can help hold principals and their teams accountable for the outcomes of their work and for building capacity in their staff (Elmore, 2000). Organizational structures and processes, such as teams and meetings, that represent school-level leadership practices have a propensity for long-term organizational change. They are more likely to contribute to successful school improvement outcomes as distributed leadership frameworks are adopted, implemented, and sustained at the school level (Leithwood, 2007).

The principals in RCPS reported using a variety of structures, processes, and tools to implement distributed leadership in their schools. Numerous tools, such as administrator observations of teachers, principal walkthroughs with feedback, learning walks, in-house professional development, and data analysis were used to communicate within the staff and to provide peer-to-peer support. Meeting agenda templates and walkthrough templates were also used frequently as a means of organizing and housing discussion items and feedback notes.

***Analysis of Interview Results.*** Principals reported implementing a variety of processes to develop teacher leadership. Amy shared, “I use peer mentoring, instructional coaching from the lens of the administrative team providing the coaching. We did have in-house professional development, walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, yes, learning walks, and data analysis are all used.” Principals also shared that they developed a variety of tools as part of distributed leadership practices. The tools most reported were peer coaching (8), in-house professional development (9), walkthroughs with feedback (8), data analysis (8), learning walks (9), and informal observations (9). Michael reported, “We use in-house professional development, certainly walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, learning walks, each

one of them is followed up with data analysis. That actually precipitates the learning walk, data analysis, as well as the feedback. Those are the essential areas or essential processes that we use.” Nancy shared, “Peer coaching, mentoring, instructional coaching, the PD [professional development], peer-to-peer observations, the learning walk, so walkthrough with feedback, data utilization.”

Principals further reported that they include communication and peer-to-peer feedback as tools for feedback and teacher development. They shared that the impact of using these tools included increased communication among staff and the principal. Principals also discussed how these tools allow for clear expectations and better understanding of the needs of the students. For example, Paul shared:

So, we do have a walkthrough template that everyone uses and we keep a binder. We share a meeting agenda template, so we do the rolling agenda. We have a lesson plan template that we’ve used for reading and the one for math that we’ve created. We talk with teachers about it to make sure that they can embrace it. Because I’m not one, I don’t believe in ‘buy-in,’ I believe in ‘believe in,’ because if you just buy-in you’re just going to go along to get along, but if you believe in what it is then you’ll absolutely do it with purpose and passion. So, we actually tweaked some things that the county had in place and made it teacher friendly, because we know all that they have on their plate and they were like, ‘Yes, I can use this.’

He further noted that,

the impact for us has been increased communication, increased dialogue, people being more open to being transparent about their weaknesses and their deficiencies, because we have been promoting for some time about being a learning environment

and we don't know where to provide a remedy, we don't know you're ailing in that area. So, that has been the impact for us. People just to be able to say, 'Okay,' or for us to be able to talk very openly like, 'Hey third grade y'all missing the mark.'

To confirm this, Nancy shared:

Well, they definitely lend themselves to greater communication whether it's a top-down or you know bottom-up sort of communication or whether it's a you know just lateral peer-to-peer communications. So, it opens that door for communication, clear expectations, sets up an opportunity for learning from each other, peer-to-peer learning and increasing teaching and learning in several ways.

Stephanie also shared, "So, when you all can sort of communicate regarding what's actually happening in the class and what the expectation is, it has a greater impact on increasing student achievement and talking about the whole teaching and learning process."

The 10 elementary school principals further reported that they utilized a variety of electronic-based tools such as templates, data collection, and electronic surveys to help them distribute leadership responsibilities to staff. For example, Nancy shared, "We have the data collection forms. Also, needs assessment surveys. Sometimes the teachers complete those to say if they need assistance with different things. So, if we don't catch it, they advocate for themselves that way."

**Analysis of Research Question 3.** To answer Research Question 3, the researcher used data from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The data used are presented below in Table 18.

**Table 18**

*Research Question 3 Data Sources*

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<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey Questions</b>
To what extent do teacher leaders report assuming leadership responsibilities and task in their schools?	Rate each of the structures in terms of the extent to which you assume responsibility in leading at your school.  Rate each of the processes in terms of the extent to which you assume responsibility in leading at your school.  Rate each of the tools in terms of the extent to which you assume responsibility in leading at your school.

*Analysis of Survey Results.* The results of the ILT survey also indicate that these teacher leaders in RCPS reported using structures, process, and tools to assume leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools. The ILTs use organizational structures, such as school leadership teams, collaborative planning teams, grade level teams, and school improvement planning teams, most frequently to collaborate with teachers on their instructional practices. The ILTs reported that they assume responsibility for leading a variety of processes to support distributed leadership such as data analysis, in-house professional development, and learning walk processes. These teacher leaders in the district also confirmed that they use a variety of tools to support distributed leadership in their schools. These tools included meeting agendas, lesson plan templates, data collection forms, and other unspecified communication tools.

**Analysis of Research Question 4.** To answer Research Question 4, the researcher used data from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The data used are presented below in Table 19.



**Table 19**

*Research Question 4 Data Sources*

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<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
What do elementary principals perceive as the major barriers and supporting factors of implementing distributed leadership in their schools?	The following is a list of potential barriers to distributed leadership implementation. Using the scale provided, rate each of the barriers in terms of a challenge in distributing leadership in your school.	What factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?  What factors act as barriers to principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?  What facts contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?  How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in schools?  How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school?

*Analysis of Survey Results.* Principals reported time constraints as the major barrier to implementing distributed leadership. Principal survey data indicated that the time barrier limits them in building the capacity of teachers and allowing opportunities for them to practice newly acquired leadership skills, which is an important factor in effectively distributing leadership.

Murphy (2005) stated that one of the key functions in promoting distributed leadership at schools lies in the provision of direct support to the stakeholders. During the interviews principals also reported scheduling and time constraints as a barrier to distributed leadership. The time barrier was recurring and clearly stated in many open responses during the survey and interview processes. Principals shared that they did not have structured time during the school day to meet with their colleagues and teacher leaders to plan, practice, and refine leadership skill development or build the capacity of their teacher leaders at a deeper level. According to Murphy et al. (2017), internal and external challenges make it difficult for distributed leadership to be successful. Therefore, principals have to be creative in redesigning their systems to accommodate successful distributed leadership.

*Analysis of Interview Results.* During interviews, the principals cited limited time as a barrier in the implementation of distributed leadership at their schools. In general, principals noted that with so many initiatives, there was never enough time to address the positive outcomes of distributed leadership. Susan shared, “So, it could be meetings, attendance at meetings takes away—takes a lot of time, absences.” She also offered that,

Even personal matters sometimes get in the way. If there’s other tasks to do, or if they’re overwhelmed with certain tasks—one of my ILTs is the testing coordinator. So, her support to her grade levels is not as, is not going to be as effective as my other ILT who is not the testing coordinator. So, other tasks and responsibilities can be an impact.

Another barrier in the implementation of distributed leadership that these elementary school principals encountered was that some of their staff members were unsure of their leadership skill sets. Furthermore, other staff members were unwilling to develop their abilities to assume leadership roles. Nancy explained this idea as follows:

Sometimes people are hesitant or scared to step into that leadership role. You may see something in them, but then they haven't developed their leadership voice yet, you know? They may not feel as confident. So sometimes you have to massage it right to make sure you get some of these teachers or different leaders in the building to step up into the roles you need them to.

Laura also added, "I think people's beliefs sometimes serve as a barrier, because while it sounds great sometimes to serve in these different capacities, people don't always understand what's required to do so or if they have the capacity to do it."

Principals further reported that teacher turnover is problematic when so much of the success of the school depends on the abilities of staff to lead effectively. With high staff turnover comes changes in leadership, which often restricts the implementation of distributed leadership among newcomers. As an example, Susan shared the following:

In my school, we've had a lot of leaders who get promoted. So, a lot of—like my reading specialist became my assistant principal. My ILT became an assistant principal in another building. So, with the turnover you have to train people all over again. You have to start from the beginning. This is my sixth year and this year I can say that we've remained consistent from last year. But I can't say that over the six-year period because I've had a change in leadership every year or two years, which makes it very difficult to sustain the whole distributed leadership, because you're starting all over again.

Mark confirmed by sharing the following:

The biggest factor to sustainability is staff retention. I lost one staff member last year who was my Title I resource teacher. So not having to go into each year training new people, new expectations, just having those who we could meet over the summer as a

leadership team and really review at the end of the year what went well, what didn't, where can we improve, and move forward from there, and then we're all on the same page starting the year. It's not retraining a whole new set of staff. So just that retention to me is very important. If you continue to have good staff retention, you can just continue to move students.

The principals also noted that it is important to have the confidence that their leadership teams will carry out directives and complete assignments. To operate effectively, principals must rely on their leadership teams for support because they recognize that they cannot carry out all of the responsibilities alone. The principals recognize that they have to forge relationships and build trust to help them to achieve goals. Amy spoke passionately about this topic and shared the following:

Being that last year was my very first year as the principal, I didn't readily trust people in the building. And sometimes I have a little bit of self-doubt about my own leadership abilities. That would sometimes put up a barrier or hindrance from me having other people help with activities or take leadership roles within the building.

She also stated:

I'm learning to trust the people in my building and the people that I'm putting into leadership roles because I can't do it all by myself. I have to have these other people who are going to help and support with the work. It's very scary, but that's a me thing not a them thing.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Stephanie shared:

So, I think that definitely speaking to the leadership ability the fact that I've been a leader for 20 years, in the same school 10 years that leadership ability and being

confident in what I can do and know to do allows me to distribute leadership more because I know the work. So, it's easy to sort of trust others to do the work because you have the ability to build those relationships and ensure that the work gets done through monitoring so I think that that's definitely helpful for the leadership capacity.

In addition to trust, principals reported that they like to see leadership staff, such as their assistant principals and ILTs, build good working relationships with their colleagues and school staff. They assert that relationships are fundamental in achieving success when distributing tasks because so much of the work depends on the interaction with other departments and personnel. Stephanie sums this up by saying:

Also, I think interpersonal skills is a barrier, because a lot of the work is about relationship building and building other's capacity. I think it takes a great deal of and a certain kind of interpersonal skills to be able to do that kind of work. So, if you don't have those interpersonal skills, it definitely can be a barrier.

The principals also rely on the administrative staff, such as instructional directors and content specialists, to accomplish goals as well as to fully address the needs of the school. They acknowledge that without these staff supports in place, they would be even less likely to implement distributed leadership in their schools. For example, Stephanie expressed that,

I think the structure [is] support[ive] because the principal has an instructional director that sort of can streamline some of the priority initiatives and goals of the work. I think the district also has clear policies and procedures, handbooks that are also supporting the work. The district is also departmentalized in a way that supports the needs of the school. So, if you have student services you can contact student services, if you have school

improvements question[s] there's a school improvement office. So, I think the district's offices are aligned to the work.

Nancy also confirmed:

The mandates help support us because we have these structures based on what we're expected to do, what we're mandated to do, so that helps. Also, the autonomy that we have in order to create schedules and things of that nature to help build time for collaborative planning. All the grade level meetings and the after-school meetings and things like that. Also, being able to give emoluments to people who want to do it. So, those things support our efforts. Also, having training for some of those roles, such as the PDLTs and the content leader—when the system has a training session for them that helps them with knowing what they need to do.

District office expectations for the role of principal to be the sole person in charge was the other major barrier reported by principals. Resources for implementing distributed leadership in schools were administrative and staff support, coupled with district-level support, to accomplish prescribed goals as well as to fully address the needs of the schools. Principals note that without these supports in place, they would be even less likely to implement distributed leadership in their schools.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The findings from the principal survey and interviews provide a baseline for understanding how principals are implementing practices associated with distributed leadership in RCPS. The findings suggest that RCPS elementary principals are sharing leadership responsibilities and tasks to others in the building very frequently. Principals are also using a variety of structures, processes, and tools that have been identified to support distributed

leadership efforts. Among these that seem to be most often used are collaborative teams, principal walkthrough structures, meeting agendas, and communication tools. Principals are using peer-to-peer structures, processes, and tools less frequently, such as peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching and PLCs. These less frequently used structures or processes, unlike the various teams and processes noted above, are not required by the district. However, these less frequently used methods are more reflective of distributed leadership practices as defined by Spillane (2006). Principals also indicate that they delegate most often to assistant principals and then ILTs if they have the position, and use other structures that are required such as school instructional teams and individual education plan teams. These findings suggest that principals are not investing in new methods or strategies for building distributed leadership, but are utilizing what is already in place and required by the district to assign tasks or responsibilities.

The findings from the ILT survey are mostly consistent with what principals reported. The ILT findings suggest that these teachers are assuming leadership responsibilities and tasks in their schools by using a host of structures, processes, and tools that support distributed leadership. However, the ILTs are not leading at high levels in activities such as peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching, which might support a distributed leadership model. This finding contrasts with the principals expressed challenge of needing to develop teachers' capacities to support a distributed leadership model.

The principal and ILT survey results ratings cannot be taken as a measure of the implementation of distributed leadership in RCPS. Rather, the results better indicate how tasks are being delegated by principals and to what extent. If distributed leadership was operating in schools, results should have provided more evidence of practices that support collaboration and capacity building. In fact, PLCs, peer-to-peer mentoring, and coaching were consistently used

less frequently.

One unknown in the study was whether any of the respondents had a definition of distributed leadership or if they had an understanding of key aspects of the term. The surveys and principal interviews were conducted without the researcher providing a definition of distributed leadership. This was intentional in order to attempt to establish how principals and ILTs engage in specific practices that are associated with distributed leadership. It was important to collect data and information in this way to establish a baseline from which the district can work to formalize or standardize the practice. However, the surveys and interview questions assumed that the principals and ILTs held some knowledge of the practice of distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership is often confused with terms such as shared, collaborative, participative, or democratic leadership (Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006). It can also appear like or overlap with delegation of responsibilities and authority. This confusion creates a difficult situation for principals and school systems that are attempting to implement authentic and systematic distributed leadership structures and processes. The RCPS does not currently have a definition of distributed leadership, nor a set of practices that should be in place in a school. While having a working definition is important, it will not by itself move a school to implementation of distributed leadership as defined in the literature. Creating a definition may be difficult. However, if the term is difficult to define, it may be equally difficult to implement. The research literature provides good examples of what one would look for in schools that are authentically engaging in distributed leadership. Moreover, this study provides a good baseline of current practices among elementary principals in RCPS that could be expanded or otherwise utilized in order to implement distributed leadership in schools.



However, to move forward, RCPS will need to provide support to principals to address barriers. Based on the surveys and interviews, principals identified time as the major barrier, specifically to build the capacity of their teachers and to allow teachers to practice developing the leadership skills that will help them effectively lead. Additionally, principal interviews suggested that there is not a clear or systematic method for identifying teacher leaders at their schools. Among those principals who were interviewed, most stated that they used informal and subjective methods, such as observing teacher practices (e.g., their interactions and influence among colleagues, their decision making, and how they take initiative). The theory of action undergirding this study was the premise that *if school districts adopt a distributed model of school-level leadership, they will provide increased opportunities for principals to lead their schools' instructional programs*. This study did not seek to address whether the job demands of the principals were more manageable as a result of distributing tasks to others in the building. However, the interviews indicated that despite frequent use of practices associated with distributed leadership, principals still find that the demands of the job are overwhelming. Consequently, either the practices that principals indicate they frequently are using are not being fully implemented with fidelity, or the practices are insufficient to reduce job demands.

In conclusion, the following questions remain unanswered as a result of the study findings from the district:

- (1) Do principals and ILTs understand what distributed leadership means and how it may differ from traditional delegation of tasks and authority?
- (2) Is there evidence in schools where distributed leadership practice is being systematically implemented that principals perceive their jobs are more manageable and

focused on key leadership responsibilities, such as instructional improvement or building capacity of teachers?

(3) Based on what principals report they are now doing to distribute responsibilities or tasks, how can RCPS leverage the practices through such things as providing indicators of effective distributed leadership?

### **Limitations**

There were some limitations to this study. As noted above, a limitation might have been that principals and ILTs were not provided the definition of distributed leadership that they could use to inform their responses on the surveys. Also, the study was conducted in elementary schools and in one school district. The schools selected did not include any special programs (e.g., charter, language immersion, Montessori, performing arts, etc.). However, this study posed questions that may be explored in other school configurations in order to provide more information about principals' current delegation or distribution of leadership responsibilities.

The survey was adapted from a previous survey that had been used to validate a fully implemented distributed leadership model in one school system. The survey items may not be a good representation of distributed leadership in other districts or research studies. In addition, as in any survey, participants' responses are subject to their understanding of questions and time spent on considering their ratings. The absence of a specific definition of distributed leadership practices in RCPS could have contributed to the interpretation of various items and account for the high rating of frequencies. Another factor contributing to the responses was a desire on the part of principals to provide a favorable impression of their practice. This limitation could have had a larger impact given that the researcher was a colleague of principals in RCPS and a former elementary principal.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study examined the frequency of principals' implementation of certain practices in 80 RCPS elementary schools, including structures, processes, and tools that can support distributed leadership. The study also investigated the barriers and supporting factors that principals perceived contribute to their ability to distribute leadership responsibilities in their schools. Finally, the study explored the frequency to which ILTs reported that they are engaging in leadership responsibilities and tasks in schools. Based on study findings, the following recommendations are provided to RCPS for consideration.

1. Identify a definition of the term distributed leadership that RCPS can adapt and use to define structures, processes, and tools that should be used in schools to implement authentic distributed leadership.
2. Once the district has a defined set of practices, the current research that relied on surveys and a limited number of interviews could be expanded to include observations, focus groups, and interviews of ILTs and central office administrators to provide a more in-depth look at some of the most important aspects of distributed leadership in RCPS schools. The distributed leadership framework is grounded in the interactions among all school staff, specific leadership actions, and the social and situational contexts of the school. These features can only be captured through a more in-depth exploration.
3. This study did not seek to examine the impact of assigning certain responsibilities to others on principal leadership, such as specific tasks or time allocations; principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of their leadership structures; or school performance data. Nor did the study explore why principals chose to use certain leadership structures, processes, and tools more than others. These are areas that deserve further exploration,

specifically if RCPS intends to implement a distributed leadership model.

### **Implications for District Action**

The discussion of implications is organized into two sections. Section one addresses the need for a more organized and systematic approach to the implementation of distributed leadership in schools. Section two suggest implications regarding the barriers to distributed leadership implementation as perceived by the principal in RCPS.

**Systemic Implementation.** The RCPS district should consider implementing systemic structures and processes that provide opportunities to build the capacity of their teachers to assume leadership responsibilities. These include such things as professional learning communities; peer engagement and development, such as peer-to-peer observations; and peer mentoring and coaching. As noted in the principal evaluation process, the expectation of principals is to build the capacity of their teachers as it relates to leadership development. This expectation is outlined in the PSEL. PSEL Standard 6 – Professional Capacity of School Personnel, indicator g: Develop the capacity opportunities and support for teacher leadership and leadership from other members of the school community. Therefore, as principals are held to this standard, it is important for the district to address time constraints and prioritize building the capacity of their teacher leadership. It is clear that principals in RCPS are distributing responsibilities and tasks to some degree, and that they understand the importance of distributing leadership at the school level. However, the district should consider looking deeper into the impact distributed leadership is having on the principal’s ability to lead the instructional program and positively impact student achievement while still doing their jobs effectively. To this point, RCPS should develop a task force to take a deeper dive into the quality at which schools are engaged in distributed leadership, as well as examine how teacher leaders are identified and

developed at both the school and district level. Distributed leadership is implemented effectively when principals are able to build the capacity of teacher leaders and empower teacher leaders to make decisions, which in turn frees up the principal to do other tasks.

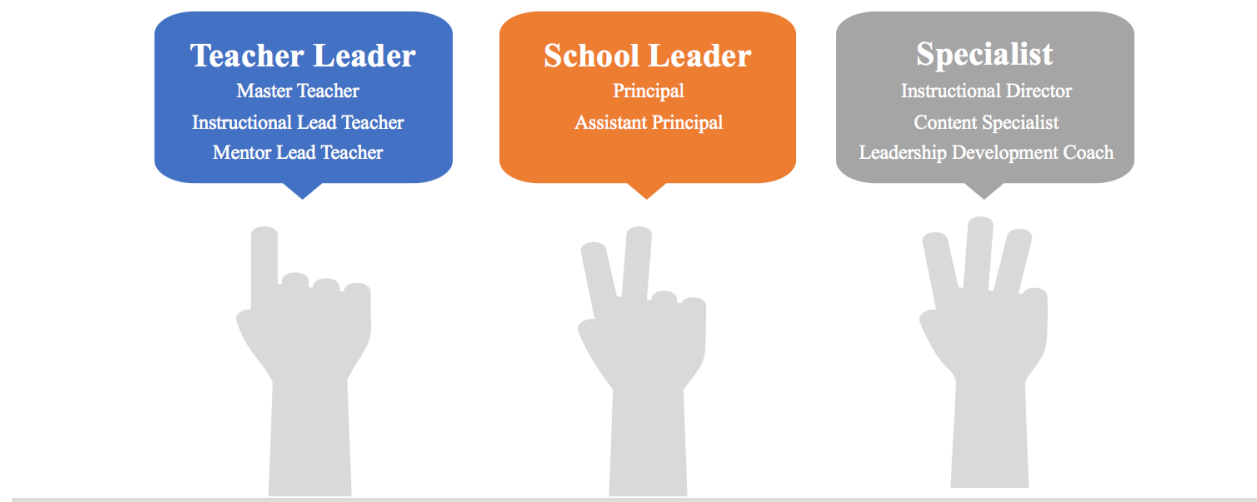
Another implication for RCPS is starting a teacher leader career pathway (Figure 5) and identifying those teacher leaders who aspire to develop their educational skill set. This distinct pathway may include many well-defined career pathways. The roles within the pathway would be developed and identified based on input from the central office, school-level administration, and teachers. Using district and schoolwide data, along with a thorough look into the needs of each school, identified teacher leaders would engage in a series of learning opportunities. Teacher leaders may receive specific training to develop in their area of interest, as well as overall leadership development.

**Figure 5**

*Teacher Leader Career Pathway*

## Teacher Leader Career Pathway

Teacher Leader Career Pathway opportunities will allow teachers to build their capacity and strengthen their leadership skills. The career pathway will prepare educators for multiple roles to improve student and school performance.

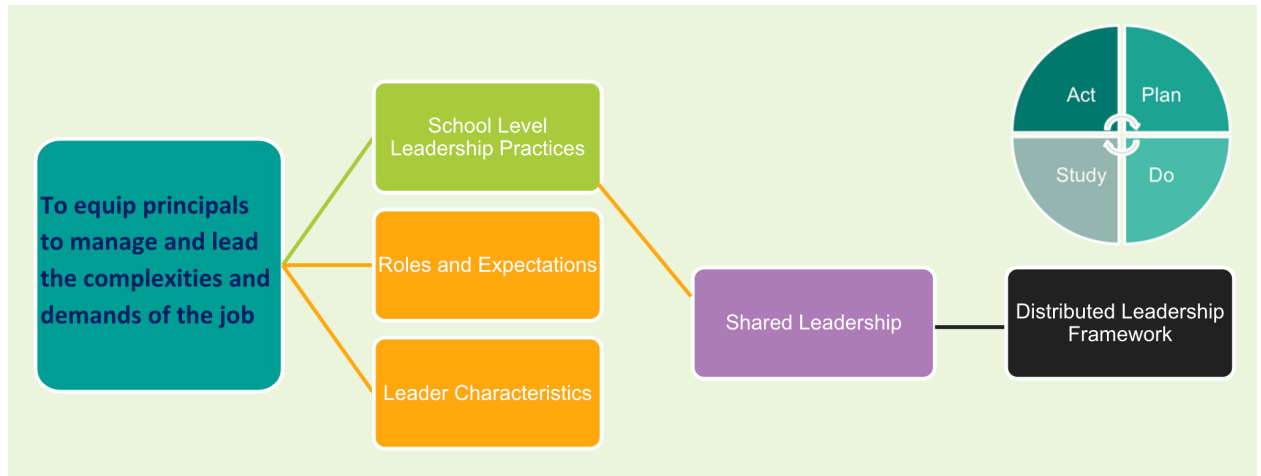


In addition to developing teacher leaders, RCPS should begin the work of implementing a districtwide distributed leadership model or framework. RCPS should consider implementing a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) and testing change ideas based on findings from this research using Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles (Figure 6), with a focus on distributed leadership models in elementary schools. By engaging in a NIC and using PDSA cycles, the district would have an opportunity to explore and test change concepts on a smaller scale. This will allow for a small number of identified schools to test a change. The district should develop a (Plan) to test the change concept of implementing a distributed leadership model in schools, carry out the test (Do) by administering the distributed leadership model in the select schools,

observe and learn from the implementation (Study), and determine what modifications should be made to the test (Act).

**Figure 6**

*PDSA Cycle: Implementation of Distributed Leadership Framework*



**Removing Barriers to Distributed Leadership.** When principals effectively implement distributed leadership practices they should be freed up to do other tasks. The fact that principals identified time as the number one barrier on both the survey and in the interviews, raises the question of the quality of the distribution of responsibilities and tasks. Through the utilization of the various teams and other practices, staff members need to be empowered and have the capacity to make decisions and take actions that the principal trusts are being done effectively. This will require that principals and teachers have knowledge on how to build relationships and how to make decisions.

RCPS will need to consider providing time for the development and practice of teacher leadership skills in order to build the capacity of teacher leaders. Principals also need to build their understanding and capacity for delegating authority: to know when and how to accomplish

tasks through others and still be accountable for leading their schools. Murphy (2005) states that one of the key functions in promoting distributed leadership at schools lies in the provision of direct support to the stakeholders. Leithwood et al. (2007) agree that capacity building is a major leadership function and is required when practicing distributed leadership. In order to accomplish this function, principals and district leaders need to create key structures, such as schedules, that support collaboration and coordination of leadership tasks. According to Murphy (2017), internal and external challenges make it difficult to achieve distributed leadership success. Therefore, the entire system must be creative in redesigning their structures to accommodate successful distributed leadership.

The role of principal has changed over time. However, the complexities and demands continue to mount. As a principal for 10 years, I have personally witnessed this shift and watched as leaders, including myself, work hard to employ leadership practices to support the charge given to lead. If we are to meet these increasing demands, this research study confirms the need to equip principals with the skills and support necessary to take on the complex and demanding job of principal that exists today.



## Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall  
College Park, MD 20742-5125  
TEL 301.405.4212  
FAX 301.314.1475  
irb@umd.edu  
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: June 24, 2019

TO: LaTonya Williams  
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1426444-1] Investigating Distributed Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in a Large School District

REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: June 24, 2019  
EXPIRATION DATE: June 23, 2020  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7; Consent Waiver: 45CFR46.117(c)(1)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

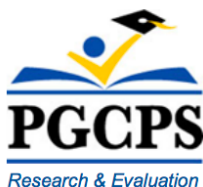
This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of June 23, 2020.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

## Appendix B: District Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



August 5, 2019

Mrs. LaTonya Claudette Williams  
2114 Medinah Ridge Road  
Accokeek, MD 20607

Dear Mrs. Williams:

The review of your request to conduct the research titled, "Investigating Distributed Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in a Large School District" has been completed. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation has granted authorization for you to proceed with your study.

Authorization for this research extends through the 2019-2020 school year only. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a request for an extension through our online portal. We reserve the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities.

The content of the consent forms as well as the data collection tools must be exactly as that of the version approved by our office. Only approved copies (stamped 'APPROVED') of the consent form may be distributed to your target subjects. Should you revise any of these documents or change the procedure, the revisions and the revised procedure must be approved by this office before being used in this study.

An abstract and one copy of the final report should be forwarded to the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation within one month of its completion. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301-749-5226 ext. 40020 or by e-mail at [carole.keane@pgcps.org](mailto:carole.keane@pgcps.org). I wish you success with your study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carole Portas Keane".

Carole Portas Keane, Ph.D.  
Supervisor, Office of Research & Evaluation

CPK:cpk

Enclosures

## Appendix C: Request to Use Survey Tool

April 8, 2019

Dear Ingrida Barker:

I am a doctoral student from the University of Maryland, College Park, writing my dissertation tentatively titled, Exploring Principal and Teacher Perceptions of Distributed Leadership Practices in the Elementary Schools, under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Margaret McLaughlin.

I would like your permission to use portions of your survey titled, Implementation and Effectiveness of Distributed Leadership Building Level Administrator Survey instrument in my research study. I would like to use portions of your survey. I will need to slightly revise some of your questions to align more closely with my research questions I am asking permission under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through e-mail at [latonya.williams@pgcps.org](mailto:latonya.williams@pgcps.org).

Sincerely,

LaTonya Williams  
Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix D: Email Granting Permission to Use Survey Tool

-----Original Message-----

From: Ingrida Barker <[ibarker@k12.wv.us](mailto:ibarker@k12.wv.us)>

To: LaTonya Williams <[latonya.williams13@aol.com](mailto:latonya.williams13@aol.com)>

Sent: Tue, Apr 9, 2019 11:01 am

Subject: RE: Request Permission -- Dissertation Survey Tool

Dear LaTonya:

You have my permission to use portions of my survey in your research study.

*Best,  
Inga*

*Ingrida Barker, Ed.S., Ed. D.  
Associate Superintendent  
McDowell County Schools  
30 Central Avenue  
Welch, WV 24801  
Telephone: 304-436-8441, ext. 221*

## Appendix E: Letter to Principal Survey Participants

Re: Distributive Leadership Survey  
From: LaTonya Williams (lwillia3@umd.edu)  
To: Participant Email Address

Dear Participant,

I am inviting you to participate in a study that will explore the extent to which distributive leadership practices are being implemented in elementary schools and the barriers and supporting factors that contribute to the implementing distributive leadership practices. The study will also explore to what extent teachers report being involved in distributive practices in their schools. Your participation could assist the county in gaining a greater understanding on how to improve principal leadership practice. More specifically, equip principals with effective organizational structures, task allocation processes and use of tools to support the implementation of distributive leadership practices. Additionally, the study aims to provide information on how to support teacher development in leadership and decision-making.

The survey should take you approximately 15 minutes. For participating, you will automatically have your name entered to win a \$25 dollar Amazon Gift Card. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and will be kept completely confidential. All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in a group format and will not identify you individually. In addition, all names in the survey are immediately replaced with a unique number identifier and no identifiers will be reported.

Your employment status in the county will not be affected by your participation or nonparticipation in this study. The data collected will be used for my dissertation.

Use this link to access the survey: This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

(ADD LINK HERE)

If the above link does not work, try copying the link into your web browser.

Thanks for your support,

LaTonya Williams  
lwillia3@umd.edu  
(301)704-9001

## Appendix F: Letter to Teacher Leader Survey Participants

To: Participant Email Address  
Re: Distributive Leadership Survey  
From: LaTonya Williams, Researcher (lwillia3@umd.edu)

Dear Teacher Leader Participant,

Prince George's County has granted me permission to survey Instructional Lead Teachers (ILT) at the elementary level. You are receiving this survey because you held an ILT position in the district during the SY 18-19. The survey is being conducted as a part of my doctoral program requirements for the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in a study that will explore the extent to which you are engaged in distributive leadership practices at your school.

Your participation may assist the district in identifying the level of implementation and engagement of teacher leaders in distributed leadership practices in elementary schools. The survey data will be used to inform district leaders on best practices regarding implementing distributive leadership practices and how to support and engage teacher development in distributive leadership practices.

The survey should take you approximately 10 minutes. For participating, you will automatically have your name entered to win a \$25 dollar Amazon Gift Card. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and will be kept completely confidential. All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in a group format and will not identify you individually. In addition, all names in the survey are immediately replaced with a unique number identifier and no identifiers will be reported. Your employment status in the county will not be affected by your participation or nonparticipation in this study.

Use this link to access the survey: This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

(ADD LINK HERE)

If the above link does not work, try copying the link into your web browser.

Thanks for your support,

LaTonya Williams  
lwillia3@umd.edu  
(301)704-9001

## Appendix G: Letter to Principal Interview Participants

Re: Distributive Leadership - Principal Interview Protocol  
From: LaTonya Williams (lwillia3@umd.edu)  
To: Participant Email Address

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a follow up interview to further explore the extent to which distributive leadership practices are being implemented in elementary schools and the barriers and supporting factors that contribute to the implementing distributive leadership practices.

Your participation could assist the county in gaining a greater understanding on how to improve principal leadership practice. More specifically, equip principals with effective organizational structures, task allocation processes and use of tools to support the implementation of distributive leadership practices.

The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. For participating, you will automatically have your name entered to win a \$25 dollar Amazon Gift Card. Your participation in this interview is greatly appreciated and will be kept completely confidential. All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in a group format and will not identify you individually.

Your employment status in the county will not be affected by your participation or nonparticipation in the interview. The data collected will be used for my dissertation.

Your interview date and time has been scheduled for: Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Time \_\_\_\_\_

Interviews will be held via Google Hangouts or Zoom. An official invitation will be sent to you a week before the scheduled interview.

Thanks for your support,

LaTonya Williams  
lwillia3@umd.edu  
(301)704-9001

## Appendix H: Week 1 Reminder Email to Principals

Dear Principal,

I recently contacted you about completing a survey for my doctoral research. The research could assist PGCPS and other public school districts improve upon their current leadership programs, gain a greater understanding on how to improve principal leadership practice, and support teacher leader development in distributive leadership practices at the school level.

Your participation is critical to this study. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you complete the online survey by clicking the link provided below. The survey is self-explanatory. There are no right or wrong answers.

Participants that complete the survey will be eligible for a random drawing of one of four \$25 gift cards. I will notify all of those eligible for the drawing as well as the winner within two weeks after the survey is completed.

Please note that all information from the survey will be kept confidential through the web-based software program. The program has a log-on feature and a high end firewall system to prevent any type of data breach.

The last day to complete the survey is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification. I can be reached at 301-704-9001. Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response to the survey.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Williams  
Researcher



## Appendix I: Week 2 Reminder Email to Principals

Dear Principal,

I recently contacted you about completing a survey for my doctoral research. The research could assist PGCPS and other public school districts improve upon their current leadership programs, gain a greater understanding on how to improve principal leadership practice, and support teacher leader development in distributive leadership practices at the school level.

Your participation is critical to this study. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you complete the online survey by clicking the link provided below. The survey is self-explanatory. There are no right or wrong answers.

Participants that complete the survey will be eligible for a random drawing of one of four \$25 gift cards. I will notify all of those eligible for the drawing as well as the winner within two weeks after the survey is completed.

Please note that all information from the survey will be kept confidential through the web-based software program. The program has a log-on feature and a high end firewall system to prevent any type of data breach.

The last day to complete the survey is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification. I can be reached at 301-704-9001. Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response to the survey.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Williams  
Researcher

## Appendix J: Week 1 Reminder Email to Teacher Leaders

Dear Teacher Leader,

I recently contacted you about completing a brief 15-minute survey for my doctoral research. The research could assist PGCPS and other public school districts with the development of support for principals in better meeting the needs of gifted students.

Your participation is critical to this study. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you complete a short, 15-minute, online survey by clicking the link provided below. The survey is self-explanatory. There are no right or wrong answers.

Participants that complete the survey within the next week will be eligible for a random drawing of one of four \$25 gift cards. I will notify all of those eligible for the drawing as well as the winner within two weeks after the survey is completed.

Please note that all information from the survey will be kept confidential through the web-based software program. The program has a log-on feature and a high end firewall system to prevent any type of data breach.

The last day to complete the survey is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification. I can be reached at 301-704-9001. Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response to the survey.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Williams

## Appendix K: Week 2 Reminder Email to Teacher Leaders

Dear Teacher Leader

I recently contacted you about completing a brief 15-minute survey for my doctoral research. The research could assist PGCPs and other public school districts with the development of support for principals in better meeting the needs of gifted students.

Your participation is critical to this study. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you complete a short, 15-minute, online survey by clicking the link provided below. The survey is self-explanatory. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please note that all information from the survey will be kept confidential through the web-based software program. The program has a log-on feature and a high-end firewall system to prevent any type of data breach.

The last day to complete the survey is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification. I can be reached at 301-704-9001. Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response to the survey.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Williams

## Appendix L: Distributed Leadership Practices in Elementary Schools: Principal Survey

### Section A Background Information

Please complete the following information:

1. What grades configurations do you lead? \_\_\_\_\_ Pre K-5 \_\_\_\_\_ Pre K-6 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total years of teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_
3. Total years of full-time administrative experience \_\_\_\_\_
4. Total years of administrative experience at your current school \_\_\_\_\_
5. Current enrollment at your school \_\_\_\_\_ Under 400 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 400
6. Is your school Title 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Title 1 \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B: Individuals/Groups

The following is a list of individuals and groups that may assume leadership responsibilities in a school. Using the scale provided, rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are **fully distributed** to those individuals and groups in your school. If these individuals or groups do not exist in your school, mark NA.

Level of Implementation: 1 Not at all   2   3 Some of the time   4   5 Most of the time   N/A

1. Assistant principal (s)
2. Instructional Lead Teachers (ILT)
3. Professional Development team leaders (PDLT)
4. Leadership team leaders
5. Grade level team leaders
6. Department leaders
7. Teacher mentors
8. Instructional coaches
9. Other (i.e., Counselors, Specialist, Support Staff) \_\_\_\_\_

### Section C: Organizational Structures

The following is a list of organizational structures used to support the implementation of distributed leadership. Using the scale provided, rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.

Level of Implementation: 1 Not at all   2   3 Partially   4   5 Fully

1. School Leadership Team
2. Collaborative Planning Teams
3. Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
4. Grade Level Teams
5. Department Teams
6. Professional Development Team

7. School Improvement Planning Teams
8. Other \_\_\_\_\_ (SIT, IEP etc.)

### **Section D: Distributed Leadership Processes**

The following is a list of processes used to support the implementation of distributed leadership. Using the scale provided, rate each of the processes in terms of the current level of implementation in your school.

Level of Implementation: 1 Not at all    2    3 Partially    4    5 Fully

1. Peer Coaching
2. Peer Mentoring
3. Instructional Coaching
4. In-house Professional Development
5. Peer-to-Peer Observations
6. Administrator Observations of Teachers (formal observations)
7. Principal Walkthroughs with Feedback (informal observations)
9. Learning Walks
10. Data Analysis
11. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section E: Distributed Leadership Tools**

Level of Implementation: 1 Not at all    2    3 Partially    4    5 Fully

The following is a list of tools used to support the implementation of distributed leadership in schools. Using the scale provided rate each of the tools in terms of the current level of implementation in your school.

1. Meeting agenda templates
2. Principal walkthrough templates
3. Lesson plan templates
4. Principal lesson plan feedback template
5. Peer to peer feedback forms
6. Data Collection Forms
7. Teacher mentoring documentation
8. Communication tools (newsletters, or calendars for staff, or daily announcements, electronic messaging platforms)
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section F: Potential Barriers to Distributed Leadership**

Level of Implementation: 1 Not a challenge    2    3 Challenging    4    5 Major Challenge

The following is a list of potential barriers to distributed leadership implementation. Using the scale provided, rate each of the barriers in terms of a challenge in distributing leadership in your school.

1. Community expectations of the principal as being the sole person in charge.
2. District office expectations for the role of the principal as being the sole person in charge.
3. Changing school culture to a collaborative environment.
4. Willingness of teachers to assume leadership roles.
5. Time for the development and practice of teacher leadership skills
6. Willingness of school leadership to share responsibilities.
7. Scheduling/time constraints (finding time plan and/or build the capacity of teachers)
8. Resources to support the instructional program and overall school improvement.
9. Staff Turnover
10. Other (Please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section G: Follow Up Interview**

1. Are you interested in doing a follow up interview to go more in depth about your leadership practices? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_.

If yes, please provide your contact information and the best time to contact you to set up a follow up interview.

Contact Information: Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Best time to contact \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix M: Distributed Leadership Practices in Elementary Schools: ILT Survey

### Section A Background Information

Please complete the following information:

1. What grades are taught at your school? \_\_\_\_\_ Pre K-5 \_\_\_\_\_ Pre K-6 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total years of full-time teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_
3. Total years of teaching experience at your current school \_\_\_\_\_
4. Total years in the ILT position at your school \_\_\_\_\_
5. Current enrollment at your school \_\_\_\_\_ Under 400 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 400
6. Is your school Title 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Title 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Before answering the questions in this section of the survey consider the following: Rate the question to the extent in which you **assume responsibility leading** in these areas i.e., leading the planning, implementing, communicating, monitoring, etc. of each structure.

### Section B: Organizational Structures

The following is a list of organizational structures used to support the implementation of distributed leadership. Using the scale provided, rate each of the structures in terms of the extent in which you assume responsibility in leading these teams (i.e., planning, implementing, monitoring, etc.) at your school.

Level of Engagement: 1 Not at all   2   3 Partially   4   5 Fully

1. School Leadership Team
2. Collaborative Planning Team
3. Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
4. Grade Level Team
5. Department Team
6. Professional Development Team
7. School Improvement Planning Teams
8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Section C: Distributed Leadership Processes

The following is a list of distributed leadership process used to support the implementation of distributed leadership. Using the scale provided, rate the question to the extent in which you **assume responsibility leading** in these areas i.e., leading the planning, implementing, communicating, monitoring, etc. of each structure.

Level of Engagement: 1 Not at all   2   3 Partially   4   5 Fully

1. Peer Coaching

2. Peer Mentoring
3. Instructional Coaching
4. In-house Professional Development
5. Peer-to-Peer Observations
6. Instructional Walkthroughs with Feedback (informal observations)
7. Learning Walks
8. Data Analysis
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section D: Distributed Leadership Tools**

Level of Implementation: 1 Not at all    2    3 Partially    4    5 Fully

The following is a list of tools used to support the implementation of distributed leadership in schools. Using the scale provided rate each of the tools in terms in which you **assume responsibility** in creating, implementing, utilizing, etc. each of the tools in your school.

1. Meeting agenda templates
2. Walkthrough templates
3. Lesson plan templates
4. Lesson plan feedback template
5. Peer to peer feedback forms
6. Data collection forms
7. Teacher mentoring documentation
8. Communication tools (school newsletters, or calendars for staff, or daily school announcements, electronic messaging platforms regarding school wide events/activities)
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix N: Principal Interview Protocol

Actual questions asked during the administrator interviews may vary based on findings from the administrator survey. All questions asked will be focused on seeking additional information to validate survey findings and provide a more in-depth look at distributive leadership in elementary schools.

### Background Information

Total years of administrative experience?

Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

Current enrollment: Under 400 or Over 400?

Is your school Title 1 or Non-Title 1?

### Section A: Distributed Leadership Responsibilities:

1. Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school.

#### Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rarely Time			Some of the Time			Most of the Time

2. How do you identify leaders at your school?

3. How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

4. What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school.

5. How are these responsibilities developed?

6. Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school.

**Individuals/groups include** - the assistant principal, Instructional Lead Teachers (ILT), professional development lead teacher (PDLT), leadership team members, grade level team member, department leaders, teacher mentors, and instructional coaches, other i.e., counselors, specialist, support staff, etc.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

### Section B: Distributed Leadership Structures, Processes and Tools:

1. Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.

**Structures include:** School leadership teams, Collaborative planning teams, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), Grade Level Teams, Department Teams, Professional Development Teams, School Improvement Planning Teams, other (i.e., SIT, SST, IEP, etc)

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

2. What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

3. How do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school?

**Processes include:** peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, In-house professional development, peer-to-peer observations, walkthroughs with feedback (informal observations), learning walks, data analysis, other.

4. What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

5. How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

**Tools include** - meeting agenda templates, walkthrough templates, lesson plan templates, feedback templates, peer-to-peer feedback forms, teacher mentoring documents, communication tools, data collection forms, other.

### **Section C:** Distributed Leadership – Barriers and Supporting factors

1. What factors **support** principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

2. What factors act as **barriers** to principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

3. What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

4. How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in schools?

5. How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school?

Prompts: your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities.

## Appendix O: Principal Interview Transcripts

### Susan

*Interviewer:* Good afternoon.

*Interviewee:* Good afternoon.

*Interviewer:* Thank you for agreeing to participate in the personal interview portion of my dissertation. This is a follow up from the survey you completed online regarding how principals distribute leadership in their schools. I'm going to ask you some questions. Some of the questions have a rating scale, and for those questions I will give you the scale for you to rate, and you have the questions in front of you for your reference. Do you have any questions before we start?

*Interviewee:* I do not.

*Interviewer:* Great. Then we'll get started, starting with some background information. How many years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Fourteen years.

*Interviewer:* Total years of administrative experience at your current school.

*Interviewee:* Six.

*Interviewer:* Under 400 for enrollment or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Over 400, 768.

*Interviewer:* Okay, wow. Okay. Is your school a title I or non title I?

*Interviewee:* Title I.

*Interviewer:* So the questions are in sections. So the first section, section A, we're going to talk about distributed leadership responsibilities at your school. So number one, select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school. The scale is 1 being rarely, 4 being some of the time, and 7 most of the time. What would you rate?

*Interviewee:* I would say about a 6.

*Interviewer:* How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* I identify leaders based on experience, expertise, strengths, because we're a strength finder school, so we use our strengths, personality traits, whether the team member has a positive or growth mindset, and knowledge of the curriculum they're teaching.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number three, how do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* Recommendation of staff, through formal and informal observations, interactions with staff, and communication.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number four, what leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* We try to do as much as possible since this is such a large school, so it's a lot of work that needs to be divided. So we – professional learning. So professional development opportunities, grade level, grade level chairs and department chairs, committees. We have various committees that meet, so we want the leaders of those committees. Grade level chairs within grade level departments, and then administrative teams.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* We use data a lot. So every year it may change based on the data. The leadership team, the administrative leadership team, as well as the leadership team, the needs of the school – so we get a lot of new students each year. So whatever needs we have among the grade level is how we decide who goes where, and also initiatives in the county. Now this year I have a math coach. They're going to be hands on in the classroom so I can use that information to make my plan.

*Interviewer:* Good. So number six, rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. Here are the lists of individuals and groups, and you're going to rate them, 1, never, 2, rarely, 3, sometimes, 4, often, 5, always, and I will name them. The assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay. ILT.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Professional development lead teacher, PDLT.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Leadership team members?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Department leaders.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* And any other positions or groups, counselors, specialists, or staff?

*Interviewee:* Nope. The counselor is part of our administrative leadership team, so I do delegate to her but she doesn't lead anything. Specialists, support staff, no.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So those would fall I guess under the 1, never.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Now we're moving to section B, and in this section we're going to talk about what structures, processes, and tools you use to distribute leadership within your schools. So the first one is rate each one of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school. So some of the structures are listed here, and again the rating is 1, never, 2 rarely, 3, sometimes, 4, often, 5, always. So first, the school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Collaborative planning teams?

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning communities?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Grade level teams?

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Department teams?

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams.

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* And then we have other categories such as your \_\_\_\_\_, IEP teams—

*Interviewee:* Chaired by the counselor, so 4.

*Interviewer:* Number two, what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And processes include and are listed here, peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching. So we have these—

*Interviewee:* Informal/formal observations, peer coaching. We have a new teacher academy so we have a chairperson of that. Learning walks – we use a lot of data, and collaborative planning. Did I answer that correctly?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. So number three is how did these processes impact distributive leadership practices at your school?

*Interviewee:* So we're all on the same page. It's a shared responsibility. We're very strategic about – you have to be organized. You have to have a plan, and clear expectations from the very beginning, and open

communication, even if it's in the hallway. So if we have a learning walk, we elicit – we solicit the team members to come in and participate in the learning walk. So at the end of the learning walk we identify some next steps, and each team member will take their role and responsibility. So if it's a new teacher concern, it goes to the new teacher academy. If it's primary teachers reading curriculum, it goes to the ILT. If it's math it goes to the intermediate ILT. So it's all distributed based on the needs and what the data says.

*Interviewer:*

Okay. Number four here, what tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? The tools are listed here, so this book right here is the *Bible*, Santoyo's books. Google Docs, we use those a lot, Google Docs, slides, all of that. This is curriculum, curriculum framework. We use staff shout outs, and we have the newsletter. We use the newsletter. We use a calendar like similar to \_\_\_\_\_ board, a consistent patterns chart, my strengths ring. *[laughter]* All of my tools.

*Interviewer:*

I see. Okay. What about peer to peer feedback forms and teacher mentoring documents?

*Interviewee:*

We don't have any teacher mentoring documents. We don't have peer to peer feedback forms. We have learning walk feedback letters. Then we have the formal and informal observation data that we collect.

*Interviewer:*

How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:*

They strongly impact. They have a very positive impact. My staff needs a lot of visuals, so the visuals are always helpful. So we may draw pictures into the collaborative planning documents and then have discussions about them. We're all on the same page, so similar to one band, one sound. We meet first to come up with what does this look like, so everyone's on the same page, so when you go to your individual teams and departments, that same message is delivered. So it's the same message throughout, but you have to have a culture in your building that supports the work. If you don't have that, a climate of collaboration, it doesn't work. We have that, so it makes it more effective. Especially the Google Docs where you can make comments, and see what work they're doing, highlight certain work they're doing using the data.

*Interviewer:*

Okay, great. Section C. In this section we're going to talk about barriers and supporting factors for distributing leadership in your

school, and at the district level. So number one, what factors support principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Definitely the leader strengths. We use those to – time, because there's never enough of it, we definitely use the calendar. Scheduling meetings on a regular basis so that they happen on a consistent basis, and being organized.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factor act as barriers to principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* So it could be meetings, attendance at meetings takes away – takes a lot of time, absences. Some grade level chairs are stronger than others. So it's training the staff, and making sure they're all on the same page, and they come with the same level of experience and expertise. Even personal matters sometimes get in the way. *[laughter]* If there's other tasks to do, or if they're overwhelmed with certain tasks – one of my ILTs is the testing coordinator. So her support to her grade levels is not as – is not going to be as effective as my other ILT who is not the testing coordinator. So other tasks and responsibilities can be an impact.

*Interviewer:* I have a clarifying question. You mentioned time. Are you citing time as a support or a barrier?

*Interviewee:* Barrier, not enough time.

*Interviewer:* Any others you want to add?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Number three, what factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* Turnover. So in my school, we've had a lot of leadership, leaders who get promoted. So a lot of – like my reading specialist became my assistant principal. My assistant principal became a teacher, or one of my teachers became an ILT in another building. So with the turnover you have to train people all over again. You have to start from the beginning. This is my six year and this year I can say that we've remained consistent from last year. But I can't say that over the six year period because I've had a change in leadership every year or two years, which makes it very difficult to sustain the whole distributed leadership, because you're starting all over again.



*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. So how does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in your schools?

*Interviewee:* So when the message is delivered, it's consistent. So at least with my evaluation tool, it's the same evaluation tool as my assistant principal. Trainings, the school system tries to provide the same trainings for us that they do for assistant principals. Reading leader meetings are useful. The reading office used to do the reading leader, so it would be the principal and reading leader to go to the meeting so they could receive the same information on the same page, can deliver the same information. Sharing information and having the same expectations as well as the leadership team meetings.

*Interviewer:* Those would be listed as organizational structures that support. So sustaining?

*Interviewee:* Being able to sustain them, right?

*Interviewer:* No, we were on – yeah, organizational structures in your district that support or hinder implementation.

*Interviewee:* Oh, okay, I thought we were still on number three.

*Interviewer:* So this answer was for number three?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, the—

*Interviewer:* Sustaining.

*Interviewee:* Oh, you're right, sharing information, the new information template being the same. Just being able to walk the same walk you know.

*Interviewer:* I just want to clarify, that's for sustainability?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* So let's answer three again just to make sure for the record. What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school? You spoke about—

*Interviewee:* The mobility, the turnover, leaders get promoted and you have to train them all over, and then you want to share some other information about the sustainability, being able to sustain. Well the

needs of the school changes, so even the school size – we went from 1,000 to 700 students at one point, and more kids, different needs, the data, you know, we had very strong reading data. We focused on the reading, but then the math data started to drop, so we had to change and that supports the sustaining the actual distributed leadership practices.

*Interviewer:* And so then, number four, how does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in your schools?

*Interviewee:* Delivering the same message, professional learning opportunities for everybody. And also that school performance plan. So if that school performance plan drives the work, everybody is on the same page with regard to the work. So they know that my goals impact theirs, and theirs impact mine, so we're both on the same page.

*Interviewer:* Anything you think hinders distributed leadership practices?

*Interviewee:* Well different – like we talked earlier about changing things. When programs are changed, structures are changed, protocols are changed. So if you have PMAP one year, and a school improvement plan one year, and now we have school performance plan, so different initiatives I guess would hinder that work.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and the last question is how does your leadership capacity impact how you distribute leadership in your school? Some think abouts are your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities. How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership practices?

*Interviewee:* Well it's the experiences you've had. If you've – you can't feel as though this is the job you can do by yourself. So you have a growth mindset, you're able to work well with others, and your knowledge, knowledge base, curriculum-wise, are you strong in reading? Are you strong in math? Are you strong in counseling? Organizational skills. And your strengths.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you'd like to add?

*Interviewee:* No, I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Okay. This concludes our interview. I'd like to thank you for participating in this part of my research study. Thank you very much.

*Interviewee:* You're welcome.  
**David**

*Interviewer:* Good afternoon. How are you today?

*Interviewee:* I'm doing great.

*Interviewer:* Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview portion of the principal survey. It was a follow-up from the principal survey for my dissertation, and so I appreciate you agreeing to do this. I'm gonna ask some questions. The protocol is divided into three sections, and some of the questions are asking you to rate the process or whatever we're asking, and the scale will be given to you for those questions. And, other than that, if you don't have any other questions, we'll just go through the protocol.

*Interviewee:* Excellent.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So we're gonna start with some background information: the total years of administrative experience.

*Interviewee:* Five, four as a principal and one as an assistant principal.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Current enrollment: under 400 or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Over 400.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Title I or non.

*Interviewee:* Non-Title I.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So, Section A we're gonna ask questions around distributed leadership responsibilities. So the first question is a rating question. You will rate this question on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being rarely, and the middle four some of the time, 7 most of the time. And the question number one: select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school.

*Interviewee:* I would say 6.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number two: how do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* We have a variety of different groups that we use. So my first is my instructional lead team. They consist of my out-of-classroom practitioners. I have a reading specialist, a math ILT, and an IB coordinator. My second group is then part of my leadership team, which would include my special education chair, my ESOL chair. I have a green – we're a green school, so I have a green team committee coordinator. I have a STEM coordinator. I have a field trip coordinator. I have grade-level chairs in grades K, one, and two, and department chairs in grades three, four, and five. And I have a specialist chair.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number three: how do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* So the instructional lead team are out-of-classroom practitioners who receive ongoing coaching and feedback through myself and my assistant principal on a, basically, daily basis. I meet weekly with my leadership team, which would include my instructional lead team and all my leaders, to go over where they are in their departments, their content areas. And for grade-level chairs and department chairs, they have to apply, so I have an online Google application form that they apply, and there's kind of a process for us to ascertain whether we feel that they would be best fitted to be influential amongst their leaders.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number five: what leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* I'm very transparent and I'm very trusting, so once a person, a practitioner, is in a position where they are over a set area, department, content area, or program, I give them autonomy to run that program. The expectation is that they run it with fidelity and they meet all the expectations and the needs, whether it's associated with, for example, the numerous illiteracy snapshot for reading, English language arts, mathematics, science. My field trip coordinator is charged with monitoring and helping educators with a field trip and submitting a Google doc to me on a weekly basis.

So I trust that they're gonna do those positions. If they're not, then it starts with just kinda informal conversations. And if we feel that it gets to the stage where they don't have the capacity after we've tried to support and coach 'em, then eventually we make changes with those people in those positions.

*Interviewer:* How are these responsibilities developed? I think you kinda talked about that. [*Crosstalk*]

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean just we – like this year when we became a green school, so we added a STEM coordinator, which has the science department chair in it, has the green school coordinator in part of it. So we try to create teams and things that benefit us. We saw a need that the school was not actively participating in field trips as much as they should be and could be, so this year one of the newest positions for us is a field trip coordinator. And that person, like I mentioned, is tasked with making sure that each grade level is utilizing county-sponsored field trips.

So we just meet the needs, and I guess that's through I do a midyear evaluation on myself with the staff to see where we are instructionally. We do a very similar one over SBB to see are we meeting the needs of our vision and mission as a school, and collectively filling positions that we think we've kind of overlooked or have not put enough attention to.

*Interviewer:* Okay. This question you will rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. You will rate them as 1 being never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always. I'll say the groups or individuals and then you will rate. So, your assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* 5 always.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Instructional lead teacher.

*Interviewee:* 5 always.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional development lead teacher, PD [*crosstalk*]?

*Interviewee:* I would say 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Leadership team member.

*Interviewee:* I would say 4.

*Interviewer:* Grade-level team member?

*Interviewee:* I would say 4.

*Interviewer:* Department leader.

*Interviewee:* I would say 4 again.

*Interviewer:* Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* I would say 5.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches?

*Interviewee:* I would say 5.

*Interviewer:* And then any other individuals – counselors, specialists, support staff?

*Interviewee:* Counselor definitely a 5. I would say support staff a 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So the next section we're going to talk about what structures, processes, and tools do you use to support your distributing leadership efforts in your school. So the first one again is a rating question, so you're gonna rate on the scale of 1 to 5 again. And the question is rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school. I will say each structure. School leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Collaborative planning team.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning community.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Grade-level teams.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Department teams.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Professional development team.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* And any other teams, such as SIT, IEP teams.

*Interviewee:* So I would say 5. So we have a one-stop shop SIT, which falls under – has IEP and SIT underneath.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So, number two, what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And some of the processes are listed here, as you can see, so you could use that list or others that you think of, but what processes do you use?

*Interviewee:* We're very big on using the coaching cycle method, so one thing we use – which I'm not sure if we still uses it – but the Six Steps of Effective Feedback. I use it. My assistant principal uses it. My instructional lead team use it with working with our staff and staff in leadership positions. We have in-house professional development. We actively do learning walks and walk-throughs and quarterly data analysis. And I will provide a variety of either informal or formal feedback, depending on the situation and the person.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How do these processes impact distributed leadership practices at your school?

*Interviewee:* I think they set the tone for what the expectation is. For example, my motto this year is accountability in monitoring. It also provides the stakeholders, the educators in the building, with an opportunity to feel that they are part of a vision and mission, right? So with distributed leadership it's not just top down. It's kinda bottom up. You get more bang for your buck in terms of buy-in – I feel personally anyhow. The challenge with it is just being comfortable with trusting people to do things maybe not exactly the same way that you would do them yourself; however, they still got the objective done. And that's an always constant battle for me in my analytical head. *[Laughs]*

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number four, what tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And the tools are listed there.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean we have – I'm a Google person, so we have rolling agendas for everything from collaborative planning per grade level to staff meeting rolling agendas, leadership team rolling agendas, professional development day rolling agendas. The staff here have to submit something called a Weekly Outcome Planner because we're an IB school, so we created a document which is not exactly a lesson plan, but it's a hybrid version of a lesson plan, that talks about how they are integrating science into math, social studies into reading, with our transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. We use the coaching cycle, where the ILTs provide feedback. We do informal, formal observations. I think that kinda covers that.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Any peer-to-peer feedback or teacher mentoring documents?

*Interviewee:* We have a new teacher – we do a new practitioner academy. They are assigned mentor teachers. And with the peer-to-peer feedback, when we do learning walks, one member of each grade is part of the learning walk, constantly seeing things, so that we're collecting information and allowing them to see from other people's perspectives. The other thing we do for our first \_\_\_\_\_ year teachers is we provide them an opportunity to go and see a seasoned educator in the building, observe the structure and the lesson, to gain any best practices so that they can reciprocate it in their own class.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So how do these tools impact implementation of distributed leadership in your school?

*Interviewee:* I think they mean that all facets of the engine are kinda moving at the same time, right? It means that one person can't control everything, can't do everything, and so it's like being on a rowboat. There's all different rowers on a rowboat and you need everybody rowing at the same time in order to go in the same direction. So by having an effective distributed leadership model, it means that on any given day we are meeting the needs of the mission and vision of the school.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So, Section C: we're gonna talk about barriers and supporting factors to distributing leadership at the school level and at the district level. So the first question: what factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* I think the fact that, one, obviously a principal has autonomy to kinda walk that vision and mission. I think that the factors for me specifically that support that is I'm very lucky to have an instructional lead team. Not every school has an assistant principal. Not every school has a reading specialist or math specialist. So the fact that I have a core of seasoned, experienced, knowledgeable educators and administrators at my disposal allows me to have more of a roundtable conversation. If you're a principal of just, you know, 230 kids and maybe no AP and no ILTs, then *[laughs]* it makes it – I could see that that would be a challenge. But for me it's a huge asset to have those.

I think also the factors that support the principal's efforts are also the culture in which the principal instills. So this doesn't happen overnight, right? Like my first year, you kinda just sit back and watch. The second year you start to put things in, and you get that pushback and you get that resistance. And it's not until the third and now in the fourth year where they drink that Kool-Aid and they understand that the systems and structures and practices you're putting in place are for the benefit of the



children and, in turn, creating an environment where everybody's successful. And I think that kinda happens, but it takes time.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factors act as barriers to principals' efforts to distribute leadership at their school?

*Interviewee:* I think I mentioned one: depending on the instructional lead team and administrators that are in the building; that are both a district concern and, you know, district has some involvement in that, as well as the school, even SBB, to find those people. I think the second is being able to clearly identify the difference between you can have a good culture in your school, but is the climate at that time appropriate for some of the things that you're doing. I'm a visionary, so sometimes I think too big and too bold. So really understanding who your staff are in your building and what it's gonna take in order to implement that new program or that new system that you're gonna do is gonna just, you know, be a barrier as to whether you're gonna be successful or not.

*Interviewer:* What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* So I believe the systems and structures are like pillars. Once the pillars there, people come and go, and it's all about setting up those systems and structures and practices in place. So my goal here is to make sure that, when I leave, those types of things that are working with fidelity can still work with fidelity, just with somebody else's twists on them.

I think when we as leaders try to do things for our own intrinsic benefit, that's when you get the pushback; that's when if you're not understanding the climate of the culture of your building. So our goal, my goal, is to put systems and structures in place that – like a well lesson plan, right? If a teacher writes a lesson plan, a substitute can come in and follow it because it's been well written and is easy to follow and it's all set up and structured.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in schools?

*Interviewee:* So I think, proactively, first the organizational structures that support the distributed leadership in my school would be, for example, the ability for principals to have SBB autonomy and be able to make decisions based on the needs of the stakeholders within their community. Conversely, I think some of the hindering factors are that there are certain positions in the school district that are not locked, and so then principals are put between a rock and hard place in order to make that decision.

*Interviewer:* So am I hearing that SBB could be support or hindrance?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. You know, certain positions should just – in my personal view, every school should have an assistant principal. I shouldn't have to worry about do I have enough of that money. Every school should have a reading specialist. And, conversely, I think the same – it's like a double edged sword again, for lack of a proverb, with how the district provides principals with an awful lot of information and professional development, but then they expect us to turnkey it.

I can turnkey something, but then once there's a misconception, if I'm not an expert in that content, I can't address that misconception, whereas they're not providing that professional development ongoing all year to the people that need it all the time. Or they decide they're gonna address high school first, and then elementary gets it at the bottom end of the year, or vice versa, which means ultimately the kids are missing out.

*Interviewer:* Okay. The last question: how does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school? And so some think-abouts for that question is think about your current capacity regarding leadership abilities, your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities to implement distributed leadership in your school.

*Interviewee:* So I think that's a fully loaded question.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* I was very lucky to be under the wing of a great principal prior to me, who showed me very quickly that you have to be a transparent leader and that you have to value who your staff are and what they do, as well as never forget what it's like to be in a classroom. I think, for me, making that jump from assistant principal to principal, especially being in the same school, oh, I thought I had all the answers. You know, I was the AP and I knew everybody. And I learned very quickly that it's a very different seat to be in, and that you can have all the ideas in the world, but it doesn't matter if nobody's following you, and that leadership today is not about pulling people along – 'cause you can't. It's about having them willing and wanting to believe in the vision that you've created for your school and your community.

So that really, to the emotional intelligence part, I would be honest and say I was very naïve in my first and second year as a principal. I was overtly emotionally invested in when there was pushback or resistance, and it took me a while. Not that I didn't understand it, but I think it's a process as an instructional leader that you've gotta go through to kinda get that leather

on your back, to understand that transparency doesn't mean that I give them complete autonomy to do what they want. Transparency doesn't mean that I then follow every decision that they want to follow but not get upset when they then decide, "You know what? We're gonna drag our feet on this a little bit."

So last year was my most influential so far in my little principal career of really understanding that I'm okay if you're upset with me. I'm okay if you're pissed with me – pardon my pun 'cause we're on this thing – because everything I do is for the betterment of the children and you need to realize that and not be bogged down with FAC issues and those types of things. And so I think that my emotional intelligence is really – this year some of my teachers have gone to my AP or gone to my counselor already and be like, "Your boy's cracking the whip this year." And they're like, "He's not cracking the whip." They're like, "He's out and about." Like it's a different tone and a different – it's like as if I'm growing up a little bit. And I think that is always something, 'cause this is a lonely seat. You know.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Everybody wants it, but when you're in it, *[laughs]* you sometimes don't want it no more.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. *[Laughs]*

*Interviewee:* So with my self-efficacy abilities, I think one thing I do like to pride myself on is I don't have all the answers; I don't have all the maps for the directions to where we need to go; and I'm very comfortable with other people providing counsel. I'm wanting their counsel. Not yes people. I don't want a team of yes people around me. I want people to push back. I want people to really challenge me on – not whether it's a good or bad idea, but just maybe it's too much to chew right now, you know, it's too much to kinda bite off.

One thing for us for us to last – this is our third year. Two years ago I was all gung-ho about Google Classroom and every teacher had to use it, and I was monitoring whether they were using it and getting mad when they weren't, realizing that they didn't have the capacity to understand how to utilize that tool. And just like children, when we don't know how to do things, sometimes we just – you know, we can't fight people, but we just be stubborn. And build that over to where we are now and listening to my instructional lead team, listening to my teachers.

I think the most humbling thing I created was – this last year was the second year I did it – was the midyear self-evaluations on me, and having them talk to me – not as a person. I don't care whether you like me as

Drew or not – but instructionally what's working, what's not working. Am I pushing you too hard instructionally in this area and that area? Is it too much of a demand here and there? Because we can have all the expectations in the world, but if they don't want to do 'em, there's only so much that we can actually then do, and what does –? I don't believe in suspension, so I certainly don't believe in write-ups. So what does a write-up do to an educator? So I'm all about finding ways to get them to be on board with everything that we want to do. And that really comes with creating a roundtable and having people share their ideas with me.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. That was the last question. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

*Interviewee:* No. Thank you for allowing me to be a participant.

*Interviewer:* Well, I appreciate you participating. I really do. Thank you.

### **Michael**

*Interviewer:* Thank you for agreeing to participate in the follow-up interview, which was a follow-up from the principal survey that was given around distributive leadership practices and how you implement them at your school. So, we're going to just kind of take a look at some questions. Before we start, did you have any questions? I gave you — I'm not sure if you had an opportunity to look at them — questions. But, if you have any questions, I'd like to clarify or —

*Interviewee:* Gotcha. Well, one, you're welcome. Two, I did look this over. It's very similar to the survey in a sense. I'm — I guess — just pre-questions I looked over when you sent me the other day. I was like, "Alright, well let's see if I answer it the same way."

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* Okay well we're going to get started with some background information. Your total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Eight plus — at least 15.

*Interviewer:* 15, okay. Total years of administrative experience at this school?

*Interviewee:* This school, eight years.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Current enrollment, under 400 or over 400.

*Interviewee:* It may have changed over the last few days and jumped over 400. 380-390 so . . .

*Interviewer:* Okay so you're right on the line. So you're under if you're at 380.

*Interviewee:* Right, of course.

*Interviewer:* No, around about is good.

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* And are you a Title I school or non-Title I school?

*Interviewee:* Non-Title I.

*Interviewer:* Okay, great. So the questions are divided into three sections and some of the questions you will be asked to rate on a scale; I will share the scale. You have the questions in front of you to reference as well. If you need me to clarify, you can just ask me and we can give some clarity if needed.

So number one, select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school on a scale of 1-7 with a 1 being rarely, 4 some of the time, 7 most of the time.

*Interviewee:* Alright.

*Interviewer:* So I'll read the question again. Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school. 1 being rarely, 4 some of the time, 7 most of the time that you distribute leadership.

*Interviewee:* Okay alright. I would say 6.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So number two: How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* What I do — oh, other than position I send out surveys normally on the surveys. Leadership is identified in previous years, but there's always a follow-up over the summer in terms of what went well, what didn't, what interests are, what types of professional development professionals are actually taking. It gives me indication in terms of what the personal and professional goals are. So I identify them through annual surveys and face-to-face conversations, and certainly through an open-door policy benches throughout the year.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Number three: How do you know these leaders will be influential amongst their peers?

*Interviewee:* Quite honestly I don't. I think that through monitoring and through conversations, PLCs, make informal observations, \_\_\_\_\_ pieces. You do gain feedback. But, essentially you don't until you have your quarterly, mid-year, or end-of-year check points in terms of seeing how effective it is. In looking at the question, "influential with peers" I know it's a little bit of subjectivity towards that. There may not be a complete data set on that. But, again, observations you really don't know until those end checkpoints are given and the opportunities to express themselves again in those surveys periodically throughout the year.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Number four: What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Instructionally — if I'm understanding the question — "What leadership distribution responsibilities" — certainly instruction department-wise. I can even start with my assistant principal. There were times where — you know we're primary to intermediate — we would mix it where there'd be a couple of grades where she or I would ensure that we both had primary and intermediate grades. We've worked with different models instructionally. In terms of departments, I would have math, she would have reading. I would have science; she would have social studies. Then she would have special education in order to build her own capacity in the areas that she's going to have to be more sound on as a principal.

Certain with transportation, you involve guidance counselors and things of that nature. Testing coordinator, ILT. So you have the instructional pieces and then you have the structures and things. Discipline, we all cover. However, with discipline as well as instruction — instruction-wise, only administrators can formally observe. But, that doesn't mean we don't teach — haven't taught other building leaders, instructional team leaders — how to actually go in, what to look for, and things of that nature. We receive input. Not just teaching them, but receiving their input.

Other areas of distributive leadership would be various program, PTA, which committees — committees are huge. That's always summer with the follow-up at the end of the September which we're going into this week Thursday. So those are the things that come to mind quickly in terms of distributive leadership.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number five: How are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* Through surveys, again. Summer leadership gathers and what's important to us. What are the county goals? What are the district goals? How does that impact what we do inside our house? How is it similar to what we already do? So it can be an umbrella from the county, makes sense at the school level. Through those, we have PDI, for example. We need to

increase the transit rate of population. We have shared housing galore that this community has never had before. So, it's a different job, different community. PDIs are something, as an example, that we typically didn't need seven years ago, but we need it now. It's more necessary.

So surveys. What do we need? How do things work? Our deltas, our pros and cons, our deltas, pluses and deltas. In addition to that, PTA involvement in terms of what do families want and need? Membership is never as great as we want it to be, but we currently tap into those entities. So, a lot of the responsibilities are developed through the needs of the school community. And of course we look at our data as it relates to instruction and our MCAT math data, reading, and how our children are performing.

Again, this year the big one is attendance. I mean, every year it's big. But it's good to hear that state-wide, systemically, we're looking at attendance in a certain manner.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Number six: Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. So these other individuals, and you're going to rate each one. I'll just say the individual and the group and you can give the rating of 1, never; 2, rarely; 3, sometimes; 4, often; 5, always.

*Interviewee:* Question. In terms of the "frequency" are fully distributed, let me give an example, bus transportation or what-have-you. Whichever leader who has been selected to do that, the frequency that they actually implement that on their own in a sense?

*Interviewer:* The frequency in which you allow them to implement that.

*Interviewee:* Understood.

*Interviewer:* Fully. Without you having —

*Interviewee:* To micro-manage.

*Interviewer:* Exactly, yep.

*Interviewee:* I got you.

*Interviewer:* So, again, I'll just read number six. Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school? So we're going to start with your assistant principal if you have one.

*Interviewee:* I do, thank God. I would any 4 and in some cases a 5. It would depend upon what that responsibility is. Do you want me to go into detail on that?

*Interviewer:* It's up to you.

*Interviewee:* Okay. A 4 would be discipline. You know? Discipline very competent. Knows the district's and school's policies and procedures. But the final signature on discipline would be mine, the principal's. So that would definitely be — go through all the gamut, input in the system, communicate with parents, all her. So it's like a 4-plus. But in terms of the signature, that would be mine so that would a 4.

But an area where she would be a 5, we talk about she creates the informal observation schedule, she leads the learning walks, focus walks. That's a 5. Of course we collaborate, but that's something that — I wouldn't say "strong point" — that's something that she's good at, and I trust her on that, and we've had some years together. So that would be a 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Instructional-lead teacher?

*Interviewee:* There it is again, 4s and 5s. Most of them are 5s. For example, she's also the testing coordinator. I follow her lead on that in terms of what she feels is most appropriate settings. Again, collaboration with that. But for that duty and we have a Glow which is a teacher workshop. She has authority and full implementation.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional development lead teacher? PDLT?

*Interviewee:* That's a 3 because half the time, PDLTs we really don't know what the heck they're supposed to do.

*Interviewer:* Can you speak up? I want to make sure —

*Interviewee:* I got you. 3s. PDLT is a 3 just because position-wise it's been defined four or five different ways since it's actually came to our district. So there's still just a lack of clarity in terms of exactly what PDLTs are to do. Essentially, there's been two or three different PDLTs in the last four or five years.

Just one, trying to build capacity and two, trying to get the right fit for the county. Right now, PDLTs in the last two or three years are working heavily with the \_\_\_\_\_ but prior to that, they were working with FFT. So that's a 3. It depends on the clarity of what the district wants and it's certainly what we're able to do at the school level — and our comfort level to be honest with you. In terms of what knowing what the position is for.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Leadership team members.



*Interviewee:* Often. I'm in secondary for 14 years, and elementary school for eight years. Instructional team leaders, department chairs, their commission to lead collaborative planning sessions on a weekly basis. They are to speak to the grade levels on a routine basis, parental concerns, things of that nature. It is a progress area because it's elementary school. Because there are so many different roles that elementary plays because of lack of staffing, I think in the last few years it's been a gradual acceptance of "I can do this as a leader. I don't have to go automatically to all these issues going to administration AP or principal.

Instruction is number one when we talk about the standards and we talk about going into MCAP. That's a leader that they lead department wise. Then, grade-level wise, it's their ethos under the banner of school culture. So that would be a 4-5.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Grade level team members?

*Interviewee:* Same as the department leaders. Different focus, but again the culture of the school and how the grade level is run. Of course, there is that banner of the school, Big Rocks, and things of that nature. But, inside the grade level their commission to work with the staff as well as the parents. So again, that would be a 4 and in some cases a 5.

*Interviewer:* And then department leaders, about the same?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Can you just rate that for me?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Um . . . teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* I wish I had one. I do not have one. But, that would be a 5 if I had one.

*Interviewer:* But rated as current?

*Interviewee:* I don't have one. It's N/A.

*Interviewer:* It's N/A. Instructional coaches?

*Interviewee:* That's a 5. I have a math literacy coach and we collaborate but again, she's a specialist in mathematics and the latest — not trends — but the latest strategies and the latest developments of the math program. So, again, that would be a 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What about other individuals' counselors, specialists, support staff?

*Interviewee:* Okay so I'll categorize them. So the professional guidance counselor, again that's more of a 4 and a 5. 4 in an area of ensuring that the school policy and procedures in the district policies and procedures are not so much in conflict, but they're understood so that she can actually implement professional guidance counseling initiatives. So that would be a 4. But a 5 would be in small-group counseling sessions with particular students, she certainly has full implementation of that.

In terms of specialists; art, physical education, music, media specialists, that would be often. Often. Again, one of those areas is a department chair person. That's why in an isolated scenario they would become a leader. But in terms of their specialist individuality they would be 4s. Then, with paras, I have I think the best paras in the district. They've been around education for over 25 years and they're very solid. So, again, that would be a 4 where most cases I would say that would be a 2 with somebody new. But mine are at a 4. They're often have their roles.

One of them specifically works with homeless children and families inside the role because you see it through early childhood. Again, I think that the trust is there. Instruction, of course they would fall to a 3. But, again, that's recognized and the skill set is in this building.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Okay we're moving onto section B which is just on the back there. Section B we're going to talk about distributed leadership structures, processes, and tools. What structures, processes and tools do you use to distribute leadership in your building? So number one: Rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school? Okay so 1 being never; 2, rarely; 3, sometimes; 4, often; and 5, always.

The structures include — the first structure is school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* Okay. School leadership team? I'm looking at the question again . . . 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Collaborative planning teams?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning communities, PLCs?

*Interviewee:* You said "current."

*Interviewer:* As in —

*Interviewee:* I get it. What I want to say, in two months it's going to be different from right now.

*Interviewer:* Nuh-uh.

*Interviewee:* Right now.

*Interviewer:* And remember, you received this survey because you hold the role of principal last school year. Since we're just starting this school year it's almost like reflecting, too.

*Interviewee:* I think it was a 2.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And then grade level teams?

*Interviewee:* That was 4.

*Interviewer:* Department teams?

*Interviewee:* 3.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams?

*Interviewee:* I would say 3. I classify Glow as a —

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams?

*Interviewee:* 3.

*Interviewer:* And any other teams you may have like SIT, IEP teams, any of those kinds of teams?

*Interviewee:* 4.

*Interviewer:* Others is 4.

*Interviewee:* I don't know how effective that was, but 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number two: What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* In terms of processes, I think more routines. In terms of processes I'm drawing a blank. We meet with frequency, routinely. The structure is always on a Tuesday or always on a Thursday. So, you know, first of the month, second of the month, third of the month.

*Interviewer:* Oh, let me help you —

*Interviewee:* Please.

*Interviewer:* — with processes because there are some listed here that will help you with question two and three. Processes include — I'll restate them but you were on the right track — processes include peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, in-house professional development, peer-to-peer observations, walkthrough with feedback, informal observations, learning walks, data analysis, and others. So, number two again I'll say, what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* In-house professional development, certainly walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, learning walks, each one of them is followed up with data analysis. That actually precipitates the learning walk, data analysis, as well as the feedback. Those are the essential areas or essential processes that we use.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Then number three, how do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* They actually affect it because staff have good questions. With that being said, it leads to peer-to-peer observations. While it's a structure that we want to define more, we certainly have more vertical peer-to-peer observations than we did in the beginning of my three or four years. The last three have been one where the Glow — for example — only for teachers. The process was only for new teachers. Now they're opened up to everybody because if it's something like classroom management or it's something like discussion, it allows the whole entity of the building staff to be developed. So it is very impactful because they lead to other processes to be implemented.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number four: What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school? So tools may include; meeting agenda templates, walkthrough templates, lesson plan templates, feedback templates, peer-to-peer feedback forms, teacher mentoring documents, communication tools, data collection forms, or other.

So, again, number four: What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* We have a plethora of electronic templates. We have the collaborative planning template. Also, every single teacher, every grade level, every content area has a weekly lesson plan for the week outside of their door. That's facilitated through collaborative planning, or grade level if you're

talking about a primary grade where the three rotation teachers select the content area to actually be the lead plan in that grade level.

These templates and these tools allow for the peer-to-peer walks, they allow for the focus walks, the informals more specifically for people to come and know exactly what a particular classroom will be engaging in. These tools also encompass the standards. They encompass the DOK level of engagement. They encompass certainly the product and the assessment. So it allows — I may be going to the next question — but the impact it allows whoever is visiting the classroom whether it's a peer, whether it's an informal observation, whether it's a learning walk. It allows not only the individual to not only know what they can be looking for, but it allows for a greater feedback in terms of being specific.

It also allows for data analysis to be gathered. For instance, if you're in a math class in a third or fourth grade and the standard is set but the level of engagement should be discourse. They're supposed to be speaking and using manipulatives. Well if you see that seven out of ten classes that you enter, it's more than simply 77% are we doing it. The template allows you — the focus template allows you to enter the information so that you have a school-wide look opposed to the individual teacher in terms of these are the specific examples that we're seeing inside the class. It allows professionals to accurately build their own capacity or the professional development I should say so they can say, "Okay I need to do this or I need to go around the classrooms in another area."

In terms of impact — I'm just jumping to four.

*Interviewer:* Okay we'll just do the next one then. Number five is: How do these tools impact the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* What is done with my building is it's allowed to teachers to be in a forum. It allows us to add additional teachers to a team to actually conduct a learning walk. So where it was mainly with leadership team members, it's opened up in the last couple of years where not any individual, but where additional teachers and professionals can accompany leadership team members on walks so that it can be their own capacity and allow them to see the content area or allow them to see an area from Glow, the teacher workshop, that we believe need to be highlighted. It could be something as simple as look-fors, it could be something with fractions or something of that nature. It could be the comprehension of understanding of this is MCAT 3-5. It all begins in kindergarten and first grade where numbers are identified and things of that nature as an example.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Great. So now we're going to move to Section C and we're going to talk about barriers and supporting factors around distributive

leadership. Number one: What factors support principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their school?

*Interviewee:* Budget. Budget can certainly support principals. I think a lot of central office or area office communication. In specific, you know, my own instruction of direct I've had three in three years. They've all been supportive. That had a lot to do with just the shift. But they've all been supportive knowing because of visiting. Knowing some of the needs and being able to articulate, "Hey, building A might benefit by doing this." I do believe through my own — what do you call it — my own advertising, marketing, or interests, but along with the support from the area office, I've been able to have this math literacy coach. Certainly the data necessitates it, but I think that helps. So that would be a support. That and any extra funding or any — what do you call those positions — gifted positions which they don't do.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number two: What factors act as barriers to principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Lack of funding would be at the top. Also, you know, teacher certification. You know I don't want to call it "transient rate" but you know, teacher turnover — teacher retainment nationwide, state wide, systemic wide, school wide. You know I think that and funding might be the biggest area. If you don't have teachers, you have teacher turnover. Then you essentially start over from the beginning and that can definitely impact building teacher capacity or distributive leadership, excuse me.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Okay —

*Interviewee:* I got one other thing to say.

*Interviewer:* Sure.

*Interviewee:* In terms of a barrier, this is me as a principal but looking at the 22 career. The number of individuals who receive promotions during the school year when students are inside the building is a barrier. It's a barrier. Testing coordinator, special education coordinator, whatever the scenario may be.

*Interviewer:* Promotions that create vacancies?

*Interviewee:* Thank you. Promotions that create vacancies. We certainly want people to be promoted.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. So number three: What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* My own acts. Principal actions. I think the principal needs to not only know the weaknesses and the strengths of him or herself, but we need to — we need to not only interview those building leaders, but we need to assess them in terms of their interests and their goals — short term and long range. Three or five — three years out, five years out, ten years out.

I certainly have never practiced — I share with my staff — I'm here to support you and help you as well as the children. But, I clearly know which ones want to stay here for good. I know which ones want to be out and want to be out of the classroom, they want to go onto bigger and better things. I clearly know. You know, my actions should dictate that. Not dictate that, but understand that.

In terms of sustainability, knowing that information, I can still help those individual teachers but my first goal is to sustain what's going on at Kettering. So, of my leadership team — of the probably nine now — four of them have been here the whole time. Four or five of them are interchangeable over the last four years. That's not a bad thing but you want balance. You want balance. That's something I probably couldn't articulate two or three years ago, but I certainly can — you want to grow people and at the same time you want to sustain.

I think in addition to that, other factors that may contribute to the sustainability are just the skillset. The skillset of the professionals in your building. This is a small building. It's not a school that has 5, 6, 7, 800 children. We're a Title I so you essentially utilize the professionals you have in the building and the skillset.

Some years you maybe have a plethora of individuals who can do the job. Then you have other jobs where you're fighting to make sure you have six, seven individuals who can do the job quite frankly.

*Interviewer:* Good. Okay. Number four: How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in school?

*Interviewee:* Again, promotions.

*Interviewer:* Promotions. Is that a support?

*Interviewee:* I think that would be a hindrance.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I think that would be a hindrance, unless of course I'm receiving it — which I haven't.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:*

Unless of course I'm receiving it, which I haven't. Again, looking at the question, this is more from the systemic level. Certification but you can't go away from that, but I think that can hinder you. You have very good staff practitioners. If they don't maintain a certification, then they're out. I understand that, but you cannot continuously need 600-800 people every single year. I know it's all tied into recruitment and this is that. It's not so much as a chastise. It's just something that I know systemically we've looked at. But perhaps something differently needs to be done.

I don't know if it's a national thing, but maybe something national needs to be done differently. But the sustainability of leadership really depends on the pool of candidates that we actually have in a system that each school in return can actually select and has an opportunity to select from. I know that's kind of like the golden egg question. No one really has figured that out 100 percent. So I'm probably not mentioning anything new there.

I do think more support however is the realignment of associates and a structure that governs the levels of education where you have elementary professionals you know, trained, bred, et cetera on each level: elementary, middle, and high school. Having been a teacher on an elementary level and high school level and an administrator on every level, I think I'm one of very few who can say from experience at each level requires something a little differently.

I think that alignment definitely supports leadership because the individuals and the candidates who HR for example recommends, they've been — from my perspective — the last 12-18 months, they've been more in-tune with the building's needs and the level's needs.

*Interviewer:*

Number five — and this is the last question — how does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school? Some things to think about; your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities. How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school?

*Interviewee:*

I'm going to go to something I just said. I've been fortunate enough to have taught as a teacher elementary, middle, and high school. No area less than two years. Having seen a classroom on those levels and having been an administrator, I think it's always best to have experienced something. To not fully understand and comprehend what someone's going through, but to understand the work. I think that as a woo — one of my strengths is a



woo — paired with contextualist or my other areas — I think that's allowed me to have empathy. Or more importantly to be aware.

Certainly you can't be a teacher in my opinion and not understand — you can't be a principal and not understand you can't do it by yourself. So, those are — like I said at the forefront of my mind when we look at a goal, or a task, or a need, or even data. Knowing that it has to be shared leadership. Whether it's an assistant principal, whether it's an ILT, whether it's just that one rock star inside the classroom. Finding ways to actually pull them out of the classroom periodically to see the greater picture in terms of how we move children, how we move achievement.

So, in getting back directly to the question, leadership capacity — you know, I've been told and I like to feel as though I'm not just a team player. I design the goal and the focus in terms of where we're going. I'm smart enough to know that the other abilities such as my AP, she's strategic planning and can setup certain objectives to actually reach that.

I don't know — did I answer the question?

*Interviewer:* Yes. Anything else you want to add to that one?

*Interviewee:* No, just thank you.

*Interviewer:* That was good. That was the last question and that ends our interview questions. Thank you for participating. I appreciate you spending this time.

### **Stephanie**

*Interviewer:* Good afternoon

*Interviewee:* Good afternoon.

*Interviewer:* Thank you for agreeing to participate in a follow-up principal interview. Based on your survey questions you noted that you would be willing to participate and I appreciate your efforts.

Before we get started did you have any questions of clarity? I know that you received the questions beforehand, did you have anything you wanted me to clear up before we got started?

*Interviewee:* No, no thank you, I'm good.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. So the questions are divided into three sections, Sections A, B, and C. Some of the questions you will rank, score and I will let you

know what the scale is. You have the questions in front of you to reference. Okay so we're going to start with some background information, total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Twenty.

*Interviewer:* Twenty? Okay. Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* Ten.

*Interviewer:* Current enrollment under 400 or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Over.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is your school a Title I school or not?

*Interviewee:* Not.

*Interviewer:* Not a Title, okay, good. So in Section A we're going to talk about how you distribute leadership responsibilities in your school. So the first question is: Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being you "rarely" distribute leadership at your school, 4 is "some of the time," and 7 "most of the time," on that scale.

*Interviewee:* Seven.

*Interviewer:* Seven, good. Number Two: How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* Most of the leaders in emerge and/or are sort of self-selected or you identify some expertise that you have seen in them and you identify them as teacher leaders.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number Three: How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* Most of the time peers are already voluntarily going to these leaders that are identified and/or the leaders themselves are taking the initiative already, so therefore they already have relationships with the peers that they are going to lead.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number Four: What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* So there are many responsibilities, leading certain meetings or content areas, leading sort of many of the district initiatives are responsibilities of the leaders, a lot of the sort of local/state assessments/laws/mandates or some of the initiatives that a lot of our teacher leaders lead.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. So how are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* Mostly through policy procedures and district mandates and oftentimes the need of our school based on the needs of our school.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number Six: Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. There's a list of those individuals and groups which I will read each one and you can rank, rate them, sorry, based on 1 "never," 2 "rarely," 3 "sometimes," 4 "often," 5 "always" fully distributing responsibilities to those leaders. Your assistant principal?

*Interviewee:* Always.

*Interviewer:* So that's a 5, right?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* ILT?

*Interviewee:* When I have an ILT which this year I do I would say a 4.

*Interviewer:* Professional develop teacher, PDLT?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Leadership team member.

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team member.

*Interviewee:* Four. We don't have department leads.

*Interviewer:* No departments, okay. Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches.

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* And other persons or individuals, i.e. counselors, specialists, support staff.

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* So other would be 4, too as well. Okay good.

Now we're going to go into Section B, which is going to talk about how you use structures, processes, and tools to distribute leadership in your building.

So this is another rate question. Rate each of the structures in terms of the level of, the current level of implementation at your school. The structures are listed. I will name each structure and you can rate each structure with 1 being "never," 2 "rarely," 3 "sometimes," 4 "often, 5 "always." The first structure, school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Okay collaborative planning teams?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional learning communities.

*Interviewee:* Three.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Grade level teams?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* And department teams, you don't, you said you didn't, NA.

*Interviewee:* No, mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams.

*Interviewee:* Four. That's kind of a five.

*Interviewer:* School improvement?

*Interviewee:* If you're including SIT, SST, and IEP it's a 5.

*Interviewer:* Well no that was, I think that was separate.

*Interviewee:* Oh that's other, okay. So school improvement 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay and then other.

*Interviewee:* Other 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay so you have other as in SIT and that would be 5, okay.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* That will be a 5, okay good. Number Two: What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? Processes include and I'll just read the list here: peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, in-house professional development, peer-to-peer observation, walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, learn-and-walks, data analysis, or other. So these are some of the processes. Again, what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* So peer coaching, mentoring, and instructional coaching is used often. In-house PD is often used. Definitely walkthroughs, informal observations, formal observations, learning-and-walk, data analysis, meetings, all of those processes are used.

*Interviewer:* Okay so Number Three: How do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* Well they definitely lend themselves to greater communication whether it's a top-down or you know bottom-up sort of communication or whether it's a you know just lateral peer-to-peer communications. So it opens that door for communication, clear expectations, sets up an opportunity for learning from each other, peer-to-peer learning and increasing teaching and learning in several ways.

*Interviewer:* Can you expand on some of those ways that it increases teaching and learning?

*Interviewee:* Sure. So when you are using these processes of sort of like coaching and doing walkthroughs and learning while it gives the teacher leaders and administrators an opportunity to see teaching in its practice in its authentic form. So when you are observing in all of those processes you get to sort of observe, compare it with the expectation of the curriculum and/or of the district and/or good practice. Then being able to speak with the teachers

about how they feel like that learning, that teaching and learning is impacting the students give you a greater insight on how to increase student achievement.

So when you all can sort of communicate regarding what's actually happening in the class and what the expectation is it has a greater impact on increasing student achievement and talking about the whole teaching and learning process.

*Interviewer:* Okay Number Four in this section: What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school? Tools include leading, agenda templates, walkthrough templates, lesson plan templates, feedback templates, peer-to-peer feedback forms, teacher mentoring documents, communication tools, data collection forms, or other.

*Interviewee:* So we certainly use all of those.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Rolling agendas, learning, walk, and feedback letters, Google surveys, and matrix, matrices are also used, in addition to all of the tools that you just named.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. How do these tools, how do these tools impact the implementation of distributive leadership in your school?

*Interviewee:* A lot of them when you especially in regards to written feedback to teachers a lot of them give evidenced-based documents. So that teachers have something concrete to sort of remember what was stated and/or what was said. A lot of the documents are used to actually write next steps or evaluative sort of learning. For example on rolling agendas you have what we call "pluses and deltas," so it kind of gives some information back about what is working and what is not working.

Then with any feedback you always have that as a tool that you can go back to and learn from. And so it just really sort of streamlines and allows us to look at and compare each other's feedback and the expectations around learning and giving you something concrete to sort of compare and document the teaching and learning process.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So now we're going to Section C. In Section C we're going to talk about the barriers and supporting factors as it relates to distributive leadership. Number One: What factors – *[intercom interrupting]*

Again, Number One: What factors support principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Well having protocols and tools actually support your ability to distribute leadership. Also have policies and procedures and clearly written expectations help you support the distribution leadership in your school. Clear direction from the district helps with that, helps to align the work in knowing what the structures and the monitoring and accountability structures are also helps with distribution leadership.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number Two: What factors act as barriers to principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Skill set, knowledge, pedagogy, people not understanding the work or task that are being asked of them. Also, I think interpersonal skills is a barrier, because a lot of the work is about relationship building and building other's capacity. I think it takes a great deal of and a certain kind of interpersonal skills to be able to do that kind of work. So if you don't have those interpersonal skills it definitely can be a barrier.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* I think structures.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Or factors that can contribute to sustaining leadership, have a certain structures, policies, and procedure, consistency amongst staff and the people who are doing the work also helps with distribution leadership. Goals, mission, and visions definitely impact that. Just being clear about what those things, those goals and missions that you're trying to accomplish help drive the work and then you're able to definitely and clearly articulate the work and the mission to others which helps sustain leadership distribution.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* Okay so I think the structure support because the principal has an instructional director that sort of can streamline some of the priority initiatives and goals of the work. I think the district also has clear policies and procedures, handbooks that are also supporting the work. The district is also departmentalized in a way that supports the needs of the school. So if you have student services you can contact student services; if you have school improvements question there's a school improvement office. So I think the district's offices are aligned to the work.

The barrier to that is, I guess the barrier to that is you have a lot of people and a lot of offices and so sometime because of duplication of services it's not easy to get your questions answered. So I think that's a barrier to actually being able to distribute leadership and know what to do because of there are a lot of offices that you have to go to.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Our last question is: How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school? Think about are your current capacity regarding leadership, your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self efficacy abilities.

*Interviewee:* So I think that definitely speaking to the leadership ability the fact that I've been a leader for 20 years, in the same school 10 years that leadership ability and being confident in what I can do and know to do allows me to distribute leadership more because I know the work. So it's easy to sort of trust others to do the work because you have the ability to build those relationships and ensure that the work gets done through monitoring so I think that that's definitely helpful for the leadership capacity.

So I really just really think it comes down to if you have the belief that you can actually change a school and you understand that that work is not done alone then you are confident in getting others to do what them to do because you know they sort of want to do it. I think it all comes down to your own self-confidence and knowledge of the work and knowledge of teaching and learning and feeling confident that you actually know enough to get that work done through others.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm, okay. Do you have anything else you'd like to add for any of the questions?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Well thank you for participating. I really appreciate your effort, thank you.

*Interviewee:* You are welcome.

## **Robert**

*Interviewer:* Good morning. How are you?

*Interviewee:* I'm good. How are you doing?

*Interviewer:* I'm great. Thank you for agreeing to interview with me this morning as a follow up to the principal survey that you engaged in regarding distributed leadership in your building. We are going to ask some questions. The



protocol is divided into three sections, Section A, B, and C. Some of the questions are rated on a scale. I will read the scale when those questions come up and we will go from there.

We're going to start with some background information. Total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Nineteen years.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* Three.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Are you under 400 enrollment or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Under 400. We're actually at 376.

*Interviewer:* Is your school Title I or non?

*Interviewee:* Title I.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. So the first questions we're going to ask are around distributed leadership responsibilities. No. 1. Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being rarely, 4 some of the time, 7 most of the time.

*Interviewee:* I'll give it a 6. I was able to identify – well, I guess I'm jumping to the next question.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so the next question is how do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* Okay, well, being that it's my third year here, my first year, I had to really observe practice and just I looked at also student data and I just observed teachers, just how they interacted and who had qualified leadership skills. From that point, I was able to identify my leadership team, and now, since this is my third year here, I have reduced that number to about 7. I think before I had 13 each year. Then I dropped to 11, and so now, I have more of a focus with just 7 individuals.

*Interviewer:* Okay. No. 3. How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* Well, it's not the principal who influences staff. My job is to influence the entire staff, but my leadership team, they have more influence with their peers because they're colleagues. They're in the same union, and I think

the message would come across more so from their leadership colleagues than me, so to say. So they're very influential.

*Interviewer:* Okay, No. 4. What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Well, this year, I have an academic support team. It consists of myself, the assistant principal, reading resource, and math ILT. So we're definitely attacking data, looking at barriers, and also, we're doing learning walks and informal observations to see what professional development needs are needed here, and then we'll identify next steps. And that's the four of us and we meet twice a month.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Any other leadership distribution responsibilities?

*Interviewee:* Yes. We have an attendance committee based off my principals' meeting last week when they gave us the attendance data. My attendance data is horrible. So now we have attendance committee in which we have 61 percent of our students who come to school and 39 percent that are chronically absent. That affects our data, so we just developed an attendance committee.

We definitely have our leadership team. We have our SPMT meeting, collaborative planning, but the new thing's the academic support team and the attendance committee. That's new this year.

*Interviewer:* How are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* Based on data, looking at data. The data is gonna drive instruction. I think last year, my reading resource, it was her first year, so she was learning her role, and my math ILT, they're both in classrooms, so I developed schedules for them. Well, they developed their schedules and we discussed them. So now they're supporting small group. Small group is really gonna drive our data.

*Interviewer:* Six. Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school? So you're going to rate these individuals and groups on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always. Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to these individuals and I'll read the individuals.

Assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Instructional lead teacher.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Professional development.

*Interviewee:* 5.

*Interviewer:* Leadership team members.

*Interviewee:* I would say often because we meet once a month.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Grade level team member.

*Interviewee:* I would say often 'cause I consider that SPMT, so that's once a month.

*Interviewer:* Department leaders.

*Interviewee:* 4, 'cause they're part of SPMT.

*Interviewer:* Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* I would say sometimes. We're developing accountability partners, so I'm doing some of that tomorrow for professional development.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. Instructional coaches.

*Interviewee:* Never.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and any other individuals or groups, counselors, specialist, support?

*Interviewee:* Counselors, 5. Specialists, 5. Support staff, 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. So now we're going to Section B which we're going to talk about the structures, processes, and tools that you use to help support distributed leadership practices in your building. So we're going to rate, again, this question. Rate each of the structures in terms of current level of implementation at your school. The structures are here and the rating scale is here.

So school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* I would say between a 4 and a 5. I'd give it a 4. We meet once a month as a leadership team, but I meet every other week with my academic support team. So it can go either way.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Collaborative planning team?

*Interviewee:* 5. We have collaborative planning by department for my third through sixth-grade teachers, and pre-K and K, that's all the time, every week.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional learning communities.

*Interviewee:* Rarely.

*Interviewer:* That's a 2.

*Interviewee:* Well, no. I would say a 4 and a 5, because I consider collaborative planning a professional learning community. Attendance committee, professional learning community. Leadership, professional learning community. SPMT, professional learning community. So I'm gonna say often.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Grade level teams.

*Interviewee:* Grade level teams. That's often.

*Interviewer:* Department teams, you said –

*Interviewee:* Department teams, that's often.

*Interviewer:* And professional development teams?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes. We sit down and plan for professional development so we're all set. For instance, for tomorrow, and for next month, as well.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams.

*Interviewee:* Well, that's ongoing. I'd say often. With the SPP, I would say that's often.

*Interviewer:* And then other teams, like SIT, SSE, IEP.

*Interviewee:* Always.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And there are a list of processes there, so what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership?

*Interviewee:* Okay, so No. 1, I'm looking at this in-house professional development. I know the county has many resources but what's gonna move our data is the resources in the school, so we try to use each other as a resource. Peer-

to-peer observations. I include some teachers on learning walks so they get to observe other teachers. Walk throughs with feedback and formal observations. That's ongoing, learning walks.

Data analysis. We hold data utilization meetings once a quarter, however every collaborative planning week three, we analyze student data. So we have a three-week cycle for collaborative planning. And peer coaching, I've kind of coached my peers and then they'll be able to coach others in the building. So I just lead by example.

*Interviewer:* So how do these processes impact distributed leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* So like I said, whatever we receive from the school system, I take it and deliver it to the staff, and so I monitor the implementation or practices with fidelity. If they have an agenda set, if they're meeting with a group, I always have a set where I have administrative feedback. So I'm constantly participating in any leadership practices or sessions that they have, but I'm always giving constructive feedback, and they do the same for me.

*Interviewer:* You're speaking about your leaders, right?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good.

*Interviewee:* So I told them I want to improve my practice, as well. What can I work on? Sometimes we get so caught up where we're in charge and we can't receive feedback, but that's the only way we're gonna grow collectively.

*Interviewer:* Good. Okay, so what tools do you use to support implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And there are some tools listed here.

*Interviewee:* Okay, so this is easy. Meeting agendas. We have the Data Wise agenda I have all of my meetings, collaborative planning, leadership. I stick to that protocol. We have walk through templates for learning walks. We have lesson plan templates for reading and math. I really haven't developed one for science and social studies, yet. Communication tools, I have data collection forms. I also have data briefs that I send home to parents, but those stick out from the tools included with the list here.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* No. 1, you have to coach them. What I had to do here was this school never used the Data Wise process. Even though we don't do that as a

county, but those agendas keep us on track and on pace. So I had to model what that looks like for a faculty meeting, and collaborative planning, and all of our meetings. However, now to develop leadership capacity, I'm not the only one developing the agenda or facilitating. I lead and then we pass the buck around to the leadership team, and not only leadership. For example, if I have third through sixth-grade math teachers, each one of us are going to facilitate a meeting. So you model and you share the wealth.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So now we're on Section C and we're going to talk about barriers and supporting factors to distributed leadership at the school level and at the district level. What factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* For me, I would say definitely the principals' meetings, cluster meetings, because they receive information to give to us and our job is to deliver it to the staff. So I would definitely say the area offices, definitely support from the instructional director, and they kind of really it's simple. They spell out for us exactly what to do. They give us the data. Now it's time for you to take this information and inform your staff. I mean that's common sense. I don't know if everyone is doing that, but that's common sense right there.

*Interviewer:* What factors act as barriers to principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their school?

*Interviewee:* There's always something to do. You can never get the job done. You feel like you finish one thing and it's something else. That's part of this role. You have to adjust your time. You have to be very flexible. You might get things at the last minute. So those are always barriers. I might have a day's schedule but you don't know how your day turns out till you show up, so all you do is put your best foot forward. But barriers is just you cannot control your day, sometimes and there's always something to do.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices?

*Interviewee:* Consistency.

*Interviewer:* And tell me more about consistency.

*Interviewee:* So we're talking about sustainability, so I can't get off-track regardless of my schedule. We know that we have these meetings on these certain dates. That's just standard. So I would say just be consistent with your meetings, being consistent with following up on any requests that you have. Constructive feedback from staff members or if something's not working.

Because sometimes as principal, we may have tunnel vision and we need others to assist us with our vision on certain things or give recommendations. So I would just say that just being consistent. The good thing for me, I don't have a large turnover. I have one new teacher, so we all kind of know what's taking place here.

*Interviewer:* No turnover, okay.

*Interviewee:* Yes. I have one new teacher and the reason I have one new one because one was not certified in elementary education.

*Interviewer:* So would you say turnover could be an issue regarding sustainability?

*Interviewee:* For some schools. Knock on wood, I don't have that.

*Interviewer:* But you view that it could be a potential issue for sustainability.

*Interviewee:* Absolutely. I'm meeting with colleagues and they're saying they have 10 to 12 new people in their building. That's retraining staff. You don't know if people have the pedagogy to teach or what they know, what their background knowledge is. Then you have to get them through getting to teacher mode and teacher practice. Its' difficult. I thank God I don't have those problems.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so how does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices? So at the district level how are the organization structures hindering or supporting that?

*Interviewee:* Well, I'd say at the district level, I think Prince George's County does an excellent job supporting distributed leadership practices. They're constantly having trainings and workshops for us to always improve our knowledge of education. Also, developing leadership in your schools. I think that's key and I think that's up to the principal to trust his or her staff to support the implementation of distributed leadership. So it starts at the district level, and regardless if the principal agrees or disagrees, which I don't disagree, you have to support the district as implemented in order for it to be successful.

I don't know how good I answered that question.

*Interviewer:* That was fine. That was good. That was No. 4. Okay, so the last question, how does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school? And so think about are your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities to do this distributed leadership in your school.

*Interviewee:* Okay. Well, as far as my leadership abilities, I would say I'm a transformational leader. I just think building relationships is the key to be successful, and that's with students, faculty, parents, and staff. Because a principal cannot do this job alone. I'm a collaborative leader, so I like to bring people on board to share ideas. I may have an idea but I need feedback to improve it. You're gonna have glitches and things, but for me, I'm just very receptive and I like to collaborate, but at the end of the day, when the decision has to be made, I have to make the decision, so I'm 51 percent of the vote.

Emotional intelligence abilities. Could you break that down?

*Interviewer:* So how does your emotional intelligence, if it does at all, play in on your capacity to –

*Interviewee:* Got it. So I was always told both professionally and personally, do not think off of emotions. So we have to put the face on sometimes. We might have that parent that we don't want to speak to or that may get on our nerves, or a staff member, but at the end of the day, they have a concern, whether it's their child or the job, so I don't let my emotions – and if I do, I go in my office and close the door and just wusa, but I do not let my emotions get the best of me, and if they do, then I know how to call in for some assistance, an assistant principal, and we work together.

So if she has a problem or feeling a certain way, then I'm here to back her up, but that stops at the top. I think the person, the principal, has to set the tone and be professional. I think sometimes our line of work is lacking professionalism and so I just try to be professional at all times.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So that is our last question. Do you have anything else you'd like to add, at this point?

*Interviewee:* No. I just believe that I think our county is doing an excellent job with just laying the foundation of what we would like in our student achievement at the end of the day. I think Prince George's County develops the greatest leaders in the country and that's why some people, when they leave the county, they get jobs, and I think the training that the county provides is phenomenal. I can say that. But with the new leadership, things take time. Change is not a process. It's an event.

*Interviewer:* This is true. Well, thank you so much for your time. I appreciate you agreeing to do this follow-up interview.

*Interviewee:* No problem.



## Laura

- Interviewer:* Good afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the principal interview survey. This is a follow up from the principal survey that was provided to you around distributed leadership practices, and we are going to ask some questions around how you distribute leadership in your school. The questions are comprised of the survey – sorry, the interview protocol is divided into three sections, sections A, B, and C. Some of the questions you will need to rate on a scale, like a scale, and I will share the scale with you when we come to those questions. We're going to start if you're ready with some background information.
- Interviewee:* Sure.
- Interviewer:* So total years of administrative experience.
- Interviewee:* This is my seventh year.
- Interviewer:* Years at your current school.
- Interviewee:* This is my second school year there.
- Interviewer:* Current enrollment under 400 or over 400?
- Interviewee:* Under.
- Interviewer:* Is your school a title I or non title I?
- Interviewee:* Title I.
- Interviewer:* Okay. In section A we're going to talk about how you distribute leadership responsibilities within your school. So number one is a question where you will have to rate on a scale of 1-7, 1 being rarely, 4 being some of the time, and 7 being most of the time. So number 1, select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school.
- Interviewee:* I would say a 5.
- Interviewer:* Okay. Number 2, how do you identify leaders at your school?
- Interviewee:* So right now, this year, we had to – well last budget season I had to reduce the number of people, so there were actually fewer people leading this year. But folks who have identified that they're interested in leadership. Also people who have been very helpful

and supportive of other people, people who serve as great models for new people and developing individuals. So there are lots of ways we've used to identify leaders in the schools.

*Interviewer:* How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* That's a good question. What we did this year – we're very strategic about providing more leadership development. So last year was my first year as a principal at my school, and I just kind of kept some people in place, and there were some people who did a great job, others who needed some development, and others who weren't doing a great job at all. So just being transparent with them, but in my reflection I realized I needed to spend more time developing them. So we talked about this summer at the retreat adaptive and technical changes. We talked about the DNA of a leader at our school and what that required. Then we talked about the mission, vision, and direction that we're going into, and how if people wanted to continue to be on a team they had to commit to what it was we were doing and support.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number 4, what leadership responsibilities – I'm sorry, what leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Can you explain what your leading – leadership distribution – just so I'm clear.

*Interviewer:* So what responsibilities have you distributed to leaders?

*Interviewee:* Okay. So today I have two people in my building who have their \_\_\_\_\_ certification, and they had different roles last year, but one of the areas I determined they both needed support in was building relationships with people. And so one of the things that's important to me is retention and recruitment, so I have them over at the new teacher academy. That's an area they need to grow in, but it's also an area that's important. So I have my lens on it. They had their first meeting today, and while last year they just jumped in and did things based on what they thought was important, I've been coaching them around doing needs assessments, and kind of leading from – since they're not evaluative, establishing rapport and meeting the needs of the people.

There are other responsibilities that – like the team leaders, that's another area. They have a lot of responsibilities around the SIT process. They have responsibilities around experiential learning,

discussing students of concern, bringing up issues and serving as the liaison between the leadership team, and they also serve on the school planning and management team. So they give a lot of input and also share a lot of information with their team members. And then some of it is just based on people's responsibilities. Like our reading specialist, I think she would prefer not to be a leadership – she really enjoys being with students in the classroom, but by the very nature of her position, she is the reading leader in the building, and she has a lot of knowledge and expertise. She's really good at coaching, but she does not like to give direct feedback to people. She doesn't feel comfortable, but she's effective because she's built relationships.

*Interviewer:*

Right.

*Interviewee:*

So while she doesn't always necessarily give corrective feedback, she does always give support. I'm working with my custodian right now. He is a great, great worker, but what I've noticed in my last year and a half is, when his team slacks up, he just does the work, but he becomes frustrated. So I'm working around how do you communicate with people effectively. We started having meetings, helping him set agendas, helping him set routines for monitoring and giving feedback. I have a CSAP or Wing coordinator. I have two special education programs. Very skilled, very, very skilled, in the procedural things, but lacking in some other areas in terms of coaching.

So I've been very strategic in terms of the assignments I've given him, so that he has more opportunities, going back to relationship building. In strengths, that's not anything that's in his wheelhouse on the top five strengths, but it's critical to run the program. So just being very strategic about coaching, what that looks like, feedback, and things of that nature. So I've been very – we're using strength finders at the school this year, looking at those things, people's practice, their goals for their career, to help identify areas to distribute, and really challenging people to take on tasks that are out of their norm, and to build them up in the areas they need support in. So multiple ways to kind of distribute leadership.

*Interviewer:*

You talked a little bit about this. How are these responsibilities developed? If you want to just do a synopsis, because you did speak about how the responsibilities are developed.

*Interviewee:*

So the responsibilities are developed based on the needs of the school, and also looking at the data, and that data is to include everything from attendance, and discipline, student performance

data, teacher performance data, also I'm working with a counselor and crisis intervention center, and an area we'll begin – I'm managing some of the really difficult behaviors of the students on the Wing, and when I looked at suspension data, they were really coming from students with special needs. Those positions exist, so a crisis as a result of the program – being more proactive versus reactive, collecting data so they can make more informed decisions around the practice, but I mean I think in terms of providing a synopsis, we're looking at the needs of the school, and then identifying were they closely aligned in terms of position, and experience, and ability to support?

*Interviewer:* Okay. Good. Number six, rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. The rating scale is here, 1 being never, 2 being rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always. I will give you the individual or group, and you will use the scale to rate them. So again rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed those individuals and groups in your school. First, assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* There's no point, no in between.

*Interviewer:* You can say in between.

*Interviewee:* I would say in between 4 and 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Just to be—

*Interviewer:* We've had some of those.

*Interviewee:* Just to be transparent. I'm walking into a team that was developed before I got there, and we had some bumps in the beginning, and so in terms of trust, and follow up, I haven't fully released, but I recognize that's something I'm going to have to push myself to fully do this year. So I'm aware that it's something I need to work on, but because there's some history so to speak, I have to make sure before I'm fully released there's some cycles of monitoring and feedback before I do that. On our way to 5 but not there yet. I would say often to always depending on the situation.

*Interviewer:* Instruction lead teachers?

*Interviewee:* At this point I have a reading specialist. I would say the same. Going back to what we talked about, definitely skilled, definitely very supportive, but when it comes to holding people accountable, and gradual release, I don't always see that. I see a lot of doing for people versus empowering them to do things themselves. So there's a need to check back in and see where people are in progress, or how much support people need, or do people need the same level of support?

*Interviewer:* Professional development lead teachers, PDLTs?

*Interviewee:* That's the reading specialist. Because my school is so small, some of the people have double—

*Interviewer:* So that was rated at a – for PDLT—

*Interviewee:* I'd say 4 only because some of those initiatives I need to be briefed on and we need to talk about what that looks like at our school. While I would like to fully release it, again I think some of it is my learning curve.

*Interviewer:* Leadership team members.

*Interviewee:* I would say 3 to be fair.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team?

*Interviewee:* I would say 3.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Department leaders.

*Interviewee:* I would say 4 to that. I think it's just kind of the way they work. They bring a lot of information to me. They come with ideas, so it's easier to trust folks where they're being a lot more proactive, and have a plan of action, and dates, and things of that nature. It could simply be their style of working.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Teacher mentors?

*Interviewee:* I think a 4, going back to today. I was really excited because I know that's an area they're doing jointly, one as a special educator, one as a general educator, just based on the makeup of the school. I needed one who could support both or a team that could support both, but we talked about the needs assessment, and they brought it to me, and wanted my feedback. We're talking about this year's teachers are very different from last year's teachers and how

they're going to have to do things differently. They've kind of embraced that.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches if you have them.

*Interviewee:* I don't.

*Interviewer:* So that's an N/A. And other individuals, counselors, specialists, support staff?

*Interviewee:* Counselor, I would say 4. She's new in her practice but she's very communicative, and very eager. She has a lot of great ideas. She has great relationships, so I don't have to help her navigate any of that.

*Interviewer:* Specialist support staff.

*Interviewee:* I think we have a crisis intervention teacher who would probably classify as a specialist. I would say 4 there as well, for the same reasons as the counselor, and they work very closely together.

*Interviewer:* So now we're going to go into section B, and in section B we're going to talk about what structures, processes, and tools do you use to distribute leadership in your school to assist you with that? So the first one you're going to rate on a \_\_\_\_\_ scale, 1 being never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always, and the question is rate each of the structures in terms of current implementation at your school. The structures are listed. School leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* I would say 4. Still some work in progress. But we meet regularly, have rolling agendas. People come back with their deliverables.

*Interviewer:* Collaborative planning teams?

*Interviewee:* I just had a big blowout with one group yesterday. They decided – I wasn't there, and they wanted to take things in a different direction. I would say 75 percent would be often, but I just recognize that not everybody is operating the same. The systems are there. I would say between sometimes and often. That is one of my goals with my instructional director, to really prepare, equip, and empower teacher leaders to take more responsibility in their structure.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning communities, PLCs?

*Interviewee:* I really want my collaborative planning to function more like a PLC than a collaborative planning, but I think we have to kind of get there first. The really – right now it's kind of non-existent.

*Interviewer:* So you would say 1 for that?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I would say.

*Interviewer:* Grade level teams.

*Interviewee:* I would say 3, just as we're bringing new people on, and developing them, and also refining their role from this year to last year. So we departmentalized this year, so a lot of the work we're doing is around content, and while the team leader's a very valuable person on our teams, just what they're doing is different. So just shaping that differently.

*Interviewer:* Department teams.

*Interviewee:* I think that ties into collaborative planning, because we're departmentalized. I would say 4 there, because we put a lot of emphasis on developing people in terms of content.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams.

*Interviewee:* Don't know what that is.

*Interviewer:* Teams that would lead your professional development.

*Interviewee:* It tends to be some of the people we already talked about, like the counselor, the crisis teacher, reading specialist, AP, the CSAP people. I developed the role and agenda immediately after the meeting, and I asked one of the teachers who does that particularly well to kind of lead that, outside of her comfort zone, but she does a really great job with her students. So I would say that's sometimes, getting there. I want to use – I want to highlight the skills and the skill set of more people, and be more purposeful about that. But that's one of my big goals this year is around \_\_\_\_\_. So as a new principal I think I did way too much, and there was a lot of talent that was untapped, and I think as a result of that, it kind of took us back a step as a school. But you know, not knowing them and their skill set – I think in retrospect I would do some things differently.

*Interviewer:* Good, and school improvement planning teams?

*Interviewee:* Everybody in the school is on that, literally. *[laughter]* So I have a parent who is a parent – we have support people, people from the main office. We have instructional people, behavioral people, just everybody, because the work is connected to what they do. So one of the things and the goal setting this year, I asked everybody to develop one of their goals out of the two connected to the SPP. So really force people to be aware of what the goals were, and align the practices to the, you know, a goal, and their goals are around mathematics performance, increased proficiency in reading, increased English language proficiency, with ESL students. So every single person has to connect their goal to that, at least one of them.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* So really everybody's on that team.

*Interviewer:* So that would be rated a 5?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. I feel really confident about that.

*Interviewer:* Then other structures such as SIT, IEP, those structures?

*Interviewee:* All of those are a structure where I am. So SIT, SST, is led by the assistant principal. I would say that's – it was very much rough last year, but we kind of got in a groove with that, so I would say 4 there. Still some opportunities to grow in reflection, but I feel confident that anybody who made it to the IEP table had a lot of eyes on them, and there were multiple opportunities for intervention, and strategies were implemented with fidelity, so I feel good about that. The IEP process just by way of the programs is very, very structured. And we have one of the administrators who facilitates those meetings, one of his goals is around providing more support for the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ ownership. Because that position exists, they take a backseat, but that is our goal this year, so I would say 4 there as well. They have a whole manual and everything. However, things on paper and things in real life are two different things. So I'd rather them \_\_\_\_\_ than be documented as such.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number 2, what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership in your school? Processes include peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, in-house professional development, peer to peer observation, walkthroughs, and informal learning walks. What



processes do you use to support implementation of distributed leadership in your school? \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewee:*

Definitely peer coaching. A lot of that is taking place around content this year. I was very strategic about who I hired, people who had strengths in areas that other people had deficits in. So peer coaching is definitely – we organize learning walks for opportunities to observe peers. Peer mentoring is something I want to move towards, but we're not there yet. Definitely instructional coaching. We go through coaching cycles with people, and those needing most support are around growth and action plans. In-house professional development, we use – and we're doing a better job of differentiating that this year. So it's more tailored to what people need. That kind of spoke to the peer to peer observations. We do walkthroughs with feedback.

I just organized one for – you should come. I'll invite you – walkthroughs – we're really doing a lot of work around discourse in this school, particularly because of the \_\_\_\_\_ population increasing. The other thing is our special education students need more time to rehearse, and practice, and use language. We have a lot more discourse. Informal observations, our whole system for that is very detailed. Each teacher gets two or three informals a month with feedback. Doing a better job this year giving face to face feedback, and real time coaching in the moment. Like today I was in a class where students were struggling to identify the X and Y axis, and I gave the teacher a strategy to support students in applying positive and negative integers, and identifying X and Y axis on the spot, that she used right away.

Learning walks, we talked about, and data analysis. This is an area of development for the school, but we have even something planned on Friday to do a deeper dive. So professional development, what tool was that? Yesterday? Definitely with that new learning, I'm kind of turn-keying some of that for the staff. And then teaching my assistant principal what I learned so that she can lead a group, and I can lead a group. So not just presenting it, but \_\_\_\_\_ that knowledge so she can also – we're planning together and all of that.

*Interviewer:*

How do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school? How do they have an impact on?

*Interviewee:*

I think it just kind of \_\_\_\_\_ what is required. We talked a lot about expectations around certain things. We document through the rolling agenda process, because if we're doing things successfully,

we might have an opportunity to go back and reflect, and if we're not, we also have an opportunity to go back and see historically what's taking place that we may have messed up. That helps a lot. I think that supports – and the other thing is when I can't be there, it allows me to be able to go back and monitor what was discussed, or ask questions, or things of that nature. Also utilized the Google Classroom. I setup Google Classroom this year and last year. It really has been helpful for organizing information.

*Interviewer:*

Okay. Great. So the next question is number four, what tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? \_\_\_\_\_ meeting agenda templates, walkthrough templates, lesson plan templates, feedback templates, peer to peer feedback forms, teacher mentoring documents, and communication tools, and data collection forms and other tools of such. Again, what tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:*

Every single one of them except for the teacher mentoring documents. I'm a documentation girl. I think by way of training – my background is in general education and special education. So what they used to teach us if it's not in writing, it didn't happen. So again not only the tools but also where to find everything. So hubs, links. People know where to go to get this information as well.

*Interviewer:*

So how do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:*

I think it does support coaching. Like I said, even if I can't be there to support the person or observe, I'm still able to give feedback, or ask questions. Even in the collaborative planning that happened the other day, where the meeting went awry, I was able to based on the documents go back and re-guide and focus people's thoughts. Also it's just norms, like this is what is included in our meetings. We end with the next steps. We identify our pluses and \_\_\_\_\_, so we're being reflective, encouraging people to be reflective, and then through those next steps it also tells us what the bring backs are, and helps us develop the objectives for the next meeting, so it's very cyclical. Some of the things we use are coming from the district, but they're also items that we \_\_\_\_\_ based on our needs and our population.

For example I did a walkthrough today – there's a lot of discussion on the math collaborative planning around – is a student centered problem – do the students not know how to unpack the math problem or they don't know how to respond appropriately to the

prompt? Because it's two different things. I can know the math, but not really understand the question, or is it that I don't know the math? The teachers were split, so I created a document to tally how often students were required to utilize certain – the math vocabulary, because that was one of the things we didn't really have any data for. So I did that and went through as many classrooms, and my goal is to do it at least twice before I go back. But I can definitively give them some concrete information about that as we narrow the focus down.

*Interviewer:*

And you can give these to your leaders to utilize as well?

*Interviewee:*

Mm-hmm, yeah, I share that with my assistant principal. She was in the meeting as well, and we really couldn't come up with the next step because we weren't clear about what the problem was. So the goal for the teachers is to bring back – teach explicitly how to unpack that, but my thing was I wanted to monitor student responses, and their use of vocabulary, and their ability to explain, and just – I didn't do everyone today, but in my observations, the students didn't have a lot of opportunities to discuss. So that rehearsing, speaking out loud, that opportunity for misconceptions was cleared up just while I was there, so that could be one of the areas of disconnect, so I wanted to be able to share that data with them.

*Interviewer:*

Good. Now we're going onto section C, and in section C we're going to talk about the barriers and supporting factors to distributed leadership at the school level and the district level. So number one, what factors support principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:*

So if I'm being completely honest—

*Interviewer:*

Please. *[laughter]*

*Interviewee:*

Last year I think around January I realized I was still operating how I had operated as an assistant principal. So the mindset, or my mindset is you're kind of the doer and the manager versus the leader. So I have to be honest, some of the barriers was me.

*Interviewer:*

We're going to talk about supports first. Let's talk about what factors support distributed leadership at the school level, then we're going to talk about barriers. Hold that thought, hold that thought.

*Interviewee:*

Supports, I'd have to say my ID is really pushing me in this area.

*Interviewer:* Your ID, instructional director?

*Interviewee:* Yes. I'm sorry. Yes, my instructional director, is pushing me, because I was very honest about where I felt like I needed to grow. She's serving as a thought partner for that. Also I've been really reaching out to other principals, established principals with similar schools, and makeups, and programs, and seeing what systems and structures do they have to build capacity amongst staff? Again that's one of my big goals personally this year. So the other principals have been very supportive. And then reflection, personal reflection. This work can't be done by me, by myself, until I have to kind of reflect on my opportunities to interact, or missed opportunities to interact, being responsive to the needs of folks, particularly those who are teaching in the classroom as well as assuming other responsibilities, creating opportunities for them to do that. And then coaching them, creating supports for those folks.

*Interviewer:* Great. So now let's talk about what factors act as barriers to principal's efforts to distribute leadership in schools. We were talking about—

*Interviewee:* Just my personal mindset around the work getting done. You know, and that it's going to take time to develop people. So while you're coaching people, the work still has to get done, but knowing that's part of the process too, and knowing eventually you won't have to be as involved in the process. So time being a big one. I think people's commitment sometimes serve as a barrier, because while it sounds great sometimes to serve in these different capacities, people don't always understand what's required to do so. And I think sometimes just the management aspects of the job can just sometimes – depending on what's going on and the season – impede opportunities for – they kind of rob time, and sometimes focus. So I think management \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Number three, what factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school, being \_\_\_\_\_?

*Interviewee:* I think one thing I'm doing is training my staff to deal with certain issues without me. And coaching them through – managing certain things, like every time the phone rings and someone asks to speak to me, they don't have to. Every behavior concern does not need to be addressed by the principal. Protecting my calendar. You know, I think those things – using the calendar, really strategically. Being mindful – it's really difficult for me to be in places for long times on Mondays and Wednesdays because of the IEP meeting days, so

that's already one administrator off the floor pretty much most of the day.

So if I want to do something on a regular and consistent basis, it probably should not be on those days. So thinking through the life of the day and being realistic about what can and can't be done, how much time you have to do things. So those are always good days for observations, for 30 minutes. Those are good days for informals. Those are good days for check ins and feedback cycles, because there's a shorter amount of time that I'm away from the other responsibilities of the school. So just managing my time, managing my calendar, and empowering people to take care of the things that they think I'm the only person that can do it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number four, how does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in your school on a district level?

*Interviewee:* I think the scale tips more on the support, versus hinder. I think again, there's lots of professional development for other staff members. So it's a – that helps me the more knowledgeable and the more information they have. We can bring it back and discuss what that looks like at our school, but that still is very supportive of that work. Again, having a very supportive network of principals that I have. On the way here I was on the phone with two of them, getting information, being clear about certain things, left a message for a third. That was helpful. My instructional director, very, very influential in my development. I have a mentor. Last year I had a coach as a new principal, and I maintained those relationships. So in terms of distributed leadership, I mean these are by modeling, visiting those schools, observing them in their roles, talking to them about their systems, instruction, has been very helpful.

*Interviewer:* Any barriers you can think of that the current district has, that impedes or impacts the implementation of distributed leadership, any barriers?

*Interviewee:* I mean time is always an issue. Just never enough of it. And then the volume of e-mails. I think that could potentially happen anywhere. I've never been a principal anywhere else, so I don't have anything to compare it to, but not being tied to the management busy work, I think sometimes that's – because your time is limited during the day while people are in the building. And so sometimes your – like today I had to stop doing something to respond to an e-mail. I'm like, this call could have taken place at

2:45 when kids weren't in the building, and I think sometimes people don't look at that and understand how that can throw you off, and several missed opportunities as a result. Again I've never been a principal anywhere else, so it's hard to gauge if it's hard, or more than average, or less than. It's just in terms of my practice in the last year and a half.

*Interviewer:* \_\_\_\_\_, and number five, how does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school? Some of the think abouts would be your current capacity regarding your leadership ability, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities.

*Interviewee:* Getting deep. Okay. I think self-efficacy in terms of reflection has been big. I recognize that's an area – that's why I was intrigued by this research because it's an area I know I need to grow in, and while again your capacity as an assistant principal is very different from what it is as a principal, and what I'm growing as, as a principal, you were focused just on teachers, and now my focus is just on developing my assistant principal, and developing our reading specialist, and folks who are interested in leadership, and the people who have the time and interest in leadership, just very different work.

So I'm growing in that area. I recognize that's – and I have to say I'm putting forth the effort and taking the steps to do that, but that's been there. I definitely enjoy seeing people grow. I love working with people. So in terms of my abilities I think I've been successful with that, but it's just – it's a timing thing, and everything doesn't happen overnight. Some people's happens quicker than others. I think it has a lot to – the emotional intelligence, being able to inspire people, motivate people, because most of my leadership positions aren't paid or are paid very minimally. Money is isn't necessarily an influence, so it's helping people connect to the work, connecting it back to the why, helping people to really connect with them as mission, and vision of what we're trying to accomplish, is very important. So definitely one of those areas. Not where I want to be but I'm definitely not where I was a year ago.

*Interviewer:* Good. Well do you have anything else you'd like to add? That was the last question.

*Interviewee:* No, but I think in terms of distributed leadership, not having the skill set to be able to identify the right people, to groom the right people, or the coaching ability, it will really derail your whole

career as a principal. There is no way you can supervise as many people as we supervise, including families, and children, and everything else, without trusting other people to do a great job. And it's really the responsibility of the building leader, or the principal, to support their growth and \_\_\_\_\_. So I was tired quite often last year, and unnecessarily so, because I did not lean on some of the people in my building.

*Interviewer:* That's great. I really appreciate you taking the opportunity to interview with me regarding this research, and again, thank you.

*Interviewee:* No problem.

**Nancy**

*Interviewer:* Good afternoon. How are you today?

*Interviewee:* I'm excellente.

*Interviewer:* Thank you for agreeing to participate in the principal interview. This is a follow-up from the principal survey that you completed and we're gonna just ask some questions. The principal interview protocol is broken up into three sections, and some of the questions are rated, and those questions I will share the rating scale with you, and we will just go through each section answering the questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Okay, great. We're gonna start with some background information. Total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Fourteen.

*Interviewer:* Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* Eight.

*Interviewer:* Current enrollment under 400 or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Over.

*Interviewer:* Is your school title one or non-title one?

*Interviewee:* Title one.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Section A; in this section we're gonna talk about how you distribute leadership responsibilities in your school. The first question is a rated question, so you will select the rating. One being rarely, four some of the time, seven most of the time. The scale is there. So number one; select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school.

*Interviewee:* Seven.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number two; how do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* Some of them are identified by the practices that I see being displayed while they're in the classroom. They're leaders even before they get the "title." So again it's based on what I see from them, what I hear from them, and then even sometimes conversations with other staff members. They may say this person was assisting them with lesson planning or assisting them with various aspects of the job. So most of it is observed by me and then some of it can be shared through other people's experiences with them.

*Interviewer:* Mm-kay.

*Interviewee:* And then sometimes they ask for leadership exposure or experience, whether it's just for personal gratification or they may be in a program that requires it.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Okay. How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* Well, the proof is in the pudding. You look at the work that they do. So if they are the models for what we need to see, then I think that is an influence within itself. And then like I said, some of them teachers gravitate towards them. So you can tell just by the informal leadership structures that exist in schools. People gravitate to them.

*Interviewer:* Mm-kay. What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Things like leading collaborative planning, being great level chair, going to various meetings that the school district may have that they need to bring the information back to the school or turnkey it, leading different committees. I mean, things that need to go out, such as the newsletters, so communications to families, parent engagement. I don't know if I mentioned working with different student groups.

*Interviewer:* Mm-kay. How are these responsibilities developed?



*Interviewee:* How do I develop a person in that role or –

*Interviewer:* How are these responsibilities developed, meaning how do you –

*Interviewee:* Some things that the school system says we need to have within our schools.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* So the work is there, so we need someone to lead it, and principals can't do it all. So a lot of those things are because they're mandates and requirements, required tasks that need to be completed per the school system.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Okay.

*Interviewee:* And some of them also – just based on school need, you may see that your school needs something, and so you need someone to help facilitate that work.

*Interviewer:* Great. Okay, number six; this is a rated question, so you're going to rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individual and groups in your school, and the rating is here. One never, two rarely, three sometimes, four often, five always; I will say the individual group, and then you can rate. Assistant principal? Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to each group or individual, so how frequently do you fully distribute responsibility to your AP?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Instructional lead teachers?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional development lead teacher, PDLT?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Leadership team members?

*Interviewee:* Four. Am I allowed to ask a question?

*Interviewer:* Yeah, sure.

*Interviewee:* Okay, I guess maybe give reasoning behind it. So I say four instead of five – they do the work, but there's always oversight or where we have to talk before they are released, if you will, to do the work. So we always touch base and determine the course of action that needs to take place. But once we have that, then they go and do. So there's never just "Do what you wanna do." It's always with oversight. So that's why I say four instead of five.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So grade level team member?

*Interviewee:* Same.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and then department leaders?

*Interviewee:* Is four for them as well.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and then teacher mentors?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm, four.

*Interviewer:* Four, okay, and then instructional coaches?

*Interviewee:* Same.

*Interviewer:* And then any others, as in counselors, specialists, support staff?

*Interviewee:* Four.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So now we're moving to section B, and in section B we're gonna look at the structures, processes, and tools that you use to distribute leadership in your school. The first question is a rated question, and you're gonna rate each of the structures in terms of current level of implementation at your school. The structures are here. Again it's on a one never, two rarely, three sometimes, four often, five always. School structure, school leadership team?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Okay, collaborative planning teams?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning communities?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Department teams?

*Interviewee:* I'm gonna say five 'cause the collaborative planning and department is the same.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Did I say professional development teams?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Is five, okay, and school improvement planning teams?

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* And then any other teams, as in structure –

*Interviewee:* Five.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm, okay. Number two; what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And some of the processes are listed here; peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching. You see the list here?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What processes do you use to support implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* Peer coaching, mentoring, instructional coaching, the PD, peer to peer observations, the learning walk, so walkthrough with feedback, Data U.

*Interviewer:* Number three; how do these processes impact distributive leadership practices at your school?

*Interviewee:* Was that that one?

*Interviewer:* Mm-mmm. You share the processes, and now the question is how do these processes impact distributive leadership practices at your school?

*Interviewee:* Well, it gives the leaders in the building the opportunity to sharpen their skills and then share their knowledge with those who they are working with or whatever. If they're coaching someone, it helps to grow their practices as well.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* It sometimes forces groups to work with each other that instead of working in silos we're working together as POCs or as teams to see what each other is doing to help improve the school. They help with cohesiveness among the staff. They help build teaming among the staff. And then sometimes even within the groupings, other leaders may begin to rise.

*Interviewer:* Number four; what tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And the tools are listed there.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. So we use the rolling agendas, we use the templates for the walkthroughs, we have the lesson plan templates that the school system has developed, but then sometimes we've created our own, following the six steps of effective feedback when we have walkthroughs, and the informal and formal observation process. When they observe each other we have questionnaires that they respond to because they go in with a focus, so that they can take notes as far as what can help them in their classroom. The ILTs and everything, when it comes to them working with other people, they keep a log as far as when they're working with different people. We have the data collection forms. Also needs assessment; sometimes the teachers complete those to say if they need assistance with different things. So if we don't catch it, they advocate for themselves that way.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number five; how do these tools impact the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* Well, it helps us to monitor how it's going, and to determine if we need to make any adjustments to what's taking place. It helps us to see if we're focusing too much in one area and need to maybe shift our focus a little bit more. It helps keep us honest with doing the things that we need to do as well. It also lets us know if there isn't a need for something anymore. Helps us track growth as well, or lack thereof.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Okay. Great. Now we're gonna move into section C, and in section C we're gonna talk about the barriers and supporting factors that contribute to distributive leadership at the school level and the district level, okay?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* So number one; what factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership at their school?

*Interviewee:* The mandates help support it because we have to have these structures based on what we're expected to do, what we're mandated to do and have, so that helps. Also the autonomy that we have in order to create schedules and things of that nature to help build time for collaborative planning; all the grade level meetings and the after school meetings and things like that. Also being able to give emoluments to people who want to do it but would like to have compensation, a carrot if you will to get some people to step up and do it. So those things support our efforts. Also having training for some of those roles, such as the PDOTs and the content leaders when the system has a training sessions for them that helps them with knowing what they need to do.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factors act as barriers to principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Time is always a barrier. Being able to focus on each of them equally is sometimes hard to do. While we have emoluments or stipends, sometimes it's not enough, especially if the person needs to have a part-time job or something after school to help support. So if we could pay them more for those types of roles than they may not have to get the part-time job and could commit more or give more dedication to that role. Sometimes people are hesitant or scared to step into that leadership role. You may see something in them, but then they haven't developed their leadership voice yet, you know? They may not feel as confident. So sometimes you have to massage it right to make sure you get some of these teachers or different leaders in the building to step up into the roles you need them to \_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Okay, number three; what factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* People staying in your building. *[Laughs]* You know, when teachers stay, you can build a program and watch it grow. If there's constantly people leaving and come back, you're always rebuilding, and sometimes that doesn't lend itself to being able to sustain those practices 'cause you're always starting at the beginning again. Yeah, so keeping your staff together, being able to keep them there. Also like I mentioned before, if you have teachers who are going to get their master's degrees and they need to get the leadership experience in the school – so those types of things help. It's like "Oh, we could use you to help out with this. This is a strength of yours."

*Interviewer:* Teacher professional growth.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* Well like I said, it supports it through the emolument structure that we have or the stipends that the school district gives for those types of positions. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Any hinder?

*Interviewee:* Just like I said, the amount – they give the stipends, but then the amount is not that great. Sometimes the trainings are not exactly what they need. So they give them information just to disseminate, but to really help grow them in their capacity sometimes it doesn't happen.

*Interviewer:* Them meaning the teacher –

*Interviewee:* The leaders.

*Interviewer:* The teacher leader, okay.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Especially if they don't have meetings frequently, because some of the departments meet more often than others.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Sometimes else I just thought about is sometimes the union, the PGCEA, can be hindrance because if they're telling teachers "You shouldn't do this. You can't do that" or whatever, some leaders it doesn't matter. They still do whatever's needed for children, but you catch the right person on the right day and they may say "I'm not supposed to do that." *[Laughs]*

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Okay, number five; this is the last question. How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school? And some of the things you can think about is your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. So as a leader, you have to know what each of those roles does in order to help train the teacher leaders in the building. So you have to be secure in your ability to be able to do that. You have to make sure that you're a lifelong learner, that you're growing, and you know what the expectations of the district and those various positions require. Just knowing the strengths that each person has, because sometimes you might have a dynamic teacher who'd rather just be in their classroom and doesn't necessarily want to lead.

So you also have to know your people to be able to determine who could be a leader, which I may have someone who's a grade level chair because they can work in a small setting with their team of two or three and help with the lesson planning and all that type of stuff. But when it comes to being a leader in the school and facilitating PD and stuff for the whole staff, they can't. They'd rather not, is what I'll say, do that. So just knowing the personalities and the learning style and the communication style of your team is very important.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Mm-kay. Well, do you have anything else you'd like to add while we end?

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* No? Well, thank you for participating in this follow-up interview. I greatly appreciate it.

*Interviewer:* You're welcome.

**Amy**

*Interviewer:* Good afternoon. We are going to — I'm going to ask you a series of questions around distributive leadership practices in your school. We'll go through — the questions are divided into three sections, section A, B, and C. We will proceed as such. Any questions?

*Interviewee:* Not at this time.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number one: Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school on a scale of 1-7. 1 being rarely; 4, some of the time; and 7, most of the time.

*Interviewee:* I would say . . . a 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* Um, so, looking at the roles that people already held at the school once I got there, I look at who really stands out. I look at people's instructional practices, how they're viewed by their peers in the school, and what their strengths and challenges are and determine that looking at the way — what's needed in the building and how each person's strengths and challenges can really help them be in a specific leadership role.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number three: How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers.

*Interviewee:* So most of the time I look at the relationship that person has with their peers within the building and sometimes outside of the building and really determining whether or not their peers find them to be credible and somebody that they can go to, somebody they feel is responsible, and is a leader. I select these people and think that they'll be influential amongst their peers because they have like a certain quality that — it's like a spark kind of. You can really tell whether or not other people find them credible and find their leadership abilities of quality.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number four: What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Oh goodness. Well, I just finished my first year and so distributing leadership is something that I really work on. So this past year, I really had to think about putting people in leadership positions and really what responsibilities I was going to give them. So, grade level chair, that was some of the responsibilities that people had. Really working with people in their content areas and in their grade levels. There was a leadership team — what else did we have?

Different content team leaders like special education, ESOL, different teams like that. Those are really the basic ones that I used last year just because it was all very new for me. So I really had to get comfortable with the people at the school to really determine what leadership responsibilities I would give them. It was hard.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number five: How are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* So because it was my first year, I did sit down and have a meeting with all of the teachers. Everyone on the staff got to sit down and have a meeting with me. So I talked to them about the leadership responsibilities they had previously and what they were interested in moving forward in terms of leadership within the school. Some people were able to keep the same leadership roles while others were not. Just based upon what they demonstrated and showed within their instruction and within how they engaged with the school and the community within the school.

*Interviewer:* Number six: Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals in groups in your school. I'm going to identify the individual or group and then you're rate them on a scale of 1-5. 1 being never, 2 being rarely, 3 being sometimes, 4 being often, and 5 being always.

The assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* I would say 4, often.



*Interviewer:* Okay. The instructional lead teacher if you had one.

*Interviewee:* I did not have instructional lead teachers last year.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional development lead teacher, PDLT.

*Interviewee:* I would say sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Leadership team members.

*Interviewee:* Sometimes, 3, sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team member.

*Interviewee:* Sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Department leader.

*Interviewee:* 3, sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* 3, sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches.

*Interviewee:* Never. We didn't have any instructional coaches.

*Interviewer:* And any other individuals or groups that I missed in your school that you would have given leadership responsibility to at your school.

*Interviewee:* We do a professional school counselor and I would say for her it was sometimes. Other specialists, 2, rarely. But that's about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Let's move on to Section B: Distributive Leadership Structures, Processes, and Tools. Number one: Rate each of the structures in terms of current level of implementation at your school. I will read the structure; you will rate again 1-5. 1 being never, 2 being rarely, 3 being sometimes, 4 being often, and 5 being always. Okay?

The first structure is your school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* Is that inclusive of like SPMT?

*Interviewer:* If that's what you have defined as a school leadership team in your building.

*Interviewee:* Um, so I would say — thinking in terms of last year — for the school leadership team itself I would say 4, often. But for the SPMT, rarely.

*Interviewer:* That's over here.

*Interviewee:* Is it? Okay.

*Interviewer:* SPMT. So give me school leadership team.

*Interviewee:* So the school leadership team; 4, often.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Collaborative planning team?

*Interviewee:* 4, often.

*Interviewer:* Professional learning community within your school?

*Interviewee:* 2, rarely.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Grade level teams.

*Interviewee:* 3.

*Interviewer:* Department teams.

*Interviewee:* Wait this is level of implementation, right? Grade level teams is 5, always. Sorry.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Department teams; 5, always.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams.

*Interviewee:* 3, sometimes.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams, SPMT.

*Interviewee:* Yeah I would say never. We really didn't have SPMT.

*Interviewer:* Okay any other teams that I may have missed that you may have?

*Interviewee:* Um so we have a SIT team which is the school instructional team and that was a 5, implemented all the time. The SST I would say sometimes because it kind of combined with our SIT, the SIT team. Then, the IEP team was always met as well; always implemented. I think that's all the teams.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number two: What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school? What processes? The processes include peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, in-house professional development, peer-to-peer observation, walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, learning walks, data analysis, or other. That's your list. I'll read the question again.

Number two: What processes do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* From the list provided, I used peer mentoring, instructional coaching from the lens of the administrative team providing the coaching. We did have in-house professional development, walkthroughs with feedback, informal observations, yes, learning walks, and data analysis were all used.

*Interviewer:* Number three: How do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* I would say that these processes have a major impact on distributive leadership. I can't do all of the work myself. Last year it was a lot of me doing these things on my own or with the help of my assistant principal. And last year, I did spend a lot of time working to develop some of the other leaders in the school so that they could provide peer coaching, peer mentoring.

And so it has impacted it a lot. We've had some teachers who have gotten promoted to different positions, higher leadership within the building because of these processes that we've used.

*Interviewer:* Okay, number 4: What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school? Tools are as follows: meeting agenda templates, walkthrough templates, lesson plan templates, feedback templates, peer-to-peer feedback forms, teacher mentoring documents, communication tools, data collection forms, and other.

Again, number 4: What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* With Fidelity, we've been using meeting agenda templates, walkthrough templates. We do use lesson plan templates, but there's a little more

flexibility in that. We do have a feedback template, teacher mentoring documents as well. As well as communication tools and data collection forms for all teachers and grade levels. So that's what we use of the tools listed.

*Interviewer:* Number five: How do these tools impact the implementation of distributive leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* These tools are instrumental in ensuring that monitoring is happening. It helps with the coaching aspect of building those leaders within the building and within the various teams that we have. These tools really help to document what's happening in the teams, and the grade levels, and the content areas and really help me monitor and implement what's going on. It helps me to know how I can support the people that I'm putting in leadership positions. Because, like I said, I can't always be there all the time. But, if they're using these tools — even though I'm not directly there in the meeting, in the class, in the group — I can still follow what's going on and what's happening with that team.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Section C: Distributive Leadership Barriers and Supporting Factors. Number one: What factors support principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Well I can say one thing for me that has really provided a lot of support is my instructional director. She has really helped me to understand how to build the various levels of teams and various levels of leaders within the building so everybody doesn't necessarily have to be on the leadership team, but can still hold leadership roles within the building and have different responsibilities.

Let's see, what else supports my efforts? Having great leaders. Having great employees in the building is a great support. It's very difficult to build leaders when the passion to be a leader is not there. So having people who really support the work is important, too. That's a support that I've had.

I can't think of any other factors right now.

*Interviewer:* Okay, number two: What factors act as barriers to principal's efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* Well I guess the same could be said in the opposite. That if you don't have people who want to hold leadership positions or who don't want to put in that little bit of extra which is necessary to be the leaders, that can be a barrier. Time is always a barrier. Not that we can really do anything about it, but it's there. What else would be a barrier? I don't think there's very

many barriers to growing leaders in your school. It's really just about who you have in front of you, and how you can help them grow, and how you can use them within the building.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Number three: What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* I think the sustainability is based upon the benefits that people can see from it. That me, as the principal, what I can see from it and the leaders that I'm using it. If they don't see the benefits of their work or what they're doing, then it's not going to be sustainable.

Last year was difficult for me because my school is very small. I had some struggles with building teams. It seemed like the same people were on all the teams. It became an issue of time because I didn't want to take up everyone's time because they're on every single team.

Changing the way I arrange teams and how I've started to work with the leaders in the building has really helped me have a sustainable process of making teams and not necessarily having the same people in the leadership roles all the time. So people really enjoy the fact that "Yes, I'm on this team, but not on this team, but my voice still matters and I get to help out with what's happening at the school."

*Interviewer:* Okay, number four: How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in schools?

*Interviewee:* You can see both sides of the coin on this one. I think that the way the school system is set up, you can only do what you can do with what you have. So, a lot of times it's very difficult as the leader in the building to have distributive leadership practices because people are already spread so thin. Giving them more on their plate, that's part of the way that the school system is arranged. There's not enough positions to bring people out of the classroom, or there's not enough time for the people who are in the classroom to be able to manage these additional leadership roles and responsibilities that they have. That's just the way that the county is set up. There's not really much that you can do about it.

But the county does provide a lot of professional development and a lot of different ways that people can show their leadership not only in the school, but outside of the school as well with different departments, with mentoring one another, with teaching classes, like all of those opportunities are available as well. So the time is not really there if you have other responsibilities, but people still want those positions and responsibilities. It's kind of both sides.

*Interviewer:* Okay, number five: How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your school? Think about your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities.

*Interviewee:* I would say that my leadership capacity directly impacts how I implement distributive leadership. Being that last year was my very first year as the principal, I didn't readily trust people in the building. And sometimes I have a little bit of self-doubt about my own leadership abilities. That would sometimes put up a barrier or hindrance from me having other people help with activities or take leadership roles within the building.

I'm learning to trust the people in my building and the people that I'm putting into leadership roles because I can't do it all by myself. I have to have these other people who are going to help and support with the work. It's very scary, but that's a me thing. That nervousness and that kind of being afraid to let go a little bit. That's a me thing. That's not a them thing. My leadership capacity does impact how I have distributive leadership in the school. It's scary.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

*Interviewee:* No. Just that this my second year as a principal and I love it.

*Interviewer:* Okay thank you for your time. I appreciate your coming to interview with me.

*Interviewee:* Thank you.

## **Paul**

*Interviewer:* Okay, good morning. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the principal interview process, which is a follow-up from the survey that you participated in. I'm going to ask you a series of questions regarding how you distribute leadership in your building. Some of the questions are ranked, I mean I keep saying "ranked," rated and so I will read the scale for you. You have the questions in front of you for your reference. Do you have any questions before we start?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Okay. We're going to start with some background information. Total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Nine.

*Interviewer:* Nine. Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* Eight.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Current enrollment under 400 or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Over.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And are you a Title I school?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Okay good. Section One, Distribute Leadership Responsibilities. Select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school, 1 being "rare," "rarely," 4 being "some of the times," 7 being "most of the time."

*Interviewee:* So probably a 7.

*Interviewer:* A 7? Okay. How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* Identify? Variety of ways, some is they're advocating for themselves about wanting leadership.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* And giving them the opportunity to demonstrate that. Some of them develop a program or have something they want to lead or if we have a school initiative and having them to spearhead that. Others it's through observation. Seeing people who are leading you know in their classroom, leading on their grade level, people who are stepping-up when not necessarily given a prompt to do so, but just stepping in, fill in the gaps, people who are problem solvers in their different roles and really trying to cultivate that spirit of excellence in what they do in their classroom.

Then in some cases we you know have people who did not even know they wanted to be in leadership step into leadership because of what we saw in terms of their excellence of what they were demonstrating in their classrooms.

So we identify leaders in a variety of ways here. Like I said observation, watching what they're doing in and out of the classroom. How are their peers relating to them? Are they a voice in sort of the informal authority? That can work in your advantage or it could work against you. You know so trying to find those people who are pushing your mission or vision who

actually have a spirit of being a champion for children and putting them in a place to help move the school forward as a whole.

*Interviewer:* Okay good. Number Three: How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* Well I try to see in terms of the interactions in you know structured environments and non-structured, who sort of people lean to, who sort of people respond to when they're speaking in large group settings whether those are staff meetings, you know I don't I rarely go into the teachers' lounge, but see who eats lunch together, sort of watch their reactions.

Who people congregate in their rooms before school, after school or the people who say they're "onboard" people tend to follow or people who are dissenters if they have a you know a cohort of people that are sort of following their lead and you can just watch the interaction of how people move through a building.

So you can sort of tell, "Okay that's the ring leader of the young folk." "That person is the old head that people sort of subscribe to whatever their beliefs are." So that sometimes let you know. I also watch when people speak around their pedagogy do people believe that they have the knowledge base to help move them and to help support them? Because if people don't believe that you're knowledgeable it's hard for people who know that they're good to follow someone who they believe is average.

So that's another way that I know that they can influence their peers, because they know that their work is good and you can hear sort of the undercurrent of conversations around, "Okay Miss such-and-such is good" or "Miss such-and-such does well" or "She's very good with that reading content or math." So knowing that they have the capacity to impact instruction and to provide information for folks.

And also I've allowed my people to do professional developments. Then when you get the feedback and people say, "I walked away with something" or "That was good." You know my staff did a PD and they were like, "This is probably one of the best PDs we've had you know with the level of engagement and how they put it together." So those are ways I know that they definitely can influence their peers.

*Interviewer:* Okay good. What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Leader distribution, everything.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.



*Interviewee:* We push everything out. I allow people to literally run their niche. Some of my ILT from math runs the math department. She does collaborative planning. She meets with those individuals and we sort of – my administrative team sort of facilitates those conversations and provides some think abouts and pushes her thinking around how to lead people.

So we really distribute everything in a more of a communal leadership versus hierarchical. So it's never that I'm over you, but I'm working with you. So we put people in a position that they feel like they have the autonomy to lead not just in title, but in responsibility and creativity. Because I think sometimes people have people lead, but it's what they want it to look like and not what they really allow the person to develop. I think if you don't let people go through their struggle it's like a caterpillar if you cut them out of the cocoon they never develop wings, so we allow people to go through that process so that they can get to where they want to be and to grow, to understand it. "I got to figure out how to deal with people."

One of the things that we are going to do and we haven't done as a school is really look at what's everybody's five strengths. You know some of my people have done it, but not everybody. So we're going to start looking at that and how we leverage those strengths to just maximize who we are you know as a school. But we actually distribute everything.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. You spoke a little bit about this next question, but how are these responsibilities developed? You spoke, can you just recap because you kind of spoke about how does that develop?

*Interviewee:* We look at where we want our students to be you know number one. Always looking at where we want to do is to be the data, what students are succeeding, what students are struggling. You know who are the people in those positions, who's going to help them? We've identified for our leaders that their teachers are their learners. So how do you number one we practice hitting the reset button with everybody every year. Who's going to help those individuals? How can we be barrier removers? And what will that look like for you in your day-to-day work?

We do walkthroughs every day. So every person that's non-classroom based has to do a learning walk. If you ever sit on my leadership team you have to do a walkthrough of somebody ever day and provide feedback. Then we sit as a LIT team and discuss the themes that we see from those walkthroughs to develop what we want to go through and rally hone in on to move practice.

But we looked at what do kids do, who's going to be delivering that instruction, and who's going to provide the support to ensure that that happens? So who's responsible to implement whatever it is that we have so we know who's accountable for that.

*Interviewer:* Okay Number Six: Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals in groups in your school.

*Interviewee:* Everyday.

*Interviewer:* So I'm going to say the individual or groups and then I want you to rate them, 1 being "never," 2 "rarely," 3 "sometimes," 4 "often," and 5 "always."

*Interviewee:* Always, always.

*Interviewer:* Let me say the...

*Interviewee:* Always.

*Interviewer:* The assistant principal?

*Interviewee:* Always.

*Interviewer:* A 5 okay.

*Interviewee:* Actually my assistant principal because I believe the mark of a good leader is creating the next leader. I believe if no one has come out of your camp and moved into leadership that you're a dictator, you're not a leader.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Because you have to have all the power and all the answers have to come from you. So my assistant principal actually runs the day-to-day operations of my building. He knows everything. Many assistant principals don't know about budgetary because the principal feels it's their budget, I don't, it's the school's budget. So he knows budget, he knows hiring, he knows... He actually has the ability to be a principal if he decided, because I expose him to everything that I do.

My ILTs they like I said once again we have very transparent conversations in my literacy meetings and so they know the good, the bad, and the ugly. My math person has to know reading. My reading person they now have to know some math. Because as a district we've been so 90-10, 90 percent focused on reading and now we're just beginning to really

focus a lot more on math. But they have to know their content well. They got to know network people.

Because intermediate, so we're departmentalized so our math teachers really just focus on reading. But K, 1, and 2 most K, 1, and 2 teachers know how to do what? Teach reading. Many of them present math, they don't teach math.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* So recognizing how do you build people and give them some tools that they may not even know that they need? So they get pushed because my thing is in your title you're an instructional lead teacher and so how are you leading instructions with the teachers that you service?

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* And so that's every day. Then have to speak to how they're doing that. What was your feedback? What was were their responses? So our protocol is that the feedback you get you got to respond too. You don't just get to get it and think about it, you have to respond to it.

Then our thing is what's our next step once we hear their thinking? And it may be for just clarity, it may be for correction, and it may be that I don't know. So what is going to be your next action step based off of what that teacher has now shared with you in your wanderings?

My PDLT people are the same folks. Leadership team members –

*Interviewer:* What, wait a minute, ILT was a 5. PDLT is a –

*Interviewee:* They're the same people.

*Interviewer:* A 5 okay. Leadership team members fully distribute leadership responsibilities?

*Interviewee:* The only person who may, but she has leadership but just in a different role.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Is or two people. My professional school counselor who actually sits on that board as well, not that board, but that team, because she needs to know the instruction implications as well. But she provides also some socioemotional information to that body to understand students who may be struggling who we need to know about.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* So she needs to know the element of what teachers are thinking about, but she needs to bring the other element as well. So she doesn't have let me see I wouldn't say that she doesn't have as much responsibility, it's different responsibility. She's in charge of our PBIS, so our incentive program for our kids to incentivize them. She's responsible to ensuring that other resources are brought in for students and families.

She goes on learning walks. So she's responsible to get and she's learning to have an instructional lens because that's not her background. Hers is as I said more socioemotional, but she's now required to talk about, "What did you see?" "What did you hear?" "What would you tell that teacher?" The other person is my PEA who sits on that team as well.

*Interviewer:* PEA is?

*Interviewee:* My Parent Engagement Assistant.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Because we're a Title I school and we have over 70 percent Hispanic –

*Interviewer:* What would you rate that person?

*Interviewee:* I would say hers is probably a 4.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Not a 5.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* But she's on learning walks as well, because she needs to know what is being required of students so that she can support parents and sharing that information. So she goes on learning walks. She sits in that meeting as well to understand all the nuances, because how do you help parents who aren't in the school know how to support children if you don't understand what's going on in the school? And so she sits there.

But I would say hers is probably often and not always, because there's some things that just she's unaware of and unfamiliar with how to do it and how to really lead people in that way. But we're working with her to understand that.

What's your \_\_\_\_\_ [crosstalk]?

*Interviewer:* Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* Are the same people.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* My teacher mentors are my ILT.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* The other person was my teacher mentor is my CERT, my Crisis Intervention Resource Teacher.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* And that's because she has a reading background. She used to be a reading coach back when we had America's Choice?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* So they had kept her on and so she was here when I got here, but she has a reading background that's phenomenal. So she's able to deal with the emotional students in our special ed that are in crisis, but she's also able to support our reading program at our primary level because she has that background. So she's on that number 5, she's an always as well, because when kids aren't in crisis she may push into a class and do a double-guided reading. She may push you know our foundational students to do work, so yeah she's there as well.

*Interviewer:* Good, okay.

*Interviewee:* You have questions on the back okay, okay questions on the back.

*Interviewer:* Moving into Section B, mm-hmm and Section B we're going to talk about how you use structures, processes, and tools to distribute leadership in your building.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* So the first question is: Rate the, rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school.

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* The structures are here and you're going to do a 1 as a "never," 2 "rarely," 3 "sometimes," 4 "often," 5 "always." So again rate each structure in terms of the current level of implementation at your school. School leadership teams?

*Interviewee:* That's always, we meet every week and sometimes we meet more than once a week depending on you know what may be transpiring or if there's some major issues or major celebrations that may arise, but then we focus a lot on the negative, but we focus on the positive too.

One of the things that we've done to sort of help keep them in that mind of things when we actually implemented a "Feel Good Friday." So one of the things we do we meet every Friday for 15 minutes and all my leadership team has to write a letter to one or two staff members or more around something that they saw them do well. We post it and we put it in their mailbox or whatever it is. But that structure is in place.

It's really we meet on Mondays to recap what transpired the previous week and also what our plan is going to be for this week coming up. So that's every week with all the leaders and that's for 90 minutes.

*Interviewer:* Mmm, good, mm-hmm., Collaborative planning team.

*Interviewee:* Collaborative planning team?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* So my ILTs lead collaborative planning. As you know administrators are just there for support.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* But that's 90 minutes. We used to have it three days, two days a week for 45 minutes, now each grade level has it once a week for 90 minutes. It's better because you now get to actually be in there and dive into the material and walk away with something. So that's the structure.

Our calendar, our schedule rather is built around collaborative planning, because that is our guarded time. We understand that if teachers are going to build their capacity it's going to happen in the work that they do in collaborative planning. Well some of it, because some of it going to come from walkthroughs and those feedback as well, but collaborative planning is really our secure time that we do not disrupt, so that's always.

That's even when we give out certificates where people may earn you know a "skip a meeting" pass, the one things that they can't use it for is collaborative planning.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* You can use it for a staff meeting, you can use it for a team meeting, but you cannot use it for collaborative planning, that is our guarded time.

Professional learning communities we have them. All my leaders that sit on my team are actually over a grade level. So I did that because when I arrived here eight years ago there was a huge chasm between the staff and leadership. So I embedded my leaders into a grade and so now they are a part of that grade. They go to the grade-level meeting which is run by the grade-level chair. When we do team events they're part of that team so it's not a "us" and "them," it's a "we." So that happens all year long.

*Interviewer:* So that would be a 5, always.

*Interviewee:* That's 5, yeah that's always happening.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Grade level team they meet once a week. We do a lot of – so K, 1, and 2 meet as grades; 3, 4, and 5 meet as content. So our grade-level teams function their collaborative planning is with their grades. We do a lot of competition with our grades. So people as you'll see like you see as evidence Pre-K team. Like people ride their grade hard here, yeah like sports teams. My people here are very, very competitive. So they will yeah grade, like their grade level the ride hard for here.

Departments not as much, not in terms of "we are the math department." Where they really play is when it comes to planning, because as I said in 3, 4, and 5, the third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade math teacher are collaboratively planning, we're doing vertical planning; same with reading and science, so that's really when departments come into play for us. So I will say that's – it depends on what you want to call it because they meet once a week and if we're doing a PD we'll differentiate it and so that the math people get what they need. So I will say maybe 3.5 for department teams.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Professional teams, development teams it depends on what it is because we have a new teacher academy so that happens more frequently. We do PDs sometimes we embed them in collaborative planning depending on

where we are and what we need. When we have them scheduled through the county we do those. But also our staff meetings are not sit-and-get with information, they're actually PDs and we build them out in cohorts. So we'll put up three topics and you get to select which one that you need to impact your capacity and build your pedagogy for that month. So that happens there too. So I will say maybe often.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* You know school improvement planning team I guess we talk about it, because I guess our school improvement team is really the LIT team with a few other additional members. My PE teacher I son there, a few grade-level chairs, we have a paraprofessional that's on that team, but that's more maybe sometimes that we pull together, because really the LIT team is they're moving together or talking about you know are we on target? Is our trajectory to hit our numbers? You know where are the deficits? What teachers are struggling and need support? So that team doesn't pull together as much as you know some of the others, because I think it is sort of encompasses – some of those people are the same people and so they're sort of because in elementary if you're middle size like mine your people are wearing you know many hats carrying several buckets so a lot of this gets intertwined. So that one is really a sometimes.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Now see you got other things. So SIT we run weekly and you know so we have people that refer go through the RTI and my guidance counselor oversees that. IEP we run weekly, because we have a CCP program. So we're doing IEP meetings, reevals, testing so that's happening for us on so every week. So Wednesdays are really our SIT, IEP, all of that happens during, on Wednesdays on a weekly basis for us.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So what processes do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? The processes are listed here. You can see them listed here. Which one or all of these do you implement that support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? You see peer coaching, peer mentoring, instructional coaching, in-house professional development, peer-to-peer observations, walkthroughs, \_\_\_\_\_ [crosstalk].

*Interviewee:* Actually we do all of that.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Yeah I don't know if we have a process that's not included on this list.



*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Because we do peer coaching, because we have, like I said we have G3 teacher leaders and so they actually coach and they don't share that information. They're mentors as well. You know we do our leaders coach, you know we'll go through and watch they'll do that with each other. Instructional coaching we absolutely, we do in-house. Yeah we do peer-to-peer observations as well. So we actually and that has benefited us.

We started that probably four years ago, because many teachers don't know what happens outside of their room. And so when you start taking them on an observation and they go watch their classmates they recognize that either they're good or they recognize that they're a farce. You know what they're saying is not actually what they're doing. So peer-to-peer observations has helped us to recognize that when we're saying certain things, because you don't have that lens or you may not have that knowledge because you're in your silo. You know but when you get out and you get to see someone else and you be like, "Oh they don't do that?" "Oh that's why y'all say that." So that's helped

Walkthroughs as I told you we do that every day. My leaders are required to do minimally five a week and sometimes they do more just because of all the other things, like right now they're doing DRAs. But they're required that minimally you got to get through one classroom and provide feedback to a teacher every day.

Learning walks we do once a month to focus on an area. Data analysis we do sort of like quarterly. Outside of math you know they look at the unit assessments and those kind of things. Yeah –

*Interviewer:* Yeah you kind of talked about the next one, the impact. How do these processes impact distributive leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* I think for us it gives people a wider scope of the larger school vision and mission and it allows people to really go back and reflect on their practices or what things that they can now begin to hold their colleagues accountable for and have some further dialog around whether that's department, whether that's grade level. When people start to see like, "Oh you're faking it in your class" or "I need to come speak with this teacher because what she does is magic and I would have never taught it that way, but I need too because it would increase student engagement in my class."

So the impact for us has been increased communication, increased dialogue, people being more open to being transparent about their weaknesses and their deficiencies, because we have been promoting for some time about being a learning environment and we don't know where

to provide a remedy, we don't know you're ailing in that area. So that has been the impact for us. People just to be able to say, "Okay," or for us to be able to talk very openly like, "Hey third grade y'all missing the mark."

*Interviewer:* Okay. What tools do you use to support the implementation of distribute leadership at your school? The tools are listed here.

*Interviewee:* Oh good Lord. So we do have a walkthrough template that everyone uses and we keep a binder. We share a meeting agenda template, so we do the rolling agenda. We have a lesson plan template that we've used for reading and the one for math that we've created. We talk with teachers about it to make sure that they can embrace it. Because I'm not one, I don't believe in buy-in, I believe in believing, because if you just buy-in you're just going to go along to get along, but if you believe in what it is then you'll absolutely do it with purpose and passion. So we actually tweaked some things that the county had in place and made it teacher friendly, because we know all that they have on their plate and they were like, "Yes I can use this."

Peer-to-peer feedback I guess that's our walkthrough. Teacher mentoring documents. They have a check list that G3's provided them around what they should be doing, but that's not something we created in-house, something that they've created.

Communication tool, depends on what you're referring to, in terms of leadership? What is that question, what is the communication tool for leadership?

*Interviewer:* Communication tools would be things like how you communicate to your community, newsletter or you staff newsletters, callouts, things, how do you distribute that? Is that something that you use or your leaders use?

*Interviewee:* Oh yeah we get – so we use, yeah, so we have a ClassDojo school account. So my PA sounds out a lot of announcements on that. We use the callout system, the Big Mouth, I call it the "Big Mouth" that we use for parents. Our teachers use that as well. But our first line is you know e-mail for our staff. We do do a school newsletter that goes out. Each grade level they, the PLC leaders meet with the grade level chair and they actually do a newsletter at certain grades, it's not mandatory, but a lot of them are primary grades. They share with parents what are the skills, the letters, the sight words and those kind of things that kids will be doing for the month. Those go out and my data course actually pulls the data for my teachers.

That's one of the things I wanted to take off their plate, because they said they needed to know how you know dissect data and interpret data, but having them learn another system to navigate is just another thing on their

plate that overwhelms them. So we actually pull the data out for them and we talk about it in Data U meetings. My data person pulls that and puts it you know for that particular grade and those particular groups of students.

*Interviewer:* So the impact again, how do they impact your implementation of distributive leadership? You can kind of summarize and recap.

*Interviewee:* I think what it does for us these the forms and the ways we communicate is one it lets us see and monitor our growth and our progress or where we're missing the mark, because we can go back and look. "Okay in September here's what we focused on." "Now in these groups our learning walks did we see an improvement in our questioning? Did we see an improvement in student engagement?" And if we did where and if we didn't where? And so we can put together and develop an action plan of how to impact this in a meaningful way.

I think in our parents and communicating with them to know where we're going and letting them know that you know that we have their students best interest at heart and that they're students are actually benefiting from what we're doing I think is the thing.

I think the transparency I think my staff appreciates you know the fact that they know what's going on. That you know we're very open with the information that we receive. As soon as we get it we sort of push it out and so no one is really in the dark about what's happening and they know where we stand with it so I think they appreciate that and I think that has helped us build the culture that we have where people for the most part enjoy coming to work. You know it's not going to be perfect. There's going to be some obstacles, but we try to be understanding and we try to – you know and I let them know that you know I do fight, I do vocalize the concerns that they have and I do you know voice my, you know my displeasure with you know the amount of work for the you know different things that they get. So I think they appreciate that.

*Interviewer:* Okay our last section we're going to talk about barriers and supporting factors to distributive leadership at the school and at district level. So Number One: What factors support principals efforts to distribute leadership in their schools? Supports supporting factors for this one.

*Interviewee:* Hmm. What factors support principals? Hmm, interesting question. Like what do you mean what factors support principals? So I'll answer it this way I guess. I'll say the district level –

*Interviewer:* No we want to talk about the school level first, because this is the district one, so we want to talk about at the school level what factors support

principals, yourself and others, your colleagues to be able to distribute leadership? What supporting factors?

*Interviewee:* So what supports me in doing it?

*Interviewer:* Well yeah.

*Interviewee:* I think –

*Interviewer:* Definitely doing it.

*Interviewee:* Yeah my admin team I think supports it. So because it's something that I value in helping to grow people my leaders help to push that vision.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Yeah I don't know what other factors support me. I think my folks openness to take on the challenge of leadership, because leadership is not easy and so I think them knowing that we're not going to just throw them in the deep end without giving them floaties and know we're going to support them and give them some tools, we show them the coaching model and that they know that they'll part of a group of individuals that are doing the work together.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Yeah I don't know what else really supports me doing that. I guess just my mindset of wanting people to grow and knowing that you know it shouldn't all be about you.

*Interviewer:* Mindset, mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* You know I'm a firm believer that if you've got to announce to people that you're a principal you're really not the principal, you're really not the leader. You shouldn't have to tell somebody that you're the leader, you know people can see it through your actions and so but I just think my people's openness to embrace the role, to take on the challenge and my mindset of that many hands make a heavy load light.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What factors act as barriers to principals efforts to distribute leadership in their school?

*Interviewee:* Always budgetary, time, workload, human capital. I think it's some structural –

*Interviewer:* We're going to talk about that.

*Interviewee:* [Laughs]

*Interviewer:* Okay so Number Three: What factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practice?

*Interviewee:* Yeah budget, because from year-to-year like this year we lost some folks because we got less money.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* And you just don't have it. Like if you don't get enough money to keep the people that are helping you produce the success, you're being asked to do the same or more with less and sometimes that's hard, because everybody's bucket is already full. We keep asking them to pick up another bucket and so at some point that becomes overbearing and it becomes to strain your muscles, rather than help to grow them. So definitely budgetary factors help to impact the sustainability of it.

Once again like I say finances, human capital. I don't know if it's sustainability, but sometimes because you know you're growing people and they're moving on. Like you're getting some new folks which is not a bad thing, but you got to sort of go through that process again. Or you've have people that are leaving for you know financial reasons and replacing that.

You know as a district switching initiatives or what have you. So having a constant you know macro system or you know ecosystem in place that allows you to know that this is what it's going to be from year-to-year could impact that.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. So Number Four: How does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributive leadership practices in schools?

*Interviewee:* I would probably say organizationally once again we're talking about you know HR and the people you get or don't get the budget impacts that. I think the part that sort of supports it and I don't know that it's necessarily district, but if you have a designation as a Title I school, as a community school it does support that you get additional funds to implement or to maybe bring on a staffing, a person, human capital or some programming to help you know your body on your community. So I think that from a district level helps.

I think they have some things in place I just sometimes wonder the impact of it in a meaningful way. Is it just drops in a bucket versus a huge splash?

Because there are people from a district level that are there I think with good intent to support, but I don't know if they have the manpower to support a district of our size and do it in a way that actually moves the instructional needle the way they desire because they're stretched so thin.

So I think in theory we have a lot of offices that have the intent to help people grow, but because they're spread so thin and they work with such a robust group of people I don't know the mass impact that it may have to help support growing people to leadership.

I look at our APIP, you know we have it, but how many of those people move onto principalships? I think structurally too our communication could be better in terms for people who are looking for leadership making sure that they have the information they need. Yeah I don't know.

*Interviewer:*

Mm-hmm, okay. Our last question: How does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributive leadership in your schools? Some of the think about are your current capacity regarding your leadership abilities, emotional intelligence abilities and your self-efficacy abilities.

*Interviewee:*

Yeah I think it goes to the law of the led. You know you can only go as high as you're lead is. And so if you want to keep moving people you have to keep adding to your knowledge base, got to keep adding to your tool belt, because if you're doing what you did five years ago you may be archaic. You know you may be like AOL, you know you got mail in a Google world. So I believe it just goes to the law of led, so for me try to surround myself with innovative educators, innovative leaders. I try to put myself around material that is working in different environments and what's causing it to work.

You know when you think of an urban prep in Chicago which has one of the highest murder rates for minorities, but they're graduating 100 percent of their young men you know what is it that they're doing in that environment that has the young people believing in what they do?

You know I look at a Steve Perry who is in Connecticut, low income area, who is sending a 100 percent of his kids onto college, what is that he's doing? So looking at other programming that works so that we can take the good parts and bring here and I share with my individuals.

The other thing for me I think, I do have emotional intelligence on here, because for me I try to always maintain. And people sometimes they ask me, "How did you deal with that? Why didn't you go off?" I said, "Because I have to demonstrate for them what I want them to do, not just tell them what I want them to do." It lets me know that some of their frustration has nothing to do with me and you know being okay with that.

Self-efficacy? I think I do pretty good with it. Yeah I think I do pretty good, probably could do a little better, but I think overall it's put us in a position to grow and move forward. I guess for me I'm just – I guess when you start, after you've done it for so long and you try to find out what it is that I need to grow? What else do I need to do? You know when you've built leaders... I have several people in the county that are now assistant principals that we've trained, you know ILTs.

So just trying to make sure that you stay, that you don't become static, that you don't become stale or that you don't become sort of just a sitting duck. So trying to ensure that we're continuously staying abreast of what's new, what's innovative, and figuring out who are people are and putting them in positions to win and be okay that they're not going to be great at everything all the time.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Well thank you. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

*Interviewee:* No, that's it.

*Interviewer:* Well thank you. I appreciate you sitting for this interview.

### **Mark**

*Interviewer:* Good morning, Thank you for agreeing to participate in the principal interview. This is a follow up from the survey that you completed around distributed leadership practices. We're going to ask a series of questions. The protocol is divided into three sections. Some of the questions are rated, so you will have a rating scale, and on those questions, I will read the scale and you will rate the questions. The questions are there for you to reference, if you need to.

Do you have any questions before we start?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Okay. We're going to start with some background information. Total years of administrative experience?

*Interviewee:* Five and a half. I'm in my sixth year.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Total years of administrative experience at your current school?

*Interviewee:* This is my fifth year at this school in administration.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And current enrollment under 400 or over 400?

*Interviewee:* Under 400.

*Interviewer:* Title I or non-Title I?

*Interviewee:* Title I.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so Section A, we're going to talk about distributed leadership responsibilities. The first question, you will select the number that best describes the level of leadership distribution at your school, 1 being rarely, 4 some of the time, and 7 most of the time, or in between. See the rating.

*Interviewee:* I think I'm really right around that 6, 7. I've got a really good team that supports me, so I just have built that up over time, so I think we're doing all right with that.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How do you identify leaders at your school?

*Interviewee:* For me, I was lucky enough to be the assistant principal there first to kind of learn individuals and who really had buy in from the staff and who could lead and then help me get that buy in from the staff, as well. So it's really through observation and seeing interactions with staff members that they knew 'cause I was still learning the staff, but just trying to get that buy in through them buying into what I wanted to do.

*Interviewer:* Okay. No. 3. How do you know that these leaders will be influential among their peers?

*Interviewee:* So pretty much the same. Because I was able to observe and see them leading their peers already and their peers looking to them for answers or asking them to come get answers for questions they had, and so realizing who the staff saw as their safe person to talk to and then utilizing that person to be a leader in the building to help get my word out and my vision.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What leadership distribution responsibilities have you implemented most frequently at your school?

*Interviewee:* Most frequently? Everything. Most frequently, what have we done? Built our new attendance team and then my registrar is acting as the attendance secretary, which is new to her this year, but knowing that she previously did attendance when she was at Blue High School, so she has a really good background in that. So letting her lead that and work with my professional school counselor.

*Interviewer:* Any other leadership distribution responsibilities?



*Interviewee:* I mean, there's a lot. Grade manager is pushed out to my professional school counselor. She does a lot. She's almost like an assistant principal. Transportation. My PE teacher deals with all transportation issues and then he can do most of that independently, but he knows if he's stuck, he can come to me, but I trust him to take care of that. 'Cause we worked together at first and then I just released him to do it on his own.

Even teacher in charge to my professional school counselor. There was another teacher in charge when I got there and then I changed it to her, just seeing her ability to lead and handle situations when I'm not there. And so taking on that responsibility and she knows that I'll support her in what she does as long as she follows \_\_\_\_\_ Public Schools' policies. And so we've done a lot of work around when something happens, there's generally a policy for that, so referring to the policy. So I built that trust in her that I can trust her to lead when I'm not there.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How are these responsibilities developed?

*Interviewee:* Really through building the relationship and trust with each individual, 'cause each person's different. Some people can pick it up quicker. Some people take a lot more time. They need more coaching to understand what the expectation is, and so to me, it's really trusting that they're going to do what you expect them to do when you're not present, and so it's all about relationships and trust. So if you can't trust them to do the responsibility, then they're not going to be able to lead without you.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so No. 6. Rate the frequency with which leadership responsibilities are fully distributed to those individuals and groups in your school. You will rate on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always. The groups are here and I will give the groups as you rate.

The assistant principal.

*Interviewee:* N/A. I don't have one.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Instructional lead teacher.

*Interviewee:* Don't have one.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional development lead teacher, PDLT.

*Interviewee:* Often.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Leadership team members.

*Interviewee:* Often.

*Interviewer:* Grade level team members.

*Interviewee:* Often.

*Interviewer:* Department leaders.

*Interviewee:* I'd say often, thinking about all of them as a whole group.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Teacher mentors.

*Interviewee:* Always. I have a great person acting as a teacher mentor.

*Interviewer:* Instructional coaches.

*Interviewee:* I don't have any of those.

*Interviewer:* And any other individuals or groups, counselors, specialists, support staff?

*Interviewee:* So my counselor is always. I mean she's got it. If she needs to ask a question, she can, but she doesn't have to ask for my approval. She knows that I trust her to make a decision. So she's always and I trust if she doesn't know, she'll come to me. That's why she gets the always. Even my specialist PE, who's running transportation, he's always. He's got it. Same thing. If he has to ask a question, he can come to me and ask a question.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So now we're going into Section B and we're going to look at how you use structures, processes, and tools to support implementation of distributed leadership. So the first question, you're going to rate, again, on a scale of 1 to 5. No. 1, rate each of the structures in terms of the current level of implementation at your school. The structures are school leadership teams.

*Interviewee:* I'll say sometimes for school leadership teams 'cause I'm usually guiding that work so it's more I'm guiding a lot of that.

Collaborative planning team? They develop their agendas. I monitor but they're developing and running that pretty much on their own.

*Interviewer:* So that's a –

*Interviewee:* A 5.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Professional learning communities, PLCs.

*Interviewee:* PLCs? I'm gonna say often. I'm doing some coaching with my leaders from PLCs right now.

*Interviewer:* Grade level teams.

*Interviewee:* Often.

*Interviewer:* Department teams.

*Interviewee:* Often.

*Interviewer:* Professional development teams?

*Interviewee:* Oh, they're always. They're good.

*Interviewer:* School improvement planning teams.

*Interviewee:* Often, \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* And then other structures such as SIT, IEP.

*Interviewee:* So those are pretty much always and I just monitor, so they can run. They're actually really good at running on their own. I don't have to micromanage them 'cause I trust them. I see the work that they do, so I just monitor what's going on in the meeting. So I do attend the meetings and I just monitor as I'm in there. If I need to provide feedback, I do. And then with the other ones, they all pretty much have rolling agendas that I participate in the rolling agendas and provide feedback to them.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. No. 2. What processes do you use to support that implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And the processes are here and they include, these are some of the processes, so what processes do you use to support?

*Interviewee:* Depending on the team, so they need coaching at the beginning to learn the expectation of what we're going to do.

*Interviewer:* So is that peer coaching?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* And we have a lot of in-house professional development. We do peer-to-peer observations, walk throughs with feedback and learning walks, and then data analysis. We pretty much use the majority of those.

*Interviewer:* How do these processes impact distributed leadership practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* I think they make each individual better at what they do because they understand that there's a process to do the work, and so when we provide that process and that structure, it makes them have a clear understanding of what they're expected to do.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What tools do you use to support the implementation of distributed leadership at your school? And the tools are listed here.

*Interviewee:* So we use the rolling agendas, so we have templates for that. We use lesson plan templates that are provided by the county but we do implement them to make sure they're being used. Walk through templates, we'll use the look force to provide feedback to that. We have data collection. All our K to 2 data is collected on forms so we can provide feedback there and that's done in the PLC for reading. And then that's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* How do these tools impact the implementation of distributed leadership at your school?

*Interviewee:* So once again, they give a structure, and the structure's important to make sure it's successful, and if we don't have that structure, then everything's just kind of maybe happening and we're not monitoring it through a specific structure or able to provide as much feedback.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so Section C, we're going to talk about barriers and supporting factors to distributed leadership at both the school level and the district level. So No. 1, what factors support principals' efforts to distribute leadership in their schools?

*Interviewee:* I think it's having those people who are outside of the classroom that can support you because you can't do it all by yourself, and so you need that support. You need personnel. It can also be a barrier as part, too, because being a smaller school, we don't have a lot of classroom personnel to help support, so there are individuals out of the classroom that are taking on these roles, but some of them have multiple roles just because there's limited amount of people out of the classroom to help support.

*Interviewer:* So for support, you mentioned just having people to support your efforts, having those personnel that's outside of the classroom to be able to support and lead the work?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Any other supports?

*Interviewee:* As in district and?

*Interviewer:* No, just school.

*Interviewee:* Just schoolwide?

*Interviewer:* Just support at your school. What factors support principals' efforts to distribute?

*Interviewee:* I mean multiple. The factors of I think me receiving professional development so I know that what I need to go back and teach the staff and provide them. So with my development, learning to have systems and structures in place and then implementing those in my school really help make it a lot more successful so I can give a clear expectation to the staff. So that's, to me, a big support, 'cause first going into principalship, it's just trying to figure it out, and then learning better ways to help support you even with agendas, calendars, utilizing the secretary for parent concerns, if they can handle some of those sometimes, and free up some of my time to look more into instruction.

*Interviewer:* So then this next question is what factors act as barriers to principals' efforts at distributed leadership. You started to talk about the personnel and how you're a small school, so tell me more about that.

*Interviewee:* Right, so being a small school, I have really just three individuals, educators who are out of the classrooms. So I don't have an assistant principal. That's a big factor. So I have a professional school counselor, but the more she's supporting me, it's kind of a barrier to what she's supposed to do as a counselor, as well, and the reading specialist who is my testing coordinator, my PDLT reading specialist, so it's the multiple roles that are also a barrier, as well.

*Interviewer:* Any other barriers that you can think of towards efforts to distributed leadership \_\_\_\_\_?

*Interviewee:* Time is a big one, just having time to actually work with and build a relationship and trust with individuals that you want to help with distributed leadership. So I have a brand new Title I resource teacher who's a teacher and it's a brand new role. So I need to be able to train her, and go over the expectations, and review the position, and then all the Title I documents that she has to learn, and it's just the time to review that to help her be successful in her position. And so once we get through that, I'll be able to trust her and leave her to do it on her own, but right now, we have to do the work together.

*Interviewer:* Right. So then what factors contribute to the sustainability of leadership distribution practices in your school?

*Interviewee:* The biggest factor to sustainability is staff retention. I lost one staff member last year who was my Title I resource. So not having to go into each year training new people, new expectations, just having those who we could meet over the summer as a leadership team and really review at the end of the year what went well, what didn't, where can we improve, and move forward from there, and then we're all on the same page starting the year. It's not retraining a whole new set of staff. So just that retention to me is very important. If you continue to have good staff retention, you can just continue to move students.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so how does the current organizational structure in your district support or hinder implementation of distributed leadership practices in schools?

*Interviewee:* I would say one hindrance, even though we're a small school, is not having that assistant principal. The SBB, the way we put money out per student into the school building, does not allocate enough funds to support outside of the classroom, and so that's one hindrance. So just everybody else we kind of have to use and then everyone's spread thin, and so to me, that organizational structure of SBB and funding per school is different, because as a smaller school with less students, we have less of the general funding that would go per student that you could use outside of the classroom, if that makes sense.

*Interviewer:* Yes.

*Interviewee:* When you have more students, you get more per student that you can put to outside the classroom resources.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Good. And the last question is how does your leadership capacity impact how you implement distributed leadership in your school? So some things to think about are think about your current capacity regarding your leadership ability, emotional intelligence abilities, and your self-efficacy abilities to implement distributed leadership. How does it impact?

*Interviewee:* I think leading by example is really important and to jump in and do the work with your staff and those who you want to lead so they don't see that they jump in and they're doing it on their own. And I'm just a big people person myself and I think that really helps me out with getting others on board and being able to communicate and be honest with individuals. And so being able to have that tough conversation when you need to and then

the accountability piece. Although we're on a good team and we get along well together, but we've gotta be able to have those honest conversations as a team. And so being able to say this is our safe place and we can have a conversation, that to me is what helps us do better.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Anything else you would like to add before we end? That was our last question. Do you have anything else to add?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Well, I thank you for participating in this follow-up interview. Again, I appreciate your support. Okay, thank you.

*Interviewee:* Thank you.

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