TEACHER LEADERS IN FORMAL ROLES:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

Tracy Williams

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education

May 2009

To the faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of TRACY WILLIAMS find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

_____
Gail Furman, Ph.D.,

_____
Paul Goldman, Ph.D.

_____
Joan Kingrey, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was shepherded by Dr. Gail Furman whose inspiration began for me in a class on Ethical Leadership. Gail, I will always be grateful for your impact on my life and thinking. You are a living example of the ethic of caring through your high academic standards coupled with your excellent support. I am a different educator as a result of your guidance. Your article written with Jerry Starratt *Leadership for democratic community in schools* challenges me to continue to deepen my scholarship and practice.

To my family, I am grateful for the time you have given to support this dream. David, you are a living reflection of *All Good Gifts*. From *Second Chapter* to *Wicked*, your shared love of music has sustained me. Your sacrifice to keep our family going through these years was great, and I appreciate your steadfastness. Jono, you can now rest in the knowledge that I will be more attentive to the little things in life. Your own journey as a student and a caring human being challenges me to keep making schools great places for kids and adults. Tricia, it has been a thrill to have a sister in all of life, and I am grateful for your constant support. To my Dad and my aunts and uncles, Jon and Jessica, Jean and Arnold, the end of this journey wouldn't have been possible without your commitment to family. Thanks for your understanding love and unyielding support.

To my fellow Cougars: It was great to meet so many sojourners in class, and to find others on the dissertation path. Dissertation Avoidance Therapy will never be the same without all of you. Mona, Mike, and Peggy, finishing with you was a joy. Debbie, Ish, Mike, Gary, Debra, and Bridget: the journey will not be the same until you are done. To Wendy, Staci, Tammy, Irene, Mary, and Linda, I appreciate you showing me the way. Irene Gonzales and Jane Schwab, I could never have reached this point without you as models. Your friendship and feedback carried me through the toughest writing places. I am grateful for your continued friendship and constant support.

To my colleagues in Spokane and Walla Walla, I appreciate the lessons I learned with you and from you. Peggy, Laura, Cindy, and Judy, I would have never survived as a staff developer without you. Janis, thanks for your teaming with technology. Learning from great leaders has been a great benefit of both school districts. Dr. Nancy Stowell, thanks for hiring me, and teaching my first doctoral class. You set me off on an incredible journey. Dr. Ellen Wolf, you are a constant inspiration! Karin Short, you have

challenged me to be both a curriculum auditor (who knew that I'd intern for Fenwick!) and thinker. Drs. Jim and Debra Howard, your constant encouragement kept me moving forward. I have learned much about teaching and learning from Ron Higgins, Ron Wilkinson, Joel Aune, Kathy Williams, and Chris Lynch, my thanks to each of you.

Dr. Diane Steese Murphy, you have provided both vision and abiding support from my Whitworth days until now, and I cherish your mentorship, friendship and love. Your sharing of Chris and Karen with me set up foundations for many teaching and parenting conversations. Dr. Sharon Mowry, you have my eternal friendship. My transition to Spokane was only possible because of your constant positive presuppositions, a legacy that I hope to pass to others as I continue to teach. Thanks for befriending me, teaming with me, and being at the end of the phone in the toughest of times as well as the celebrations.

Marcia Tomlin, you have been and always will be my in-school mentor (since Madeline Hunter was not available). I will always cherish the years we taught across the hall from each other, all the planning, and the talk over lunches, travel to conferences, and professional excursions. To my Bridge and Birthday Girls, my love to each of you. You are the balance in my life. To my NSDC academy 6 chicks and a dude, thanks for putting up with my distracted learning. I learned a ton from you and with you, and am continuously spurred on to use what we've learned together. To the many teachers and students in Walla Walla and Spokane who invited me into classrooms, thanks for teaching me about student engagement and professional development. Digger, colleagues on court first and the classroom. Your ability to thoughtfully approach engaging instruction has provoked me in so many ways. When my web site is up, it will be a credit to your guidance. You are the Dennis Sparks of our generation.

Dr. Joanne Martin. You set me on this journey when you were a WSU graduate student. You hired me in my first formal teacher leadership role, believed in me and sustained me through all the dilemmas. I learned about staff development centered on student learning from you and will never forget the assessment training where you discovered that you are 13 years older than me… I will forever be your colleague, and am honored to have learned with you. I expect that there is much more in the future! Your professional modeling is what I aspire to, and your life is forever a joy.

TEACHER LEADERS IN FORMAL ROLES:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

ABSTRACT

By Tracy Williams, Ed. D.
Washington State University
May 2009

Chair: Gail Furman

This phenomenological, qualitative study explored the lived experiences of ten teacher leaders in K-12 schools who have served in non-supervisory teacher leader roles, including as “mentors” or “instructional coaches.” Data were collected through a series of open-ended interviews with each participant. The study utilizes portraiture and auto-ethnography and a cross-case analysis. This technique reveals the multiple roles employed by full time teacher leaders in K-12 school settings, underscoring their backgrounds and motivations, the nature of their work as teacher leaders, and how they make sense of their work. In addition, the study explores teachers’ experiences when they exit these roles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Dedication

This study would not have been possible without the support and interest of caring educators who are aiming to make a difference on a daily basis for the students in our schools. My thanks to Jeannie Harmon of the Center for the Strengthening of the Teaching Profession; Sue Anderson, formerly of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the great state of Washington; Jan Rust, Director of Careers in Teaching mentorship in Spokane Public Schools; and Dr. Sharon Robinson, Director of Professional Learning in Spokane Public Schools. Each of you provided support and resources when needed for this study, and in the best sense, were part of the action related to this research.

It is true that this study could not have happened without the 10 remarkable teacher leaders who opened their lives, schools, and classrooms to me. I enjoyed every interview, visit, and phone call. If each official interview didn't result in the transcript of the conversation, I could have gone on forever. Thinking about teaching and learning is fascinating! It is really hard to continue to not be able to name you (and you can't imagine how many times people have tried to do so… I didn't know that you would be so sought after!) and personally thank you each right here for the amazing stories of your learning that you shared with me. I laughed with you, and cried. I hold out hope that schools are becoming increasingly more balanced in leadership, and as a result of your experience – in spite of a few clear potholes – I believe that is true. I appreciate being able to access your lives. I loved listening to your stories about students and our colleagues. I will never forget the openness with which you approached the task of telling your stories. I know that others will benefit from what you have given. My life will never be the same again.

This study resulted in a journey that I would have never imagined possible. It lead me from classrooms in Spokane, to Colorado, back to western Washington, through Spokane again and even to my roots in middle school in Walla Walla. I relished in your joy when teachers tried something that worked with students in their classes, and anguished when administrators acted like "suits." My personal journey was anchored on the campus of Walla Walla High school which is graced by a beautiful setting, incredible staff and amazing students. Depicting a day in the life brought back years of joy, and the press of staying ahead of high school students. I loved teaching with you, and loved thinking of our journey, and was heartened by my visits that show that the journey continues!

As the work in our schools and classrooms move forward, I'd like to make a note that in turbulent economic times, it is the teacher leaders and our students who feel the impact of unwritten policy and unsure funding streams. It is my hope that there will be legislators who will find value in the ways that teacher leaders create spaces for novice and experienced teachers who daily work to provide challenging, appropriate, supported learning in classrooms for each student. It is heartening to have worked in two school districts who have valued this work. It is time to put teacher learning at the center of how schools seek to daily serve each child in our care. This work will not be done until Malachi, Jermaine, Alexandra, Kimiko, Jonathan, Camina, Kylie, Michael, Dylan, Taylor, Katherine, Emily, Warren, Alice, and Beau are ready for lives beyond high school. Let's get on with the work in our schools and classrooms. These kids can't wait!

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership theories and constructs are changing. New leadership concepts focus on the distribution of leadership throughout a school site and staff, whereas former, traditional leadership concepts focused on "heroic" leaders in administrative roles (Spillane, 2006). One of the reasons for this shift in thinking about leadership is the current reform/policy environment with its demands for increased student learning (e.g., the federal "No Child Left Behind" legislation – the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.) These demands call for new forms of leadership that look specifically at the learning of students in K-12 schools (Alvarado, n.d.). Many writers are addressing this shift, including Lieberman and Miller (2004) who note the changing understanding in K-12 schools from the principal as a singular leader to the many leaders within a school staff. Murphy (2002) reflects this shift in describing the new foundations of educational leadership as including school improvement, social justice, and a democratic community. In short, educational leadership must respond in different ways so that students can meet higher standards for learning (Alvarado, n.d.; Elmore, 2000).

Teacher leadership is seen as a means to influence instructional practice beyond one's own classroom (Smylie, Conley, & Marks 2002). Teacher leadership has emerged as a prominent focus of study. In alignment with this shift in leadership constructs, this phenomenological qualitative study explored the lived experiences of individuals in one type of teacher leader role that is under-studied: those who serve in a formal K-12 positions as mentors or instructional coaches, with full time duties as staff developers.

Background

Distributed leadership is one of the important new leadership constructs in the field of education. The idea of distributed leadership suggests that principals and teachers lead together in formal and informal ways**;** leadership, thus, is "distributed" throughout the school site. Pounder, Ogawa and Adams (1995), in a seminal study on distributed leadership, show that a variety of leadership influences exist within schools, and Spillane (2006) speculates that leadership is actually "stretched" across a school site. Murphy's (2002) call to recast the concept of leadership includes an "unrelenting focus on the creation of personalized learning environments for students, leading from a web of interpersonal relationship with people, not through them; and to empower others" (p. 188). Similarly, Grogan and Roberson (2002) describe distributed leadership as relational, with a goal of empowering others. Spillane (2006) adds that distributed leadership involves "leaders, followers, and their situation" and that "leadership practice is about interactions, not just the action of heroes" (p. 4). Furman (2003) rightly adds that educators have a "moral responsibility to engage in the communal process…pursuing the moral purposes of their work…" (p. 2). Distributed leadership clearly has its place in the current educational milieu.

Related to the concept of distributed leadership is the concept of teacher leadership, which has developed into a distinct strand of literature and research. Perhaps since the inception of schooling, formal and informal teacher leaders have existed within schools (Little, 1988). However, educational researchers are currently increasing their focus on clarifying the concept of teacher leadership in the literature and its applications in the field. Teacher leaders can be found in classrooms and in union leadership. They

serve as department and committee chairs (Little, 1988). They write curriculum and assessment. They supervise student teachers. They are essential in every aspect of school culture. Many scholars (e.g. York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Crowther, et. al, 2002) have indicated that teacher leadership extends the leadership of the school in a way that benefits student and teacher learning.

While a consistent definition of teacher leadership continues to elude the profession (Wasley, 1991; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001), several authors have offered their understandings. Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) posit that teacher leadership is "action that transforms teaching and learning in a school that ties school and community together on behalf of learning…" (p. xvii). Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2001) state:

> …within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change. By using the energy of teacher leadership as agents of school change, the reform of public education will stand a better chance at building momentum. (p. 2)

York-Barr and Duke (2004), in a twenty year review of literature on teacher leaders, concluded that teacher leadership is "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (pp. 287-288). Building further understanding of teacher leadership will clearly be advantageous to the advancement of the profession.

One of the arguments for the importance of teacher leadership is that it multiplies the ways that the educational needs of students can be addressed. Killion and Harrison (2006) surmise that school-based teacher leaders "assist teachers in learning and applying

the new knowledge and skills necessary to improve the academic performance of all students" and that they spend a "significant portion of their work day with teachers" (p. 8). Lieberman and Miller (2004) call for teacher leadership to bring an end to the era of teacher isolation with the advent of communities of professionals who engage in "public discussion and display of teaching" (p. 10). Barth, in his 1999 monograph *The Teacher Leader,* states that:

> A powerful relationship exists between learning and leading…This is where teacher leadership intersects with professional development. Teachers who assume responsibility for something they desperately care about … stand at the gate of profound learning (p. 2).

There are some reasons to look at the separate influences of administrative and teacher leadership. Urbanski and Nickolaou (1997) point out that teacher leadership and administrative leadership represent two different types; they state that teacher leadership is primarily collegial in nature as opposed to the managerial nature of administration. Similarly, Spillane, Diamond, and Halverson (1999) describe the ways that teacher leaders emerge when leadership is generated from within the school as contrasted with the external appointment of principals. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) add that leadership does not exist in one role in schools. They explain that "we have experienced situations in which teacher leaders leave the classroom and are still quite effective in working with other teachers…" when the focus is improving teaching and learning, and not "quasi-administrative" responsibilities that take them away from the "focus on teaching and authentic relationships with colleague teachers" (p. 6).

In the field of K-12 education, up until the 1980's, most teacher leadership in action remained informal, with the exception of high school department chairs and union

leadership (Little, 2003; Danielson, 2006). Recently, formal teacher leadership roles have extended into the policy arena with legislatures hoping that these roles will serve to further educational reform efforts (Smylie & Denny, 1990), and teacher leadership has been formalized in many states and districts. Numerous school districts have begun to identify formal instructionally-focused, non-supervisory roles for experienced teachers who are released full time or part time from instruction to be "mentors" to novice teachers (Knight, 2009). Typically, mentors in non-supervisory roles support beginning teachers who have less than 90 days of experience (OSPI). The idea is that mentors on full time release from classroom duties build capacity in novice teachers and create conditions that improve student learning. In addition, mentors help novice teachers become part of the community of educators within the school (Johnson, 2004).

In the 1990's, another formal role, that of content area instructional coach emerged, an innovation that targeted the development of individual teacher capacity in each classroom. Like mentors, instructional coaches are expert veteran teachers, but in contrast to mentors, coaches support teachers beyond the beginning or novice stage. Instructional coaches are recognized for deep subject area expertise and related pedagogy. Instructional coaches work with small groups of teachers, individuals, and even entire faculties, lending experience in using data to make classroom-teaching decisions. The ability to assist peers in reflecting on lessons and in planning for instruction require two skill sets that are common to both mentors and instructional coaches (Bennett, 2007; Killion & Harrison, 2006). Both of these formal teacher leader roles require that teachers take what they know about instruction with students and use it in working with adults.

Several states are beginning to develop ways for teacher leaders to gain acknowledgement though certification and development of additional formal roles in the profession. Washington State has developed standards for beginning teacher mentors in the past five years. A partnership between the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) resulted in a set of standards being published in 2007. These standards speak to the qualification of veteran teachers who could be selected to be mentors. Two of the standards, Mentoring and Professional Development (CSTP, 2008), describe the knowledge and skill sets needed to work with adults in job-embedded, daily staff development. Similarly, in California, the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz initiated a formative assessment system that addresses not only the needs of new teachers and their mentors but also the characteristics of program leaders (New Teacher Center, n.d.). The Denver based Partnership for Education and Business Coalition (PEBC) initiated a weeklong coaching training series in 2004 to assist school districts in developing instructional coaches. PEBC has utilized forms of instructional coaching for nearly 25 years in schools and classrooms that want to explore that option.

In eastern Washington State, Spokane Public Schools' board of directors stated in its 2004-2008 strategic plan that "each teacher shall have an instructional coach." Although this goal has not been fully realized, it remains one of the largest system-wide efforts in Washington State to implement site-based, classroom-embedded staff development. In Spokane, over 100 coaches gather for collective professional development for six hours each month. The core of this plan is to support school and classroom level professional development full time.

York-Barr and Duke report that the voice of the teacher leader is unresearched (2004). Danielson in 2006 chimed in that the concept of teacher leadership "has not been fully explored in the professional literature" (p. 15). The lack of research on teacher leaders leaves the literature void of the stories of those in this role, especially those in formalized roles such as mentor and instructional coach. Leadership beyond the classroom has "only recently been afforded serious consideration" (Murphy, 2005, p. 19). Firestone and Martinez (2007) indicate that the roles that teacher leaders fill and the conditions that undergird their success are dependent on administrative support. Yet, relatively little is known about how leadership practice is "stretched" over administrative leaders and teacher leaders (Spillane, 2006). The increased use of teacher leaders in non-supervisory roles as a strategy for improving student learning creates new opportunities for researchers to examine the phenomenon of teacher leadership (Little 2003; Hargreaves & Fullan 2000). Further, little is known about teacher leaders who take in the relatively new formal roles of mentors or coaches.

The Research Problem

Educational leadership perspectives are shifting to a distributed leadership model that includes and values teacher leadership (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Teacher leadership is seen as promising practice related to improving student learning in schools, and many states and districts have created formal, but non-supervisory, teacher leadership roles with the potential to impact classroom instruction and student learning directly (Knight, 2007). Among these roles are mentor teachers and instructional coaches. According to Lieberman and Miller, teacher leaders impact teacher practice. However, the roles of teacher leaders in formal, full-time release positions are under-researched

(York-Barr & Duke, 2004). While some research has explored the perspectives of teacher leaders in general, there is currently no research that explores the lived experience of teachers in formal leadership roles in K-12 schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of teacher leaders in formal roles within the K-12 public school system. These are the specific research questions that guided this inquiry:

- How do teacher leaders come to be in their roles, and what motivates them to do this work?
- What is the essence of the work that teacher leaders do as mentors and instructional coaches?
- How do teacher leaders in full time released roles make sense of the work that they do?
- What problems and issues do teachers leaders in full time released roles face?
- What is the impact of the full time released, formal role on the teacher leader?
- If the formal role comes to an end, what experiences do teacher leaders face as they re-enter the classroom or take on other roles in K-12 schools?

Methodology

Focusing on the experiences of cultural insiders, this qualitative study employed phenomenologically oriented, open-ended questions as the primary data collection method. A phenomenological approach was considered appropriate for this study because it focuses on the "meaning of events and interactions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25) of teacher leaders and seeks to orient the research toward the lived experience of others. A

series of interviews (Seidman, 1998; Creswell, 2007) were utilized to allow participants to describe fully their experiences. A portrait of one participant was developed was co-created as a way to understand better the experience of these teacher leaders. Thus, the product of this study also draws from the approach of portraiture as described by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), and co-constructed narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). An auto-ethnographic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) passage was written to reflect a slice of a day in the life of a mentor of novice teachers. Finally, thematic analysis was employed to lift out patterns from the words (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The study used purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to identify and recruit at least ten teacher leaders who are or have been in formal roles as mentor or coach. Some of the participants had left these formal roles. I used purposeful sampling to seek participants from the western United States where the use of full time release mentors and instructional coaches is rising dramatically. Participants were nominated for this study by district level supervisors, state department network supervisors, and an executive director of a non-profit foundation that supports teacher leaders – The Center for the Strengthening of the Teaching Profession (CSTP). Participants represented as much diversity in age, years of teaching experience, school level experience, subject matter expertise, ethnicity, and gender as was possible given the limitations of my status as a graduate student. Criteria for participation in the study included the current position that was held by the teacher leader, the number of years the position had been held, and the willingness of the teacher leader to participate in the research.

Each potential participant was contacted and asked if he/she would participate in a series of interviews as a "conversational partner" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 14). To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used in all documentation.

Interviews were taped recorded and transcribed verbatim. I invited the participants to review and comment on their interviews. Analysis followed the basic procedures of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), to identify patterns in the data and generate themes.

Positionality

As a researcher, it is important for me to consider my positionality in regard to the proposed study. Several perspectives on ethnography place my experiences as a mentor and coach – the groups of teachers leaders that I propose to study – as a filter to the study. These perspectives as discussed by Ellis and Bochner (2000) are (a) reflexive ethnography, which uses a researcher's experiences to illuminate the culture under study; and (b) narrative ethnography, which is a strategy that incorporates the ethnographer's experiences through ethnographic dialogue or encounter between the narrator and the members of the group being studied. These perspectives on ethnography and the phenomenological stance that I have taken during previous interview studies attract me to the form of portraiture as a research style in which the experiences of the teacher leader participants are intertwined with my own experiences and life. My desire to report research in a manner that draws the reader into the experiences of these teacher leaders motivates me to use my personal professional experiences as a way to guide the narrative.

Report of the Study

This report of the study will consist of six chapters. Chapter One introduces the study's focus and methodology. Chapter Two examines the literature related to the research problem. Chapter Three discusses the qualitative methodology used in this report. Chapter Four includes two sections: A portrait of one participant, and an auto-ethnographic illustration of a day in the life of a mentor teacher. Chapter Five displays the thematic analysis of the interview data. Chapter Six presents lessons learned and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To provide a context for the study this selective literature review includes sections on the concept and value of teacher leadership, foundations of school-based coaching, emergent formal roles in teacher leadership, and dilemmas related to teacher leadership. The research on teacher leadership is thin to date, but growing. This review includes published studies as well as theoretical and practitioner oriented literature.

The Concept of Teacher Leadership

The research literature regarding school leadership has focused almost exclusively in the past on the administrative roles of principals and superintendents. However, in recent years the concept of distributed leadership includes the multiple voices within the school community (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership invites the engagement of many stakeholders within the schoolhouse to work on increasing the achievement of all students. This signals a major shift in how work is done in schools and places teacher leaders in partnership with principals and other administrators.

Angelle and Schmid (2007) looked at those making decisions in schools through identity theory. They used qualitative interviews of principals and teacher leaders who the principals nominated. The teacher leaders described their actions. Although teacher leaders in elementary, middle and high school levels described being an “educational role model”, the role of a “decision maker” was limited to the K-8 spans. Middle school and High school teacher leaders described being a “supra-practitioner” which essentially means that these teacher leaders gave “extra” time to go beyond what was expected.

Most of the distributed leadership that was described in this study was found within the classroom walls, which was an interesting nuance when coupled with the differences experienced at different levels of schools.

Teacher leadership and its connection to distributed leadership need further research, as much of the literature on the topic is theoretical in nature (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Sergiovanni's concept "leadership density" indicates that the greater the number of people involved the knowledge creation and transfer, the greater the potential is for a larger number of potential leaders there could be (2001). This highlights the notion that leadership can emerge formatively and could include all members of a school staff in some degree. Spillane (2006) comments:

> …from a distributed perspective, leadership is more than what individuals in formal leadership positions do. People in formal and informal roles take responsibility for leadership activities… Individually or collectively, teachers take on leadership responsibilities, including mentoring peers and providing professional development. (p. 13)

Harris and Lambert (2003) agree with Spillane that delegation is not synonymous with distributed leadership. They clarify that if the distribution of leadership becomes too diffuse that its distinct qualities are lost. They go on to indicate that certain tasks and functions should be retained by those in formal roles, with the goal to involve teachers in shaping instructional development. Harris (2003) concludes by stating

> Quite simply, we cannot continue to ignore, dismiss, or devalue the notion of teacher leadership as a form of distributed leadership – to do so is to knowingly invest in forms of leadership theory and practice that make little, if any difference, to the achievement of young people. (p. 322)

Teacher leadership is a key aspect of distributed leadership in schools, and several types of formal, non-supervisory, roles for teachers have arisen and been strengthened

during this educational era (Knight, 2007; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Killion & Harrison, 2006). Teachers often experience leadership first in a formative manner, being asked to lead their peers as a result of exemplary teaching (Livingston, 1992; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Many teachers are encouraged further into leadership through involvement in union activities. Leading staff development focusing on curriculum is another way that many teachers develop leadership skills. For the purposes of this study, teacher leaders will be identified as those teachers who hold full time non-supervisory roles as a mentor to novice teachers or as an instructional coach. Although defining leadership is evolving, an operational definition of teacher leadership offered by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) will be used for this study: "Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (p. 5).

What is the role of the formal teacher leader when working with the principal and other informal teacher leaders? Although they lead together, teacher leaders and administrators rise to leadership in fundamentally different ways (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Principals generally rise through formal organizational positions, and teachers generally emerge as content experts, through the recognition of their peers (Lieberman & Miller, 2004; York-Barr & Duke 2004). As Spillane states in 2006, (p. 21) "interrelationships between teacher leadership and administrator leadership are rarely discussed." Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2001) state that "moving into administration is not the only way to lead in schools" (p. 5). Anderson (2004) noted that teacher leaders and principals have "mutual influence," while Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), in one of the

few quantitative studies on teacher leadership, gathered survey data that showed the effect of principal leadership was weak but significant while the effect of teacher leadership showed no correlation to school improvement. Du's (2007) research focusing on teacher leaders as group leaders suggests that both group leaders and group members bring personal and social characteristics that impact cohesiveness and compatibility. Firestone and Martinez (2007) indicate that teacher leaders compliment the leadership efforts of district leaders. They found that teacher leaders span the distance between the central office and the classroom through personal relationships developed over time. Swinnerton (2007) points to the fundamentally different conversations teacher leaders have with teachers when contrasted with principals' conversations. Teacher leaders typically have more to do with a focus on teaching and learning than management (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Lieberman and Miller (2004) describe how teacher leaders lead "side by side" with other teachers. Teacher leadership has the potential for working in groups where there is the potential for openness and trust building in an authentic manner that affirms the reciprocal nature of the teacher leader being a member of the faculty, rather than the administration (Donaldson, 2001). In the end, "Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow" (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p.70).

Teacher leaders emerge over time. York-Barr and Duke in their review of 20 years of teacher leader literature (2004) suggest that teacher leadership emerges in the following stages: Teacher leaders are, in the beginning, accomplished classroom teachers who are initially engaged in leadership as a result of the respect that they gain from their peers. Their leadership can emerge in formal and informal ways. The condition of

building respect from one's peers leads to increased opportunities to lead. Teacher leaders build trusting relations with both peers and principals and affect the learning of individual teachers, groups of teachers, and even the capacity of the system as their sphere of influence grows. Ultimately, teacher leadership positively impacts teacher learning and student learning.

When teacher leadership is focused on teaching and learning, what are the skills and abilities that are required? Lieberman (2004) describes the "dramatic shift" in teacher leaders' work that happens when teacher expertise is legitimated and that learning focuses on students. Lieberman – whose research has longitudinally followed teachers in National Writing Project networks – describes what is needed as

> …building a professional ethos that respects diversity, confronts differences, represents a sensitivity to and engagement with the whole life of students and the adults who teach them. It is about teacher leaders who are creating learning communities that include rather than exclude, that create knowledge rather than merely apply it, and that offer challenge and support to both new and experienced teachers as colleagues. And it is about teacher leaders who make a difference (p. 13).

Little (1988) connects teacher leadership with an impact on instruction: "Teachers who lead leave their mark in teaching. By their presence and their performance, they change how other teachers think about, plan for, and conduct their work with students (p. 84)." York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Spillane, Diamond, and Halverson (1999) concluded that the respect from peers leverages formal and informal opportunities for teachers to lead. They point to the ability of teacher leaders to build the capacity of the system and positively impact both student and teacher learning.

In spite of all that is known about teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) located and reviewed less than five peer-reviewed studies that examined the direct effects

of teacher leadership on students. This is an area of research that needs additional attention.

Summary

Although teacher leadership and its connection to teacher collaboration and capacity building have been well-established (Little, 1999; Lambert, 1998), we need to better analyze the role of teacher leaders. Exploring how teachers, as both formal and informal leaders, partner with the principal and other administrative team members is an area that invites investigation. According to Smylie and Denny (1990) the context of the teacher leader role is key to the development of formal roles when they are established. Researchers should focus on what is needed in both school leadership and school community (Furman & Starratt, 2002). Both researchers and practitioners point to teacher leadership as a portion of distributed leadership that holds promise due to the need to increase the leadership load in the school beyond the principal (Taylor in Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000, in Angelle & Schmid, 2007) note that "teacher's and principal's voices are missing from much of the literature advocating for teacher leadership, thereby leading to the conclusion that teacher leadership has yet to be defined by those who actually practice the concept" (p. 772).

Foundations

The expertise that allows teachers to emerge as instructional leaders is typically based in salient frameworks for instructional coaching. In the early 1980's, Joyce and Showers reported (1980) that peer coaching could assist in the transfer of teachers' new learning to classroom situations. Showers (1984) further investigated the implementation of new learning and found that coaching is a prerequisite for the successful

implementation of new teaching practices. Bush (1984) reported on a 5-year longitudinal study that confirmed the work of Showers. And Lord, Cress and Miller (as cited in Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008) state "For many classroom teachers, the teacher leader is a critical bridge between traditional practice and new, more robust approaches to instruction" (p.72). These initial studies laid the foundation for further research on coaching.

Cognitive Coaching[sm] is a model developed by Costa and Garmston (1994) that is also a foundation for mentors and instructional coaches. The basic premise of Cognitive Coaching[sm] is to "support individuals as they move beyond their present capacities into new knowledge and skill" (p. 3). Knight, in reviewing the literature on cognitive coaching notes that qualitative research points out the difficulty in researching in schools: each school having its own cultures and multiple initiatives (2009). Knight's research on the impact of school-based coaching on teacher practices spawns a new era in research on this school embedded professional development role for teacher leaders (2007).

Teacher leaders bring foundational knowledge in teaching as their perspective to the core work in schools. One of their main purposes is to develop trust between teaching staff and the instructional leaders so that improvement of instruction will increase student learning (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Taylor observes that "coaching dedicates extended time to the examination of instructional practice and attempts to connect teachers to create networks that enhance social capital and information flow" (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008, p. 22). Sanders' and Rivers' groundbreaking research in 1996 looked at students over three years, and found that the "most dominating factor affecting student achievement is teacher effect (p. 6)." The move to focus on teaching

was furthered by Wrenglinski's 2000 analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress data. Student achievement could be predicted, he summarized following a multilevel structural modeling analysis, by the professional development of the teacher. He claims that "changing the nature of teaching and learning in the classroom may be the most direct way to improve student outcomes" (Wrenglinski, 2000, p. 11).

Emergent Formal Roles in Teacher Leadership

In the field of K-12 education teacher leadership roles have traditionally been informal, with the exception of high school department chairs and union leadership (Little, 2003; Danielson, 2006). Recently, formal teacher leadership roles have extended into the policy arena holding out hope that these roles will promote educational reform efforts (Smylie & Denny, 1990). There are roles for teacher leaders that are emerging in schools. (Neufeld and Roper, 2003; Killion & Harrison, 2006). Does the emergence of these formal roles within teacher leadership flatten out the traditionally hierarchical structures which lead to the insidious nature of the isolation of teachers in our schools? Beachum and Dentith (2004) allude to the potential that teacher leaders are "successful change agents and conduits in promoting cultural change" (p. 283). Stone et al. (1997) found that teacher leaders are "constrained by time, power, and politics" (p. 26). The desire of teacher leaders to create schools where the focus is on a caring community that promotes student learning related to the concept of "schools as communities for students" (Osterman, 2002). This leads us to deconstruct the nature formal teacher leadership and to view how these full-time released teacher leaders in formal roles work inside schools.

Thus, districts have begun to identify formal instructionally focused roles for experienced teachers who are released full time or part time from instruction to be

"mentors" to novice teachers or instructional coaches (Livingston, 1992, Killion & Harrison, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003, Knight, 2009). The idea is that teacher leaders who are released full time from classroom duties will build capacity in other teachers and create conditions that improve student learning.

The Instructional Coach

According to Knight, the word 'coach' was listed in the 1997 National Staff Development Council (NSDC) program nineteen times. The number of occurrences grew to 193 in the 2007 conference program (Knight, 2007). This is an indicator of the scale of implementation that coaching is experiencing as the current milieu in schools. Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) concur, "with increasing frequency, district and schools are creating new leadership positions – such as coach or coordinator roles – that formally extend responsibility for instructional leadership to teachers" (p. 3). These positions are designed to provide professional development to teachers in a sustained, school-embedded manner that meets the NSDC standards for staff development (Table I). Knight states that "an instructional coach…partners with teachers so that they can choose and implement research-based interventions to help student learn more effectively" (p. 30). Russo (2004) in an epistle on school based coaching notes that:

> …professional development must be ongoing, deeply embedded into teachers' classroom work with children, specific to grade-level or academic content, and focused on research based approaches. It also must help to open classroom doors and create more collaboration and sense of community among teachers in a school. (p. 2)

Although many schools use an approach like Cognitive Coaching[sm], others design their own models based on their needs, while others adopt programs that use a coaching component (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

One of the reasons for increasing use of coaching models is to address the traditional isolation of teachers. As Bolman and Deal (1994) state

> "Teachers often feel isolated and trapped in their classrooms. They are surrounded and often overwhelmed by their students, each with a complicated array of needs and talents. Yet they often fee deeply lonely. They are staved for the opportunity to talk openly with other adults who can really relate to what their life is like. Teachers can become collaborators; they can be allies and guides for each other. They can help each other thorough reflection and dialogue" p. 82

Teacher leaders in the role instructional coach can assist teachers in developing classroom practices and in becoming a community of learners. Swinnerton in a 2007 study looking at central office instructional leaders suggests that some are able to have "fundamentally different" conversations with teachers than principals due to the lack of positional authority.

Killion (2008) describes an instructional coaching model that she calls a "partnership model." This partnership approach is embraced by Knight (2008). In Knight's 1998 study, teachers were trained in a new teaching strategy with either a traditional for of professional development or a partnership approach. The traditional approach was a workshop only format where a new teaching strategy was introduced, and the partnership approach included modeling and support for implementation. To assess the impact of the results of the impact of modeling, a 7-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree) was used to assess expected implementation, engagement, and feelings toward the training (Knight, 1998 in Knight, 2008). Teachers who were surveyed believed that they had increased fidelity to the teaching practices (mean 6.4); that they had higher confidence with respect to implementing the new instructional practice (mean 6.22) and that they found it easier to implement the lessons when they had

observed an instructional coach model (mean 6.51) (Knight, 2008, p. 207). Knight (2008) states that "we are at the starting point for research on instructional coaching, not the end" (p. 205).

Killion and Harrison in their 2006 book, *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School Based Coaches* describe nine forms of coaching. They review that Cognitive Coaching[sm] was developed by Costa and Garmston (1994); that collegial coaching technical coaching and challenge coaching were labels used earlier by Garmston to increase collegiality, to support transfer, and to promote the problem solving of instructional challenges; that content-focused coaching developed by West and Staub (2003) targets the development of professional knowledge; that instructional coaching is used by Sweeney (2003) to refer to the way that modeling can personalize the professional development match for individual teachers, that peer consultation as used by Blasé and Blasé (2006) describes organically occurring informal support; that peer coaching is a reciprocal process used by teachers improving professional skill (Showers, 1982). Killion and Harrison (2006) go on to describe the ten roles of school-based coaches: "resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner" (p. 28).

Knight (2007) characterizes effective coaches as people who are affirmative, humble, and deeply respectful of teachers. He quotes Jim Collins' *Good to Great* adding that they are a "compelling combination of personal humility and professional will" (Collins, 2001, p. 13). Knight's assessment of teacher leaders in these roles indicates that they are restless until teaching and learning improvements occur in their schools (2007).

Mentors of Novice Teachers

The specific teacher leader role of mentor to new teacher emerged a few years before the role of instructional coach in many states and districts (Livingston, 1992). The emergence of this role was spawned by research into the needs of novice teachers (Morey & Murphy, 1990). As early as 1988 Ellen Moir, of the University of California at Santa Cruz, published research on the stages of new teacher development, setting a foundation for teacher leaders who support novice teachers (Scherer, 1999). Mentors who are experienced teachers are seen as "trusted counselors" for novice teachers (Livingston, 1992, p. 42). Moir adds that mentors are teachers who teach teachers, not "telling" but establishing collegial inquire practices (Moir, in Portner, 2005). Casey and Claunch comment, "Having a mentor is currently viewed as critical to professional success, and institutionally designated mentors are charged with directing the personal growth and development of others" (Casey & Claunch in Portner, 2005, p. 95). A mentor interprets what the novice knows and mediates classroom practices. In addition, mentors help novice teachers become part of the community of educators within the school (Johnson, 2003).

In 1990, Bey and Holmes edited a book focused on mentoring. They capture the state of the role of mentor at that point in time. Several fields of study are identified for creating a knowledge base for mentors. First is the process of mentoring itself, with roles and responsibilities for mentors as well as needs of new teachers. Next is clinical supervision with its focus on instruction, observation, and conferencing. Modeling effective teaching practices is listed as an important aspect. Knowledge of adult

development and interpersonal skills round out their list of important mentor knowledge. These fields of study with their key components are captured in Table I.

Table I: Bey and Holmes' (1990) knowledge base for mentors:

Fields of Study	**Key Components**
Mentoring Process	Concept and purpose of Mentoring. Role and Responsibility of mentor. Phases of mentoring relationships. Needs of new teachers.
Clinical Supervision	Analysis of instruction. Classroom visitations. Observation techniques. Conferencing skills.
Coaching and Modeling	Effective instructional strategies. Demonstration teaching. Reinforcing teaching effectiveness. Modifying instruction. Maintaining professionalism.
Adult Development	Adult learners. Life cycle changes. Stages of teacher development and growth. Self-reliance and motivation. Stress management.
Interpersonal Skills	Communication. Problem-solving. Decision-making. Active listening.

Susan Moore Johnson et al (2003), in a longitudinal study of first year teachers, found that novice educators were more willing to stay in their schools and the profession when the school was more organized to support them. Could the retention of new teachers and the growth of formal teacher leaders be impacted by reciprocal circumstances? Although Moore-Johnson and her peers did not examine the formal roles

of teacher leaders in that study, the New Teacher Project at San Jose State University in California has developed standards for mentors and commensurate training for mentors that they hire (New Teacher Center, 2007). These mentors are released from teaching duties, receive regular professional development, and carry a novice teacher caseload of fifteen novice teachers.

Utilizing both the phases stages of new teacher's first year by Moir (in Sherer, 1999) and the Cognitive Coaching[sm] structures of Costa and Garmston (1994) were Lipton, Wellman, and Humbard (1999) who produced one of the most used guides for training mentors and instructional coaches: *Mentoring Matters*. Subtitled "a practical guide to learning-focused conversations," *Mentoring Matters* is a contextualized set of communication protocols derived from Cognitive Coaching[sm] (Costa & Garmston, 1994) that focuses on skills and processes mentors can use to help novice teachers refine their instructional skill in a one-on-one fashion. Lipton, Wellman, and Humbard state that skillful mentors balance three functions: "offering support, creating challenge, and facilitating a professional vision" (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999 in Portner, 2008, p. 150).

Mentors in the State of Washington have access to three state sponsored phases of professional development: Mentor Academy, which includes two days of *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999) training; Mentor Roundtables, a networking group in various Educational Service District regions; and Mentor Academy II, which includes additional *Mentoring Matters* concepts (OSPI, 2009).

Capturing the views of multiple experts on mentoring is Portner's 2008 book *Teacher Mentoring and Induction*. This text is highlighted by Dennis Sparks' afterword

which spotlights the role of a mentor: “Well-designed and skillfully implemented induction programs – which include mentoring as an essential core element – are critically important in creating schools in which students experience quality teaching in every classroom” (p. 241). Portner’s collection (2008) focuses on constructs for mentors highlighting the development of mentors, mentors as instructional coaches, the time and timing required for mentoring, and keeping the relationships between mentors and protégés centered on learning. These add to Bey and Holmes’ initial structures for the knowledge and skill of mentor teachers. Moir sums it up: “training mentors is as important as training the novice teachers they will serve” (in Portner, 2008, p. 62).

Dilemmas in Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is inhibited by a number of conditions: Time for work outside the classroom interferes with time for teaching students (Smylie & Denny, 1990). When time for teachers to work together is provided it frequently is not enough time to accomplish the tasks at hand, (Wasley, 1991) requiring teacher leaders to take on responsibilities outside their areas of expertise (Little, 2003). “The bureaucratic, hierarchical nature of schools often conflicted with the collegial nature of the reforms that teacher leadership was designed to bring about.” (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 17) Traditional cultures of isolationism and norms of privacy, politeness, and contrived collegiality inhibit work with colleagues (Livingstone, 1992). Livingstone adds that teacher leadership roles “assume a hierarchical relationship” (p. 42) and engender suspicion through an association with the administration. Finally, teacher leadership is constrained by lack of role definition (Smylie & Denny, 1990).

Informal roles for teacher leaders have been the tradition in the profession, creating dilemmas for teachers when they are included in leadership that pulls them away from their classrooms. Many informal roles such as curriculum planner have classroom related functions, and yet become a burden on the scarcest of resources in schools: time (Livingstone, 1992). That the more traditional roles such as department chair or subject coordinator are administrative in nature has led to the condition that these teacher leaders are "often removed the leader from the classroom" (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). Teacher leaders are frequently placed in quasi-administrative roles with limited power, authority and resources (Livingstone, 1992). These situations create tensions that erupt in collegial opposition (Villini in Portner, 2005, p. 175).

These tensions lead to misunderstandings resulting in an expenditure of time and energy on adults rather than on improving student learning. Teacher leaders find themselves in "brokering and boundary-crossing roles" yet "may not come naturally equipped to manage the multifaceted and sometimes politically charged communication processes that result from movement throughout a system" (Swinnerton, 2007).

Teacher leaders straddle the chasm between the school office and the classroom in ways that can leverage important aspects of instructional leadership in a school, often looking like administrators to their peers (Livingstone, 1992). Hargreaves calls some formalization of leadership roles "contrived collegiality." He includes the roles of peer coach, mentor teacher, joint planner, and consultative roles although he does find "merit in these roles where there is a need to get collegiality going" (Hargreaves, 2003). Judith Warren Little also casts aspersions specifically on the role of mentor teachers (2003). She asks, "Who can assign a mentor? And who does this work?" Murphy (2005) joins

the cautionary researchers by pointing out that teacher leadership, beyond the role in the classroom, has only recently been recognized and that the "emerging perspectives represent a break with prevailing views of leadership built around formal administrative roles" (p. 19).

There are discrepancies between the perceived role and the enacted formal role of teacher leaders that are related to the traditions of practice, power structures, and belief systems in schools and school systems. School structures continue to impact the work of teachers in formal teacher leadership positions. Resistance to teacher leadership is likely related to the insufficient definition and the inability to balance the dynamics of institutions, society, and individuals (Kowalsi in O'Hair & Odell, 1995). Smylie and Denny (1990) concur, showing that although teacher leaders described their roles as in classrooms, they described much of the work at the school or district level.

Gaining access to other teachers creates an opposing set of conditions for teacher leaders. When they carry a teaching load, they experience a scarcity of time for leadership; yet when they are granted the released time to organize learning for other teachers, there is a sense of the loss of "co-membership" that gives teacher leaders in formally appointed positions the access that they need to maintain balanced relationships, resulting in a sense of the "quasi-administrative" nature (Donaldson, 2001).

Lack of Research

Mangin and Stoelinga in their landmark 2008 book, *Effective teacher Leadership*: *Using research to inform and reform*, showcase research on teacher leadership that cover a variety of aspects. The contributing researchers examine how teacher leaders leverage content knowledge (Firestone & Manno; Chapter 3), a look into an investigation on

teacher leader's procedural knowledge (Lord, Cress, & Miller; Chapter 4), Mangin's own study looked at context and the design of teacher leadership initiatives (Chapter 5), Stoelinga used social network analysis to examine the impact of informal teacher leadership (Chapter 6), and a case study employing survey and regression data give Camburn, Kingall and Lowenhaupt (Chapter7) insight into the implementation of a district coaching initiative.

More research is needed to understand the role of formal full time release teacher leaders (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Foundations in peer coaching and Cognitive Coaching[sm] have laid some foundation for the actions of teacher leaders in formal instructionally focused roles. Teacher leaders may experience problems such as role ambiguity. While some research has explored the perspectives of teacher leaders in general there is no research to date that has explored the lived experience of teachers in formal leadership roles in K-12 schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Summary

Although there is increasing interest in using teacher leaders in formal roles as mentors and instructional coaches, the realities for teacher leaders in these roles are complex and ambiguous. The scant amount of current research on these phenomena does not include the voices of teacher leaders. Including teacher leaders who have served in the formal roles in defining the formal roles focusing on day-to-day functions and dilemmas will assist researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of teacher leaders in formal roles within the K-12 public school system. These are the specific research questions that guided this inquiry: How do teacher leaders come to be in their roles, and what motivates them to do this work? What is the essence of the work that teacher leaders do as mentors and instructional coaches? How do teacher leaders in full time released roles make sense of the work that they do? What problems and issues do teachers leaders in full time released roles face? What is the impact of the full time released, formal role on the teacher leader? If the formal role comes to an end, what experiences do teacher leaders face as they re-enter the classroom or take on other roles in K-12 schools? In keeping with the purpose of the study, a qualitative phenomenological approach was used.

The qualitative research approach assumes that everyone has a story to tell (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). From the beginnings of the qualitative research movement in education in the 1960's, qualitative researchers have focused on five basic characteristics of qualitative inquiry: naturalistic, descriptive, process-oriented, inductive, and meaning making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Naturalistic suggests that qualitative research is conducted in real settings, and the researcher serves as the "instrument" of data collection and analysis. Descriptive data are collected via words, pictures, and direct quotations of the participant's language so that descriptions of participants and their settings can be developed. Process-oriented qualitative research focuses on natural processes as they occur rather than measurable outcomes. Inductive researchers search for meaning and

patterns in the data. Finally, meaning connotes that qualitative researchers make every attempt to capture the meanings that participants bring to their experiences and, in turn, interpret those meanings. Through these means qualitative research attempts to look at that which is unexamined and to give voice to those whose lives are marginalized.

Focusing on the experiences of cultural insiders (teacher leaders in formal roles), this qualitative study employed phenomenologically-oriented, , open-ended interviews as the primary data collection method. A phenomenological approach is considered appropriate for this study because it focuses on the "meaning of events and interactions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25) to teacher leaders and seeks to orient the research toward the lived experience of others. A series of interviews (Seidman, 1998; Creswell, 2007) were utilized to allow participants to describe their experiences fully. In addition, this study was shaped by the approach of portraiture as described by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). Thus, the findings of the study include a portrait of one participant, which illustrates the lived experiences of all the participants. Additionally, I drew on the ethnographic approach to reveal a day in the life of a mentor teacher. These approaches allowed me, as the researcher, to use my own experiences as a mentor and instructional coach to interpret the experiences of my participants.

Research Approach and Positionality

As a researcher my stance has been impacted by several perspectives on ethnography that place my experiences transparently in the midst of the study, since I have been a member of both of the groups that I am researching. These perspectives, as discussed by Ellis and Bochner (2000), include (a) reflexive ethnography, which uses a researcher's experiences to illuminate the culture under study; (b) radical empiricism,

which is the notion that the ethnographer's experiences and interaction with other participants remain vital parts of what is being studied; (c) narrative ethnography, which is a strategy that uses the ethnographer's experiences by incorporating them into the ethnographic description and analysis with the emphasis placed on the "ethnographic dialogue or encounter" between the narrator and the members of the group being studied; and (d) complete-member researchers, which describes researchers who are fully committed to and immersed in the groups that they study. These perspectives on ethnography and the phenomenological stance that I have taken during previous interview studies attracted me to the form of portraiture as a dissertation style in which the experiences of the teacher leader participants are intertwined with my own experiences and life. The analysis of data utilized my professional experiences as a mentor and instructional coach in guiding the identification and selection of themes.

As an educator, my educational philosophy lines up most closely with that of the post-modern critical theorist. Although I have been a secondary classroom teacher since 1982, I am not satisfied with the status quo in schools and have worked with Washington State's Commission on Student Learning since the early 1990's to enact educational reform. At that time my focus was on helping teachers to learn the various uses of assessment and to create classroom-based assessments that support student learning. I have always considered myself a realist and a pragmatist, with constructivist ties to the philosophies of John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky. My educational career has also been shaped by being a teacher leader in a formal role, working as a full time mentor and coach. I currently direct a school district department responsible for hiring and supporting the professional learning of many instructional coaches.

My educational stance has been shaped by multiple experiences during my career. These experiences have influenced my perspectives in regard to teacher leadership. I am a clear advocate of teacher leadership. The opportunities I was afforded when Sue Anderson was the Teacher Assistance Program coordinator at Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Selecting me as a speaker for the statewide mentor academy added to my professional growth. Her gentle nudging sharpened the focus of my "Mentor Tools" session. Jeanne Harmon, executive director of the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP), included me in early think tanks on the topic of teacher leadership, the creation of the first set of mentor standards for the state, the revision of those standards, and professional learning sessions with Susan Moore Johnson and Ann Lieberman. Personal access to both of these researchers as they visited in my home state has encouraged my interest in issues of teacher leadership, teacher retention, and qualitative research. The additional experience of meeting with Judy Swanson, a qualitative researcher, and reading her study on middle school science teacher leaders was influential in my ability to think about ways to approach this topic.

One experience that marked my own work as a mentor and coach involved extensive work focused on adult learning theories. Early in my career as a full time released mentor, I spent a week studying the concepts of Dr. Shirley Hord. Her 1987 *Concerns Based Adoption Model* and *Stages of Concern Questionnaire* influenced the balance of my work. Understanding how adults adapt to change is the basis for this set of theories. The work was originally accomplished with novice teachers as participants and seemed readily applicable to supporting teachers in K-12 settings. Another theorist who colored my professional world was Dr. Bruce Joyce. His earlier work titled *Models of*

Teaching pointed to the impact of coaching, and his later one, *Results Based Professional Development*, cemented the impact of coaching on the acquisition of an innovation. These theoretical underpinnings were further reinforced when I participated for three years in the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Academy. There I worked with colleagues from all over the U.S. in using the NSDC standards shown in Appendix D. These are based on the works of Dr. Hord, Dr. Joyce, and others. Dr. Fenwick English marked my career as a curriculum specialist with his work on a systems approach to curriculum management. I had the good fortune to be his personal intern on a curriculum audit in the fall of 2007. My greatest fortune as a graduate student at Washington State University is in having Dr. Gail Furman as my committee chair. Under her tutelage, I gained a deep respect for the topic of ethics in education, the process of qualitative research, and an interest in community in schools.

Self as Researcher

There are many ways that my educational career has influenced my approach as a researcher. I wrote and worked on a pilot project for a western state as a full time release mentor and instructional coach for seven years. This work is captured in a 2001 Northwest Regional Education Lab publication, *Surviving the Crossfire* (see Appendix C). During this time I met many new mentors who were participants in regional leadership networks. I also developed an appreciation of the impact of policy on the practice of education. By participating in several state level policy implementations, I observed firsthand how change is made in the policy arena and how that impacts educational practice. I also participated in initiating, planning, and implementing statewide symposia for teacher leaders during the research project. For a number of years,

I served as a member of a state leadership academy for mentors. Currently, I direct a department that employs over 100 instructional coaches. The staff members who are directly responsible to me plan and deliver professional development for these coaches twice a month. I partner with the director of professional learning in both hiring and participating in orientation and regular staff development for these instructional coaches.

As a former teacher of writing, drama, and English in grades 7-12, I agree with Seidman (1988) that the telling of stories is a meaning making experience. I appreciated the data collection phase of this dissertation work with adult participants who told their stories in order that schools might become ever more humane places for adults to work together in the service of student learning.

Methods

Participants

Although Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe interviewees in qualitative studies as "informants," I prefer to call the mentors and coaches who were interviewed for this study "participants." The study included ten teacher leaders who are or have served in formal roles as mentors or coaches. Details on participants' age, gender, ethnicity, classroom experience, teacher leader position, and number of years in the formal teacher leadership role are summarized in Appendix C. A number of the participants were teacher leaders who have left these formal roles.

For this study, I sought participants from the western United States where the use of full time release mentors and instructional coaches is rising dramatically. All participants were nominated for this study by a teacher leadership network leader (CSTP, OSPI, PEBC) or teacher leader supervisor. This approach is called snowball sampling

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I contacted district level supervisors, state department network supervisors, and the executive directors of a non-profit foundation that supports teacher leaders. These contacts agreed that the topic of transition from formal teacher leadership was worthy of study and assisted in the nomination of potential candidates. I have participated in these networks myself for more than ten years.

Participants represented as much diversity in age, years of experience, school level experience, subject matter expertise, ethnicity, and gender as was possible, given my resources and the nomination process. Criteria for selection of participants was based on the current position held, the number of years the position had been held, and the willingness of the teacher leader to participate in the research. Recruitment was done by contacting participants via phone and describing the research project. Nominees who were in their first year of a formal role as a teacher leader or who stated that they were seeking principalships were not included in the study. Dialogue with the network leaders established these criteria. One participant served in both roles, while another participant essentially left the K-12 setting at the end of the role. The years the participants served in classrooms ranged from 8-24 years, giving them a total of 12-30 years of experience in K-12 settings. While a majority of this experience was in the state of Washington, one participant has 8 years of experience in Colorado, three had multiple years in California, and one had two years in Egypt. Only two of the ten participants hold principal credentials. The background of the participants was balanced between elementary experience and secondary with 5 participants identifying with each level and two who serve the full K-12 span. Two held special education certification, three taught language as a subject matter, yet only 1 holds an ELL endorsement.

Each participant was contacted and asked if he/she would participate in a "purposeful conversation" (Bogdan & Biklen 2007, p. 101) as a "conversational partner" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 14) for an hour-long interview for the purposes of studying teacher leadership. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms have been used in all documentation.

Data Collection and Analysis

An initial set of open-ended questions (Seidman, 1998) was developed for this study. These questions, exhibited in Appendix A, comprised the basis of the initial interview guide. During the interview, I employed probes to allow participants to describe their lived experiences more fully in their own words.

Additional questions were added to the interview guide following pilot interviews for this study. These questions became the basis for follow-up questions in a second round of interviews that further explored the participant's experience and meaning making. These additional questions are displayed in Appendix B.

Interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed verbatim. After I checked the transcripts, participants were invited to review and comment on their interviews. I then coded the transcripts into thematic areas and used "constant comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop "meaning units." During this process of reducing and categorizing the data, I selected data excerpts that would illustrate the elements of the teacher leaders' views and identified themes that emerged from the sense making of the participants.

The portraiture approach (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) helped influence the shaping of the product of this study. Using quotes from participants

illustrates the experiences that they have had as teacher leaders. This approach lifts up the voices of these teacher leaders to describe the daily life of these relatively invisible members of the school staff. This study also brings forward the dilemmas that they face in these positions as they live in the margin between administration and classroom teacher. It is my hope that the resulting portraiture, auto-ethnography, and thematic analysis are used by educators to better understand the role of this emerging group of teacher leaders.

Ethics and Credibility

Informed consent characterized the agreements made with participants. Participants were given assurance verbally and in writing that the interview could stop at any time for any reason. The identity of the subjects is protected by the researcher through the use of pseudonyms in written documents. Further, using multiple school systems and states for sources of teacher leaders adds to the ability to maintain confidentiality.

My previous experiences as a mentor of novices definitely influenced this work. Clearly, on my part, a bias toward the work of teacher leaders who have not aspired to the position of building principal exists. I experienced the good fortune of serving under a remarkable administrative supervisor for the first five years of this teacher leadership project and, upon her retirement, learned the dilemmas and intricacies of working with a new administrative leader who did not originally sponsor that project. The principals in that district were a great team to learn from and with. Yet I occasionally faced the frustrations expressed by many of the participants in working with principals new to the context who had no perception of the role of a coach or mentor.

I did, however, serve as a speaker for the state superintendent's mentor academy for a number of years, and four of the participants were first known to me through contacts related to that engagement. My current role puts me in the position of hiring a number of instructional coaches in partnership with principals, giving me clear access to firsthand information on how instructional coaches are selected and hired. I conducted the interviews at times and locations convenient to the participants and, in general, did not use school settings during data collection. Because I did not shadow these teacher leaders, I drew from my own experiences to illustrate authentically the daily life of a teacher leader.

This study is also a construction of the researcher, myself, as the primary data collection tool (Glesne, 1999) and, as such, is biased by my subjectivity. My attempt to capture the words of the participants and to tell the collective and unique story of each teacher leader is undoubtedly marked by my knowledge of the participants and the districts and states where they work. Attempts were made to limit the influence of my bias by adhering to strict data protocols such as verbatim interview transcripts, member checks, and repeated excursions into the data set.

As a researcher, it is important for me to consider how the conclusions at which I arrived might be wrong. Several aspects of the design for this study addressed this issue. The participants were asked to check for accuracy in the transcript of their interview session to pursue respondent validation of the data. This process is referred to as "member checking." Additionally, I pursued initial analytical ideas in a second round of interviews and through follow-up interviews.

Triangulation was approached by selecting participants from different locales, through repeated interviews, and by exploring my own experiences. The portraiture section of the chapter four analysis was co-created with the participant on whom it is based. The lessons learned and recommendations section architecture was reviewed by both a colleague who shares responsibility for teacher leaders and one participant. In these ways I worked toward the inclusion of views and voices in addition to my own.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of teacher leaders in formal roles within the K-12 public school system. To this end, I interviewed ten teacher leaders who hold or have held formal roles as mentors or as instructional coaches. Two sections frame this chapter. First is the portrait of a teacher leader. This portrait was developed collaboratively with the participant on whom it is based. It is presented here to show the kind of person who is drawn to teacher leadership. Next is a description of a day in the life of a teacher leader. Although this auto-ethnographic element is drawn primarily from a day in my own experience as a teacher leader, it was reviewed by another participant who related that she identified with it "word for word." The segment was developed to give the reader a sense of the work of a mentor teacher on a daily basis.

Portrait of a Teacher Leader

This portrait of a teacher leader, Julie, is positioned here to give the reader the sense of the work that teacher leaders engage in, how they emerge as teacher leaders, and some ways that teacher leaders view the work in which they are involved. Julie is a middle-aged white woman who has worked in two large school districts in the western United States as a teacher leader since the year 2000. In Julie's state many school districts have full time positions for both mentors of novice teachers and instructional coaches by subject area content. Julie has been in each of these roles for several years; however, the state has yet to develop a formal policy that supports differentiated certification or pay for teacher leaders.

Julie was named by two teacher leader network leaders as an individual that I should consider for this study. Her experiences in two full time release positions in separate districts, one as a mentor of novice teachers and one as a content area coach, give her an insider's view of both of these roles. Julie has also demonstrated leadership by participating in her state's "Mentor Academy" in which she has provided professional development for administrators and teacher leaders. Additionally, she was a member of a teacher leader team that developed standards for other districts to use as they approach the work of supporting novice teachers.

We meet for our interview in a hotel lobby in the vicinity of the Seattle airport (SeaTac). We are converging at SeaTac for a teacher leadership meeting with others in our network. It is a fog-filled morning, and Julie is cloaked in a pea jacket with a stylish silk scarf. Our meeting will be followed by a committee meeting, and we have agreed to meet early for the interview. We seek a quiet place to talk, and finding no place to sit in the lobby areas where the muzac isn't annoying, sit in a conference room at the end of a large table where our colleagues will join us in an hour. Julie sets down a bag filled with professional books we will use in our committee work that day. Before the interview begins, we talk about the dilemma of describing the "location" where teacher leaders do their work and laugh about our cars being our mobile offices. Our car "offices" feature bags in the backseat, filled with workshop contents, planners, and materials so we will be ready to put a meeting together for two to twenty teachers on a moment's notice. We laugh again as we share the impressions we have about the vagabond nature of mentor teachers. We share the experience of trying to find some place to leave personal belongings, particularly coats and purses, while we worked with teachers in a school.

Julie engages energetically with others, drawing them to her with a cheery greeting that usually includes a hug. Her eyes hold the attention of those she interacts with, and they dance as she talks about things that stir her passion. Standing at 5'8" tall, she dresses professionally for meetings in a blouse and skirt or a stylish dress and often dons hose and modest pumps. On the day of our interview, when she is scheduled to present to a group, she wears a sleeveless dress with a fitted white bodice covered with brown ribbon-like swirls, and a bow tied at the princess waistline. It is a simple, yet suitable dress whose only problem is there's no place to hold the microphone pack that supports the lapel mike needed for the presentation. She pins the microphone to the neckline of the dress and holds the microphone pack in her hand as she speaks.

Julie's brown hair is just above shoulder length, with thick layers of gentle curls that frame her face. Julie smiles a lot when she talks and her hands are always moving. Later, during her presentation, I observed that her hands are clasped and extended forward, and then she wraps each finger over the next in a weave. It seems to signal that her brain is working over the ideas she is hearing from her co-presenter or the audience. Another physical indication of this mental work is how she moves her tongue in her mouth before she speaks, to the side of her mouth, and then under her lip as she thinks.

Julie's aptitude for both academics and leadership was evident when she worked her way through her university program in education. Her entrance into teaching during her late twenties was at the middle school level in English and Spanish. During her first year of teaching, she was one of fourteen new teachers at her school. She was a natural in supporting other new teachers that year as they learned together various ways of engaging the12, 13, and 14-year-old students who filled their classrooms. In her second

year of teaching, her peers asked her to chair the school's in-service committee, and the principal gave her the "nod" as she entered into school leadership. Julie organized the school's staff development and supported another fourteen new teachers in that same school during her second year. Her quick insight combined with her gracious style gives her a magnetic quality that educators were attracted to.

In year three of her teaching career, Julie found herself fully engaged in teaching**,** supporting new teachers and leading learning for novice and veteran teachers alike. She had developed excellent skills in teaching, staying focused on student achievement. Before she entered the role as district mentor in year eight of her teaching career, she had served as department chair and student newspaper advisor. She garnered a plethora of positive parent feedback. Julie's initial experiences with a principal who valued her ability to lead other teachers formed a belief that she had the competence for being a teacher leader. This initial exposure to teaming with an administrator provided foundational experiences that would contrast with later experiences when other administrators did not grasp the nature or scope of the work, or would act in ways that treated her expertise and actions as invisible.

Julie's current role is that of a high school instructional coach. Her position is clearly defined by the school district as "professional development." The district that she works for invests in best practices as defined by the state department of education, and regularly sends Julie and her fellow instructional coaches to workshops so that they can return and teach the teachers. The instructional coaches each have a subject area specialty: math, science, reading, and writing, but occasionally find the need to stretch into an area such as health and technology. This school district has also invested in

teacher leaders who mentor novices or coach teachers whose students are engaged in English language acquisition. A regular part of the job of instructional coaching is to support individual teachers as they assess student work and plan instruction. These responsibilities, paired with reporting to a district level administrator, create multiple opportunities to partner with more teachers and administrators. Being responsible to a district level administrator - yet finding herself in the daily life in the high school - creates multiple opportunities to partner around the work with teachers with different administrators. Julie supports the School Improvement Planning team at her high school as a main focus of her work, yet leads district level curriculum development and professional learning communities on a regular basis.

Julie talks easily and fluently about her work as a mentor and her current position as a coach in a high school setting. Her expertise in working with teachers comes from her successful years as a teacher herself and the confidence that builds from being catapulted into leadership early in her teaching career.

When she was a mentor, Julie's work spanned across thirty schools. Just the logistics of so many buildings, each with their unique rituals and cultures, create dilemmas in the way mentors approach their daily experiences. Tasks as simple as navigating parking locations and pass systems to ensuring a secure location for materials that she would bring to campus for teachers were part of the daily mental preparation for each site. Finding time and space are two prerequisites for supporting the one-on-one conversations. Using her car as her office and organizing tool, she could make phone calls, eat a quick bit of lunch, plan for the next conversation, re-read a note or an email. Julie's four years of mentoring was framed as a team approach, and her daily routine was

often interrupted with dilemmas that emerged from the teachers other mentors were supporting as well. Scheduling time for the mentor team to collaborate became more possible with the advances in wireless internet and calendar software. Group training and the marshalling of materials were eased by having a room dedicated to the professional learning needs of teachers.

A typical day for Julie in the role of instructional coach might revolve around grade level teachers who will be scoring an assessment. For such meetings, Julie would prepare the necessary materials for the teachers, the agenda, and the scoring protocols. She has had specialized training in the use of protocols, scoring writing items to state standards, and in cognitive coaching. Each of these skill sets will come into play during the day. Julie is also accomplished in working with adults as learners, and designs each session with her teachers to build their capacity as instructional decision-makers in their classrooms. She sets up the agenda for each teacher to score student work, examine some inter-rater reliability scoring, and discuss trends that can be analyzed across student papers. Time has been set aside in the agenda for personal reflection, group analysis, and planning for implementation. While each grade level team works for several days at a time with substitutes in their classrooms, there is another grade level team in the wings, and there is no time for Julie to get behind in the schedule.

On days that she is not working with a grade level team in an all day setting, she spends some time planning for other sessions. Some days she schedules meetings with teachers during their planning period, and other days, she meets them in their classrooms as they work. This kind of day can go as planned, or can be interrupted by the work of other coaches who occasionally call Julie to help them with sticky problems in their

work, or an administrator who stops in to talk about his/her dilemmas. As a member of a building team, Julie has a space that is dedicated to her use. She relates that having a computer and phone that are not “borrowed” is a big shift from her vagabond days as a mentor in multiple buildings. Julie shoulders duties that fall beyond the scope of the contracted day, with some regular events like supporting teachers who are earning their professional certification or national boards. Additional committee obligations spill into times when students are not in class.

Some of her time each day is spent planning meetings and juggling her schedule to meet the needs of the teachers and administrators she works with. For instance, if a teacher who has been co-planning a writing unit with Julie asks Julie to stop in and see how the lesson is progressing, she quickly rearranges her schedule. Julie calls the coach with whom she had a meeting set, and they agree to move their meeting to 5:30 p.m., as it is the only opening on the schedule. Fortunately, this coach is willing to talk on a cell phone for this meeting, which allows them both to start their commute home and continue their dialogue while in their separate cars.

Julie says that it was in her third year of mentoring when she began to "hit her stride.” Finding a sense of being effective or accomplished is a dilemma for most mentors and instructional coaches. Julie reflects not only on the structures that limit the length of a mentor's career in many districts, but also the desire to find the sense of accomplishment that she achieved as an outstanding classroom teacher. About her own work she says "people who come in my third year, they got [my] quality work."

There is an inner strength that seems to exude from Julie as she reflects on her work as a teacher, mentor and coach. Her focus on improving the profession is illustrated

by her plans to spend the rest of our interview day planning professional learning for other teacher leaders across the state for an upcoming symposium. She is focused both on her personal investment for others as well as the next steps teacher leaders can take together to develop other leaders. I am buoyed by her passion for the profession.

Julie's most central attribute in the work of leading other teachers is her unabashed love for learning, coupled with an incredible speed by which she can acquire and integrate new information. Julie is clearly an analytical thinker, as she can sit in professional development provided by another educator, take in the information, make adjustments to it for her teachers, and return ready to deliver it at her school site in the next few days. Being able to support the content work across many disciplines while remaining focused on instruction and classroom management is one of the defining traits of a district based mentor. Julie's supervisor sent her to attend and participate in many state level training sessions, with the expectation that she would bring back what was needed to improve student learning and package it for the teachers with whom she worked. At the same time, Julie has kept her mind agile enough to take in research about the teaching profession.

Julie is a consummate learner. When Harvard researcher Susan Moore Johnson presented some research findings in Olympia, Julie was there and reflects on what she learned that day. Johnson's research showed that the different school cultures have a powerful impact on novice teachers and their decisions to stay in the profession. Johnson delineated three types of culture – novice-oriented, veteran-oriented, or integrated professional, the latter being preferable. Johnson's work had a major impact on the way that Julie and her colleagues worked with others in schools. More attention was given to

matching mentors to new teachers in a way that supported the development of a balanced culture over time. Another impact on her learning was from a coaching conference with the Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC). Julie heard a PEBC school-based coach describe a way of cycling through groups of teachers, so that attention and time could be distributed in a different way. This seemed to Julie to be both more sustainable and more effective in terms of handling a caseload of thirty novice teachers. Julie regularly references professional books she is reading and often listens to podcasts from educational conferences, adding useful knowledge to her work as a teacher leader.

Julie's hope for the future can be captured in her desire to do some additional research around what is working for students in the classroom. She describes herself as intense, in a "momma bear" kind of way, taking seriously her work with students. When students are being hurt, she advocates for them. Her interest in research that focuses on student learning has not yet prompted her to enter an advanced degree program. We talk regularly about the benefits of the supports in an academic setting, but she has other professional skills that she would like to use.

Her master's degree focused on mental health, and her skills as a trained mental health therapist come in to play both with the teachers that she works with and in keeping peer coaches who are not trained in mental health, but are also dealing with human behavioral issues. When other mentors deal with a teacher in crisis, they often call Julie for help. She makes arrangements to reschedule her appointments and sets aside her agenda for the day in order to assist another mentor and novice teacher.

Julie sees the benefits of leadership as well as the dilemmas. She knows that teacher leaders can't access safety nets in the same way a classroom teacher does.

Classroom teachers in the K-12 system are provided a substitute for days when they are sick or used for another purpose in the system. Teacher leaders on full time release from classroom duties do not have the same access to a systematic backup system. If they are sick, the teachers they were planning to work with will still be subbed out, and there is no one else who has done or can do the planning for that event; as a result, many teacher leaders go on with the work when they are sick, overlooking or suppressing their own needs.

Julie is an advocate for all teacher leaders to have outside help in balancing their own mental health. Both classroom teachers and teacher leaders need people outside their work environment to help manage the daily stress of the work as well as the family matters that impact all educators on a daily basis. Julie relates an example from her work with one teacher who spent an hour a week working with Julie on classroom issues and who also sought outside help from a mental health professional. Julie describes the teacher as too caretaking in her personal relationships, with many boundary issues with students. When the teacher started seeing an outside mental health therapist, her issues in identifying herself as the leader in the classroom improved, and she was even more open to change. Unfortunately, not all teacher leaders are skilled in seeing the need for accessing mental health professionals, and not all classroom teachers are open to the suggestion that they would benefit from outside help. Julie states that teacher leaders themselves would benefit from a "coach," someone not in the "bitching and whining" of the context of the work group, someone who could help teacher leaders sort out the dilemmas they face. This coach of coaches could help the teacher leader objectively sift through the issues without repercussions. It seems important in keeping the balance for

teacher leaders that they have a coach for themselves to support decision-making and the multitude of ways they support other educators in making healthy and professional decisions.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) describe patterns of leadership development in teachers. They emerge from the classroom as accomplished teachers; they continue by deepening their leadership in their school, district, or professional organization. Some teacher leaders move into formal roles as they continue to develop their expertise. Julie emerged as a teacher leader along these lines. In her first year of teaching, she was recognized by her peers and her principal as a leader. She was asked to lead the in-service efforts in her school starting in her second year. Accomplished teaching leads to this kind of peer recognition and the "nod" from the principal. With a focus on student achievement and positive parent feedback, Julie continued to develop her skill in instruction and knowledge in curriculum areas. This informal leadership at the school level continued to expand as Julie was asked to chair the technology committee and was later named as Language Arts Department Head. Her experiences in the classroom and in leadership at both the school and district level catapulted her into her first formal full-time release role as a mentor teacher. This position not only allowed her to deepen her leadership at a district level, but cemented her work at the state level in terms of committee membership, networking, and state level training for other mentor teachers. Julie's current position as a teacher leader in a formal role has no logical next steps. It is not clear if attaining this position is the penultimate in teacher leadership - for her - or even if the position she currently holds will continue to be funded in the district where Julie works.

A Day in the Life of a Teacher Leader

The start of the day begins before my feet hit the floor, as my mind moves through all the people I will meet with today. This is my seventeenth year of teaching, and I have been mentoring new teachers in addition to teaching my own students since my second year of teaching. It is my third year of full-time release mentoring in a school system where I "grew-up" as a teacher. In the two previous years, I had new teacher caseloads of twelve and sixteen, which seemed busy, but manageable. This year, I am feeling overwhelmed with forty new teachers in the district, twenty of them new to teaching, and the others new to this district.

Today, I think of Tom, a first year middle school social studies teacher in his late twenties, who previously worked in Washington, D.C. as a legislative intern. Tom wants to talk about reading and ways to support the students in his classroom who are not getting the content after the first lesson. It is September, and I am curious if this is a real concern, or if he is distancing our conversation from his own learning. He frequently jumps to conversations of theory, and doesn't seem comfortable in examining his own practice. I think of ways to listen to him, and we have agreed that looking at some student work together will support our conversation. I am grateful that my background included teaching remedial reading and that I have some content background that will be helpful. Tom, fresh from a Master's in Teaching program, is new to town.

I will also work with Bob, an auto shop teacher who came into the profession as an alternate route vocational teacher; another new vocational teacher was hired at the same time. Early in the summer, after they were hired, it seemed to me that supporting Bob and the other new vocational teacher, Fred, would be a challenge as they had little

pedagogical foundation. I accompanied the two of them to the two-day "crash course" in teaching that the state department offered to teachers who entered the profession through vocational routes. Both of these vocational teachers are in their 40s with grown children.

That each new teacher comes to the profession with a variety of skills and supports in place is a factor that always keeps me mindful of the many influences on their decisions to stay in the school where they were initially hired into the profession. Some of the novices are new to the profession and the town, and like Tom, have no one to interact with outside the school setting. Others, like Bob and Fred, are long-time members of the community who are new to teaching in a public school setting. Sometimes these mid-life novice teachers even have high school age children of their own. Most bring skill developed in other arenas that they are eager to apply in a school setting. Each novice's situation brings a plethora of supports and challenges, and the balancing of these forces impacts the decisions these new teachers make about staying in teaching or finding another career.

This year, I began to meet the new teachers as they were hired in the spring, and have spent time with them individually and as a group. Other members of the district professional development staff and I shared a week-long orientation with the teachers who were hired before mid-August. The last minute hires were not even on the radar at that point, and one of the Kindergarten teachers I will meet with today was in that group. She was hired the day before students started. I have been in her room frequently over the course of the first month of school, and we have built a good relationship while working on setting up her classroom and discussing strategies to manage students and deliver instruction. Today we will talk about how she needs more volume with her voice. This is

not a need that I have run across in my years of working with novice teachers. I do not have an approach for even talking about it, but am carrying with me today a video camera which we agreed to use for a few minutes in her classroom. She also receives support from the bilingual coordinator, who has been in her room assisting her with materials and planning, and who recognizes the need for the teacher to talk more loudly and clearly. Serving the needs of second language learners is complex, but since the teacher is bilingual herself, I believe that she has an advantage in perceiving the language acquisition needs of her students.

Some of the 40 new teachers this year are paired with school level mentors who also carry a full time teaching load. The union president and I identified a number of veteran teachers to support most of the novice teachers in logical pairings. We then had a group of teachers who did not have a mentor in a job-alike position. This left me with a caseload of 14 novice teachers. Their teaching assignments were in areas beyond my content expertise: bilingual classrooms, vocational education, and music. Much of the work we did during initial meetings and group orientation in August was about identifying or securing classrooms and getting them prepared to meet their students. There is always a scramble to ensure that each new teacher has the curriculum guides, assessment schedules, and student materials needed, not to mention the classroom or classrooms where they will meet their students. Occasionally, there is also a need to advocate for space for the novice teacher to leave personal and professional items as they are frequently sharing physical spaces with veteran teachers who are fully settled into all available spaces.

Before I am out of the shower, I have mentally covered the route between schools that I will take on this fall morning. I am glad that it is still warm enough outside to go without a coat, making my wardrobe selection simpler. I will walk several miles of hallway today and will sit on the floor of a kindergarten classroom, so a denim jumper with a short-sleeved blouse will serve to top my favorite leather sandals.

Grabbing my tall travel mug, I balance my purse with several canvas bags that are filled with the projects that I am working on. As I throw them in my back seat of my car, I do a mental check to ensure that they are all in place: Writing workshop with new samples and scoring guides and the reflections of the group from last week -- check; health curriculum committee posters folded back into bag size, now transcribed from the "walk the wall" exercise that we created from the current iteration of the teaching in classrooms—check; my daily planner, too big for my purse, yet essential, and often on the top of any bag I am packing – check; books to loan to my two high school second year teachers who are digging about in research for some ways to stretch their repertoire of teaching practices -- check. The bags are muslin colored, each with an imprint of a conference sponsored by the state education department. Colored handles are the identifiers, and the red, blue, and green straps intermingle in the piles stacked by the front door in my home and the desk in my office. I generally use the same bag for a project until it grows into a crate-sized project. Bags contain not only essential paperwork, but also markers, tape, highlighters, and other portable materials. As I pile today's bags into the back seat floor of my car, I recognize a few bags from projects I won't be working on today that were abandoned in the car last night and make a mental note to haul them into the office today, if I ever get there.

I dash to the first school stop of the day, the high school. Getting there before students arrive provides precious moments with my new teachers. This high school is a California style campus that belies its northern location most days of the year. Bordered by well-maintained grass fields edged by asphalt parking lots, this campus covers twelve acres and is graced with a fish filled, tree-lined stream that sweeps diagonally through the grounds. Guest parking angles in near the steps that lead down from the street to the main office doors, and I swing into an empty space at 6:45 a.m. Having taught on this campus for many years gives me the new sense that today I am a visitor. I clip my identification badge to the collar of my blouse and walk into the office area to sign in. Louisa, the front desk clerk, and I exchange greetings, and I wave to the assistant principal who currently occupies the office by the entrance.

I walk out of the office and enter a courtyard area in the English and social studies building. I know each teacher in this building well, and I feel the urge to stop in and say "hello" to the ones here early, but turn left out of duty to my new teachers and walk through the breezeway. My first stops today will be with the new vocational teachers. Each has a unique approach to teaching, and at the end of September I am still puzzling over how to best support them in their teaching. I walk the path beside the creek, over the footbridge, and skirt the math/science building as I approach the vocational building on the furthest eastern edge of campus.

My first stop is in the technology room. Fred was a small business owner for years before he came to teaching, and he has multiple ideas about how students can approach their work in a systematic fashion. He has voiced that he does not need help, and yet he does not have a grasp on the expectations hidden within the school culture or

even what he is expected to do by the principal. Today's topic is grading, and he is averse to talking about it at all. We begin with some chitchat about his high school-aged kids and their sports activities. I nudge toward the grading topic with a question about what he knows about progress reports. The question stops him in his tinkering over the computer that is open in front of him.

Like a surgeon, he holds a mental instrument in his hands, but looks at me with puzzlement. "Progress reports?" he questions… His puzzlement reminds me to consider if much that the new teachers heard at the orientation had any context. I remind him that the school has a policy that students who are not passing the class must receive a progress report at the end of the first five weeks of school. He smiles and says, "no problem," and returns to his tinkering inside the computer. We start a bit of cat and mouse kind of dialogue where I try to probe around the concept that there needs to be some kind of record of the work that students have done to allow him to determine a grade. He states that his students come to class every day and work hard. I imagine days of students sitting around, talking to each other, and am internally urged to press forward to consider other instructional issues that are likely masked by his stand on grading. He does not intend to track student work and is rather insulted by the whole notion of grades.

I try to determine when I am at the end of what I can do to support this teacher, if and when an administrator could step in, and how to accomplish that task without breaking my confidentiality code with this teacher. I decide to leave the conversation this morning with the promise of a return visit, and move on to the next classroom.

I am comfortable in the auto shop, having grown up on a farm where my father did all his repairs in a well-tooled shop. The smell of motor oil is strangely comforting,

and the overalls that the students and teacher wear are welcome buffers to their work on this brisk morning. The oversized garage doors open to the south, and the classroom does not have a feel for academics in any way. There are about 15 students visible throughout the shop, under, over and inside cars, trucks, and smaller engines suspended from ceiling chains. I finally find Bob huddled around an engine with three students who are posing ideas of how they might test their theories that the starter is the malfunctioning part. I think to myself about several times when this was the case for the rig that I was driving, and think that I remember that replacing just the starter may not be the total solution. Bob stops teaching when he sees me, and since the starting bell for zero hour has not rung yet, I do not mind interrupting him.

We greet each other, and I refrain from hugging him – a hold over from several years ago when he was the youth pastor at the church where I served as musician for the youth band. He does have his progress reports under control, but wants to have me look at some text he is using in his small engine repair class. I agree to return during his lunch tomorrow to look it over and ask if there is a copy I can borrow today. He laughs as he points to a 25-pound industrial manual and asks cheerfully if I want to take that with me. I decline and make my exit, knowing that my content knowledge – good as it is with my farm girl background – is not going to help this new teacher. There is no job alike in the system, as he is the sole auto shop and small engine repair teacher. I ponder useful ways to help him learn his craft in teaching young people. I make a note in my planner to call a colleague in a neighboring community to arrange a visitation in their auto shop. I will go with Bob to spend time in shop classes taught by a more veteran teacher in hopes of getting to some conversations about teaching and learning that will spark his learning.

As I start to walk back across campus, the bell rings. It is 7:15 AM, and students scuttle toward doors and enter classrooms at the last second while I cut through the parking lot toward the music building. The new orchestra teacher came with several graduate degrees and no formal teaching experience. He stepped into the shoes of a well-loved veteran who was mild-mannered and understated in his expertise. As I enter the band room, I wince at the tone of one of the students as he addresses the teacher disrespectfully. I scan the room to see if anything has changed physically since the last time I was here. There are music stands, black with three feet at the bottom, scattered throughout the room. This is where the over 100-person marching band practices. For this twenty-piece orchestra, the extra equipment is not just room filling, but creates blind spots as well. I find a perch in the upper rear of the classroom and smile at Craig when he lifts his head from the roll book and spots me. I have been here many times before today, and we have an agreement that I can, and should, drop in anytime.

I am drawn to his guitar class, as I love the instrument, but it is this high school orchestra that needs our collective attention. His teaching assignment requires him to teach in two buildings in the district and share spaces with other people in both locations. I often reflect that there is no college experience that truly prepares one for the fact that the context in each school system is unique, and music teachers end up needing a lot of expertise in negotiating both student and adult relationships. Orchestra students come with varied backgrounds and experience. From the Suzuki kids who are near virtuosos to the students who decided this school year that they should play an instrument, this orchestra class is as diverse in ability as I have seen. I recognize many of my former students and try not to make eye contact, as I am not here to talk with them, yet the

disrespectful manner of several students gets in my craw, and I squirm in my seat as I listen to them give over to tuning and warm-up. I listen and observe as students follow the teacher into a piece that they have mastered as a group. This piece is going well. The next piece is not as polished, and the teacher assigns sections of students to work on a portion of the music. The students stay in the area where they had been working as a whole group.

This is where the class falls apart. Students do not respect the section leaders, and the rehearsal becomes increasingly chaotic. I listen while Craig works with the bass section, a group that includes a cluster of novices, and I wonder if they are music lovers, or music readers, or if a counselor (or mother) signed them up for orchestra. He makes some progress with them, and they begin to play the music, working their hands up and down the necks of the tall heavy instruments, discordant notes ringing frequently. My gaze is drawn to the viola section where a few girls have other homework surreptitiously stashed behind stands on the sides of their seats, and they scribble on paper, clearly not working on the music at hand. They are behind the teacher, and I make a mental note to talk about line of sight supervision and the dilemmas in the physical environment of this busy classroom.

I pull the high school master schedule from the pocket in the front of my planner and note that Craig has second period planning, a little more than an hour from now, and write him a quick note on a post-it that I will return then. I leave the note on his music and exit the music building. I move by the music office where other music teachers gather around a secretary that I consider a friend. I am not in the frame of mind to talk to anyone at this point in the day. The music teachers share teaching spaces with each other

making public the problems that the novice orchestra teacher, Craig, is facing. The veteran music teachers are so accomplished with students and music that I wonder if they can remember their first weeks of teaching. I am unnerved by the disrespect that the students have shown Craig while I was in the music classroom, and am sure that other music teachers have witnessed the student behavior in the orchestra.

The three teachers I have visited all need more help than I can leverage, and I am not even done with my tour of this portion of the campus. I don't have anyone else to talk these dilemmas over with. I walk across campus to the math/science building where I might find a comfortable classroom to hang out while I review the commitments on my calendar. I need the physical and mental comfort of being in a place where students and teachers are working well together, and huddle at the back of the Advanced Placement Biology classroom. Students are clustered at tables working from instructions on the overhead screen. No one notices my entry into the classroom. I am grateful that I can peacefully soak up the classroom environment. I pull out my planner and look over the rest of the day. I make notes to myself about the trio of novice teachers I have touched base with so far today. I search my mind and the class schedule, contemplating classes on this campus that would make for a productive observation for the orchestra teacher. I wonder when he has a planning period and try to remember his afternoon travel schedule. I decide to highlight the planning periods for the first and second year teachers on my copy of the schedule, and then I think that I need to mark the planning periods of the veteran teachers whom I depend on to support the novices.

Wishing I carried several colors of highlighters, I step into the science supply room and rifle through my friend Anne's right hand desk drawer. Bingo! She has

multiple highlighters, and I purloin a few to finish my color-coding. As zero period ends, I move back into her classroom and tell her that I have borrowed her highlighters; she laughs and says “anytime,” and we swap stories of our own kids as the students exit the room. As her next class enters, I spot one of the orchestra students and decide to hang out for a few more minutes watching the way that this student transforms into a top-notch biology student. The student’s surly disposition from zero hour orchestra abandoned, she and her partners pour over their biology notes, eyes twinkling as they talk. I am struck by the complete change in this student and wonder what lies under the surface of this complicated, seemingly contradictory set of behaviors. I wonder if having the orchestra teacher to observe another class on this campus might give him a sense of how students engage differently with other adults. I look at the class schedule again and mentally flip through the classes that might be possible for us to observe. I am not settled on this as a strategy, and decide that I should ask for his input before making assumptions or arrangements.

The probable next steps for novice teachers often takes place in classrooms where veteran teachers have given me an “open door” policy for using their classrooms as lab settings when mentoring or coaching other teachers. Still other teachers are happy to make arrangements in advance so that we can plan to observe various aspects of the daily life in classrooms. I generally prefer to have a match in subject matter but know that there are many ways to use observation in a classroom to frame dialogue about various aspects of creating community and managing a classroom. Since there is not a match in terms of content for an orchestra or vocational teacher, it will be up to me to find some way to frame the conversation. All of this planning is based on the willingness of the novice

teacher to enter into a conversation about the aspect of the classroom that I am focused upon. Frequently, novice teachers request support with items that are not on my list, and we have to negotiate and prioritize next steps.

I am still pondering what to do with the technology teacher who does not have a plan for grading when I see the vice principal collecting absence forms in the external walkways. I join him in walking the exterior of the campus. With the mantle of confidentiality for my new teachers weighing heavily on my mind, I bring up some of the dilemmas I am facing this morning. Though I don't use names, I am confident that he will not pry into the exact identity of the teachers with whom I am working this morning, as we have worked together for many years. I carry twelve new teachers on my caseload from this campus, plus a few holdovers from years past. We talk about the experiences we have had with other new teachers in figuring out systematic record keeping for grading. We reflect on an incident with an exchange teacher who kept no marks for her students, thus experiencing the dilemma of having no basis for grades at the end of the quarter. We laugh as we give ourselves credit for detecting the problem earlier this year. We think it would be possible to gather several novice teachers together during a lunch period and plan to ask two veteran teachers to share their strategies for record keeping and grading. I am grateful for finding such seemingly fitting solutions. By now, the list of items I need to communicate to teachers via e-mail has grown to a length that I cannot keep in my head. After a parting comment, I walk to the center of campus and enter the library.

Greeting the library assistant with a brief exchange about what we are each reading at the moment, I head to one of six computers in the center of the large book

room. Feeling like I am taking a student's place, I log in, read the e-mail in my inbox, and quickly compose messages to the teachers with whom I want to make requests. Some of the messages set up meetings with individuals or groups. This process takes about 10 minutes, and when I push back from the terminal, there are students in a queue. As I step away, I catch the librarian's eye, and we move to an exterior wall to chat for a few moments. His children were my students, and we have years of shared conversation and great experiences. I have a passion for more technology throughout the district, and he wants to help the novice teachers to access library resources. We agree to talk again, and as I exit through the metal detectors, I am grateful for the relationships developed over years of teaching in this school that allow me easy access to resources. I am also cognizant of the dilemma it creates in protecting the confidentiality of the teachers with whom I am working and the maze of agreements that I have made and need to make.

With first period nearing an end, I head south to the gym, where my old volleyball-coaching buddy teaches adaptive physical education. I know that she will have a few minutes to chat as the kids are putting up equipment and heading to the lockeroom. I feel like I learn something each time I enter into the adaptive class as the students work on physical, social, and emotional skills. Today they are on the track, and I remember how heavy the dew is after I step into the grass that needs mowing. My sandals leave clear footprints in the dewy grass as I walk across the field toward the track in the southeast corner of the campus. I am conscious that I seek the solace of an old friend and the safety of a classroom where things are going well for students and teachers. I do not know what to do with the classrooms where what is going wrong is so unnerving, and

seek to soothe the unsettled feeling that I am left with after exiting the orchestra room this morning. It is not yet 10:00 a.m., and there is much yet to do in this day.

Summary

The portraits in this chapter make it clear that the work of teacher leaders in formal roles is filled with both personal relationships and dilemmas about professional practice. Teacher leaders in formal roles find their work in supporting both novice and experienced teachers to be challenging, yet fulfilling. The next chapter will further develop these and other points through a thematic analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of teacher leaders in formal roles within the K-12 public school system. To this end, I interviewed ten teacher leaders who hold or have held formal roles as mentors or as instructional coaches. The interview data and my reflections against my own experiences and the literature in the field resulted in six major themes that will be discussed in this chapter. The first major theme looks at the experiences of mentors and instructional coaches as they enter these formal roles. The second major theme explores the nature of the work. Sub-themes here include descriptions of the work common to these teacher leaders in formal roles, the work specific to mentors of novice teachers, and the work specific to instructional coaches. The third major theme targets the nature of the relationships that teacher leaders experience while in the roles of mentor or instructional coach. The relevant sub-themes include relationships between teacher leaders and administrators, teacher leaders and teachers, and teacher leaders and classroom communities. The fourth theme highlights dilemmas teacher leaders frequently face. The sub-themes include role ambiguity and invisibility, micropolitics, and the time it takes to learn the role. The fifth theme underscores what sustains teacher leaders. Finally, the sixth theme points out the teacher leaders' experiences when they leave their formal roles.

Entering the Role

Few of the teacher leaders in this study were actively seeking a formal leadership role when they first heard about the opening for a job as a mentor or coach. Study participants talked about "the job finding them," or that someone pointed them to the job

saying, “This seems like a good fit for you.” Formal roles of this type were relatively new when these teachers were recruited, and the positions were being “invented” in each locale.

Many of the teacher leaders described being at some kind of transitional point personally or professionally as they entered the formal position. Many had young children as they entered the teacher leadership arena, but welcomed changes in their personal and professional lives. Each had attained success in a classroom role. Others were moving to new locales and were redefining themselves professionally. Still others were immersed in their teaching and informal leadership roles at their school level and wanted official recognition for what they were already doing.

The participants in this study were working in districts where there were several peers in parallel positions, giving them at least the sense of being on a journey with others who were new in a teacher leadership position. The districts in which they work each serve over 5, 000 students. Having multiple teammates also creates a context for the professional development of teacher leaders. Where there are multiple role-alike positions, it is efficient for a system with many teacher leaders to pursue collective staff development; when there is one teacher leader professional development must be addressed in another manner. Smaller school systems may not have the sheer numbers of teacher leaders in formal roles to provide job-alike professional development. This may have implications for legislation and the regional supports that can be provided by universities, the state departments of education, educational foundations, and regional service districts.

Most of the participants talked about their focus on students. Jeni unabashedly relates, “I love the students,” and Mara states, “There are kids sitting in these classrooms.” Her comment anchors the common belief that although the work of teacher leaders in formal roles is framed in adult relationships, the focus is on improving learning conditions for students. Julie talked about the impact she knows that her work as a mentor has on kids: “What motivates me to stay in education is all those things that aren't working. I know I make a difference. It [what I do as a teacher leader] makes a difference for a lot more than one kid.”

Many teacher leaders are educators because they love learning and the impact that learning makes on others. Jeni’s passion for learning gave her the ability to approach mentoring from a learner’s stance; she stated “It is important not to come off as the expert.” Her passion for students also translates into a passion for supporting teachers:

> Before I mentored, I scored AP tests. There are some leadership roles I just don’t like. I like the ones where I am in charge of the quality of their life, not rating how they do. I chose [to be a] mentor because I had worked with new teachers the year before and saw how pathetic their energy was at the end of the quarter. They could barely crawl to the end. That’s what kind of drove me in that direction.

Jeni leverages hope for novice teachers by taking time to listen to their dilemmas and supporting collaborative crafting of solutions to their daily classroom issues. She does not see leadership in the judging of student work, though she understands the drain on a teacher’s energy that the paper grading can have for teachers who see over 150 students a day. She often gives the “gift” of grading papers to her novice high school teachers. This gives her a way to support the teacher, and to enter into a deeper dialogue about planning for student learning. As a result, her novice teachers feel valued as professionals. In my own work as a mentor, I was gratified when one of my novice

teachers talked about how the support he received helped him make it until the end of the year. His views are captured in an article entitled *Surviving the Crossfire* (Appendix D). He was comparing the support he received in our district with a peer who was a novice teacher in a large system without a mentoring program.

Many of the teacher leaders described being recruited for the job. Julie said, "Somebody came to me and said, '*you should do this*.' It never crossed my mind to pursue something like this." Shara explained her initial reaction: "In my district, I had opportunities to do workshops and other things where I was trained, and there were people in our district who were leaders and saw me and said '*you should do this'*." Jane said simply: "It was time for me to find a new position, I had been teaching for 13 years in one school in one district." Maggie added: "I was a master teacher working with college interns." It was a college faculty member who pointed out the mentor job to her. Many of the teacher leaders felt they were at the nexus of a personal and professional crossroad as expressed by Mara

> I had left the classroom because I had my second child and I had gotten my master's degree in curriculum and instruction, with no vision for my future. My master's work was actually on peer coaching but really…what my heart on [helping] teachers get smarter about what they do. I was really tired of all the bad professional development that I had participated in.

Each teacher leader faced circumstances at the initiation of the role that mirror the kinds of induction experiences all new teachers face. Many participants described the reality of learning what the work was as the work moved forward. Kris described being new to the school and the district and spending the first year building her knowledge of the curriculum and the staff. "When I came in as a new coach they [the principal and the staff development director] said that the first year was about trust and rapport, trust and

rapport… they would just drill it in… and I would wonder if I was really coaching…" She described the nervousness she felt as "a very tense feeling" when she began the role in thinking that she "had to know everything, and really be the expert." Jeni related that

> …it was an uncomfortable structure [creating the job as they went], 'cause I always want to make sure that I'm doing a really good [job]. But no one ever told me that [I was]. In fact, the new teachers didn't even like us for the first semester. So it was difficult going from having choral adoration in the classroom to having – once in a while - somebody say "OK, I see what you are talking about."

Jeni described the first year as providing a "greater level of support" for her novice teachers and that in the second year she experienced "more of a comfort level" for work that she was doing in classrooms which moved beyond support. Her reflections about the second year centered on her ability to give feedback that was useful in helping the novice teachers reflect on and improve their teaching as opposed to solving their technical problems.

While all of these experiences and feelings may have more to do with the context in which the teacher leaders worked rather than the teacher leaders themselves, the teacher leaders experienced doubts as to whether they had done the right thing by leaving the familiarity of the classroom, where they had been seasoned veterans, sure of the impact on their students and their learning.

Nature of the Work

In general, the day-to-day work of teacher leaders in formal roles is the work of creating job-embedded staff development that is customized to the teachers with whom they are assigned to work. Characterizing the work of the teacher leader is problematic as many educators do not understand the design or intention of the formal teacher leader roles that have in emerged in K-12 schools.

The kinds of experiences that the teacher leaders in this study described as satisfying were ones where they could help teachers make a connection to how students learn**.** The situations occurred when the teachers they supported reflected that they acted on a suggestion made by the teacher leader which resulted in increased student learning. One mentor related that "I've mentored in auto body shop. The guy knows cars really well, but he doesn't know kids at all." The auto shop teacher would frequently give too many verbal directions for students. While he was an expert about the work that needed to be done, the students had a hard time carrying out these complex and lengthy skills. Mara was his mentor, and described the satisfaction of helping this novice teacher develop processes to be more successful with students.

Being able to add value that impacts the world of students is a great aspect of the work of teacher leaders. Fiora relates "Teachers come back to me and say 'I can't believe what the kids are doing.'" Kris describes helping a teacher to learn a new aspect of the language arts curriculum, "though she struggled through every step of implementation [of new curriculum], the reward was seeing the results of the kids." That focus on how teaching impacts students is the ultimate reward. Jane remembers a time when, "Even one of our most veteran teachers said she could see it was working for her kids." This fifth grade teacher had participated in some book studies, and was a part of the writing classes Jane taught throughout the year. The class allowed teachers to see themselves as writers who go through the same processes that they guide their students in. The student work, when displayed on the bulletin board, showed that the students were able to put to use the collaborative lessons that the writing classes had worked on related to elaboration. Students' writing had improved since the teacher started using her writing as a tool in her

teaching. Teacher leaders bring positive energy that helps others in the school community focus on student learning. This may be one of the most important ways that teacher leaders build community, helping put an end to the isolating nature of the classroom teacher's work. Jane's workshop on writing spilled over into grade level teaming as the teachers encouraged each other to share their writing, and to help students see that we are all writers who can learn through collaborative effort.

Most teacher leaders that I interviewed have expertise in multiple areas and ended up serving their schools and systems much like a utility player in baseball. They were in charge of running staff development in a number of areas; supporting certification classes; being a liaison between the university and local district; assisting with parent engagement; supporting curriculum development; and delivering technology integration. Shara describes her many roles:

> I support and assist new special education teachers as they come into the district. I help them set up their classrooms; I help them with discipline. I help them do on the job training with para-educators; I help them with data collection. I help them write IEP's and plan for instruction. I also help them head toward their next step of certification, and include in that observations of veteran teachers in the district. I often get called into the classrooms of veteran teachers that may be struggling with a certain group of kids, or a new curriculum piece. I do trainings with specific curriculum elements, on students in poverty, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders. I do training for parents. I do recruiting fairs for the district. I have a full plate.

Many of the participants really loved their formal role as mentor or coach. Jeni says, "It was the hardest job I ever had. It was so hard. I loved it." Shara relates, "I liked being a mentor because of the autonomy. I just think that there are so many things in a teacher's life at school that take them away from his passion or her passion." It is a drain

on teachers where there are frequent interruptions to teaching and learning: deliveries, assemblies, and cumbersome attendance procedures.

Teacher leaders are self-starters who can handle ambiguity and independent work in the school environment. Jane describes it this way:

> You create your own schedule every day knowing that the administrators have given us total empowerment. I mean we create schedules based on the needs of teachers and the needs of the district. I have autonomy in what I do and I'm self-directed, which appeals to me.

In addition to many shared characteristics of the work of coaches and mentors, there are two variations of context for the work of these teacher leaders. Mentors of novice teachers were deployed from a school system level, often with a supervisor at the central administrative level. Frequently, mentors talked about specializing in one level of school with multiple novice teachers at several sites who taught a variety of content to students. In the second variation, instructional content coaches were most often part of the staff at one school, with a specialty in a specific content area such as math, reading, or science. Mentors specialize in one-on-one work with teachers, while coaches utilize small group work on a weekly basis. Both mentors and coaches in Washington State have been trained to utilize the cognitive coaching approach via *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton and Wellman, 1999) as a basis for their work (as described in the literature review), while the two participants who were teacher leaders from other states did not describe cognitive coaching as a part of their training.

Work Common to Mentors and Instructional Coaches

When a teacher is accomplished, he or she is recognized for outstanding work in organizing, managing and delivering student learning. When a teacher leader begins to

support other teachers as learners, the context of the work changes, yet is still centered on teaching and learning. Mentors and coaches related that they share many aspects of their work as job embedded staff developers. As the interviews of the participants and the analysis of the patterns in the data progressed, the connections between the formal roles of mentors of novices and instructional coaches became clearer and clearer.

Both mentors and coaches described a variety of ways they approached their work with teachers. One aspect of their role was planning with teachers. Jane said she would spend time, "Planning with grade level teams, sketching out a year." Then she would meet with individuals "going from the big picture and planning for what it would look like specifically in lessons in the classroom based on the unique needs of students."

Some of the day-to-day work of mentors and coaches is centered on communication. Fiora describes the day-to-day communication rituals for a mentor:

> On a normal day, I will answer some e-mail, and have appointments with my teachers. Then I will see a sixth grade math class – we planned that earlier in the week – and schedule the post-observation. Then I will meet with a high school English teacher who is planning for the gap between spring break and WASL. A lot of days my time is spent in meetings and with departments. One of my teachers cancelled on me yesterday, and she's thinking about quitting. Her whole psyche is down in the dumps. She has come with a whole bunch of preconceived notions, about what it was like and it hasn't panned out. I am planning to meet with her today and just talk about how you make it through the year.

Although the communication is mixed between e-mail and managing individual appointments, this novice teacher who has decided that teaching hasn't "panned out" brings a whole different set of needs to the table for the teacher leader to make decisions about. Does the mentor handle this on his/her own? Should an administrator be included at some point – if there is one with whom a trusting enough relationship has been built? Does the teacher leader have the skill set to counsel the teacher given the possible

dilemmas the teacher is facing? Many of the dilemmas I faced in this kind of situation were compounded with the teacher's life circumstances (divorce, bankruptcy, etc.) that were well beyond the scope of my skills as a teacher mentor. These life problems are woven into the lives of the teachers we work with and can sometimes appear camouflaged.

There are a handful of structures that are used by teacher leaders to frame up the work that they do with classroom teachers. Most mentors and coaches are engaged daily in support of design and analysis of lessons, professional book studies, unpacking student achievement data, communicating about a number of professional issues, co-teaching, observing classrooms, and conferring about student learning. Jeni shares, "We've done book studies. One led us to a tighter focus on teaching and learning…having smart goals, working as a team." Mara related that "We work on the anatomy of lesson and have morphed from teaching reading to teaching thinking. That was key to the professional development here. We are supporting teachers with their professional learning."

Figuring out how to support teachers with their own professional goals is an aspect of the work that many teacher leaders related to. Kris remembers, "I coach teachers doing their job and meeting the goals that they have, [the goals] that they accept themselves." Maggie describes this aspect of the work as listening to teachers to unpack their teaching beliefs as a point of access:

> We're going for understanding; we're not just going for knowledge. So sometimes I got to back way out…what do you believe? That's that question of what do you want kids to walk away with at the end of this unit? It gets into teaching beliefs. I'm listening, listening to the teacher, "Alright, what do you care most about? If you care most about that. How can you practice that?"

Jane describes the difficulty of selecting the focus of professional learning based on what the teachers need:

> I think of my timing, that sense of where my teachers are. Does the professional development match what the teachers need? I think I just missed the mark lots of times, and I was always dumbfounded when teachers asked me about something that I taught them a month or two ago. There was so much stuff that was far away from where we were as teachers.

Jacob describes the duality of keeping the focus and the reality of what happens in classrooms on a daily basis:

> It takes a bit of finessing to figure out how do you come back to it and not just continue on, without addressing things when you see them…things that need to be addressed. I insisted on the teachers focus on "what am I going to do today? How am I going to teach it? And what are we going to do with it?" This helped students key into understanding why they were learning and how it might impact their future.

The interconnectedness of what students are learning and what teachers want to know and need to know is the very platform on which teacher leaders' dance. This is the balance between the old workshop style of professional development, which was not successful, and job-embedded professional learning. Finding ways for planning professional learning that is both personally relevant and suitable for a group within a school is challenging for teacher leaders.

One way to keep the focus on the learning that frames the teacher in the classroom is co-teaching. Jacob describes the likelihood of co-teaching:

> If I walk in (to any class in my school) and if I'm there for more than five minutes, there's a very high likelihood that I might end up co-teaching it at any time. If the kids are working in small groups, I might go and sit down with a group and spend some time asking questions and seeing what they know and getting on…which leaves one less group for the teacher to get to. If they're doing some instruction, I may very well just jump right in.

This gives the teacher leader a first hand view of what the students are actually working on in the classroom, as opposed to hearing about what students are doing from the teacher. This is beneficial in building the trust between the teacher and teacher leader.

Most participants in this study were provided initial training in cognitive coaching via a related set of skills known as *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton &Wellman, 1999). Embedded in the structures and strategies are many foundational communication skills that focus dialogue on the learning goals of the novice teacher. This set of cognitive coaching skills guide teacher leaders in planning for conferring with teachers in the planning stages of lesson design and in reflecting on taught lessons, labeled "coaching cycles." The state of Washington has used this as baseline curriculum for developing the communication skills of teacher leaders for several years. Tammy describes the coaching cycle that she uses with her teachers:

> The biggest piece I do is as they plan a lesson [is to] let them talk through a lesson, kind of a dry rehearsal. Then I get a chance to sit in the classroom and take notes for them about what it is that they're interested in seeing. How did that go for the kids? How is that going in terms of their learning? Then we have the opportunity afterwards to talk again and find out how it felt, and share the data. By the time we are done, they have experienced this lesson about five times.

This three-stage cycle of previewing the lesson, observation during teaching, and reflection of the lesson is the center of the cognitive coaching training as described by the participating teacher leaders. Jeni reflects on her use of the coaching cycle:

> My first year as a mentor I had nineteen novice teachers from all subject areas in three high schools. We'd pre-conference, brainstorm, plan. I sat as a learner in math classes and ask if what was being taught made sense to me. I would write down my questions, and then we would talk about what didn't go well.

This type of three phase "coaching cycle" was described over and over again by the participants. Yet there emerges a concept of instructional coaches needing to work with

more than one teacher at a time. Jane clarifies, "Working with teachers is a team thing. There are all these different roles and relationships, not [just] one to one… we don't want teachers to be isolated in the classroom." Jeni shared how this benefited her work with novice teachers:

> I was glad for my training in *Mentoring Matters* because I realized that all the new teachers bring positive intent to the table. I went back from the training with renewed energy. It helped me with communication skills, and to become a really good communicator. I liked to talk but I didn't listen. The communication skills helped me disagree in a different way, and helped me build trust more than anything else.

Mara shares that though *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) provides important foundations, valuing teacher's viewpoint is essential:

> *Mentoring Matters* is important so you know the conversation techniques. But being able to read someone else and understand their point of view and understand that they may have a different one. I've got nine different teachers who teach in probably six different basic ways. And none of them are really all bad or all good. "This is good stuff. Keep doing it. No, don't become like her. Become a better you."

The value of *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) is underscored later in this analysis.

Some additional protocols focusing specifically on working with groups of teachers have recently emerged from professional literature. An example of one of these was brought into Jacob's school through his principal. *Data-Driven Dialogue* (Wellman and Lipton, 2004) was provided for all district administrators in that school system. The principal immediately showed her instructional coaches how to use the protocol, and Jacob describes what happened after he had worked with a team of math teachers:

> We've done a data-driven dialog on the (middle level math unit) assessments from the fall. And they have discovered with a little bit of guidance that our kids have trouble with number sense. That is they have trouble with ordering fractions

> and whole numbers and decimals when they're put together. How do you order them and figure out which one is bigger from all of them? Our kids also have difficulty with order of operations. They get mixed up on that. And they have great difficulty keeping track of volume, perimeter, surface area, and what happens when you change the dimensions. So, we have been creating entry tasks that they can do at the beginning of the lesson to review those things that we're no longer teaching; to help our kids get what they didn't get before.

This shows that the teachers and instructional coaches were able to take analysis a step further than in the past and focus their time on developing aspects of lessons that supported what students need to know. This is a change in instructional planning practices from the one-on-one coaching model.

For several participants a second structure is that of peer learning labs. This structure emerged from a coaching conference in Colorado. *Peer Learning Labs* is a protocol developed by instructional coaches who work for the Colorado-based Public Education and Business Coalition (2006), and is based on an aspect of the Boston Collaborative Coaching and Learning model (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The focus is to embed the learning that coaches are framing for teachers in a classroom with a teacher and his/her students rather than in a removed conference setting. Teachers enter a fifth grade classroom in preparation for the peer-learning lab. The classroom teacher serves as the lab teacher, and the instructional coach or mentor is the host. The teachers have been briefed on the observational protocol, and have heard the teacher talk through goals for the lesson and plans for the class that day. Jacob describes the impact of this structure on his middle school and the elementary schools in the neighborhood:

> In the spring the last two years, we've done a peer-learning lab. Where one of our teachers had been teaching seventh grade and we've invited the teachers from the feeder schools to come up and be part of the peer-learning lab. I do those peer learning labs. I organize them; I set them up; get a teacher to volunteer; run the

> protocol, debrief it and then run a session after that, okay, what does, what impact does this have when we plan our next unit?

Peer-learning labs give teachers a chance to interact with each other based on a shared experience as a group. The traditional way that the observations have been used in education is in the one-on-one situation. Peer-learning labs give teacher leaders a way to multiply the effects normally derived from the one-on-one to a small group.

In addition to peer learning labs, Jacob's teachers use a different approach:

> One of the things we do is take out the book where the kids are now and we do the problems together that the kids will be doing in the next two weeks. And as we do them we talk about two things. Where do we think our kids might have difficulty understanding? And what questions might we ask…to help the kids understand what's going on? So we make lists of questions and we solve the problems in different ways trying to anticipate. (These are all teachers who were math majors.)

This kind of team approach to planning what students need not only breaks the isolation of teaching, but also challenges the long held norm of egalitarianism. It shifts the focus from the isolated actions of a teacher to the actions of teachers in service of the immediate needs of the learners.

Mentors of Novice Teachers: "I spend more time with individual teachers."

Mentors generally serve several schools, specializing in work at one level, such as high school. The goal of mentoring novice teachers is to support the novice teacher's entry into the profession help the novice teacher improve learning for students, and a help ensure that the novice teacher will stay in the profession. Jeni describes her mentoring assignment: "After the first year of mentoring, [our program] started organizing mentors around high schools; in my second year, I had twenty-one novice teachers." The responsibilities mentors assume ranged from orienting new teachers to curriculum and

instructional practices to helping veteran teachers effectively use student assessment data. Mentors are often called upon for their expertise in classroom management, a perennial issue for novice teachers. Mentors find that people understand the work of the professional educator who helps to bring a novice teacher into the profession. Julie states,

> My job is to work with new teachers. While they come out of their college very trained and skilled, there are things that are unique to each district. And that part of my job was to help them understand the culture of that district. I'd often speak to [the fact] that we lose new teachers [from the profession] who are very skilled because it's such an isolating job. And that our job [as mentors] was to change the culture of education so that it's not isolating and so that we're truly working in a collaborative way.

Several of the mentors in this study described their work as "teaching teachers." "Working with new teachers," was mentioned by Julie. In yet another district, the definition of mentoring included "Helping teachers meet student needs." Within the profession itself, mentors and their roles are accepted. Jeni describes her setting:

> Our district hired people that were truly mentors, they had so much expertise. I felt like I was in the presence of greatness. I was on fire all the time I was a mentor. We were learning, and giving workshops, and the intentionality of building relationships kept me going… how I would make all these little cheat cards to help me be intentional [about remembering individuals in each school]. I feel like I have a thousand people that I could call and they would help me have success for my students or teachers. It's a great model.

Sometimes the role of mentor required advocacy with the administrators who set the teaching schedule. Often teaching assignments were not arranged for a novice teacher to be successful, and as a result, many new teachers leave the profession. In my first year of mentoring, one principal moved a novice teacher from 5th grade to 1st grade the day before school started. This mid-life novice was not skilled in classroom management or pedagogy for beginning readers, and found the classroom of 6 year olds quite different from the 10 year olds she had planned to teach. Additionally, the class was comprised of

students whose parents did not choose the other two sections of first grade. Those sections were multi-age, and taught by two veteran teachers who were well known in that school community. I advocated that a more veteran teacher be assigned to teach this 1st grade class. My reasoning was that any veteran teacher would have some additional experience that would create a more conducive environment for students. The principal did not agree with my rationale. This mismatch between novice teacher skill and teaching assignment creates a difficult year for both the teacher and the students. This kind of advocacy takes a toll on teacher leaders. Jeni relates,

> One [novice] teacher was in tears. Her English classes were out of control, and they were all freshman. I helped her plan and organize and then just begged them to let her have a different schedule at the semester, just one class of juniors, not all freshmen. We put a lot of labor into getting her classes moved into the possible range. She is the only teacher I didn't hear from ever again after that year.

Jeni describes another aspect of the unsettling nature of the position of mentor: "I was an outsider [as a mentor]. I had to negotiate the adult relationships. I also had to work with teachers on their relationships [with students], it was reciprocal. It's about human relations. Everything boils down to that." Jeni shares that her strategy was to collect information on the different schools so she could make some sense of all the varied locations where her teachers worked: "I developed a book about each school; a notebook so that I could remind myself about the personalities." Her approach to remembering information about the myriad people she worked with helped her build relationships in several schools at once. This need to keep track of the people in each setting underscores the complexity of the contexts that mentors negotiate on a daily basis.

Learning from one who is more experienced in the profession is a time-honored tradition. Mentors are generally in a one-year relationship with novice teachers who span

many content areas. They generally work in multiple schools. In comparison with instructional coaches, mentors tend to do more one-on-one support of novice teachers.

Instructional Coach – Content Specialist for Groups of Teachers

Coaches, on the other hand, are typically assigned to one school, have expertise in one content area and related pedagogy, and are generally facile in use of student assessment data. Instructional coaches generally provide staff development for both instructional design and delivery. One coach describes it this way:

> It's a role that supports teachers in whatever professional learning they are participating in…professional understandings, or new pursuits. I add that I help provide professional development and leadership in the building in terms of instruction.

Deducing the role of instructional coaches is not intuitive for educators. Some instructional coaches used the analogy of sports coaching to help others recognize the role of instructional coach. This work was described as "coaching teachers to meet the goals" that they have for themselves. Yet another instructional coach defines the role as "not a sports coach – everyone thinks of that [role, in athletics] first." This was an adamant assertion that at the base of the work, there are no whistles, tires, drills, or playbooks designed by others in a hierarchy. Another instructional coach in the same school district described the role as "a professional developer, working on site." This coach preferred to think of the position as one of a teacher working in a "slightly different capacity." Being a learner with the teachers at this site was an important aspect of how this coach approached the work of instructional coaching as well as "getting principals and teachers on the same page."

One of the vivid ways that one of the coaches describes herself is as the "guardian of teacher learning":

> I am the guardian of teacher learning. It's the idea that school needs to be a great place for adults in order for it to be a great place for kids. I want teachers to be jumping out of bed in the morning as excited to come to school as the kids are.

The notion that schools need to be great places for kids and teachers is one that supports the notions of care and community, which thread throughout the words of the participants. Teachers feel the press of the current accountability system and often do not feel honored for the incredible work that they do with students. Teacher leaders who view themselves as guardians of teacher learning value the great expertise that teachers bring with them to the classroom on a daily basis. These coaches and mentors seek to support the passion that teachers have for their students by leveraging the common love for learning.

Discerning how teachers set goals for their own learning, and how to connect these to the overall goals of the school, is an aspect of being a "guardian of teacher learning." Helping make "have to's, want to's" is the way that Maggie describes this balance. Teacher leaders value the impact that learning has on actions in the classroom and can often help make connections between district and school initiatives and the classroom. Often when new curriculum or materials are rolled out centrally, teachers do not understand the rationale behind the changes that are requested. Fiora puts it this way: "As an effective coach, you know the curriculum, the instructional practice, and can use that to help teachers pinpoint a specific area where they are working." Understanding how to help teachers navigate the pressures of rapid changes in standards, and thus curriculum and assessment is an asset that most instructional coaches described.

Maggie talks about the connection between teacher learning and student learning: "I say I help teachers get smarter so they can help kids get smarter. I say if you know anything about how learning works, you know we're never done." Making decisions in a rapid-fire kind of way is the norm in a K-12 classroom. Figuring out how to help teachers access what they need to help students progress is the job-embedded nature of instructional coaches.

Jacob describes the feeling of the uncertain beginnings as a facilitator. His district eventually renamed the facilitator positions as "instructional coach":

> When I first started out I had difficulty because when I first started out I had been named facilitator. It was difficult to explain. But when the name changed to "coach," it became easier because everybody knows that really good performing people have a coach. Tiger Woods has a coach and Tiger Woods' coach cannot play golf as well as he does. And that model became easy for people outside to understand and coincidentally makes it easier for teachers in the system to say, "Oh, you're not saying that you know more. You're helping me learn how to do what I do better." That's been a big boon.

Teacher leaders who are located entirely in one building can approach the work in a different manner than those who move from school to school. Jacob says, "Coaches are really, truly instructional leaders." This brings into play the balance of the others who lead together in a school. Julie, who served as both a mentor and instructional coach, describes the partnering of coaches with other instructional leaders:

> We have a day when we look at the data. There's a weird lag time between it. The data-driven [dialogues] are initially run by a district person. It's important that we have a protocol for looking at the data that doesn't allow us to blame our solutions. And it worked at school level as well as district level, kind of sharing some information. And that was the first time I felt like at a district level it was really productive and really useful for teachers.

She goes on to show how her leadership has to focus on the teacher's current reality, and also be forward thinking as she will work with the same group of teachers throughout the next several years:

> That was a really powerful day for my teachers. It has to be much more responsive to the teachers. And even in the leadership of the group I had to be very responsive. Being observant in the moment just requires awareness and an observation of the group in kind of a side manner. You're off to the side a little bit.

Julie's awareness that facilitation is more important in building a learning community than being up in front. That teacher leaders often lead with others is a feature that creates a willingness to change. One sophomore English teacher that I coached helped me plan a series of lessons focused on grasping the range of occupations during Elizabethan England named in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She was ready to quit her teaching job because it had become all too painful that she was not reaching the students. As we planned the lessons, we designed ways to engage the students in a different way than they had been in that class. For one lesson, we moved out all the furniture, and had students sit in spaces based on an occupation that was listed on a slip of paper that they drew as they walked into the room. We teamed the teaching for several days, and had a lot of fun with each other and the students. Her willingness to continue teaching and to work at different ways of engaging students was spawned through our teamwork.

Partnering with other leaders who may catalyze the learning of the teachers is one of the ways that teacher leaders extend the leadership of others. This starts to put to rest the old model of "one-shot" in-service. Julie's teachers have the opportunity to move these dialogues about their students' data forward on a monthly basis as they continue their work over time. They return to the hand-written charts that they built in their time

together, and revisit the trends, noting what was confirmed, and what they might focus on next. The charts serve as anchors to the conversations they hold when analyzing data that will impact their planning for student needs.

Modeling professional practices gives instructional coaches and teachers common experiences with students to work from when focusing on instruction. This puts the teacher leader in a position to be a "co-learner," because it focuses on how teachers and teacher leaders learn about student learning together. It was easier for me to return to the sophomore English teacher's room to plan after we had taught a few lessons together. I was invested in her students' success in a more personal way.

Most instructional coaches have a content area specialty and spend the majority of their time working on supporting groups of teachers, with an occasional individual coaching cycle in the balance. That these teacher leaders were experts in their own classrooms and are focused on a single content area gives them deep capacity in focusing on student learning in that area.

In contrast to the well-established roles of mentors, the formal roles instructional coaches assume are not well understood by others. Although instructional coaches garnered increasing informal leadership before they emerge from the classroom, instructional coaching is not as well understood as mentoring.

Relationships

Teacher leaders have varied relationships with others in the school communities in which they work. Teacher leaders described the excellent relations that they had with teachers eager to attack the hard work of examining changes in instructional practice that would benefit students' learning and with principals who partnered with them and did the "heavy lifting." They also reluctantly talked about the difficult and troubling relationships with teachers and administrators when there was not common vision about the purpose of their role. One teacher leader leaned back, crossed her arms, and spoke slowly, choosing each word in that section of the interview – a vivid contrast to the fluent language she used when talking about the work in classrooms. Building relationships in a new work place puts tension between the perception of existing relationships and the press of coaching. Most teacher leaders talked frankly about their relationships with principals.

Teacher Leaders and Principals

The relationship with the principal was a key relationship for all teacher leaders. Mara relates that:

> …with my principal is she's…she's actually…we have a pretty great relationship. She's very blunt and a lot of people don't like her. She's very brusque and I can deal with that. She likes my e-mails or bullets 'cause I know that's what works for her. But one day, she said, “You know the problem with your job... the problem with your job is, some of the older principals, they didn't take this job to be a school…an instructional leader. But I did.”

Maggie describes her view that principals who are in classrooms on a regular basis have a different view of the work:

> …principals mostly get their impressions from other interactions. Who’s nodding their heads at faculty meetings versus getting in classrooms and seeing what’s

> really going on… breaking that culture of assuming what people are doing in their rooms without ever setting foot in is important.

This notion that principals base their opinions about teachers on inputs other than classroom time is one way that the context for teacher leaders differs from administration. Principals have interactions with parents and community members, and teacher leaders are nearly single-minded about their focus on the classroom. I frequently took principals with me as I walked through classrooms, and over time we began to see the same things. It wasn't like they would ever spend the same kind of time in classrooms as I did when I mentored, but they began to spend more time in there when I invited them, and that improved the way we approached the work together.

That teacher leaders cannot have an opinion about teacher evaluation is not as much a problem for them as sometimes for the principal or the teachers involved. In the first week of my first year as a mentor I remember having a heated discussion with a principal. Not only did he want me to contribute to the evaluation of a veteran teacher, but he had just assigned a new teacher to a really big mismatch the day before school started. It became apparent really quickly to me that of the eleven principals that I worked with, some were in classrooms regularly and some were not. Those who were in classrooms regularly helped build a culture of learners amongst their staff, which made teachers more open to thinking about how lessons were impacting students, and what we might try if the kids did not learn or make progress. The work of the teacher leader is powerful when coupled with a principal who is a learning leader. There are often misunderstandings when the principal is more a manager and in classrooms less.

The principals who sat back and let the teacher leaders do the hard work create interesting dilemmas:

> …when I realized that he wasn't going to push, I started pushing. So, I started, I started going in there, asking them really hard questions, sending them emails, asking them why does this work matter? I'm noticing this, this, and this kid "checking out." I mean, he didn't turn up the heat, and so I did. Which was bad because it ruined my relationships with half of the staff. It took me a long time to get back trust. 'Cause they were like, "Oh great, you're here to run teachers out of the building."

Teacher leaders walk a tightrope between the administration and their peers in the classroom. That Tammy was able to overcome the trust issues that were developed by this situation and continue to be an effective coach is a testament to her tenacity and vision for the kind of classroom that she wants students to experience:

> It is about how fragile people are feeling. It goes all the way from how does the staff work together to what's the leadership like in the building. What perception does the principal have in terms of coaching? If a coach gets nudged into more of an administrative role, then it can impact the relationship they have with teachers. There's no way that it can't.

That attention needed to be drawn to this aspect of the community in schools was underscored by Tammy: "If the principal sees the importance of the trust and relationships, there is greater opportunity for success for the coaches." Jacob stated it this way: "Administrative responsibilities should stay with the administrator. It's not my role, nor should my administrator ask me to give private or personal information about a teacher because it undermines the relationship." Kris shared that "When there are difficult conversations that have to happen, it's been the principal who's done it." Fiora noted that,

> The confidentiality piece is huge. I am in the know about everything in the building, and yet I don't tell the principal everything because I do believe in that confidentiality piece. There are times when I'm behind the scenes thinking what

> can I do about a problem. I think I have a very good relationship with most people here on staff.

Jane shared that, "My principal says 'I couldn't do this work without coaches.' It speaks volumes about the partnership." She goes on to show how this builds into a balanced relationship: "My first principal gave me tons and tons of responsibility. I would just do it, and in that respect, it was a gift. He asked my opinions on a lot of things. He would never walk in with his own agenda; he would help us get there." Maggie has worked in a number of schools, and believes that, "The number one thing is just to keep those lines of evaluation and coaching completely separate…in a really honest way. Not a 'wink-wink' 'nudge-nudge' way, but really, it's just a delicate line."

Jeni did not have prior experience working with the principals whose buildings she mentored in prior to her formal teacher leader role; she describes how she built connections with them. "I worked with principals in three buildings, and I would bring them food, and invite them to share my lunch. I told them I was desperate. I needed their help. One principal did not want to know anything; he said '*just do your thing'*." This detached view of the potential partnership with the teacher leader was disheartening to Jeni. Shara describes the power relationship and its effects on the teachers with whom she worked:

> Let's face it, some principals can look at a teacher cross eyed, and the teacher crumbles and cries for days. I get the phone calls that say "my principal hates me…" Principals' plates are really full; they are stacked to the limit. I think teacher leaders have more of the matchstick to the flame view of change than some administrators, because they only get a snippet. We've got this little match that can ignite because we have time to meet the teacher in the afternoon and say "What were you thinking here? What do we need to be doing?" We can ask those questions because we have established the rapport. Administrators do carry the stick that will snuff out the flame.

Kris points out ways for the relationship between teacher leader and principal to have some effective boundaries:

> Sometimes the principal looks at the coach as their spy…spy may be a harsh word for that. Maybe a better word would be their eyes and their ears in the camp, so to speak. And as soon as that happens, it backfires. And so that, that, that's one of the things that the principal and I have had a long term relationship with each other and it's been very professional over that period of time. She doesn't expect me to tell on anybody. Nor do I expect her to share anything with me I shouldn't know.

Maggie would concur, saying that "I really think about really carefully what is going to give my teachers the energy to teach, 'cause this job is so hard... the twelve to fourteen hours a day that they put in on a regular basis." Knowing how to keep the balance for teachers is a constant demand for teacher leaders.

Part of the dilemma for teacher leaders is that they work with new administrators on a regular basis. Julie describes the way that she started working with a new administrative team member:

> But we were shifting from my principal to a brand new vice principal. She stepped into a situation and made it worse because she had no sense of the context. The principal stepped in and said "She's going to make people mad. Not intentional or being mean or anything… You have to understand she is pushing them to think about things they've never thought about… to do things they've never done before. And you cannot respond every time somebody's uncomfortable."

Teacher leaders and principals may have to approach their work in really different ways as a result of their expertise. Julie describes her frustration with an administrator who is more focused on planning for professional learning, while Julie is immersed in learning with the teachers and focused on creating time to put that learning into practice:

> Each year we've argued about this and actually the big thing that I finally got him to do is [schedule] one day in between the ninth and the tenth grade scoring. The day after scoring is when I have them ready to hear the message. So what might

> teachers need after scoring in order to be able to capitalize on their cognitive discomfort?

Keeping the schedules of teacher leaders packed full of formal meetings may not lead to the most conducive conditions for facilitating the learning with groups of teachers:

> There're some things that teacher leaders know about what's happening with teachers and about schools but it isn't translating into the big picture. Planning and creating space and that tension and the need and the ability to respond to it is a really key piece of what coaches and mentors do, that all administrators don't do or know about or do in the same kind of way.

Dealing with the changing realities of time and the way that others approach scheduling and accessing time with teachers and teacher leaders is a major part of the way that principals and teacher leaders learn to work together. Julie relates,

> I guess the hardest part as a mentor is that, as a teacher, you're so regimented by time. You have a clock. You have a bell. You have five minutes in between. You know you've got lunch. You know you've got a prep period. And it seems like you have no control over the time, but the reality is that you have most control over your time. But you become a coach and there lots of people who want to lay claim to your time. I guess my frustration is that they're not always clear about what their priorities are.

Another shared experience revealed that teacher leaders became the confidant for administrators, using their excellent communication skills in ways that were unexpected, that lead to teacher leaders being in situations that were unplanned in the role.

> Often principals would haul us into the office to dump on us about their own world. We became mentors for the principals. You'd hear about the building fights. You'd hear about the union, whatever and frequently I'd hear about the same event from three or four different people. You…you start to paint an interesting picture of stuff. Who did the teachers try not to call because they were such a pain to deal with? And who did they always call because they were so helpful?

Some of what defines the work of teacher leaders morphed over time as negotiations ensued with administrators. Tara recalled, "That first summer we couldn't

get our hands on their teachers because the principals didn't know what we did and how good it was and they locked them up with all this other stuff - tons of other professional development and school work." In one of my districts, the human resources director negotiated with the principals to have a weeklong orientation in the summer for new teachers to the district. We matched up each new teacher with a teacher who helped create maps of the assessments and overall curriculum for the year. He also managed to get all the teachers who worked in that week paid. It was a great step forward toward having a realistic start for teachers that supported student learning.

There are other administrators who impact the role of teacher leaders. Many teacher leaders are supervised by an administrator in the central administration. My own entry into a full time teacher leadership role was smoothed by the support of a supervisor with whom I had worked over the course of my classroom-teaching career. There were times when our relationship might have been stressed by things that I discussed with her, but the years of relationship building under-girded the dialogue when we had disagreements. One such moment happened on a classroom walk though. My supervisor noted that a new science teacher was not teaching in the written curriculum. I suggested that the content for the class was in fact in the grade level curriculum. We went back to the office convinced that we were each right, and in the end, agreed that it wasn't a main theme in the curriculum, that it was listed in the topics that a teacher might select. Many of the participants related the notion that teacher leaders spend more time in schools and classrooms than their administrative supervisors and that this situation creates tension. Jane related "I think it was threatening sometimes in how much the mentors know. When you're mentoring across all the schools, you've got a broad view of the system." This

view of the larger picture of what is happening in the system is built from differing amounts of time spent in classroom across the system by administrators and teacher leaders.

That many administrators who supervise teacher leaders have never filled these roles themselves creates some of this dilemma. Figuring out a way to value the broad vision of the teacher leaders who span many schools in a system is an opportunity that many systems have yet to capitalize on. Creating a way for teacher leaders to hold dialogue about issues like this with administrators without feeling like they are in jeopardy of losing their jobs is certainly an important first step.

Teacher Leaders and Teachers

Maggie describes the relationship between teacher leader and classroom teacher:

> I think a teacher's job is a million times harder than my job. I am a slave and a servant to what these teachers do every day. And I think getting coaches to take that stance is a really important thing. You are not above teachers. You are their servant. And you are not their servant to make copies, but you are their servant to notice and wonder things about their classroom that they don't have the luxury of time to notice and wonder about.

Transition from peer and informal leader to formal leader, yet not an administrator, creates a portion of the dilemma. Knowing who your peers are is an inherent problem of a teacher leader, and the ability to have multiple job-alike peers was a benefit to all of the participants, and yet Jeni related that even so, she did not "have anyone to hang out with." This mentor's teacher friends from her former life as a classroom teacher were no longer in her daily life and the novices she supported were not her peers: "It was a lonely time."

Yet, an inherent job of the teacher leader is to build community. Kris shares her definition: “Two teachers working side by side in the classroom to develop and grow professionally, instructionally; to improve student learning.” This aspect of building community through a focus on student learning underscores the positive relationships between teachers and teacher leaders.

Maggie relates, “There were fairly trusting relationships because we had worked together before.” She had been drawn into the role of instructional coach from serving as the building resource room (special education) teacher. She remembers that first year as being really positive. “It was very reciprocal. We were very comfortable bouncing ideas off each other in the context of the lesson. It’s mutually beneficial. I learn as much or more from the teacher when we are working together.” Jacob reflects on leading teachers toward growth, and change: “Leadership is empowerment; leading someone towards their own realization, their growth. You just can’t rush some people. People are going to change when they’re ready.” Kris adds, “The idea of working with adults never made much sense to me without being in the classroom and working with the children, too.” The ideas of not rushing people to make change and working with students in the classrooms results in positive connections for teacher leaders and those they work with. Fiora points out, “When I work within the classroom, or plan with the teachers, I feel appreciated.”

Kris reflected about not knowing why teachers resisted at the start, but being able to show them the growth in their student work as a result of building their expertise:

> I didn’t know in the beginning what the resistance was. I think it was about not being a writer themselves and not really knowing what to do, how to share that with kids. Later I remember looking at the bulletin board and noticing all these

> incredible pieces of writing and thinking back over three years ago to where this individual was in terms of looking at themselves as a teacher of writing and then when you can see what the kids were doing, and what kind of instruction happened for those things to occur. We had a conversation to help them acknowledge that growth, and the confidence in terms of their own expertise in the area.

She continues, "There is a certain amount of being overwhelmed. Teachers wonder if they are ever going to get this. Because I am the messenger, there is sometimes some frustration coming toward me because I'm the one sharing the information." Knowing that resistance is about forces from the outside is a lesson learned through experience by teacher leaders. Jeni faced similar issues in her first year mentoring:

> It was a tough crowd. I had a lot of hard cases my first year mentoring. They did not want a mentor. Most of them had really unsuccessful management problems. I worked a lot on gathering outside references to these management problems because it seemed to me that if someone else said it, that they were more apt to try it than if I said it.

Figuring out how to bring in the words of other experts supports the thinking of teacher leaders and smoothes the focus with the "hard cases." I spent time gathering information like this, especially on classroom management, as many novice teachers did not have strategies to choose from.

Making the change from beloved classroom teacher, where students, teachers, and parents all give regular praise about the work, to working with teachers who don't even know why they need your help is difficult. I will never forget one teacher who called my boss and said "what is she doing here?" The principal had not set up any clear perceptions of the work that we were doing, and the teacher was pretty mad about it. Jeni had a similar experience: "The new teachers didn't even like us (mentors) for a

semester." Another aspect that Jeni points out is that when she is mentoring, she does not often have subject area match:

> One of the challenges in mentoring high school staff with different subject matter background was the willingness of those who were perceived by self and others as experts to accept help from a non-subject matter expert. Fifty percent of the novices were mediocre at best. They were put in positions that weren't the best match for their background and skills.

Mara agrees: "I started with the woodshop guy, and he would have absolutely nothing to do with me." This always seemed like an irony to me. The vocational teachers had no background in pedagogy, management, or any assessment practices needed the most support, yet were the most resistant.

The worst part of the jobs were clearly when there was a lack of administrative sponsorship, leaving several of the teacher leaders feeling "trashed" and "alone." Tara shrugged as she said "The principal didn't know I could mentor." Mara related that a supervisor was "horribly threatened by me because I had ideas, and vision, and 'push.'" The administrator said "'things became more difficult with us when you began to think like an administrator.' I wasn't supposed to have those things." She went on to relate,

> Increasingly things were not good between my supervisor and me. We were talking one time and she said, "I felt I always had to defend the district to you. And defend decisions." And I'm thinking, she was…She was the only person I could talk to.

A surprise for many teacher leaders is the really difficult things that they see in classrooms. Maggie relates "I asked my principal to go into the classrooms because there were some absolutely dangerous and inappropriate things going on." Knowing what to do when the ethic of care for students is not being applied in a classroom and to

experience first hand flagrant violations of community norms is extraordinarily disappointing. Maggie continues,

> It happened my first year, too, right off the bat actually. There were two really, really, really nasty middle school teachers and they were calling kids "stupid" and humiliating them and just like the worst things you can possibly imagine. And I said to the principal, "You get in there and evaluate them out." And he didn't and it was a really, really rough year. I tried to be as diplomatic as I could, but I, but kids were totally suffering on a daily basis.

Sometimes the relationship between teacher leaders and the teachers they work with evolves in surprising ways, ways that put a burden on the teacher leader to step lightly and measure every word. Jacob describes this situation:

> The teachers don't treat me as an equal. They treat me like someone who has authority that I don't have. If I make a suggestion, I have to be really careful because they will take it as a "we should do this." I'm a little worried that they see me as not a colleague, but see me as someone authoritarian.

Not being able to see that the work they are engaged in is making any impact is a regular disappointment for teacher leaders. Maggie put it this way:

> When I failed to make a difference… That's the other thing. When I put forth some effort, thought, and concentration, and it's like…the pebble never hit the water. There wasn't a ripple anywhere…nothing happens. That's disappointing. That's hard to deal with.

Teachers and Students in Classroom Communities

Interestingly, as we talked about the relationships between adults between who work in K-12 schools, the relationships that teachers build with students in classroom communities emerged regularly. It is as if in distributing leadership within a school, the value of human relationships is acted out as in Shakespearean drama where there is a play within a play. The parallel nature of human interaction impacts students and their ability to learn when adults are learners in a school. The business of navigating relationships

with adults while fostering their learning related to student achievement was a never-ending, passionate pursuit for each teacher leader.

Jane helps us ground our thinking in the reality of the classroom teacher: "As a coach I was all about instruction, all about the research, all about best practice and data. Now as a classroom teacher, that is half of me. There is this other big half that as a coach I think we don't remember."

There was lots of dialogue about building community in schools where the building community with adults parallels the type of relationships that teachers build with students in their classrooms. Jeni says, "As a teacher, I always build relationships with kids. It seemed like the way to approach working with adults, too." She found that many of her first year teachers did not innately develop relationships with kids related to the learning. "The students were ready to drop dead because they were so bored." She explains

> The problem was that they had not established a good student/teacher relationship. So we worked over and over on systems and relationships to get rid of the chaos and to establish relationships, working relationships with their kids. An example is when the teacher wanted them in a conversation. If the students were facing each other, then there was more of a cooperative conversation. We drew pictures of what the teachers wanted to see. We worked through students helping set up the classroom norms, and having them posted. When we started, teachers did not have norms posted, and students did not know what to expect. We started from ground zero. This led to small group meetings of my new teachers. We started with intention statements, that they wanted their classrooms to be better.

She adds that "It is simpatico when you have a similar vision of the kind of community, and the climate of the classroom." She relates this to working with teachers in a parallel structure: "The conversations are proactive in terms of when we make decisions it is to support the teachers where they are." Kris adds, "Perhaps the biggest struggle in this job

is to have this vision of community; the way that we work together, and organize time for the benefit of kids."

Jeni reflects about her strategies for starting off with building relationships with teachers in the first few weeks that they work together

> To build relationships between teachers, I find it works to do off campus visits, like meeting for coffee. Then we moved to small groups and created a shared environment. I think small groups work best. People hate meetings, so I would ask them to gather together for coffee, and we would work on problem solving.

That the work of teacher leaders and teachers is really about working together for the benefit of kids underscores the team nature of this professional aspect of a school community. Jeni anchors this concept, "It is really a great benefit to have another person in the classroom for the professional aspect of it, the ability to really meet kids where they are. Every problem we had was solved by building relationships with kids." Kris adds, "When you build community it happens all day long. We are building the relationships with each other and with kids in trying to figure out what motivates them to want to learn." Fiora says, "We have different ways of building relationships with other people." Mara concludes, "The community has to be trusting."

Dilemmas - "I don't think I had the skills to be heard"

Many kinds of dilemmas ricocheted throughout the interviews with these teacher leaders. Both the literature in the field and the first person accounts point to the ambiguity of the nature of the roles of teacher leaders. That the work of a teacher leader in a full time position seemed invisible to others in the school system resounded throughout the words of the participants. Teacher leaders who serve in formal roles face a dilemma in the amount of time that it takes them to become accomplished in that role when

compared to the length of the role. The political nature of any position within the power structure is inherent, and the words of these participants point to future opportunities to make sense of the micropolitics of schools as teacher leadership continues to develop. Finally, there are dilemmas in how teacher leaders who have held formal roles transition back into a classroom when the role comes to an end.

Ambiguity: "It's a huge grocery list of responsibilities…you create the job as you go."

The ambiguous nature of the formal roles of teacher leaders was reflected by comments by most participants. Many of the teacher leaders related that some educators didn't comprehend the role of the teacher leader, resulting in the teacher leaders' sense of "creating our jobs as we went." Jacob said, "I'd never worked with an instructional coach before. I wasn't 100% sure what the task was. There were two of us, and we were both brand new to the coaching job. Our principal wasn't sure about this deal either." Jane observed

> We were just trying to feel this out together. When I first started, I was in there working, listening to my principal, our other coach. I don't know if it has even been 100% exactly defined because it's different every place you go. It's different in the eyes of the principal you work for.

Chris remembered that sometimes there were differences in the view of the role of the instructional coach

> After three years of working with that individual, [I'd wonder] "Why do you think that? What is the purpose of our working together?" Some teachers just saw the coach as an extra adult in the classroom to provide extra support. I don't think it resolved itself or changed. I think that's just the way that particular relationship was.

Mara reflected, "I always wanted someone as a champion to come in and say, 'trust me, this is good stuff.' And, it always felt like we were kind of out there. Having to

do it on our own." Julie related, "I was always trying to be the voice at the table to say this is what the new teachers need and it's not there, because no one else knew and no one else was saying it. I don't think I had the skills to be heard."

How others recognize what is needed to do job embedded staff development may be counterintuitive to the way that administrative teams have worked in schools and districts. "I cannot tell you how many e-mails I get from teachers on Mondays because they had a weekend to think. And they've got these ideas and they want to do something or they want to...and we're locked up in a district meeting all day." The need to balance being able to work with teachers on their goals and needs while balancing the pre-planned agenda of a school or system was clearly an area of ambiguity in designing full time roles for mentors and instructional coaches.

One participant had served as a teacher leader in another state, and when she moved, sought a formal position. This school's first instructional coach was well loved, but was whisked away by a fatal accident. Both the previous positive experiences of the teacher leader and of the school seemed to move the work forward in a useful manner. This second generation of formal teacher leaders would be worth further research as this and other studies move forward in documenting the way that teacher leaders make sense of their roles.

The ambiguity of the role appears to diminish as time passes, and as teacher leaders, teachers, and administrators stay constant. When any changes in staffing are made, there is a need to negotiate the role with all who are affected. Frequently, the change occurs in the school administrator position. This leads to additional complication

in the micropolitics and demands clarification of the benefits of distributing the instructional leadership in a school.

Invisibility-"She has no idea what I do."

That the work of teacher leaders spans a range from one-on-one support to teachers to small group and whole group work demands the use of a variety of venues. That peers and administrators cannot physically see the work of the teacher leader on a minute-to-minute basis is one major way that the work of a teacher leader differs from that of a classroom teacher. This dilemma leads teacher leaders to describe their positions as "invisible." This invisibility results from working in so many locations that others don't see a regular routine. Teachers are assigned classes of students on a fixed schedule, and the work of teacher leaders breaks this traditional way of understanding what the work is like.

Another feature of invisibility is that teacher leaders are generally in a position to sharing leadership with other teachers. "There's an importance of having a person who's leading, who understands that leading isn't leading [in the sense of being up front], and it's being invisible." Julie relates how this affects a team of teachers with whom she works:

> I think when I'm working with a team, they kind of think that they almost don't need me, when I'm doing it well. Because I've done all the facilitation before we've gotten to the meeting. An administrator will say "then what the hell's she doing?" Well, what I'm doing is I'm talking to Hannah ahead of time so she doesn't freak out about this thing and spend all day on it. I'm talking to Jane ahead of time to make sure she's going to kind of take a lead and to get an agenda. Though, they know I'm doing that piece to get an agenda clear so that she can lead with an agenda that's clear. I'm talking to John so that he has some things to bring to the meeting because he's never prepared. I'm pulling things from Hannah's file that I know she has, 'cause she'll never be brave enough to share. So that by the time they get there, something happens.

Julie goes on to describes how all of this behind the scenes work impacts the view of support needed for an individual teacher:

> …a brand new teacher last year who was given the writing support class. I'm not going to expose that she's needing help. I met with her no less than once a week for the whole period to help her create curriculum because there's no curriculum for our writing support classes. She did a great job. So there's another new teacher that's been given writing support again. So they both have a section of this class. So I'm trying to convince the principal that they should meet together, so that they have time to share. And the principal says, "Well, you did fine last year, Jane. You didn't need anything." (at this point, the interview breaks up with both of us in knowing laughter) and Jane reports this to me and that she said "well, I met with our coach." But she didn't say how much. And she said, "I didn't know what to say." So I did this great job of supporting her or making her look great and now she's not getting what she needs this year.

Figuring out how to make what is needed by teachers, but invisible to others in the system is a constant dilemma for teacher leaders, and the feeling of invisibility is increased because of the ever-changing resources used to support these positions. "There is such a lack of recognition of the importance of what we offer to support our new teachers. When there's a shortage of money, everybody starts getting very protective of their own thing." Many teacher leaders who participated in this study did not know if the programs that fund their positions would be funded in the next year or two, complicating the trajectory of teacher leaders in formal positions.

Another mentor struggled with making the invisible visible in terms of working with a new administrator who had no clear picture of what the role of coach could entail. "She has no idea what I do." This unsettling feeling of having little support from an administrative teammate echoed throughout the participants.

There is satisfaction when a teacher leader finds when the leading of learning goes well. Jacob's reflects: "I am finding coaching to be more and more satisfying. I do

feel a little guilty every now and then when I get credit for other people's work and skills. But, it's still kind of fun to be part of." Even when teacher leaders know that leading is not always about being visible, or taking credit for work that has emerged over months and years, it is hard to recognize good facilitation in themselves.

The Time it Takes to Become a Teacher Leader:

Each teacher leader had something to say about the topic of how long it takes to become "good" in the formal role that he or she assumed. First years were generally not satisfying. Julie frames it: "The first year was a very 'novice teacher' culture, and that's not healthy." Jane related

> I'd never had support staff. Making sense of the job …at first, it was just being in the building and seeing…working with the principal. The other coach was new to the school and district as well, and the principal, who didn't hire us, wasn't sure about this "deal" either.

Several of the teacher leaders said that it wasn't until about year three that they felt they functioned as designed. "My first year, I wasn't that great. I was okay, but…not like I was my third year. People who came in my third year, they got [my] quality work."

Few of the teacher leaders had any training about serving in this kind of formal role prior to day one on their first full time release position. Several participants reflected that it took two to three years to become skilled at the work of a mentor or a coach, but as one mentor relates, "No one had a conversation with me to ask about that." For Jeni the learning curve was a little longer: "It took us a long time. It took me six years to move forward."

Mara stated that "we pulled four fabulous teachers from the classroom and all of those positions went away about three years later as issues changed**."** In her words

> This is my third year in my job right now. I am hitting my stride. I was finally able to have real conversations with teachers. I am finally aware enough of other people in the district to be able to access them at different schools. I know who to go to at the school. Now you take me out? I just learned how to do my job. You didn't take advantage of my best years as a mentor.

Part of the reality is that the first year was so hard, yet these teacher leaders learned quickly how to interact with so many different people. Jane relates that progress is possible, "Because [by] my second year, I would never have quit because I loved the job." Frustrations for teacher leaders centered on the length of time that it took to "get change going" paired with how long the role lasted**.**

Political Nature – "They only have one year to be first year teachers."

By the very nature of the work in other teacher's classrooms, and for many teacher leaders, in multiple schools, the navigation of school politics is not only daunting, but essential. Teachers must be willing to be vulnerable to allow a teacher leader in while students are learning. Cris commented, "I think it is a sense of people seeing and trusting you. People are, for whatever reason – afraid. They are not going to let you in if they don't trust you." Jenny remembered "Most people did not want a mentor the first year. They saw it as an absolute invasion of their privacy." Acknowledging that this is the case, and figuring out ways to build relationships that are focused on student learning is a survival skill for teacher leaders.

The first conversation about making a move outside the hidden rules of the school is described by Jane:

> I remember that conversation and I felt they were telling me I had gone around them and that I wasn't supporting the district…I was devastated by the conversation. I can't remember the content of it now, but I felt I was being accused of not supporting the district and I live here and I have defended so much crap to my friends. I was devastated. I didn't have all the chain of command or

> specific lines of communication…part of it was me naïvely not knowing the system. I was just dumb. I didn't know enough about working inside systems with power rankings. I believe it is a challenge. Teacher leaders are often managed by people who have few management skills. And so there's struggling for "*How much control should I have of you?*"

It is no surprise to an outside observer that a highly talented teacher might not have any idea what is really happening in other teacher's classrooms. I remember often telling my high school students that I didn't really know what they were experiencing, and when I became a mentor, I was shocked at how some teachers were addressing the students when I was in the room.

Adding to the stress of the micropolitics is the way that many districts organize the work of the teacher leaders. Some teacher leaders work under the direct umbrella of a curriculum department, others work for the human resources department, and sometimes, as in the anecdote shared by Tara, where the political lines are drawn because of personalities:

> The mentors were under Human Resources initially, but I think it had less to do with a conscious decision as a Human Resources function and more a that's where Jacob was…Plus there was a woman who was very well respected who was kind of brought in as a consultant, as they were shaping the program. And she didn't want us to be part of Curriculum and Instruction. She wanted the mentoring separate. I think it had to do with she was afraid that the mentors would sort of become…the failures and flaws of Curriculum and Instruction would, would become the mentors problems and they would have to be out there and try to fix it. And I think she had some personality issues with the head of Curriculum and Instruction at the time. There were a couple of reasons we became Human Resources, none of which had to do with sitting down and saying "Is this really is a Human Resources function?" When Jacob moved to Curriculum and Instruction, we did, too. We stayed with him.

Helping teachers see the rationale behind classroom practices that impact student learning is a difficult part of the work of teacher leaders. It is a dilemma when teacher leaders work with district initiatives that are top down in design when teacher leaders are

working from a bottom-up perspective. Some school systems hold that being a leader of change is the most important role of the teacher leader. Julie puts it in this way:

> The reason that some teacher leaders don't impact kids is they're afraid to be a leader. They're afraid of it. And they end up doing things like making copies for teachers and subbing for them when they need it, somebody in their room. Or they end up individually instructing kids in that classroom. They never helped that teacher understand how to, how to change. And that's hard to learn.

Terra relates that one of the dilemmas in keeping track of the work with teachers is that administrators don't have a sense of the way that a teacher leader's calendar can leverage time for teacher learning:

> Openings are not able to be planned. So for example, a teacher's working on a unit, or with a group of kids, literature circles, blah, blah. It's not working. I just popped in the teacher's room for a second and the teacher said, "Ah, can I talk to you about this class?" And that became my opening to say, "Hey, I can come in if you'd like and I can take some data on some kids in that room." And what that does is it allows me then to have a conversation about not just the kids, but the lesson, too. But if I'm going to do that, I need to be ready to do it tomorrow. But those kinds of openings are how you get in with a teacher that you might not have had any other success any other way. And so, the important work is a balance of things. It's proactive work. You need to plan book groups and get groups together around particular topics of interest. And you need to have those kinds of structured things that give people places for openings. But you also need to be available for those other kinds of openings, and to look for them. I mean, it's funny, but I realize just walking down the hallway at break time is important.

Most of the time teacher leaders get into the format position with no idea of the politics of the surrounding cast of characters. Jeni related that:

> There was a retired teacher, who had enormous respect in the district, and I discovered over a couple years that she had an ax to grind. She'd been screwed by the district and she was pretty angry about it… she worked very hard to keep the mentors unconnected to anybody else.

When I first took on a formal teacher leader role, my superintendent asked all the administrators to look systemically at mentoring and induction as a systems approach because it's bigger than just having mentors. She said to the principals:

> Don't overwork your new teachers. Take everything off their plate that you can. Their job is to learn about teaching children. Anybody can supervise the crossing guards. Other people can coach JV basketball. New teachers only have one year to be a first year teacher.

When I began to talk with teacher leaders from other districts about this aspect of the way that we approached the work, they wished that their administrators could frame up the work that way, too. This deep realization of the purpose for the role of the mentor for first year teacher honored the brief amount of time that teachers are in that first stage, and the reality of the need to protect the learning time for teachers. First year teachers often not only get the students whose parents did not choose the veteran teachers, but they inherit all kinds of other "jobs" inside the schoolhouse… supervisor of the crossing guards, basketball coach, homework club supervisor, etc.

Participants writhed when they described what little preparation they had for some of the realities of the work in schools and classrooms. Mara reflected on the type of situation:

> What I didn't know how to do was what to do with all the crap I was seeing out in the buildings. It wasn't right. And then it felt wrong to be a taxpayer, resident, employee, and parent in a district and not try to fix it. Sometimes it was wrong for kids; sometimes it was wrong for teachers; sometimes it was…just stupid. So I kind of just made up in my own blundering way trying to figure out who I could talk to and who would listen. And, clearly, I made some mistakes.

Mara described her expectations of supervision as "I expected to be managed a little bit like I was in the high school. Do your job and don't cause too much grief and, we'll all be fine." The resulting clash with a supervisor who was her only lifeline ended up influencing the end of the mentoring role for Mara:

> She had no way to be in classrooms and be in schools and I thought she wanted to know what was really going on. What was really going on was a bunch of horrible stuff. And she was hearing some pretty bad stuff from me and I didn't realize that

> she didn't want to hear that. She wanted to hear the happy stuff. So really I hung myself. And she would defend the district. She responded to me as though I was an outsider attacking the district. She projected on me her limitations. She had such a narrow view of what I could be and was capable of. I was stunned. Things were so locked down who could talk to whom. I couldn't get to the guy who supervised the principals who really needed to know what was going on in the buildings.

The district did not have a teaching position that matched Mara's skill or interests, and they even offered her an elementary math coaching position (she taught high school language for a neighboring district before entering the role of mentor.) As a result, Mara decided to take a year away off from education. She was offered a literacy coaching position later in the fall, but stuck with her determination to have a "sabbatical year" and did not return to the district, or pursue employment anywhere else.

> I didn't leave gracefully at all. I had a few good moments of leaving. I left…I left with tears and anger and meltdowns and that was horrible. It was horrible. I was like…Ooh, I'm getting good at this now. Don't make me go now that I've developed some new skills. My supervisor assumed I would go back to the classroom. And she told her boss that I would go back to the classroom in Creekside. I never came from a classroom in that district. I wanted somebody to be advocating for the program so we didn't have to be tooting our own horn. And also, in the last couple of years I saw myself wishing I had a supervisor who cared about my own professional development and who cared about my own growth.

Micropolitics are frustrating for teacher. That they are not allowed by law to contribute to other teachers' evaluations does not separate them from the moral responsibility to ensure that the care for both students and teachers was balanced in a positive direction. Teacher leaders need access to others with whom to have safe conversations about issues they experience in school.

Issues of Compensation and Resources

Instructional coaches generally hold a teacher contract. Most spend time in professional learning situations well beyond the scope of a teaching contract and are

granted “per diem” days as additional pay for some of the additional hours. It is never a one-to-one match, and many instructional coaches are left with the reality of having scant additional professional perks. Many have given up rights to return to classroom work in the schools where they taught. Bargaining agreements frequently protect the rights of other association members as classroom teachers despite the seniority of those who serve as instructional coaches.

The role of mentoring is a more established concept and appears to be more accepted than instructional coaching in educational settings. Commensurately, mentors frequently receive additional pay. In one district, mentors earn a $10,000 stipend over their base (teacher) pay. In another district, mentors create the pool from which the principal candidates are selected. Yet another district uses the 29th and 30th year teachers exclusively as mentors, honoring the longevity of these veteran professionals with a stipend for adding to their regular day. While the way that districts honor the expertise and service of mentors is not uniform, there is movement toward recognizing that what mentors do moves beyond the scope of teaching.

Transitioning Back to a Classroom

One of the great dilemmas for teacher leaders is that teachers acquire positions as they develop informal leadership. Some of these leadership roles are rewarded with both tangible and intangible status symbols, most of which are wiped from the context when the teacher leader returns to the classroom. Both coaches and mentors who return to the classroom must navigate many aspects of the context of their transition from the formal role as a teacher leader. They start at the bottom of the ladder again in many school systems. Stipends for extra contracts, classrooms they used, and informal leadership

positions that they held are all assigned to others, making their return not only lower in status, but in real value as well. Julie reflects,

> So, here's what, here's what was happening with me before I went to mentoring, okay? I was department chair; I had a stipend for that. I was paid huge quantities of money to do district building in-service. I was the newspaper advisor. So I had all this money and it was coming in from other things in the building. So, in that district, when you go back to the classroom [at the end of a five year bargained term as mentor], you go back to what's open. You don't go back to your room. So I no longer had that great room. I didn't get to go back to the same building where I had a team or I had what…and that happened with everybody who was there. I mean, you didn't get to go back. I didn't get to go back to any of those stipends. So, basically I was going to be punished for taking the mentoring job. And I honestly wouldn't have taken the mentor position if I hadn't thought maybe I was going to go do something else when I was done.

How will the best and brightest teachers make decisions about moving into formal leadership roles that are not only unstable, but eliminate most of the perks of the profession?

Sustaining Teacher Leaders

An aspect of my role as a teacher leader in my first formal position that was not apparent to me at the time was that there was no plan for my learning. As a singleton teacher leader, there was no community for job alike professional learning. I often sat with novice teachers in the professional learning designed for their school. While participating in professional learning designed for other teachers was better than nothing, there were four years where my best learning was solitary reading. At that point, the teacher induction program I was working in garnered a national award, and I began to get calls to lead professional learning for other teacher leaders. It was at this point that I was invited to participate in *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) training. I had a good background in cognitive coaching, and the teacher leaders I would

be speaking to would be participating in *Mentoring Matters* as a part of the experience in the Mentor Academy. I was glad to hear my participants talk about their learning, and glad to know that some school systems were planning for the learning of their teacher leaders in formal roles. There are lessons to be learned about what sustains the roles of teacher leaders in the formal roles of mentor and instructional coach.

Mara describes what keeps teacher leaders in these positions:

> I see the difference between what the teacher might have been doing if I weren't there. It is a huge payoff, especially when the teacher comes back and says "you know what?" That is when I would feel that is a success. Because they count on me - that keeps me going every day.

She continues: "So I guess it's success. It's laughter. It's relationships." Maggie gives her view:

> I spend most of my time, I spend 75% of every day in classrooms scripting every single thing I see and hear. And then the teachers and I sit and we pore over it and we go, "Okay, did kids get it? How do we know? What worked? What didn't? What do I want to do better tomorrow?" And it's the best job in the world.

Julie describes a situation with one high school social studies teacher that characterizes what keeps her focused on the big picture: "I have a teacher right now who was really non-functioning when I started with her. She'd been in a different classroom for nine years. She'd been given a different curriculum every year." She goes on to show the contrast in what happened after they had worked together for a while:

> Now she has actually been an advocate herself, and she's teaching the same curriculum for the third year in a row. She has organized files in her classroom. She has good relationships with her kids. She has 150 kids. And I've impacted more [teachers] than her. So, that's more than I can do on my own [in a classroom].

Jacob shares about the way that teacher learning inspires him: "I love the work, coming along beside someone who goes, 'I can't do that. I don't know how to do that.

There's no way I can pull that off [re-teaching a difficult math concept].' And then they do. That's quite a buzz for me." Jane describes how serving in a leadership role makes her feel valued within the school community:

> I think that the leadership roles and the responsibility I was given in the building and the faith people had in me to do the job and follow through were an absolute gift. It made me believe in myself a whole lot more than I probably would have if I hadn't been a coach.

This confidence that builds in a teacher leader is connected to the state of being a learning leader. Jane led a high school teacher team discovering the common norms for giving feedback for student writing. When they were done scoring, they planned common lessons that could improve student work based on the traits they noticed as strong or weak while they scored.

Fiora illustrates the need for and value of professional learning for teacher leaders in talking about her typical weekly activities as a mentor. She specifically mentioned professional learning that helped her carry out various leadership activities successfully. For example, she describes guiding a group of first grade teachers in a lab classroom observation. She specified the learning which she received that supported this activity as *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999), Teaching and Learning conferences, Instructional coach training, the Cognitive Apprenticeship model for teaching and learning, developing protocols and crafting questions, Pedagogy for All, and having been coached as a classroom teacher. Additionally, she also noted that she regularly uses the coaching cycle with her novice teachers. The learning that supported her knowledge and skill in this area was *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999), Teaching and Learning conferences, Mentor collaboration,

Pedagogy for All, and the Washington State Mentor Academy. Her analysis of links between several weekly activities and the learning that has informed her are summarized in Appendix G.

Mentors and instructional coaches function as staff developers on a scale that is different from the traditional large-scale staff development work that has been traditional in K-12 education. The change in the focus to job-embedded staff development requires an understanding of how to support the learning for mentors and coaches as "teachers of teachers." Working with other adults to improve student learning in classrooms is not intuitive, and most teacher leaders described some kind of formal learning experience shared with other teacher leaders that helped them refine their skills in working with their classroom peers. Maggie said,

> I think the patterns I notice in teachers that are leaders all over the country is this hunger and this realization that, okay my kids could know more, do more, be better if I knew more, did more and was better. So, it's this kind of real stance as a reflective practitioner which I think absolutely can be taught [to teachers]. It's about moving from this "knowing stuff" to developing habits of mind.

Implementation of both new standards for student learning and new strategies that support these standards is the complex world in which both the coaches and mentors find their current practice. That the preparation for instruction is changing from a focus on teacher knowledge to a set of practices that focus on student learning create the framework of the coach and mentor. Implementation of these new practices is a large portion of the responsibility of mentors and coaches.

Julie describes her way of working with teachers: "My job is clearly defined as professional development. I say, 'Teachers come in with great [initial] skills, but, there are new things happening all the time and we need somebody to be point person helping

teachers learn.'" And we want to implement best practice. And that requires somebody working with teachers for that to happen.

Jane states, "When I first took the job (as instructional coach) I can remember being extremely nervous, feeling like, oh my gosh, I have to know everything? I have to be the expert?" She continues:

> It took me several years to realize that a coach is a learner just like anybody else and it's really just a matter of pushing up your sleeves, taking a look at what's going on and collectively pooling your expertise to really try and figure out how to best look at instructional practices and how to best help kids be effective in the work that we do.

Kris adds, "The biggest most freeing kind of understanding for me was that I didn't have to know everything. That I could just knuckle down and learn right alongside people. And then it was pretty fun. Then I didn't worry so much!"

Jane talked about the benefit of having a coach from her perspective when she was in a classroom:

> A coach was someone to make me better and know what I'm working toward, and helping me, asking the questions, getting me to think. I think that it is all about the collaborative nature. Knowing the goal and talking to each other and working together. I'm a teacher. I want to be better. I have goals as a learner. I need somebody to help me get there. I want a coach to help me but I don't want them to teach for me.

Several participants talked about how we approach learning as a profession and the relationship of this to the forward motion we are making. Jacob supposes, "I think that we are better than we were. I think that we as leaders have a responsibility to reflect on how we are as learners." Jeni reflects, "There is a positive presupposition that you are here to learn." That learning in schools is not just the responsibility of students, and that a

part of the community that we are part of is making forward motion underscores the learning in community aspect of the lived experiences of these teacher leaders.

Maggie reflects on the incredible work that teachers do on a daily basis:

> I do believe in my core that this is the hardest job that has ever existed on the planet. Trying to figure out how 24 brains work and you connect new information to the known information. Like I truly don't think there's a harder job. And I believe that everybody's doing the best they can do until they know better, and then they do better… The way I build trust is just labeling what I see and what I hear and then really labeling and why it matters in student learning, so taking them an extra step.

Julie talks about the focus of groups of educators working together: "We have put an emphasis on developing stronger collaboration and stronger team work. A lot of the professional development is about how to utilize that time, how to function as a group." Jane relays what it looks like from her vantage point, back in the classroom. "This is the first year there has been a leadership team here. We started off by learning together about formative assessment and professional learning communities. It was a big moment to pull 9-10 teachers into the team that has a vision." Both Jeni and Jane are teacher leaders who have elected to return to the classrooms, and who have experienced an expansion of leadership in their schools as a result. Jeni shares the department chair responsibilities with another teacher. Jane leads a grade level team on a daily basis.

Jacob talks about the focus of what teachers want:

> What teachers want to talk about is real life issues. Like Johnny, "I am trying to teach math and Johnny won't raise his hand and he's interrupting other people's learning, and my ability. We are changing a fraction to a decimal to a fraction, and I've tried everything I know how to do and he's still not getting better. And, dang it, I'm happy when he's absent." That's what they really want to talk about.

When the learning that is focused on is not related to what teachers really want to talk about, teachers are just as capable of faking engagement as their students. Getting to the

issues that teachers deal with on a day in day out basis gives the teacher leader credibility with the community of teacher learners. Learning with other teachers can give the school community a problem solving orientation:

> Being part of a good team was really good for me, too. We had no clue what we were doing. So we were a program planning and problem solving and that power of team meetings sustained us. It was bad for the mentors when the team meetings got consumed by other stuff.

Teacher leaders often find themselves in a place where they know that they need knowledge and skills that they did not require in teaching in a classroom. Julie shares her first supervisor's philosophy. "When you have thoroughbreds, you just need to get out of their way and let them run." This set of beliefs honors the expertise of outstanding classroom teachers who are recruited to formal positions of leadership, and honors that they will know what they need. She goes on to describe the next steps that they took: "The most important thing that we ever did in our district, I think, was when we really started training the mentors throughout the year. Because when we started doing that the culture started shifting." Jeni relates that there was a value to things that she learned on the job that helped her know what she needed that would help her new teachers. "I learned from the first year how to do a better job of mentoring. There was so much classroom management that was needed." She goes on to talk about the learning that she participated in with an experienced mentor:

> My greatest support base is other mentors. There are some very experienced mentors. One in particular was a very good sounding board. We'd meet informally to talk about particular situations and next steps. It was mutual. When he retired, I looked to a gal in the mentor state network, another full time released mentor. I think that there are a lot of folks in these jobs who are singletons and need the support of others in the network.

Kris related to this on the job learning, and showed how a principal can be the one who leads the learning for teacher leaders:

> Some of the best learnings I've ever had are on the Friday mornings that our leadership team meets with our principal. She asks questions that just make you stop and think about why you're doing what you're doing, and you're just mentally stretched. She shares her own growth in terms of instruction, and helps us all grow.

Jane chimes in with a view of the district support for instructional coaches, "There is such a benefit to receiving the kind of training the coaches receive. You understand what you might not have understood if you had always been in the classroom." Another coach said similarly, "It was unbelievable all the support and training we got."

In districts with over 5,000 students, there was a norm of having some formal structures for teacher leader learning that had emerged over the past 12 years as these new positions have burgeoned. Many districts also benefited from the state level structures that put professional development in place for mentors. Mara describes her view:

> We did it for a year before the Mentor Academy and any other trainings came through. I could have used some good coaching myself. Who's coaching the coaches? Who's mentoring the mentors? I got more than adequate training on that once I got the academy and *Mentoring Matters* going.

She describes an element that she would put in place for new teacher leaders:

> You come out of a building and then you move to the district view and I watched this happen and it's shocking. And it can be disturbing and can be distressing and all sorts of stuff. And I think acknowledging that that will happen, knowing that that is a piece of the whole deal, I don't know, psychiatrists or counselors, therapists. They hear about all sorts of wrong stuff in the world. They can't fix it all. And they don't try. If I was mentoring the mentors, it would be to let them know that that's part of what's going to happen. You're going to see and hear things that aren't good and aren't right that you're going to feel like you really need to do something about.

One of the inherent dilemmas in providing learning for teacher leaders in these new positions is that what they need does not necessarily line up with the professional development that is available. Fiora describes the dilemma, "The administrators were trained in cognitive coaching so that when a coach had an observation the conversation was open-ended, but looked like supervision because the administrators were all doing it that way." She describes the next steps:

> So at first, we observed and gave feedback, and that didn't feel comfortable at all. So the district brought in a coaching trainer who worked at getting tools in our hands. The first one was contracting with teachers. This way I could be really organized and diligent about what the work was that we had committed to. But there wasn't this level of trust or confidentiality as a result. Then we worked on how individuals change, how adult learning happens. That adults as learners have communication types and challenges as we go through change. These tools were a gold mine in working with resistant teachers in making changes.

Jacob relates the personal struggle over the way that the system describes what a coaching cycle looks like, and what happens in reality:

> Personally, I can't do the one-on-one coaching cycle successfully very well. It doesn't work for me. I try because I keep getting told I'm supposed to. So I try it desperately. But I always end up saying, "Now wait a minute. Let's call in…" And I get three or four people at the table. And I kind of move back a little and then just keep the conversations flowing. Because they do it day in and day out and I don't. I'm afraid to say, "why don't you try this?" because I don't live with that pressure of the ten thousand decisions a day that a teacher makes.

Jeni shares her strategy. "As we move through the coaching cycle, I keep a record that goes just to the teacher, and keeps the places we are accountable to work on, what we've set out to do." Jacob counters with, "We're talking less and less about what teachers do and we're talking more and more about what students do." Jacob finds that the most important thing is how teachers get to the way that students learn the content well:

> What the teacher needs to do is know the math and know the kids well enough that they can understand that when a kid is saying something that doesn't fit, that

> there's a mathematical essence that may still be there. That if you know the math well enough, you can find it and you can help the kid solve it? Our job now is to listen to the kids so well that we understand what they're thinking so we can tell them what they are doing, instead of what we ask them to do. You're no longer teaching lessons; you actually are in fact helping students understand a concept that you're learning more about yourself.

This focus on the connection to the content of what students are learning is the biggest thing that distinguishes the work of coaches and mentors. Coaches are generally seated in the daily lives of teachers and students in one school. Mentors carry a caseload that is spread between several buildings.

S*hifting Patterns of the Nature of the Work*

There are structures that emerged from the data around instructional coaching. An emerging characteristic of instructional coaches is a shift in the format of their work with teachers. Several coaches described moving from giving feedback in a one-on-one setting to facilitating a group of teachers that shifts responsibility for their learning from outside to inside.

Jacob advocates for ways to learn with teachers as small groups in focused professional development experiences with students:

> In a Professional Learning Lab, you have a facilitator, and you have a teacher that's teaching a group of kids, but you've got all these other people in there like a fish bowl. But they're really not taking notes on the teacher in the traditional sense. They're really looking at what are the kids doing? What are the kids saying? How are the kids understanding what they're doing and how are they representing it.

Maggie is really focused on documenting teacher growth over time. Here is what she advises new coaches learn from her experience:

> I have stacks of emails that I send to teachers about here's what I notice, here's what I wonder. And then I have the follow up conversations and so I have like this…for each teacher that I coach, I have documentation of over a year of back

> and forth meetings, emails, student work, planning documents. When I first work with coaches, I hand one of those and they say, "Alright, tell me what you notice about this teacher's growth over time." And that rocks people's world. For them to realize that, okay, my job is exactly like a teacher's job. I need to document growth and learning over time just like a teacher has to document growth and learning of the student over time… Coaches really get that, because most of them are coaches because they were really great teachers.

What is needed to support how teachers deconstruct and analyze their instruction and its effect on student achievement is a model that does not rely simply on the planning aspect of instruction. If what coaches do looks too much like the clinical model of supervision, teachers will not be able to separate the interactions with a coach from their past experiences with supervision. Julie shares how the teachers in her school reacted to the initial coaching model that looked a lot like clinical supervision:

> One of the things that drove me crazy about the way mentoring was set up initially - our district and the state model. It took me a long time to figure out why it bugged me. They had that whole observation cycle. And truthfully the observation cycle is really like what an administrator does. You do the pre-planning conference. You do the conference. You do the post conference. And the way they set it up you were supposed to make sure you cycled through the teachers all in a period of time. And what would happen is you go, I'd go and have the conversation, and we'd do the thing. And then the teachers needed more. They needed me to be there so that I could help them be consistent in doing whatever we'd talked about for a week, so that it became habit. Or they needed another follow up when they'd done the lesson that we'd talked about in [the lesson] debrief so that they could see if it worked or not and kind of go to the next step. They needed me to come back and bring with me, with me some articles about what we talked about so that they could read up on it. 'Cause they are voracious readers and they're willing to read but they just didn't know where to look for solutions. You know there were all these things they needed, but…"oh, you know what? I have my next person scheduled tomorrow. I'm sorry I can't come back." And it, it just drove me crazy.

Making this kind change as a profession requires a new set of leadership skills. Julie related the challenges faced by a leadership team when moving around a concept

that is in the new skill set, working with groups of teachers using student data, with a protocol:

> The other point about the data-driven dialogue is that so many people don't know it and aren't skilled. I would say I'm better than some, but I'm not excellent at it. We really were having a lot of conflict about how to plan the day between the teacher leaders. One of the guys has no training, no mentor training, no nothing, and he just wanted to have these activities. And frankly, so did my boss. She wanted to read an article. She wanted to look at recent data. And then she wanted to look at this other thing and it was going to be this kind of choppy day; full of activity, but not really meaningful.

Changing the way that teachers and leaders approach instructional leadership in a job-embedded way requires planned abandonment of structures that do not work. It goes far beyond filling up adult time with activity, and parallels the work of using data to make decisions about learning with students and applying this principle with adults.

Leaving the Roles

Half of the participants in this study had left the formal teacher leader role. Finding a way to end the role was problematic for the teacher leaders who were not returning to classrooms in the school communities in which they had worked. Other teacher leaders made an impact upon their return to the classroom by expanding the influence of what they learned about leadership.

The decision to end the formal role of teacher leader was influenced by different forces, including doubts and fears that the work was going well, and contract language that limited the "term" of a teacher leader. In some cases, this process worked well when a principal advocated placing the teacher leader into a school staff. This is a complicated move given current negotiated language in many districts as teacher leaders have no tenure status at the building level even when they are "assigned" to a building. Teacher

leaders who returned to the classroom described the value added to their leadership and ability to teach. Kris shares, “We’d had all that great professional development and knew how the curriculum and assessments worked. Imagine what it would be like if every teacher had that view of the work.” Yet there was a hesitancy that she felt about what was being asked to ask of teachers:

> I got to the point where there were some things I wanted to do but didn’t because I wasn’t in my own classroom. I didn’t feel like I could ask others to do things since I hadn’t tried them myself. Things go a lot differently in your own classroom. You get a sense through training and it is really hard to put all the pieces together to understand. I’ve never practiced it in my own classroom. I felt hesitant to nudge enough. So going back to my own classroom gives me the opportunity to practice it myself. It’s going to help me answer some of my questions about my own capacity to do it in my own classroom.

Kris’ return to the classroom following her years as an instructional coach was engineered in partnership with her principal, who valued Kris in both roles, and advocated for her return to a classroom in that school, despite the union contract which did not allow for such seniority to be considered. Jane had a similar positive experience when she determined to return to the classroom for similar reasons:

> I got to the point where I was becoming impatient. I had been in other schools and districts where there was no instructional support. As a coach, I tried to work with teachers who are not moving as fast as I would. I would get impatient with teachers who would say “no, too much” and it made me feel really impatient. I felt lots of times some teachers were obliging me, and maybe that’s where my patience ran out, too. So now that I am back in the classroom, I am working with the same teachers that I coached. I still wear the same hat, only now I have my own kids, my own struggles, so I can meld those things together. I think that my role as a teacher leader in the building will make me better.

Both of these elementary level teacher leaders continue to lead from their classrooms, adding value to their students and peers from their learning while in the formal role.

Jeni served as a mentor, and also initiated a return to a high school classroom, where she instigated a co-leadership position that was novel, and included others who were developing their teacher leadership. Returning to teaching invariably includes a restoration of leadership roles that helped the teacher leader develop leadership skills. Jeni returned to one of the high schools where she had served as mentor for five years and was offered the department chair. She accepted on the basis that she could share the position with another teacher. Jeni reveals, "I had a view of leadership from mentoring that valued shared decision making and just couldn't go back to a one person show – so we developed a co-leadership department chair position." She goes on,

> We need to develop capacity in more people, we've got to be thinking about how to add value for the students. I have always felt that two heads are better than one. I am a good leader because I sit at the table to be a leader and come forward all the time. I also learned as a mentor to work within your locus of control. If it is outside your control, you have to give it up to someone else, or pass on the scepter. You can't tell the difference you make with adults unless you are lucky enough to come back to a school where you've mentored. It is very hard, because the rules and roles have changed.

These experiences point to understanding how the time spent in a formal role can expand the distribution of leadership within a building.

In another case, the end of the mentor role was contentious, and led to the mentor not having a position in the district. Mara related "I was so trashed by it [the end of the role] that I didn't have the wherewithal to go fight it." The failure of the system to plan for the eventual end of the role to allow the professional a gracefully re-entry to a classroom position, or to take on another leadership position was a clear system glitch that could be avoided by other systems.

At the end of her mentoring role, Mara met with a teacher she had mentored several years ago. She reflected on their conversation:

> I came in one afternoon and he goes, "You came in like you always do. You have all this energy. I was trying to be up for you because I knew good stuff would come, but I don't know what was going on. I just couldn't do it. And we were working and you were asking about something and then you looked up and you saw a tear rolling down my cheek and totally shifted.'" And it's not very often that guys cry with me. "The most important thing you taught me was not to cry alone in my room."

For some the pull of the classroom is all about the students: "I just missed children." For others, there are other goals that are contiguous with their roles as teacher leaders: "I'm planning to go to Africa this summer, to train teachers to teach." Still other teacher leaders are still trying to figure out what they want to do with the rest of their professional lives. "I've contemplated going back to school to get more education for myself. Not to be a principal or an administrator, but maybe to work in training outside education."

Without a doubt the most disheartening aspects of formal roles for teacher leaders is that in many districts these roles are not designed to be sustainable. Many of the teacher leaders do not know what the future will hold for them personally and professionally, or when districts reposition teacher leadership roles, what the new design will be. "I really don't know what will be happening. I just found out yesterday that there is reorganization in our district. My boss really left me alone to be autonomous. I don't know if he understands the work I do, or my need to network with other mentors." One teacher leader who faced the ending of the role approached it like this:

> I was trying to figure out how I wanted to end and say goodbye. One school I'd been at continuously for eight years and I had ten to fifteen teachers there that I'd worked with, and so I decided what I wanted to do was hear their stories. So I sent

an e-mail out to them and got them to get me a room and I brought in cookies and they came in told me their stories. It was hilarious because the department head who I had mentored my first year had showed up. That department head is now the district head for ELL one of his new teachers saw him and said, “She mentored you, too?” It was fun telling stories. One of the guys in telling his story said, “You gave us what we needed, not what you wanted.”

Summary

We can learn valuable lessons from teacher leaders in formal roles by attending to the themes of entering and leaving the role, the nature of the work, the centrality of relationships, dilemmas that they face, and supporting what sustains them as they lead. Much of what the teacher leaders described during interviews was expected in terms of making sense of the roles that they fill in K-12 schools. A few related information that was expanded on by others that can compose the lessons that were learned. That only the largest school systems have the capacity to design and sustain these positions is a proposition worth following. Building the expertise of mentors and instructional coaches takes time, and needs commensurate safeguards. The focus on relationships in schools with principals, teachers and in classrooms needs further investigation. That the work is initiated with foundational work in a one-on-one setting, and must move to work with small groups is the element that needs the most attention from the professional development and instructional leadership community.

CHAPTER SIX

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This phenomenological, qualitative study explored the experiences of teacher leaders in the formal roles of mentor or instructional coach in K-12 schools and addressed the following research questions: How do teacher leaders come to be in their roles, and what motivates them to do this work? What is the essence of the work that teacher leaders do as mentors and instructional coaches? How do teacher leaders in full time released roles make sense of the work that they do? What problems and issues do teacher leaders in full time released roles face? What is the impact of the full time released, formal role on the teacher leader? If the formal role comes to an end, what experiences do teacher leaders face as they re-enter the classroom, or take on other roles in K-12 schools? A portrait of one teacher leader, an auto-ethnographic slice of a day in the life of a mentor, and a thematic analysis of interview data were presented in chapters 4 and 5. This chapter will highlight the lessons learned from this research and make recommendations for practice, policy and future research.

Lessons and Recommendations

Given the analysis of teacher leadership in chapters 4 and 5, there are many lessons to be learned from this study about teacher leaders in formal roles in K-12 schools. I will highlight three of the most important lessons learned from this study along with implications for the practice of teacher leadership in K-12 schools and for educational policy, and recommendations for future research. The first lesson focuses on the need to develop a better understanding of distributed leadership in schools; the second lesson discusses the need for differentiated professional learning in order for formal

teacher leadership roles to succeed; and the third lesson calls for the creation of equitable conditions for teacher leaders who hold formal roles.

Lesson 1 –Need to Develop Better Understanding of Distributed Leadership in Schools

Clearly the findings of this study indicate that teacher leader roles can be rewarding, challenging and beneficial. The formal roles of mentor and instructional coach are filled with talented educators. These teacher leaders are dedicated to improving teaching and student learning, even though the positions they hold are fraught with dilemmas. Two of the dilemmas highlighted in this analysis are ambiguity of the role and invisibility of the work of teacher leaders. Clearly, there is a need for better role definition for teacher leaders and for better understanding of these roles, especially among the administrators who work with these teacher leaders in specific school sites. However, a larger lesson here seems to be the need for better understanding of the concept of distributive leadership in schools and how to operationalize that concept in regard to teacher leaders. The work of the teacher leaders, its highly collaborative nature and its assumption of many aspects of instructional leadership within schools, exemplifies the idea and ideals of distributive leadership, one of the most important recent conceptualizations of leadership in education (Spillane, 2006). In other words, teacher leaders in formal roles are an essential part of the distribution of leadership in schools, but this is not well understood by many educators, leading to role ambiguity and invisibility. There is a need for a better understanding and operational development of the concept of distributive leadership in schools.

The implication for practice in K-12 schools is that teacher leader roles need to be clearly defined vis-à-vis the responsibilities of school administrators. For example, the

instructional leadership work of teacher leaders needs to be clearly separated from the evaluation work of administrators (Katzenmeyer & Moeller, 2001). Further, both teacher leaders and the administrators they work with would benefit from mutual inquiry into the concept of and research on distributed leadership in education. For research, the implication is that there is a need for further field research that looks specifically at the concept of distributed leadership in schools and how this plays out in schools staffed by teacher leaders in formal roles.

Lesson 2 – Teacher Leaders Need Differentiated Professional Learning

The teacher leaders included in this study worked hard to "learn on the job" and to acquire the needed skills for their work through continued, self-directed professional development and research. Their learning needs were related not only to contemporary best practices for classroom instruction, but also to their new roles as leaders in the professional development of teachers. One of the surprising findings in this study was the unique set of skills that many teacher leaders have developed in working with small groups of teachers around common goals. These group skills depart from the traditional, one-on-one instructional supervision skills and need to be intentionally developed. Some of these skills are illustrated in the list of professional learnings that were important to one teacher in this study (see Appendix G). These and other learning needs are unique and important, yet little formal professional development was available for the teacher leaders in this study. While this study is only suggestive of the professional learnings needs of teacher leaders in similar roles, the clear lesson to be drawn is that high quality professional development that is differentiated for the work of the teacher leader is needed if these roles are to succeed and meet the expectations of stakeholders. Further,

this study suggests that teacher leaders are anxious to work with and learn from peers in similar roles. Thus, professional development for teacher leaders should involve networks of teacher leaders (Lieberman & Miller, 2004).

The implications for educational policy, whether at the state or local level, are several. First, funding that supports the roles of teacher leaders must included adequate funding for their professional development. Second, states should sponsor research that further explores the learning needs of teacher leaders. Third, professional development for teacher leaders should involve them in peer, job-alike networks, since many teacher leaders work in isolation within their school and districts. In regard to professional development practice, one source for high quality research-based standards is the National Staff Development Council professional learning continua (2009). Finally, a broader implication for research is that scholars interested in teacher leadership might focus more attention on and expand the knowledge base in regard to the professional development needs of teacher leaders.

Lesson 3 – Create Equitable Conditions for Teacher Leaders in Formal Roles

Some of the dilemmas for teacher leaders highlighted in this study were the time it takes to become accomplished in the role versus the typically short-term nature of the role, the disparity in compensation for the two roles—mentor and instructional coach—and the losses incurred by these dedicated teachers when the exit the formal teacher leader role. Building capacity in teacher leaders so that they can be effective is costly in time and resources. Many of the teacher leaders in this study felt that it took at least three years to be accomplished in their work, and yet the appointments in these formal roles were limited, often to a three-year term. This is not only frustrating for the teacher

leaders, but is not cost effective for the system as a whole. Regarding compensation, all of the teacher leaders in this study continued to be on teacher contracts, and pay for additional duties and time was handled in different ways. In some cases, teacher leaders working as "mentors" received an extra stipend of up to $10,000 per year. In contrast, while instructional coaches generally worked comparable hours and carried a larger caseload of teachers, they typically did not receive additional pay and in some cases, lost professional stipends they had received for other duties prior to becoming formal coaches. Finally, one of the most startling findings of this study was that when teacher leaders exit their formal roles, they often return to teaching situations in which they have lost their preferred classrooms as well as status and informal positions they used to enjoy, and, in the most dire cases, their jobs. Thus, teacher leaders often, unwittingly, make great sacrifices when they take on the important role of helping other teacher do their work well. The lesson to be drawn here is that such inequities and unfair practices need to be changed if formal teacher roles are to be successful and sustained.

The implications for state and district policy are several. First, teacher leaders in formal roles should receive fair and equitable compensation for their work that recognized their important contributions to the system. Leaders in roles with like responsibilities should receive similar compensation. Second, teacher leaders who take on formal roles should have the time that it takes to learn the role. Contractual language could indicate that the role will begin with a five-year span, and specify the conditions for transition to a classroom at the end of that period.

Concluding Thoughts

Teacher leadership emerges from the classroom and begins to develop at the local school level through informal roles. As their leadership activities expand, teacher leaders find additional leadership roles available to them. Some of the current roles for teacher leaders are formalized and focused on mentoring novice teachers and providing instructional coaching for teachers in a given content area. This study looked solely at the view of teacher leaders who hold, or have held a formal role as a mentor or instructional coach.

The care for teacher leaders in full time roles must be considered when schools plan to utilize job-embedded staff development as a strategy for supporting implementation of practice or instigating educational change. Selecting highly effective educators and putting them in a role that is focused on the learning of others seems benign enough in inception. The reality is a triangulated set of relationships that must be artfully navigated between the teacher leader, the school administrator, and the classroom teacher. When schools take accomplished teachers and move them into formal teacher leadership positions, no one wants that superstar teacher to become a falling star.

Schools with a clear purpose for instructional coaching and mentoring set a foundation that will lead to smoother implementation and sustainability. Principals who recognize that the work teacher leaders do is related, yet different, from their work as administrative leaders plan for distribution of leadership in a positive manner. Teachers who share the commitment to hold high expectations for student learning, and are open

to navigating new paths to student learning with other adults in the school create the third leg of balanced support.

In the end, the current use of teacher leaders in formal roles will only be understood though additional research. This research should focus on the role of a principal in distributing the leadership within the school, and the interrelations with teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles. It would be instructive to the field to have a deep look at one school in order to design research that can look at how those distributing leadership impact students. How can we learn more about how to attract and retain while treating fairly the accomplished teachers who take on these formal roles?

REFERENCES

Alvarado, T. (n.d.). District wide reform. In *Making schools work*. Retrieved June 27, 2007, from http://www.pbs.org/makingschoolswork/dwr/ca/alvarado.html

Anderson, K. D. (2004). The nature of teacher leadership in schools as reciprocal influences between teacher leaders and principals. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*, 97-113.

Angelle, P. S., & Schmid, J. B. (2007). School structure and the identity of teacher leaders: Perspectives of principals and teachers. *Journal of School Leadership, 17*, 771-797.

Barth, R. (1999). *The teacher leader* (Monograph). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Foundation.

Beachum, F., & Dentith, A. M. (2004). Teacher leaders creating cultures of school renewal and transformation. *The Educational Forum, 68*, 276-286.

Bennett, S. (2007). *That workshop book: New systems and structures for classrooms that read, write, and think.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bey, T. M., & Holmes, C. T. (Eds.) (1990) *Mentoring: Developing successful new teachers.* Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators.

Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2006). *Teachers bring out the best in teachers: A guide to peer consultation for administrators and teachers.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1994). *Becoming a teacher leader: From isolation to collaboration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Bush, R. N. (1984). *Effective staff development. In making our schools more effective: Proceedings of three state conferences*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratories.

Coaching Institute. (2005). Denver: Public Education & Business Coalition.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (1994). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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

Crow, Tracy. (2007) *Teachers teaching teachers: Coach lends them her ears.* National Staff Development Council. Retrieved April 27, 2008, from http://www.nsdc.org/members/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1483

Danielson, C. (2006). *Teacher leadership that strengthens professional practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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

Du, F. (2007). A case study of teacher leaders as group leaders: Implications for research and teacher education. *The Teacher Educator, 42*, 185-208.

Effective support for new teachers in Washington State: Standards for beginning teacher induction. (2008). Olympia, WA: Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). *Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Research as subject.* In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ellis, C., & Flaherty, M. G. (Eds.) (1992). *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Elmore, R. F. (2000). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Washington, DC: The Albert Shanker Institute.

Fibkins, W. L. (2002). *An administrator's guide to better teacher mentoring*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Firestone, W. A., & Martinez, M. C. (2007). Districts, teacher leaders, and distributed leadership: Changing instructional practice. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 6,* 3-35.

Fullan, M. (Ed). (2006) *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Furman, G. C. (2003). Moral leadership and the ethic of community. *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration, 2*, 1-8.

Furman, G. C., & Starratt, R. J. (2002). Leadership for democratic community in schools. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 101*, 105-133.

Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *Discovery of grounded theory: staged for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Grogan, M. & Roberson, S. (2002). Developing a new generation of educational leaders by capitalizing on partnerships. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 7, 314-318.

Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2000). Mentoring in the new millennium. *Theory into Practice*, 39, 50-56.

Harris, A. (2003) Teacher Leadership as Distributed Leadership: heresy, fantasy or possibility? *School Leadership and Management*, 23, 313-324.

Harris, A., & Lambert, L. (2003). *Building leadership capacity for school improvement*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W. L., Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G. E. (2005). *Taking charge of change*. Austin, TX: Southwest Education Development Laboratory.

Instructional Coaching Model. (2004). Spokane, WA: Spokane Public Schools.

Johnson, S. M. (2004). *Finders and keepers: Helping new teachers survive and thrive in our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Johnson, S. M. (2006). *The workplace matters: Teacher quality, retention, and effectiveness*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Johnson, S. M., & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). Pursuing a "sense of success": New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*, 581-617.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1980). Improving inservice training: The messages of research. *Educational Leadership, 37*, 379-385.

Joyce, B., Weil, M., & Showers, B. (1992). *Models of teaching* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Killion, J., & Harrison, C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Knight, J. (2005). A primer on instructional coaches. *Principal Leadership, 5*, 16-21.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Knight, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Coaching: Approaches and perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2003). *Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kowalski, T. J. (1995). Preparing teachers to be leaders: Barriers in the workplace. In M. J. O'Hair & S. J. Odell (Eds.), *Educating teachers for leadership and change* (pp. 243-256). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Krovetz, M. L., & Arriaza, G. (2006). *Collaborative teacher leadership: How teachers can foster equitable schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandra, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Hoffman Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). Transformational school leadership effects: A replication. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 10*, 451-479.

Lipton, L., Wellman, B., & Humbard, C. (1999). *Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships.* Sherman, CT: Mira Via.

Linik, J. R. (2001). Surviving the crossfire. *Northwest Education Magazine, 7*. Retrieved June 27, 2008, from http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/2001w/crossfire.html.

Little, J. W. (1988). Assessing the prospects for teacher leadership. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools* (pp. 78-105). New York: Teachers College Press.

Little, J. W. (1999). Organizing schools for teacher learning. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession* (pp. 233-262). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Little, J. W. (2003). Constructions of teacher leadership in three periods of policy and reform activism. *School Leadership & Management, 23*, 401-419.

Little, J. W. (2003). Inside teacher community: Representations of classroom practice. *Teachers College Record, 105*, 913-945.

Little, J. W. (2006). *Professional community and professional development in the learning-centered school*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Livingston, C. (1992). Teacher leadership for restructured schools. In C. Livingston (Ed.), *Teachers as leaders: Evolving roles* (pp. 9-17). Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Mangieri, J. N., & Block, C. C. (Eds.). (1994). Ft. Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Mangin, M. M., & Stoelinga, S. R. (Eds.). (2008). *Effective teacher leadership: Using research to inform and reform*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Marshall, C., Patterson, J. A., Rogers, D. L., & Steele, J. R. (1996). Caring as career: An alternative perspective for educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 32*, 271-294.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Moir, E. (n.d.). *Putting new teachers at the center*. Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, Santa Cruz, New Teacher Project. Retrieved May 28, 2007, from http://newteachercenter.org/article2.html

Morey, A. I., & Murphy, D. S. (Eds.). (1990). *Designing programs for new teachers: The California experience.* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Murphy, J. (2002). Reculturing the profession of educational leadership: New blueprints. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*, 176-191.

Murphy, J. (2005). *Connecting teacher leadership and school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity*. The Aspen Institute Program on Education.

New Teacher Center. (n.d.). *Formative Assessment System*. Retrieved December 11, 2007, from University of California at Santa Cruz Web site: http://www.newteachercenter.org/ti_formative_assessment.php

Osterman, K. (2002). Schools as communities for students. In G. Furman (Ed.), *School as community: From promise to practice* (pp. 167-195). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Portner, H. (Ed.). (2005). *Teacher mentoring and induction: The state of the art and beyond*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pounder, D. G., Ogawa, R. T., & Adams, E. A. (1995). Leadership as an organization-wide phenomena: Its impact on school performance. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 3*1, 564-588.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Russo, A. (2004). School-based coaching: A revolution in professional development--or just the lastest fad? *Harvard Education Letter*. Retrieved from http://www.edletter.org///-ja/coaching.shtml

Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee.

Scherer, M. (Ed.). (1999). *A better beginning: Supporting and mentoring new teachers.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Scribner, J. P., Sawyer, R. K., Watson, S. T., & Myers, V. L. (2007). Teacher teams and distributed leadership: A study of group discourse and collaboration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*, 67-100.

Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2001). *What's in it for schools*? New York: Routledge/Falmer.

Showers, B. (1984). *Peer coaching: A strategy for facilitating transfer of training*. Eugene, OR: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon, College of Education.

Silva, D. Y., Gimbert, B., & Nolan, J. (2000). Sliding the doors: Locking and unlocking possibilities for teacher leadership. *Teachers College Record,102*, 779-804.

Smylie, M. A., Conley, S., & Marks, H. M. (2002). Exploring new approaches for teacher leadership for school improvement. In J. Murphy (Ed.). *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century: 101st yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education,* Part 1 (pp.162-188). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smylie, M. A., & Denny, J. W. (1990). Teacher leadership: Tensions and ambiguities in organizational perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 26*, 235-259.

Sparks, D. (2007). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in schools.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., & Halverson, J. (1999, April). *Distributed leadership: Toward a theory of school leadership practice*. Presentation of paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada.

State standards for beginning teacher induction. (n.d.). *Effective support for new teachers in Washington*. Retrieved June 23, 2007, from Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession Web site: http://www.cstp-wa.org/index.html

Stone, M., Horejs, J., & Lomas, A. (1997). *Commonalities and differences in teacher leadership at elementary, middle, and high school levels*. University of Southern California.

Sweeney, D. (2003). *Learning along the way: Professional development by and for teachers.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Swinnerton, J. (2007). Brokers and boundary crossers in an urban school district: Understanding central-office coaches as instructional leaders. *Journal of School Leadership, 17*, 195-221.

Urbanski, A., & Nickolaou, M. B. (1997). Reflections on teachers as leaders. *Educational Policy*, *11*, 243-254.

Wasley, P. A. (1991). *Teachers who lead: The rhetoric of reform and realities of practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wellman B., & Lipton, L. (2004). *Data-driven dialogue: A facilitator's guide to collaborative inquiry.* Sherman, CT: Mira Via.

Wenglinsky, H. (2000). *How teaching matters: Bringing the classroom back into discussions of teacher quality*. Princeton, NJ: Policy Information Center.

West, L., & Staub, F. (2003). *Content-focused coaching: Transforming mathematics lessons.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 255-316.

Appendix A

Interview Guide – Initial Questions:

1. Tell me what influenced you to take on a formal teacher leader role (instructional coach or mentor).
2. Describe a “typical” day as a teacher leader.
3. How do you describe this role to people outside of education?
4. What kept you motivated in this role? What was problematic?
5. Describe your decision to return to _____ the classroom. What has your experience been like? What influenced your decision making? How have you interacted with other teacher leaders in this position?

Appendix B

Interview Guide 2

Additional Questions:

5. Talk about the differences between the work of instructional coaches and mentors. How do you see the margin between the work of these two groups of teacher leaders?

6. What other teacher leader roles do you see?

7. Describe the professional relationships you had with teachers when you held the role of teacher leader.

8. How would the teachers you worked with describe the work that you did together?

9. What is important about how teacher leaders learn? What professional supports do teacher leaders need?

10. Now that you are in a classroom again, would you coach (or mentor) differently? How have you interacted with formal teacher leaders?

11. How do you define a mentor or an instructional coach?

12. How is the role of teacher leader different from the role of teacher?

13. Why do teacher leaders leave formal roles?

    a. What influences and characterizes these transitions?

    b. What influenced your decision making as you left the role of …?

14. Describe what it is like to help teachers decide to make changes?

15. Describe shared leadership as you conceptualize it and as you experienced it…

16. Describe what trust building looks like from the role of Teacher Leader and, then, from the role of the classroom teacher.

Appendix C: Participants

Pseudonym Gender Ethnicity	Years Full Time	Current position (former role)	Years teaching	Grades, subjects, taught	Administrative Credentials
Julie Female White	8	Literacy coach	17	Middle School Language Arts	No
Kris Female White	12	5th grade teacher (coach)	6	2nd grade Special Education	Yes
Mara Female White	7	Not employed (mentor)	16	High School English	No
Jeni Female White	5	Spanish Teacher (mentor)	10	High School Spanish	No
Jane Female White	8	6th grade teacher (coach)	14	5th Grade	No
Shara Female White	6	Sp. Ed. Coach (mentor)	12	Special Education	No
Fiora Female Asian	9	Mentor, coordinator	14	Mentor	No
Jacob Male White	6	Math coach	24	Elementary 6th grade teacher	Yes
Tammy Female White	8	Instructional Coach	8	Magnet School K-12	No
Maggie Female White	2	Instructional coach; Language Acquisition	10	Elementary, Specialist	No

APPENDIX D

NSDC's Standards for Staff Development

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

Context

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Process

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making.
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

Content

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (NSDC, 2008)

Appendix E

Surviving the Crossfire: Mentoring Program Helps Heophytes Triumph over the Challenges of Teaching by Joyce Riha Linik

WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON— Amidst the arid bunchgrass and sagebrush plateaus of southeastern Washington winds a verdant river valley, steeped in history. The Walla Walla, Nez Perce, Cayuse, and Umatilla tribes once roamed this valley and fished in its rivers and streams. Lewis and Clark passed through during their legendary westward journey in 1805 and traded goods with the Native Americans. Not long after, the settlement of "many waters" — Walla Walla — was established as a fort and trading post, while the neighboring Whitman Mission became home to one of the region's first schoolhouses.

Evidence documents that this school's early teachers faced monumental challenges: the harshness of frontier life, for starters, plus the charge of teaching "reading and writing" and "the rudiments of agriculture" to the Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians, alongside the settlers' children. Unfortunately for one Judge Saunders, these challenges were augmented by a particular incident involving flying tomahawks when a dispute broke out between the mission's founder and a small band of Cayuse, ending the career of a promising young schoolteacher caught in the crossfire.

Although today's education challenges are decidedly different, they are no less formidable to new teachers saddled with enormous responsibility and often dodging the latest crossfire in the public education arena. It's no surprise that, without proper support, nearly a third of new teachers abandon the profession within the first three years and as many of half are gone within five.

But history is not repeating itself in Walla Walla where an award-winning teacher mentoring program has managed to boost the new teacher retention rate to 93 percent in the five years since the program has gone districtwide.

"It started out as a real grassroots effort," says Tracy Williams, mentoring coordinator for the district. Williams recounts her own experience as a first-year teacher in Walla Walla nearly 20 years ago, when she was one of 15 new teachers on a staff of 26. "We were lost," she says. "We'd stand around the copy machine and say, 'What are you going to do?' 'What are you going to do?' And we just tried to figure out how to teach on our own. So I was really committed to the fact that people who are new to the profession of teaching need some guidance and peer support."

About 15 years ago, Williams reports, the program started as "a voluntary, after-school kind of thing." Williams and others in the district took it upon themselves to take new teachers under their wings and tried to find ways to plan helpful workshops. "It was hit and miss," Williams says, "until, about seven years ago, we applied for a pilot grant from the state of Washington and got the resources to make it more formal."

Today the program is a finely coordinated effort carried out by the Walla Walla School District and the Walla Walla Valley Education Association. Working as a team, a school principal, the mentor coordinator, the local education association president, and an assistant superintendent pair up veteran educators with teachers who are either new to teaching or new to the district. In addition, the team provides training and ongoing support throughout the year to ensure success.

This collaborative process was recently recognized when the Walla Walla Mentoring Program was one of six programs across the country selected as Distinguished Winners in the 2001 National Education Association/Saturn/United Auto Workers Partnership Award for Teacher Mentoring Programs. Recipients were honored for their use of strong union-management partnerships to create outstanding mentoring programs for new teachers.

Current funding for the program comes primarily from Washington's Teacher Assistance Program (TAP), which provides approximately $1,400 per new teacher as long as the school district meets certain training criteria. This money is split between stipends for mentors and new teachers, and release time for participants to engage in classroom observations. The district provides additional financial support, funding the district coordinator's salary and footing the bill for training and materials.

Joining the Ranks

This year, Walla Walla has 21 first-year teachers and 19 new-to-district teachers in the program. All 40 have a mentor.

Some even have two.

Each new teacher is assigned a "peer coach" and a "peer mentor." The peer coach is a veteran teacher who has taught the same or similar curriculum and can help the neophyte "develop a yearlong plan with the curriculum that they're actually going to teach," Williams explains. The focus is on the "what" of teaching, addressing specific course content. The peer mentor focuses on pedagogy, the "how" of teaching, with an emphasis on issues of performance and classroom management. When possible, one person fills both roles. When this isn't possible — for instance, when there is no "job-alike" in the building — two separate veterans are assigned the roles of peer coach and peer mentor. In these cases, the peer mentor will most likely be a veteran within the same building, while the peer coach may be from elsewhere in the district.

These pairings are monitored and adjusted when necessary. Today, for example, Williams and Margaret Yount, president of the teachers' union, are discussing changes. In one instance, they've decided to assign a new peer mentor to one of their new-to-district teachers, a 40-year-old veteran who may relate better to a contemporary than to the 22-year-old teacher originally recommended by the principal because of a similar job assignment. In another case, Williams and Yount discuss alternatives for a mentor who both think may be "overbearing."

"We want new teachers to succeed," says Yount, "because when teachers don't succeed, then you have plans for improvement and probation, and then a teacher is ushered out of teaching. Nobody wins. It's much better to train them, get them the right mentor in the beginning so that they're successful teachers."

But even with this thoughtful attention to matchmaking, mentoring goes far beyond the simple pairing of veterans and neophytes. According to research, programs that do little else than assign mentors inevitably fail. Training and ongoing support are essential elements of a successful induction program.

Training The Jedi Knights

Like the valley's early inhabitants, Williams — the key figure in the development of Walla Walla's mentoring program — has demonstrated great resourcefulness. Elements of the program are based on a California teacher-training model developed by education researchers Ann Morey and Diane Murphy. Williams also utilizes references on instructional strategies and classroom management, notably work by Harry Wong. Additionally, Williams pulls useful information from any promising piece of research or tool she can get her hands on. This includes books, journal articles, Web sites, and even the odd movie classic when the situation calls for it.

"In training, I talk a lot about the qualities of a peer coach, the qualities of being a good mentor," Williams says. In short, she tells mentors to follow in the path of one wrinkly space gnome named Yoda. "Yoda doesn't tell," she counsels veteran teachers, reminding them of the wisdom exhibited by the Star Wars character. "He just asks questions and guides. Yoda doesn't see himself as superior. He doesn't come with all the march music and the regalia and the fanfare. He comes in the mud, with questions. He pulls it out of Luke Skywalker. He says, 'It's in you. You have the ability to do this,' and he helps Luke pull it out. And he's always there in Luke's head — his words echo. That concept works for me. The people who were my mentors — their words echo in my head. And you can't get rid of those, the little gems of advice."

Training also addresses how mentors can avoid common communication barriers with those under their tutelage. Most find it obvious that they should avoid criticizing, preaching at, or threatening their wards. But some are surprised to learn that general praise, reassurance, or diversion can shut down communication. "Too much praise can shut down a teacher from asking questions," Williams observes. "They'll say, 'Well, I'm supposed to be really good at this,' and so they don't ask questions."

District Elementary Science Coordinator Peggy Willcuts reflects on her first-year assignment, many years ago, as a fifth-grade teacher teamed with two very experienced male instructors. "I didn't want them to think I was this stupid, young, inexperienced little thing. So I kept to myself." Willcuts had questions about basic procedures for lunch and recess and how to deal with behavioral issues, but she kept quiet. "You know, sometimes, it's the really dumb questions that you need to ask. But you don't have anybody who's supposed to answer those, so you decide you're not going to ask and you hope, somehow, you're going to assimilate the information just by observing."

Many veteran teachers remember contracting strains of Emperor's New Clothes Syndrome, where they felt they couldn't let others see what they didn't know. That's why Williams provides tutorials for new teachers, including curriculum scavenger hunts and how-to lists for basic procedures. It's also why, at a training session with administrators and mentors, she promotes discussion of the "unwritten rules" of each school's environment and encourages mentors to share these insider tips with new arrivals.

Learning To Joust

Cindy Nass, a veteran at Prospect Point Elementary, says Williams "put us empathetically back in the shoes of being a first-year teacher again." Those shoes cover some rough terrain. According to the research of Ellen Moir, first-year teachers move through a predictable cycle. They slide from anticipation to survival and then disillusionment in the first half of the year. They go on to experience rejuvenation, reflection, and renewed anticipation by year's end. By understanding this cycle, mentors can gauge how best to support new teachers through the inevitable peaks and valleys.

When Lance Longmire came to the district two years ago, he was fresh out of grad school and starry eyed. "I was very idealistic," he says. "I thought I was going to hop in school, change the world. Everything was just going to go my way. Things didn't go as smoothly as I expected."

Like many new teachers, Longmire was given an especially tough first assignment. The latest in a string of bodies meant to fill a revolving-door position, Longmire became the Lead Special Education Teacher at Green Park Elementary. Charged with developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for 30 kids, he had his hands full.

Longmire says Williams and Nass, his mentor, "saved my life." Nass walked him through initial IEPs and parent conferences, and shared invaluable techniques for classroom management and basic survival.

And, Longmire says, Williams shared one gem of advice that got him through the rough spots: Expect train wrecks.

"She told me that sometimes, when you're a first-year teacher, it's like a train wreck coming through. Sometimes things just get messed up and, the next day, you have to pick it up, put it back on the tracks and just keep on going. And I'd say that I derailed a few times. It was humbling. But it was good to know that was normal and that it's OK to make a mistake, and then pick things up and move on."

This concept of "failing forward" is an important lesson Williams attempts to impart. She says it is imperative that teachers are given license to try things that might not work as they attempt to improve learning in the classroom, and it is essential that the education environment allow failure not to be fatal. "Trying new things is essential to growth and achieving," she says. "Bret Boone of the Mariners wouldn't hit home runs if he wasn't making good attempts and striking out sometimes. You have to take the chance that you're going to make mistakes, and then learn from those mistakes. And know that, even in failure, we find things that improve performance." Williams says this is especially

important in the culture of first-year teachers where mistakes will be made. "If veteran staff don't criticize them as much, things will get better for those new teachers faster."

Throughout the year, new teachers meet with their mentors, usually on a daily basis, for troubleshooting and guidance. "The first few months, it's like being on call," says Nass. "Then as the year rolls on, there are fewer and fewer questions and more conversations about how things are going instead of what fire is burning at the moment and needs to be put out."

Additionally, mentors and new teachers engage in assigned observation-feedback cycles, tied to their stipends. To further support teachers through that crucial first year, neophytes attend monthly workshops covering a range of topics, including such things as how to conduct parent conferences and prepare substitute plans.

Gaining Ground

Teachers who have been through Walla Walla's mentoring program have nothing but praise for it. Kenny Singer, who joined the eighth-grade staff at Pioneer Middle School last year, says, "I don't think anything prepared me better for teaching than working in this mentor program. I mean, being able to collaborate on curriculum, being able to talk about classroom management, being able to talk about how the day went or how this kid was so hard or, you know, wow, that class was really intense. Or a parent called me and was not happy, or even — woohoo! — a parent was *so* happy... Just being able to talk about the emotional roller coaster that is teaching was great."

Lisa Firehammer, Singer's mentor, says she also benefited from the experience. "The nice thing about the program," she says, "is that it's not all Ken asking me things. It becomes more of a collaborative relationship. It's not one teacher always getting help from another teacher. It's just teachers working together. It fosters that — the give-and-take that you really would like to have happen. Everybody's used to working together and talking things over, and we're just all really comfortable with collaborating. I think the fact that it's established around our district makes everyone more open."

Williams gives a Yoda-like nod. "We're trying to build a culture of collegiality," she says. "We don't expect teachers to teach in isolation. We want them to be models for students. We want them to be continual learners." For the district, the mentoring program has become a good recruitment tool. Judy Reault, assistant superintendent, says that with the current teacher shortage, "we're in a sellers' market. For teachers deciding between Walla Walla and another district, this may give us the edge." Certainly, Reault notes, "it has given our district the ability to maintain quality teachers."

Evidently so. While new teachers fall in droves around the country, those in Walla Walla stand steadfast and tall.

Now in his second year of teaching at Walla Walla, Singer shares a story about a fallen comrade: "I was at a wedding this weekend and met a woman who graduated with honors from Stanford, then got her master's in teaching. She taught for one year in California schools and she'll never teach again. I asked her, what was her year like? She didn't have

a staff that she could talk to; she didn't work with anyone all year on anything; she had contact with her principal or vice principal only once or twice; neighboring teachers didn't talk to each other. It was completely isolating. And she was miserable because she had to do everything and she had no one to talk to about, you know, the problems or the good things. She had no support.

"And I told her if she had taught her first year in Walla Walla, she would still be teaching."

Appendix E

Coach lends them her ears

By Tracy Crow

Instructional coach Marit Nierman approaches her job with teachers this way: "I'm the person in this building who gets to roll up my sleeves and help you do this— I am an extra set of ears," Nierman describes. When she looks to the future, one of her questions is how long will the district need a coaching program? Nierman asks, "Will teachers get to a point where they coach each other? Or will we always need an extra pair of ears?" Nierman works at Garrison Middle School in Walla Walla (Wash.) Public Schools. She has worked in the past as a reading specialist in a traditional pullout model. Now, as part of a districtwide literacy initiative, she is a coach who works with teachers in grades 6-8. The school has about 600 students and 40 teachers.

Building relationships was — and still is – a major goal for Nierman. She was new to the district when she became Garrison's instructional coach. "I know I was lucky; this school already had an extremely positive culture," she said. "The staff is a highly collaborative group; there are many entry points for my work and a lot of information about what is needed." The trust level at Garrison is high and teachers are willing to receive feedback. Typically, Nierman helps teachers plan lessons and she talks with them after they've taught certain lessons so they can reflect upon the experience. Nierman also helps teachers "connect the dots." "There are many things going on in the district. How are these all supposed to connect and work together?" she said.

The Walla Walla district is focused on literacy in all content areas so Nierman and three other coaches collaborate to build a comprehensive coaching and professional development program to address literacy across content areas at the secondary level. Each year, the coaches work with a cohort of teachers to develop common lesson structures and integrate specific instructional strategies.

Literacy is "the ability to read, write, and communicate at a level that allows you to participate in society," Nierman said. For content-area teachers, this means being able to read and write like a mathematician or to read and write like a scientist. For math and science teachers in particular, emphasizing thinking skills and information processing skills is more meaningful than just an emphasis on reading and writing, Nierman has learned.

Because of the instructional strategies and common lesson planning structures, "our culture has changed," Nierman said. "Now we have conversations that go across departments." The district has also adjusted schedules to enable every teacher to have an hour of collaboration every week. At Garrison, students arrive an hour late each Wednesday in order to provide this time for teachers.

Much of Nierman's learning occurs as the secondary coaches meet weekly to plan the work and hone their skills. They discuss how to integrate literacy strategies throughout the secondary curriculum. They discuss what a year's worth of professional development should look like. To "build our toolbox," Nierman said, "we pair up, we practice reflective conversations, and we role-play different strategies that we want teachers to use."

Nierman has worked at strengthening her communication skills. "I thought I was already pretty good in that area, but the more you learn, the more you realize you don't know," she said. "Instead of being the expert, I needed to become more refined in the art of listening and questioning." Nierman particularly values the collaborative work the coaches do to articulate their vision for the Walla Walla coaching model. Her biggest challenge is "having an idea where we'd like to see the staff grow, in terms of instruction, in terms of culture, and figuring how to get there slowly. How do we scaffold this work, what do we do first? We see where we want to get. What is the road we take to get there?" Nierman said. The Walla Walla coaches have worked intensely with Joellen Killion, NSDC's director of special projects, and this summer will work with Jim Knight, a researcher at the University of Kansas and a leading voice in the field of instructional coaching. Nierman has found this type of assistance critical to the growth of the coaching program. The district's support has also been significant.

The coaches' principals join them in the collaborative work once a month. "Our administrators are incredibly involved – as much as they can be with all of their responsibilities," said Nierman.

MARIT NIERMAN
Position: Instructional coach
School: Garrison Middle School
School district: Walla Walla Public Schools
Professional history: Taught 1st grade, (2 years); 2nd grade (1 year); Title I reading specialist (6 years); instructional coach (2 years)
Education: Bachelor's degree in education, Pacific Lutheran University; master's degree in curriculum and instruction, Lesley University

Appendix F

Forward to *That Workshop Book*

Before reading this book, I was pretty sure that I knew how to plan for and meet the needs of most of my students. I was relatively confident that I had it figured out. When asked to read the manuscript of *That Workshop Book*, I didn't anticipate how blown away I'd be by the thinking it held. I was struck by how much I didn't know. I expected to read each chapter and nod my head and say, "Yep, I do that," and "Yes, that is something I've done for years." Instead, I wrote margin notes, recorded ideas to try on Monday, and became once again hopeful that I could inspire my second hour of struggling readers. I jotted down questions about planning and final products—I couldn't wait to talk to colleagues about the ideas I had read. I was struck by how much I still had to learn. Oddly, it was comforting. Knowing that I wasn't there yet felt invigorating. I had been challenged to dive back in and do better. But this time, I didn't feel alone. In this book, I had found a coach.

Good instructional coaching is about support. Often the unsung heroes, coaches have the opportunity to leave their mark on the world with every person they train, inspire, and mentor. They help teachers shake off the dust, pull up their bootstraps, and have another go. After twenty-three years of experience, I've learned that athletics and teaching have a lot in common. Wasn't it Yogi Berra who said, "If you don't know where you are headed, you might not get there"? Was he talking about baseball or unit design? In athletics, the best players have coaches who inspire, instruct, and encourage. It makes sense that teachers should have good coaching as well.

A good coach pushes but not too hard. She listens but not with an agenda, serving as a sounding board and mirror. She builds confidence and is a partner in fearless risk taking by showing and not just telling. Yes, I'm lucky. I get to work alongside Sam on a regular basis. However, readers of this book are lucky, too, because inside they will find Sam's words resonating with passion and joyful teaching. You, too, can have Sam as your coach by simply opening up this book.

That Workshop Book will surely be a groundbreaking text. Innovation and best practices permeate the pages. You'll hear Sam's voice naming thinking and nudging instructional change. She'll make you want to investigate your teaching beliefs and notice how they are reflected in your instructional practice. Sam's coaching packs a powerful punch, always refocusing us back upon authentic learning and real-world instruction. For teachers who feel alone with the challenges they face, this is the book for you. For instructional coaches who are stuck and unsure where to lead, this book will show the way. It will help you work through the tricky parts, negotiate the roadblocks, and think through to the future.

I need this book and I think you will, too. —CRIS TOVANI

Appendix G
Mentor's report of professional learning supporting weekly activities

Actions in a typical week for a mentor:	Professional learning Mentor received:
Guiding observations in lab classrooms	• Protocols and crafting questions • Cognitive apprenticeship model for teaching and learning • Being coached as a classroom teacher • Instructional Coach training • Teaching and Learning Conferences • *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) • Pedagogy for All • Professional networks – local and statewide
Analyze assessment data to plan small group instruction with grade level teachers	• Examining student work and protocols • Instructional Coaches training • Being coached • Curriculum Writing • Pedagogy for All • *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999)
Supporting a teacher who wanted to find balance	• *Mentoring Matters*—Learning-focused conversations, pausing, paraphrasing, fully attending, clarifying questions and shifting level of abstraction. • Mentor collaboration • Pedagogy for All
Coaching cycle with novice teacher(s)	• *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) • Mentor Academy • Teaching and Learning Conferences • Mentor collaboration • Pedagogy for All
Supporting Novice teacher with assessment in preparation for reporting	• Assessment Literacy • Principal's Repeat Conferences • *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton, Wellman, & Humbard, 1999, 1999) • Pedagogy for All • Mentor collaboration • Book Study