FINBERG, ROBIN A., Ed.D. The Journey of Becoming a Distinguished Elementary
Teacher Leader. (2013)
Directed by Dr. Rick Reitzug. 174 pp.

Historically teachers have primarily operated within the confines of their
classrooms. However, school environments have started to shift leadership opportunities
that have traditionally been exclusive to administrative positions, by empowering
teachers to lead school initiatives as well as holding them accountable for leadership
through annual evaluation instruments. Yet, it is not enough for teachers simply to be
invited to the decision making process. Leadership is not handed out like blue books for
a college examination it is largely up to teachers themselves to locate and leverage
opportunities for professional growth and personal development that will increase their
qualifications and credibility for leadership (IEL, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of this
study is to examine the attributes, experiences, and environments of identified elementary
distinguished teacher leaders and their principals.

A qualitative interview study design was chosen to examine the perceptions of
these individuals in order to conceptualize how teachers develop from teacher to
distinguished teacher leader. This study has three broad objectives: to identify the
responsibilities teachers must assume to be perceived as a distinguished teacher leader, to
determine what the costs and benefits are of being a distinguished teacher leader, and to
identify the factors, conditions, or attributes that either support or impede the
development of becoming a distinguished teacher leader.

The interview data revealed that one's ability to transform from teacher to
distinguished teacher leader does not occur through a series of steps or indicators that one

can simply check off. In fact, this transformation is much more complex and is primarily

driven by one's intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, and opportunities to lead. The study

examines the professional environments, experiences, cost and benefits, and leadership

values of identified distinguished teacher leaders and themes related to these four areas

emerged from the data.

THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING A DISTINGUISHED

ELEMENTARY TEACHER LEADER

by

Robin A. Finberg

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2013

Approved by

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To future leaders
Kaitlyn and Kyle Finberg

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Robin A. Finberg, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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October 4, 2013
Date of Acceptance by Committee

October 4, 2013
Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finishing my dissertation would never have been possible without the guidance of my committee members, encouragement from my friends, and the unconditional support and love from my family, children, and husband.

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Rick Reitzug, for his guidance, wisdom, reflections, and encouragement throughout my graduate studies and research experiences. I would also like to thank Dr. José Villalba for the countless hours he spent providing such invaluable feedback. Thank you Dr. Carl Lashley, Dr. Craig Peck, and Dr. Kimberly Hewitt for serving on my committee and for always challenging my thinking. I would also like to acknowledge the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for providing me with four outstanding educational experiences: 1996 Bachelor of Fine Arts, 2001 Master of School Administration, 2012 Specialist in Education, and 2013 Doctorate of Education. I also want to thank all of the outstanding educators who volunteered their time to participate in my study.

I would like to thank all of my closest friends for the words of encouragement you have provided me throughout this process. I especially would like to thank my mother, Linda Bennett, who has always been my number one cheerleader. Thank you mom for ALL that you did to make this event possible. Without the support of both of my parents, my wonderful in-laws, and all of my closest family members this dissertation would not have been possible. The pseudonym names are a tribute to each of you.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Jeff Finberg, and my two wonderful children Kaitlyn and Kyle Finberg. Your unconditional love, support, and patience made this dissertation possible. I love you with all of my heart.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The future is here. It's just not widely distributed yet. —William Gibson, Novelist

Historically, teachers have operated as individual practitioners as they implemented programs, curricula, procedures, and policies within their classrooms, governed by a top down administrative model (Fullan, 1993). Due to this hierarchical structure, teachers have had few opportunities to collaborate with other educators about teaching and learning in order to lead their profession, shape the culture of their schools, improve student learning, and influence practices among their peers. However, schools have made attempts to transform themselves from a top-down leadership model to a more distributive school leadership model comprised of lead teachers (Swanson, 2000). With the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001, a principal's role expanded from a manager of the building and staff to also include being an instructional leader responsible for increasing student achievement. Therefore, the responsibility of being principal became too extensive and led principals toward sharing their responsibilities. One effective way to share such responsibilities through out the school involves distributive leadership (DuFour, 2004; Elmore, 2002; Spillane, 2006). This model emphasizes that a team approach of administrators, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders could make a greater impact (Barth, 1991). The movement toward the principal partnering and

collaborating with teachers has also led to multiple, sometimes overlapping roles for teacher leaders. Leadership in schools has evolved from formal managerial positions toward more informal opportunities for shared-decision making where the sense of strong teamwork and shared responsibility are valued (Wynne, 2001).

Recently, during the 2011–2012 school year, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) implemented a requirement in which all licensed teachers across the state would be held accountable and evaluated annually on their individual attainment of Standard One of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership* (McRel, 2009a). Teachers are rated on a continuum of not demonstrated, developing, proficient, accomplished, and distinguished. There are five elements under Standard One: lead in the classrooms, demonstrate leadership in the school, lead the teaching profession, advocate for schools and students, and demonstrate high ethical standards (McRel, 2009a).

During the 2009–2010 school year, I participated in the train the trainer model for this new North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Instrument. I was responsible for training several different schools throughout the 2010–2011 school year within the district where I currently serve as a principal. While facilitating these trainings, I became very interested in the perceptions of both teachers and administrators on how one becomes a teacher leader. I observed many educators defining teacher leadership within the traditional managerial roles and hierarchy roles such as department chair, lead teacher, and NCEA representative. I was surprised by how many teachers and administrators wrestled with concerns that opportunities to demonstrate the elements as described in the

rubric were limited within their professional environments. Throughout these trainings it became apparent that there were various levels of understanding about what defined teacher leadership, what steps one must take to become a teacher leader, as well as how teacher leadership is essential to student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lieberman & Walker, 2007; Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, & Crowell, 2004). As a result, I became interested in exploring what attributes, experiences, and environments lead teachers toward becoming a distinguished teacher leader as defined by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric (McRel, 2009a).

The North Carolina State Board of Education defines a distinguished teacher leader as one who consistently and significantly exceeds basic competence on the standard(s) of performance as they relate to demonstrating leadership (McRel, 2009a). Teachers in North Carolina are valued for the contributions they make to their classroom and the school and are held accountable toward shared ownership of the vision and purpose of the work of the school (McRel, 2009a). Barth (2001) and others (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lieberman & Walker, 2007; Muchmore et al., 2004) report that teacher leadership is essential to student achievement.

This qualitative study seeks to provide a detailed description of how administrators and teachers define and support teacher leaders, determine the cost and benefits of teacher leadership, identify various avenues teachers are seeking in order to develop their own leadership skills, and generate a list of the factors and conditions that either encourage or limit one's ability to assume leadership roles and meet the standards indicated in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric.

By engaging in conversations with a variety of practicing North Carolina Distinguished Teacher Leaders and their principals, the study is intended to describe a more concrete path for other aspiring teachers who desire to become distinguished teacher leaders.

Problem Statement: Purpose of Study

As the demands on schools and school leaders have increased, the historical top-down administrative design has encountered great difficulty adjusting or changing structures while maintaining high expectations (Datnow & Castellano, 2002). Research suggests that the majority of responsibility and resources should not go to the top or the bottom, but to the teachers and their development as teacher leaders (Elmore, 1996; Lambert, 2002). The continued focus on educational reforms such as NCLB (2001) and Race to the Top (2010), as they pertain to school improvement efforts and accountability, is shifting towards a more systematic reform. These efforts involve developing teachers' knowledge, abilities, cultural perceptions, and commitment to ultimately play a greater role in the organization and climate of the school in order to yield greater student achievement (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002).

Holding teachers accountable for being teacher leaders is quite ambitious. Historically teachers have primarily operated within the confines of their classrooms. This structure has limited opportunities for teachers to engage and contribute to the overall culture and climate of the school (Strodl, 1992). However, school environments have started to shift leadership opportunities that have traditionally been exclusive to administrative positions by empowering teachers to lead school initiatives. These opportunities are allowing teachers to take advantage of becoming key contributors of

knowledge and influence in order to impact student learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Unfortunately, what is missing in the research is a greater understanding of how teachers develop themselves in order to become distinguished teacher leaders as measured by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the attributes, experiences, and environments of identified distinguished teacher leaders and their principals. By examining the perceptions of these individuals, the study will begin to conceptualize how one becomes a distinguished teacher. The study is intended to increase the level of understanding of the perceived responsibilities of being a teacher leader, the cost and benefits of assuming such a role, and which conditions either encourage or limit one's potential of becoming a distinguished teacher leader. Furthermore, the study will allow teachers, administrators, districts, universities, and policy makers to become more informed about Standard One of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric in order to create environments and policies which foster the development and implementation of successful teacher leadership experiences for all educators across the state (McRel, 2009a).

Guiding Research Questions for the Study

1. How do teachers develop from teacher to distinguished teacher leader?

    a. What responsibilities must a teacher assume in order to be perceived as a distinguished teacher leader?

    b. What are the costs and benefits of being a distinguished teacher leader?

  c. What factors, conditions, or attributes either encourage or limit one's

   professional growth potential of becoming a distinguished teacher leader?

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter II

   Research surrounding teacher leadership is described through multiple phases or

periods which define both formal and informal roles (Bradley-Levine, 2011; Silva,

Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Chapter II provides an overview of the literature and describes

the various roles teacher leaders have assumed overtime. Additionally, the effects of

teacher leadership are highlighted to provide an understanding of the influence these roles

have on school improvement and professional learning communities. Influences on

teacher leaders' work are also depicted as this chapter reviews the literature on the

conditions which promote teacher leadership, barriers which impede teacher leadership,

and the potential social transformation outcomes in the context of schooling as a result of

developing teacher leaders.

Chapter III

   The qualitative methodology used to conduct this study is described in this

chapter. The qualitative method of exploratory research was used to discover and

generate the attributes, experiences, and environments necessary to develop into a

distinguished elementary teacher leader. Interviews were conducted to describe the

experiences and perceptions of elementary teacher leaders and principals currently

practicing in North Carolina. These focused interviews, along with a document analysis,

corroborate the exploratory account of prevailing practices among distinguished teacher leaders.

Chapter IV

Characteristics of each identified distinguished teacher leader are presented in Chapter IV. Using fictitious names, "The Travels" of eleven identified elementary distinguished teacher leaders are shared to tell their individual stories as they transitioned from teacher to distinguished teacher leader. Additionally, each story captures a primary leadership value among these identified distinguished teacher leaders. The leadership values which emerged as the participants described the attributes, experiences, and environments which led them through the journey of becoming a teacher leader were essential as they navigated through the education profession and met the distinguished indicators as defined by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric.

Chapter V

Chapter V is an analysis of teacher leaders' and principals' descriptions of influences on their work. Themes identified during the data analysis process are discussed as the chapter explores the voyage of becoming a distinguished teacher leader and include: defining moments in which teachers transformed from teacher to distinguished teacher leader; distinguished teacher leadership responsibilities including administrative roles, collaborative roles, pedagogical roles, research roles, and professional development roles; the perceived outcomes of being a distinguished teacher leader; and the conditions necessary in order for teachers to become distinguished teacher leaders.

Chapter VI

The final chapter revisits the conceptual framework and includes themes constructed during the data analysis process. Chapter VI also discusses an unanticipated finding from the research as well as the conclusions of the research findings, while providing recommendations for administrators, teachers, and policy makers. Future research studies are suggested and the chapter concludes with a professional connection between the research findings and my future travels as Dr. Finberg.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Teacher Leadership

The concept of teacher leadership first emerged more than five decades ago (Bradley-Levine, 2011; Silva et al., 2000). Bradley-Levine (2011) describes four periods of teacher leadership that overlapped one another, while Silva et al. (2000) identify three phases. Teachers were first invited to managerial roles such as department chair, head teacher, master teacher, and union representative (Bradley-Levine, 2011; Silva et al., 2000). Teachers were tasked with being the middle manager whose primary role was to compel other teachers in their department to be cooperative team players. These positions implied a structure of power that created isolation between teacher leaders and teachers, similar to the barrier between teachers and administration. This phase of teacher leadership focused on efficiency and effectiveness of the system and did not work toward influencing others or practicing instructional leadership (Lashway, 1998).

A second wave of teacher leadership expanded the concept to include expert positions such as a curriculum leader, curriculum developer, and staff development provider (Bradley-Levine, 2011; Silva et al., 2000). It took the form of positions that capitalized on teacher instructional knowledge. Teachers were identified by the administration of the school and their responsibility was to implement curricular reforms that they may or may not have had a part in adopting, but that they needed to sell to the

staff (Bradley-Levine, 2011). These positions allowed teacher leaders to work with their

peers in a formal, yet collaborative manner that was not necessarily seen in the hierarchy

of the first stage. This form of leadership is prominent in many schools today.

The third period of teacher leadership, which arose in the 1990s, included

colleague support roles such as mentor teachers (Bradley-Levine, 2011). This form of

teacher leadership allowed teachers to critique their own teaching practice and then

challenged them to gain the respect of their colleagues. This period blurred the lines

between formal and informal roles (Silva et al., 2000). Bradley-Levine's (2011) work

describes a fourth period of teacher leadership known as distributed leadership. In this

period, identified teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom. Teachers were

not only leaders within their own classroom environments, but they impacted the

instructional practices of other teachers within the school by sharing effective pedagogy

and resources to improve student learning. They identify with and contribute to a

community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved

educational practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

In the past, a teacher's basic role in leadership was one of a representative, not an

actual leader or change agent (Whitsett & Riley, 2003). Over the past two decades, the

shift in ideology as a response to new and fluctuating pressures has developed different

views of, and responsibilities for, teacher leadership. This shift has created a need for

effective teacher leadership, which not only involved a move from top-down hierarchical

designs, but a movement toward shared leadership opportunities. Teacher leadership has

evolved into a process by which teachers, individually or collectively; influence their

colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increasing student learning and achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Benefits of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership directly benefits schools by supporting the organizational structure and culture of the building. Muijs and Harris (2007) discussed that effective leadership is a central component of school improvement efforts. York-Barr and Duke (2004) found in their 20-year study of the literature that teacher leadership promotes continuous improvement of teaching and learning with the result of increasing student achievement. Coburn and Russell's (2008) analysis of a longitudinal study focused on social networks in a school district, as well as Senge's (1990) concept of Systems Thinking. Both of these studies also supported the assertion of teacher leaders facilitating collaboration and supporting school improvement. In essence, increased student learning is influenced through teachers who are able to exercise quality leadership (Fullan, 2006; Muijs & Harris, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1992).

York-Barr and Duke's (2004) literature review identified four areas pertaining to the benefits of teacher leadership. The first area asserts that teacher participation in the decision making process promotes ownership. When teacher leaders contribute to the school curriculum and organizational policymaking, they become empowered and tend to improve their commitment towards the profession. The second benefit is teacher expertise. Teachers work the closest with students and know more about their students' abilities and needs than anyone else in the school building (Cuban, 2003; Shulman,

1996). York-Barr and Duke's third area addressed recognition and growth. Teacher leadership opportunities provide means of standing out in order to allow teachers to be recognized for their work. Teacher leaders have the opportunity to participate in decision making outside of their classroom and act in roles which affect students in different forms other than direct instruction. The fourth benefit sums up the first three which is the impact on student achievement. York-Barr and Duke's (2004) review found that teacher leaders who work with curriculum and instruction improved knowledge and skills which contributed to increased student achievement.

Formal/Informal Teacher Leader Roles

In schools, teacher leadership takes on many forms. Teacher leadership surfaces when teachers and administrators support one another by helping each other transform their practices in the current accountability era (Beachuum & Dentith, 2004). Patterson and Patterson (2004) define a teacher leader as someone who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Teacher leaders assume a wide range of both formally assigned roles and shared informal roles which support school and student success and uniquely reflect each teacher's talents and interests (Harrision & Killion, 2007).

Formal roles have been identified within the literature. Formal teacher leaders have titles or positions given by administration with monetary or non-monetary compensation. Barth (2001) identified formal teacher leadership roles such as textbook selector, curriculum developer, developer of standards for student behavior, provider of staff development, developer of promotion and retention policies, budget development,

and recruiter of new staff and new administrators. Wetig's (2002) study spoke of formal teacher leader roles as those who were involved in facilitating change, mentoring, and developing expert teachers. Wetig's (2002) identified roles included team leaders, department chairs, master teachers, grade level chairs, curriculum coordinators, and consultants.

Informal teacher leader roles emerge as teachers see an opportunity for improvement or notice a need. Wasley (1991) defines an informal teacher leader as being recognized by their peers and administrators as staff members who are always volunteering to head new projects, mentor and support other teachers, accept responsibility for their own professional growth, introduce new ideas, and promote the mission of the school. Informal teachers may not have an assigned role or position, but they earn their leadership through their work with their students, their colleagues, the school, and community (Wetig, 2002). Informal teacher leadership roles are nurtured through relationships with colleagues. Teachers who are recognized and respected leaders have subject-area and instructional expertise, maintain high levels of trust and positive working relationships with teacher peers and administrators, and are focused on the teaching and learning processes as opposed to administrative or managerial tasks (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). Informal teacher leaders share their vision with others and help change the culture of the school.

Effects of Teacher Leadership

School Improvement

Teacher leadership has been recognized by many as being a significant part of the answer towards the question of how to increase student achievement (Suranna & Moss, 2002). McRel conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative research on teacher, school, and leadership practices. The meta-analysis identified a number of variables that influence student achievement with effective leadership being one of these variables (Miller, 2003). According to Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), the average effect size between leadership and student achievement is .25. This correlation indicates that the increase in one's leadership ability translates into higher student achievement (Miller, 2003). The design of teacher leaders collaborating also alleviates the pressures that may often fall on a few individuals and in turn distributes responsibility to all.

Facilitators of Learning Communities

Teachers who collaborate share their knowledge about teaching and learning. A professional learning community is one that shares a common mission, vision, and values which promotes collaboration (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). School culture and context can facilitate leadership when the following characteristics are present: a school-wide focus on learning, inquiry, and reflective practices; encouragement for taking initiative; an expectation of teamwork and shared responsibility; shared decision making and leadership; teaching professionals being valued as role models; and a strong sense of community among teachers that fosters professionalism (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). When teacher leaders are focused on

instruction they improve their own instructional practices in ways that impact student outcomes (MSP, 2010). The interactions that occur in schools where teachers collaborate set the stage for an informal social network of learners (Herzberg, 2006). These networks allow teacher leaders to share best practices for instruction and educational leadership beyond the confines of their building or district, which provides teachers with ever-widening circles of professional learning communities (Barnett, Daugherty, & Wieder, 2010).

Teacher Leader Influence

Snell and Swanson (2000) conducted a study that searched for a conceptual framework for teacher leaders within school environments. They developed a framework which began with four frames; expertise, collaboration, reflection, and empowerment. As they collected their data and spent time with the 10 case studies, their framework developed into 5 frames with flexibility being the added frame. Snell and Swanson (2000) felt that the teacher leaders were those who led by example, both, in and out of the classroom. They are the ones who are exemplars in the classroom, effective coaches of their peers, and are change agents who contribute to school, district, state, and national educational reform. This study also pointed out that teacher leaders are different than administrative leaders since they offer their peers the wisdom of practical experience which can help to impact the student and school achievement (Snell & Swanson, 2000).

Critical Analysis of Teacher Leadership

Some teacher leaders are identified primarily by school administrators, while other teacher leaders are self-proclaimed (Sledge & Morehead, 2006). Not every school

fosters the conditions for the emergence of teacher leaders, particularly informal leaders (Danielson, 2007). Therefore, the administrator plays a crucial role in developing the necessary conditions which facilitate teacher leadership (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2006; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Sledge & Morehead, 2006). Yet, it is not only administrators who may stand in the way of teacher leaders by not providing environments which nurture shared leadership opportunities. Barth (2001) shared that teacher leadership may also be seen as risky and time-consuming. In some situations, the teachers themselves resist taking on leadership roles or their colleagues make it difficult for teachers to assume leadership roles within the school (Danielson, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Assuming teacher leadership roles may violate the norms of the teaching profession and place collegial relationships at risk (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Research suggests that the teaching profession is characterized by the norms of equality, autonomy, and privacy (Rosenholz, 1989). These norms suggest that teachers have equal status to make their own judgments concerning their classroom and they do so in a private manner with minimal external intrusion. A study conducted by Lieberman (1988) found that one main barrier perceived by teachers in leadership positions was the norm of equality among educators. The pressure to demonstrate teacher leadership and the need for collegial relationships often create conflict for teachers (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997). Wasley (1991) found the apprehension felt by teachers to assume leadership roles resulted in high levels of tension and resistance in interactions between teacher leaders and their colleagues.

Conditions which Promote Teacher Leadership

Gunter (2005) offers conditions that promote leadership through three forms of distributed leadership. The first is *authorized* distributed leadership where the work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted since it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system as well as gives status to the person who takes on the work. This form of leadership is also known as "delegated leadership" where there are teams, informal work groups, committees, etc., which operate within the hierarchical organization (Woods, 2004). However, the influence of leadership remains at the organizational level and teacher leadership is dependent on holding such formal leadership positions. A second form of leadership described by Gunter (2005) is called *dispersed* distributed leadership and refers to the process in which the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes of organizational members are accepted. This type of leadership centers on spontaneity and intuitive working relationships (Gronn, 2000). By implication, leadership is widely shared or distributed throughout the organization. Research by Silns and Mulford (2002) concluded that distributed leadership throughout the school community has shown a more positive relationship between teacher leadership and student learning outcomes. The third, shared by Gunter (2005) is *democratic* distributed leadership which is similar to dispersed distributed leadership. However, the difference is that it does not assume political neutrality and instead engages critically within the organizational values and goals while raising questions and challenging social inequities and inequalities (Gunter, 2005). This form of leadership is also described in an extensive study conducted by Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (2000). The authors found that

the work of this form of teacher leadership included: placing nonjudgmental values on

providing assistance, modeling collegiality as a mode of work, enhancing teachers' self-

esteem, using different approaches for assistance, making provisions for continuous

learning and support for teachers at the school site, and encouraging others to provide

leadership to their peers.

Seeking Teacher Leadership

There are several reasons teachers may find the opportunity to be a teacher leader

attractive (Johnson & the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004). First, many

teachers may feel increasingly competent and confident in their pedagogy and may want

to share their acquired knowledge with others. Second, becoming a teacher leader

reduces isolation as teachers work in teams (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). A third

benefit of becoming a teacher leader offers an opportunity to vary one's responsibilities

and expand one's influence (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Legislators, policymakers,

and those who make funding decisions about education have made it apparent that the

next steps of accountability are linking student outcomes and teacher knowledge to

teacher effectiveness (Sledge & Morehead, 2006). However, not all teachers actively

seek leadership opportunities. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) found that some teachers

refrained from volunteering for leadership positions unless they were drafted due to the

anticipation that veteran teachers might criticize them for their inexperience or question

their qualifications. Therefore, this potential opposition discouraged teachers from

seeking leadership roles in order to minimize their colleagues' resistance and the

potential emotional burden which may be placed on them through seeking leadership opportunities (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Barriers to Teacher Leadership

The literature reveals that there are a number of barriers that make teacher leadership more difficult to realize in practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). These researchers found that success of teacher leadership within a school was influenced by a number of interpersonal factors, such as relationships with other teachers and school management. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) found that teacher leaders need support to overcome barriers created by the norms of the school culture such as autonomy, positive attitudes towards group decision-making, and deference to seniority. Teacher leaders' efforts to share their expertise can also be undermined by a culture of teachers. Troen and Boles (1992) found that female teachers they studied experienced a loss of connectedness to peers while engaging in teacher leadership. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) found that teacher colleagues often resisted the work of teacher leaders because they saw it as an inappropriate intrusion into their instructional space, an unwarranted claim that the teacher leader is more of an expert then they are, and an unjustified promotion of a relative novice leadership role. Danielson (2007) determined that teachers must also be confident that administrators and other teachers will not criticize them for expressing ideas which might seem usual at first. Teachers who do not work with administrators who are committed toward cultivating teacher leaders by proactively helping teachers acquire the skills they need to take advantage of opportunities of

leadership such as data analysis, meeting facilitation, and so on may be less likely to become teacher leaders (Danielson, 2007).

The overarching support and barriers to teacher leadership are categorized by Troen and Boles (1992) within two domains: institutional structures and interpersonal relationships. Fullan (1993) and Harris and Muijs (2005) found that the physical and organizational structures of teachers from one another limited the effectiveness of teacher leaders and collaboration. Coyle (1997) found that personal barriers also contributed to teachers being reluctant to assume leadership roles. Some teachers have difficulty in adapting to these unfamiliar leadership responsibilities (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997) and others become frustrated when their leadership efforts do not result in positive outcomes (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Can Anyone Become a Teacher Leader?

In a study on preparing teacher leaders, the researchers stated the case for teacher leadership saying all teachers have the capacity to lead their schools down a more positive path (Ross et al., 2011). Teacher leadership is a role that is open to whoever wants to pursue the opportunity (Ross et al., 2011). Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb's (1995) research addressing training teacher leaders through professional development efforts, suggests that there is a significant amount of research which indicates that all teachers can be formal/informal teacher leaders.

Defining an Effective Teacher Leader

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2005) defines an effective teacher leader as being one who has extensive knowledge of the curriculum,

effective instructional practices, stays on top of current research, and continuously provides intellectual stimulation for the team by sharing and seeking out answers to tough questions about practices and policies when student learning is not improving. Teacher leaders are also seen as having significant teaching experience, are known to be excellent educators, and are respected by their peers (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). Murphy (2005) suggest that teacher leaders are chiefly concerned with securing enhanced instructional outcomes, generating positive relationship with staff and students, and creating the enabling conditions for others to learn. However, a culture that lacks a precise definition of teacher leadership may result in a wide range of activities, roles, and behaviors (Wasley, 1991). When teacher leaders' roles are not well defined it can often result in teacher leaders being a source of extra help in a school which is strapped for human resources (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Teacher Leaders and Social Transformation

A teacher's tenure in a school is generally longer than that of administrators. In many settings, administrators remain in their positions for only 3 to 4 years, where teachers stay for longer (Danielson, 2007). Therefore, teachers who recognize that students' school experiences depend not only on the interactions they have with individual teachers, but also on the complex systems in place throughout the school and the district, are motivated to want to influence change and carry out long-range initiatives (Danielson, 2007). As the capacity of shared leadership increases, the opportunity for leaders to support colleagues and challenge the beliefs of student learning is critical toward improving the professional practice (Sledge & Morehead, 2006). Research

suggests that teacher leaders can help other teachers to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching and learning, and to work together towards improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Summary

While the teaching profession has come a long way in recent years through opportunities to impact the total school program, using the talents of many accidental teacher leaders who have been thrust into or find themselves in leadership roles without any training, causes an on-the-job training dilemma (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). The growing reliance on teachers to lead instructional improvement suggests a need to be more intentional about preparing future teacher leaders. Teachers need effective teacher preparation programs, effective administrator leaders, and adequate time to collaborate and put into practice effective instructional practices (Miller, 2003). Being a teacher leader offers opportunities to vary one's responsibility and expand one's influence. However, school leadership needs to provide formal support to teacher leaders to create an effective professional learning environment within which teacher leadership can emerge and thrive (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

A gap exists between what is expected of practicing teachers within the current conditions of the teaching profession and the emergence and development of distinguished teacher leaders. Although professional development for teacher leadership should begin long before they enter a classroom of their own, the knowledge acquisition about teacher leadership should originate both within teacher preparation programs and each school environment. A few studies suggest that extensive knowledge is a

prerequisite to becoming a teacher leader (Lord & Miller, 2000; Manthei, 1992; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). However, even in environments where principals and schools are supportive of teacher leadership, this does not guarantee that teachers can take full advantage of those opportunities to lead. When teachers lack the tools, time, and materials needed to exercise instructional leadership, they perceive these deficits as implicit challenges to their professionalism as well as barriers to their efficacy (Dozier, 2007). In sum, it is not enough for teachers simply to be invited to the decision making process. Leadership is not handed out like blue books for a college examination, it is largely up to teachers themselves to locate and leverage opportunities for professional growth and personal development that will increase their qualifications and credibility for leadership (IEL, 2001). Therefore, additional research is needed in order to provide aspiring teacher leaders with a deeper understanding of the skills, attributes, and experiences that will lead toward the development as a North Carolina Distinguished Teacher Leader.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore teacher leaders' and principals' perceptions of the role of teacher leader, what they believe this role to be, and to uncover how one develops from teacher to distinguished teacher leader. The research is intended to increase the level of understanding of how teachers evolve into becoming distinguished teacher leaders. The results of this study can be beneficial to leaders of schools, practicing teachers, institutions of higher education, and to educational policy makers who are focused on developing teacher leaders. The guiding research questions for this study include the following: What responsibilities must a teacher assume in order to be perceived as a distinguished teacher leader?; What are the cost and benefits of being a distinguished teacher leader?; and What factors, conditions, or attributes either encourage or limit one's professional growth potential of becoming a distinguished teacher leader?

Research Design

Qualitative research is designed to take place in the natural setting and to provide an in-depth description of a specific program or practice. Creswell (2003) believes that qualitative research involves active participation by both the participants and the researcher. This study is designed to provide in-depth research about a sample of distinguished teacher leaders and their principals who are currently practicing in the

North Carolina public elementary schools. A qualitative method of exploratory research is best aligned to this study in order to examine the experiences and perceptions of several identified educators as it relates to the North Carolina Standard One: "*Teachers Demonstrate Leadership.*" According to Creswell (2003), this approach is appropriate since "the inquirer makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives such as multiple meanings of individual experiences, with intent of developing a theory or pattern" (p. 18). The purpose of this study is to collect multiple perspectives and experiences from both principals and distinguished elementary teacher leaders in order to develop a credible, applicable, and transferable theory about how one transforms from teacher to distinguished teacher leader.

Lessons learned from multiple interviews were applied to a conceptual framework on how one transforms one's self from teacher to distinguished teacher leader (see Figure 1). This framework provides specific types of indicators administrators use to evaluate teacher leaders, roles teacher leaders assume, and paths teacher leaders take in order to grow professionally and meet Standard One of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership.*

Key Concepts and Terms

According to the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2011), roles of teacher leaders include teachers as mentors, team leaders, curriculum developers, and staff development providers intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Patterson and Patterson (2004) define a teacher leader as someone who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or

informal capacity. Formal teacher leaders have titles and positions given by
administrators, with monetary or non-monetary compensation. Informal teacher leaders
are recognized by their peers and administrators as those staff members who are always
volunteering to head new projects, mentoring and supporting other teachers, accepting
responsibility for their own professional growth, introducing new ideas, and promoting
the mission of the school (Wasley, 1991).

What factors or conditions either encourage or limit one's professional growth potential of becoming a distinguished elementary teacher leader?
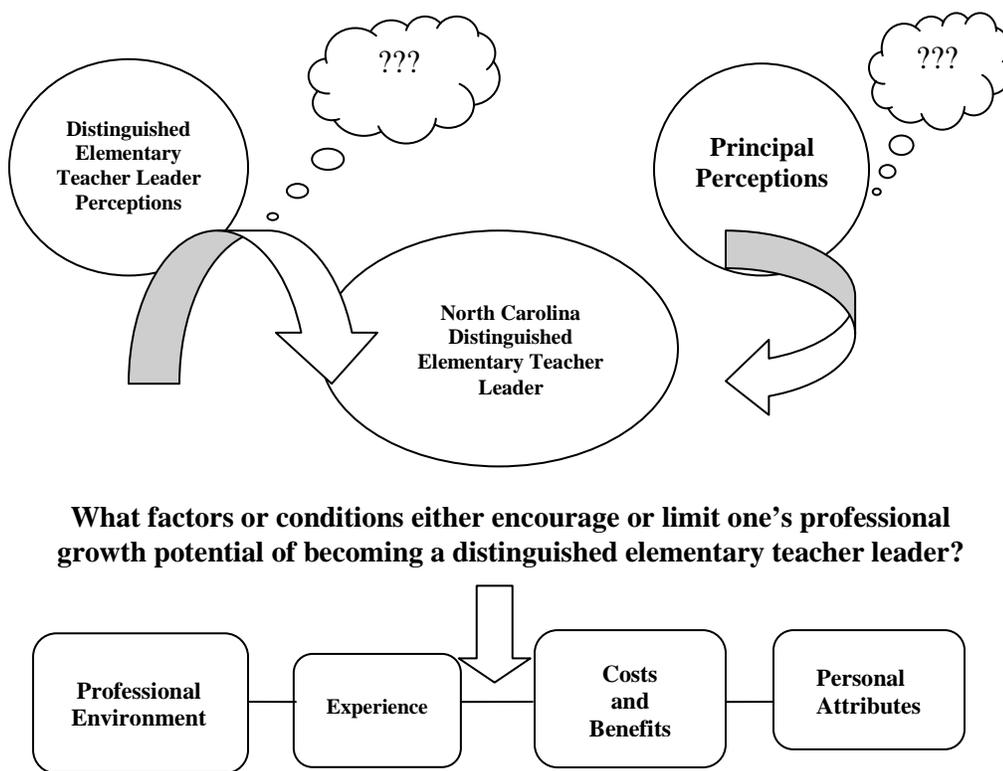
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

For the purpose of this study, teacher leaders are individuals who assume any
leadership role in which they collaborate with others to directly or indirectly impact
teaching and learning practices. These roles can be formally assigned as well as informal

roles that develop through a teacher's professional relationships with colleagues within the school setting as well as their individual professional growth. Other characteristics of teacher leaders, as defined by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (McRel, 2009a), include teachers who lead in their classrooms by creating classroom cultures that empower students to collaborate and become actively engaged in the learning process. Teachers who evaluate student progress to inform program planning and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teacher leaders also include those who support positive change in policies affecting student learning, actively participate, promote, and develop initiatives to improve education while modeling and encouraging others to adhere to the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct (Adopted April 1, 1998).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction defines a distinguished teacher leader by using a teacher evaluation rubric that contains an entire standard dedicated to *"teachers demonstrate leadership."* In order for a teacher to obtain an overall rating as "distinguished," the highest rating within this standard, teachers must provide evidence as it pertains to the following elements:

- Teachers lead in their classrooms. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher uses classroom assessment data to inform program planning and empowers students to create and maintain a safe and supportive school and community environment.
- Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school. Teachers collaborate with colleagues to improve the quality of learning throughout the school while

assuming a leadership role in implementing the school improvement plan throughout the building.

- Teachers lead the teaching profession by promoting positive working relationships through professional growth activities and collaboration. Teachers also seek out opportunities to lead professional growth activities and the decision-making processes.

- Teachers advocate for the school and students by actively participating, promoting, and providing strong supporting evidence for implementation of initiative to improve education.

- Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards by modeling the tenants of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct while encouraging others to do the same (McRel, 2009a).

However, what are not defined are the factors, conditions, and/or attributes that either encourage or limit one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader.

Research Setting

Although the North Carolina Standard One of the Teacher Evaluation Instrument is applicable for all certified teachers in grades K-12, for this study, I examined elementary distinguished teacher leaders. I selected four elementary schools within the North Carolina Public Schools to represent two different school districts (see Table 2). This approach allowed the study to collect a common spectrum of perceptions and experiences through the elementary setting as related to Standard One: *Teachers*

Demonstrate Leadership. The two school districts and four elementary schools used in

this study were selected by examining the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness Ratings

for the 2010–2011 school year that is released to the public annually by the North

Carolina Department of Education. However, when I started my research in February

2013, the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness Ratings for the 2011–2012 had not yet

been released to the public. Therefore, the 2010–2011 data were used for my research

purposes. From this data, I selected one elementary school with a high percentage of

distinguished teacher leaders, one elementary school with a low percentage of teacher

leaders, and two elementary schools with an average percentage of distinguished teacher

leaders as compared to the state average on Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate*

Leadership (see Table 1). Selecting schools with varying degrees of teachers who were

rated as distinguished teacher leaders during the 2010–2011 school year provided an

opportunity for the data to reveal the experiences, attributes, and environments necessary

to develop into distinguished teacher leaders through diverse settings. After this initial

selection process, I contacted the school districts and schools to request permission to

conduct the research.

Research Participants

After the schools were selected and district approval was granted, I met with the

principal of each school to explain the research study in detail. I then requested that the

principal identify classroom teachers who were rated distinguished on Standard I:

Teacher Demonstrates Leadership during the 2010–2011 school year to interview. I also

requested that if applicable, the sampling of identified distinguished teacher leaders

represent the diversity of the school's demographics. For the purpose of this study, teachers who assume their primary role as an instructional coach for the school or who do not instruct children directly for at least 80% of the instructional day were excluded from consideration as distinguished teacher leaders. I also requested to interview the building principal of each of the schools which were selected. Once the teachers had been identified by their principal using the criteria of obtaining an overall rating of distinguished on Standard One during the 2010–2011 school year, I met with each teacher to request an interview.

For this study, there were a total of eleven distinguished elementary teachers interviewed in addition to four elementary principals. The number of years in which the identified elementary distinguished teacher leaders had taught varied from six to thirty-three years. Of the eleven elementary teacher leaders, four teachers held a Bachelor of Science Degree; seven had obtained a Master's Degree either in their content area or in the area of curriculum and instruction, while three of the teachers had obtained a Masters in School Administration and/or administration add-on licensure. Two of the elementary teachers interviewed had National Board Certification. Ironically, all four principals interviewed in this study were in their first year at each of the schools chosen for this study. As a result of this factor, all teachers who participated in this study were not rated as distinguished elementary teacher leaders during the 2010–2011 school year by their current principals who also participated in the study. In addition, two of the elementary schools used in this study were schools located within the same school district where I currently serve as an elementary school principal. Although I do not feel this factor

significantly influenced the results of this study, it is certainly a condition that needs to be

mentioned. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of this study.

Table 1

Districts (LEAs) Selected and NC Teacher Effectiveness Data

	% of Distinguished Teacher Leaders on Standard I in 2010–2011	Total Number of Distinguished Teachers on Standard I in 2010–2011
NC LEA 1	10.8%	81
NC LEA 2	12.4%	34
North Carolina	9.7%	4,808

Source: NCDPI (2010–2011)

Table 2

Elementary Schools Selected and NC Teacher Effectiveness Data

NC Public School	Total Number of Participants Interviewed	Number of Principals Interviewed	Number of Distinguished Teacher Leaders Interviewed	Percent of Distinguished Teacher Leaders in the School 2010–2011	Number of Distinguished Teacher Leaders in the School 2010–2011
Elementary School A in LEA 1	6	1	5	62%	10
Elementary School B in LEA 1	4	1	3	41%	5
Elementary School C in LEA 2	3	1	2	38%	5
Elementary School D in LEA 2	2	1	1	20%	3
TOTAL	15	4	11		

Source: NCDPI (2010–2011)

Table 3

Participants and Interviews

Pseudonym	Demographics	Interview Data	Professional Data
Madeline Principal Elementary School A	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 36 minutes	First principalship, first year at school, 21 total years in education, 5 years as an assistant principal
Amy Principal Elementary School B	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 37 minutes	First principalship, first year at school, 24 total years in education, 4 and ½ years as an assistant principal
Chloe Principal Elementary School D	Black female	Interview at her school, 49 minutes	11 years as a principal, first year at school, and 21 total years in education
Christina Principal Elementary School C	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 58 minutes	First principalship, first year at school, 22 total years in education, 7 years as an assistant principal
Kaitlyn Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School A	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 23 minutes	13 total years in education, 5 years at current school, Bachelor's Degree, highest degree obtained, 1st grade teacher
Aimee Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School B	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 36 minutes	17 total years in education, 5 years at current school, Masters in Curriculum and Instruction/Reading, PE teacher
Linda Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School B	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 38 minutes	10 total years in education, 10 at current school, Masters in School Administration, National Board Certified in 2006, 1st grade teacher

Table 3. (Cont.)

Pseudonym	Demographics	Interview Data	Professional Data
Kyle Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School B	Black male	Interview at location of choice, 49 minutes	8 total years in education, 5 at current school, Masters in School Administration, 4th grade teacher
Jeff Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School A	Caucasian male	Interview at his school, 38 minutes	10 total years in education, 10 years at current school, Masters in School Health and add on administrative license, PE teacher grades K-5
Pete Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School A	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 45 minutes	33 total years in education, 13 at current school, BS in Elementary Education, 4th grade
Katrina Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School A	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 40 minutes	16 total years in education, 13 years at current school, BS in Elementary Education, 2nd grade teacher
Norita Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School A	Hispanic female	Interview at her school, 38 minutes	14 total years in education, 6 years at current school, Masters in Linguistics, ESL teacher
Barbara Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School D	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 61 minutes	21 total years in education, 6 years at current school, Masters in Elementary Education, 4th grade teacher
Jamie Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School C	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 37 minutes	6 total years in education, 6 years at current school, BS in Elementary Education, 2nd grade teacher

Table 3. (Cont.)

Pseudonym	Demographics	Interview Data	Professional Data
Sue Distinguished Teacher Leader Elementary School C	Caucasian female	Interview at her school, 52 minutes	20 years in education, 10 years at current school, Masters in Reading, AIG teacher

Data Collection

Data selection for this research study used multiple methods: (1) interviews and

(2) document analysis of the North Carolina Teacher Effectiveness data for the 2010–

2011 school year (NCDPI, 2010–2011). Merriam (1998) defines data in a qualitative

research study as "ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment" (p.

69). Since the information only becomes data based upon the selection by the researcher,

Merriam (1998) refers to this process not as data collection, but as data selection. Data

can be selected from people's experiences, opinions, and feelings about their involvement

in the study. Therefore, I interviewed the principal (see Appendix A) at each identified

school. I also interviewed distinguished elementary teacher leaders (see Appendix B) as

indicated by their overall summary rating on Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate*

Leadership from the 2010–2011 school year. There was one set of interview questions

for the building principals and another set of interview questions for the identified

distinguished elementary teacher leaders. Marshall and Rossman (2006) say that

interviews "allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold

for people" (p. 102). Another advantage to interviews is that they yield rich data quickly

(Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For this study, all of the interviews were conducted

individually. Each interview was audio-taped and then transcribed for coding purposes. The 2010–2011 North Carolina Educator Effectiveness Ratings public report was the document used in order to analyze and identify the research settings.

Data Analysis

Data were collected from all participants in this qualitative research study with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2003). This research method is known as content analysis in which the researcher makes replicable and valid inferences from data in the context or purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action (Krippendorff, 1980). Data analysis encompasses the entire process of making sense out of data (Merriam, 1998).

By using the content analysis process, I was able to make valid inferences from the data collected from distinguished elementary teacher leaders and their principals, coding for themes as trends became evident. I chose to use large visual display boards during the data analysis process in order to generate codes and sub codes from the descriptive data. Following this process I began organizing the codes into common recurring themes as they related to each of the guiding research questions for the study. After completing the coding process and identifying the key themes, I began to determine patterns and relationships among the data. I considered if the data indicated any outliers and examined possible explanations for outliers. I also considered if the data provided any silences in which information that I expected to be shared about a topic was not shared. I determined a possible explanation for these occurrences as well.

I was also able to produce narrative accounts that gave each of the 11 distinguished teacher leaders interviewed an opportunity to have their voice heard. From these narrative accounts a dominating leadership value for each of the teachers emerged. These played a significant role in how teachers perceived their roles and responsibilities as a distinguished teacher leader as well as influencing what avenues they took in order to practice their roles. A further analysis revealed the roles and responsibilities of principals engaged in the teacher evaluation process, which either supported or impeded the development of teacher leaders. The principals at each of the four elementary schools selected were all in their first year as a principal at their school. Therefore, the principals interviewed were not the principals who had rated the identified teacher leaders as distinguished during the 2010–2011 school year. However, their perceptions concerning teacher leadership were still valuable to the study as practicing elementary principals and offered further insight on the research topic.

Since this research study involved examining elementary schools with varying percentages of identified distinguished teacher leaders, I conducted a further analysis to determine the similarities and differences among these elementary school environments pertaining to teacher leadership. This approach provided an opportunity to look at another layer of data analysis as it pertains to a variety of attributes, experiences, and environments of the various distinguished teacher leaders and principals which may either encourage or impede a teacher's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader. By utilizing all of the gathered data and analysis, I identified how teachers develop into distinguished teacher leaders; what teachers are doing to be perceived as distinguished

teacher leaders; what the benefits and costs are associated with being a distinguished teacher leader; and what factors, conditions, and attributes either encourage or limit one's ability to meet the distinguished elements of the North Carolina Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*.

Researcher Subjectivity

As a practicing elementary school principal and one who uses the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Rubric to annually evaluate teachers on their ability to assume the standards of demonstrating teacher leadership, I have developed my own perceptions of various roles and artifacts that support this area of the rubric. As a school principal, I have also experienced the impact teachers can have on leading their profession, shaping the culture of their school, improving student learning, and influencing practices among their peers. As a leader, I believe in shared leadership and appreciate how when multiple professionals collaborate around teaching and learning, student achievement can improve and the professional cultural of the school is empowered.

In addition to the aforementioned beliefs, I also feel that there are barriers that prevent some teachers from becoming distinguished teacher leaders as defined in the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Instrument. These barriers can include the individual's lack of understanding on how to develop the necessary relationships within their environment in order to be perceived as a leader by their peers (Coyle, 1997). Another barrier may be the individual's lack of expertise on how to impact teaching and learning either within their individual classrooms or the total school program. An additional barrier which may interfere with a teacher's ability to become a distinguished

teacher leader is the principal's inability to foster multiple opportunities for teacher

leaders to emerge (Fullan, 1993; Harris & Muijs, 2005).

My experiences over the last 13 years of serving as an elementary building level

administrator have exposed me to a variety of teacher leadership roles. It is my belief

that in order to be a distinguished teacher leader, one must have the ability to be a leader

first and foremost in their classroom. Teacher leaders in their classrooms provide

consistent opportunities for students to be empowered as active and engaged learners,

teachers consistently use data to inform their daily instructional plans, there is evidence

of student growth for each child, and the teacher's role is primarily that of facilitator.

Once teachers become leaders of their classrooms, meeting the comprehensiveness of

Standard One would then involve the teacher's ability to continually seek out

opportunities to support fellow teachers, develop the necessary professional relationships

in order to work successfully with a variety of people, and have the ability to always

consider the total school program when making decisions.

I also recognize that it is vital for a school principal to create an environment

which empowers teachers to participate in, promote, and develop school wide initiatives.

I believe that traditional teacher leadership roles such as department chair, head teacher,

and committee chair are positions that imply structure of power within their isolated

titles. Teachers who assume such roles may not necessarily influence the teaching and

learning practices of their fellow colleagues. These roles might be limited to sharing

information, rather than providing opportunities to engage in curial conversations about

teaching and learning. Teacher leadership positions such as team leader and curriculum

facilitator allow teacher leaders to work with peers, still in a formal role, yet provide more collaborative efforts than in a formal hierarchy role. However, I believe that becoming a distinguished teacher leader occurs when the lines between formal and informal roles are blurred. I have witnessed successful teacher leadership which impacts teaching and learning among their colleagues without a formal role assigned to the teacher leader. Once blurred, the indirect impact of the teacher leader emerges through collaborative efforts and coaching opportunities in which he/she is able to support more effective instructional practices of other teachers.

Schools that structure themselves to depend on the skills of all professionals throughout the environment have a greater impact on student learning. These schools are also not as dependent upon the principal's leadership in order to self-sustain growth. Therefore, although I have a strong bias towards the benefit of developing teacher leaders, I am also aware of certain perceptions that exist among both principals and teachers surrounding the development of teacher leaders. Some principals are hesitant to give teachers too much control, while some teachers view teacher leaders as meddlers in the business of other people.

Research Trustworthiness

For this research study, I used a variety of data sources, including four elementary schools as well as two different school districts. The intent of these multiple data sources was to gain a better understanding in order to describe how North Carolina administrators at the elementary level are supporting the development of teacher leaders as well as what measures they use to determine distinguished teacher leaders. The multiple perspectives

of elementary principals and identified elementary distinguished teacher leaders also allowed me to accurately describe what roles and responsibilities teacher leaders were implementing in their practice, what path they each took to develop this level of leadership, and what factors, conditions, or attributes contributed to their ability to become a distinguished teacher leader.

Creswell (2003) emphasizes the importance of validity in a qualitative study, and says that it is "seen as a strength of qualitative research" (p. 195). Creswell recommends several strategies that can be implemented to validate a qualitative research study. For this study, I used several of these strategies, including triangulation of data, member-checking, clarifying any bias of the researcher, and using peer debriefing. Following the data collection of both the documents and interviews, I conducted a member check by providing a written record of the interview for each individual I interviewed. All participants were provided an opportunity to validate whether the transcribed interview accurately reflected what they said. I also used a peer reviewer, who is a practicing University Professor and is familiar with the role of teacher leader, in order to validate themes during the data analysis process.

Benefits and Limitations of the Study

This research study is intended to benefit teachers, administrators, districts, universities, and policy makers, not only in North Carolina, but also in other states that may be examining ways to create environments and policies that foster the development and implementation of successful teacher leadership experiences. The study provides insight into how administrators and teachers perceive the responsibilities of being a

teacher leader and what necessary support aspiring teacher leaders may need. The study also uncovered how identified distinguished teacher leaders encountered specific factors or conditions which either facilitated or limited their professional growth in becoming a distinguished teacher leader.

The limitation within this study is that it does not provide a comprehensive analysis which represents how every school in the state of North Carolina is meeting standard one of "*Teachers Demonstrate Leadership.*" However, the study provides a framework that educators, universities, and policy makers can use in order to build upon the capacity of fostering environments that support the development of distinguished teacher leaders.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAVELS OF ELEMENTARY DISTINGUISHED TEACHER LEADERS

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. —Lao Tsu, philosopher

"The Travels" is a collection of stories that was constructed using raw data from the 11 interviews of elementary distinguished teacher leaders. The interview questions allowed each teacher an opportunity to share their personal experiences pertaining to the various roles and responsibilities they each have assumed throughout their career as a teacher leader. Each teacher identified specific factors, conditions, and attributes that contributed to the defining moment in which they transitioned from teacher to distinguished teacher leader. Furthermore, as teachers shared their stories, specific leadership values for each interviewee emerged. These leadership values appeared to define how each teacher navigated through the various trials and tribulations experienced along the way.

"The Travels" collection was constructed from the following interview questions presented to the identified teacher leaders:

- In your own words, define the word *leader*.

- How do you use this definition of *leader* for your work as a teacher?

- Why do you think your principal considers you a distinguished teacher leader?

- When examining Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership, could you share examples of roles you have assumed this year which have demonstrated the distinguished descriptions in the following elements:

  a. (teachers lead in their classroom);

  b. (teachers demonstrate leadership in the school);

  c. (teachers lead the teaching profession); and

  d. (teachers advocate for schools and students).

- What are the benefits of being a teacher leader?

- Have you ever experienced any barriers or resistance as you developed into a distinguished teacher leader? If so, how did you overcome these barriers?

- How do you think you are perceived by others in your teacher leadership roles? What are your thoughts about these perceptions?

- At what point do you feel you transformed from teacher to distinguished teacher leader? What do you feel were the contributing factors?

- What strategies, techniques, people and/or programs have helped you in order to develop into a distinguished teacher leader?

- Describe your personal attributes and characteristics. How do you think these factors have helped your ability to influence others?

- Do you feel the support of your colleagues and your principal is essential in order to develop into a distinguished teacher leader? Why or why not?

- What (if any) future plans do you have in order to continue to grow professionally as a distinguished teacher leader?

What follows are the "travels" of each teacher leader.

Kaitlyn, First-grade Teacher: Building Enduring Relationships

From the moment you enter Kaitlyn's classroom you immediately feel the warm, welcoming, and nurturing learning environment she has created for both children and their families. Kaitlyn has been a classroom teacher for 13 years and is passionate about building relationships with everyone she meets. It is essential for Kaitlyn to ensure that every child in her room feels loved and wanted as she strives to get to know each individual child and their home lives. As Kaitlyn reflected on ways in which she leads in her classroom she shared,

> I really care about the children and this school; I'm always looking for ways to better myself to help the children. If I know I have children that don't have clothes then I'll get clothes for them, or if they don't have food then I'll get them food, I've even cooked meals before and taken it to families.

Kaitlyn begins each new school year by building relationships and feels that this is the first step toward getting involved as a teacher leader.

> I think that's number one. I mean I am so close to parents now. One student I taught was the ring bearer at my wedding. I just have good relationships with parents. When I see parents I go and give them a hug. I just think that that's so important.

For Kaitlyn building relationships is essential for anyone who desires to become a leader.

> I think that a leader in a school is someone the kids can look up to. A leader is someone that has a relationship with the parents, a relationship with the kids . . . reflects on your work . . . to try to meet the needs of all your kids.

Equally important for Kaitlyn are her efforts to build relationships with her colleagues. Kaitlyn currently serves as the leadership chair for her grade level, coaches the lead mentors in her school, and is a member of the district English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core Team. She is responsible for facilitating weekly meetings with her grade level team in which they meet often to go over data and assessments and plan instruction to meet the needs of first grade children. Kaitlyn also collaborates with another team of teachers across the district to create lesson plans and units for each of the ELA strands as well as takes the initiative to research articles and teaching blogs in order to find new ideas while sharing this information with her respective teams. In addition to these responsibilities she works with three mentors to help support their efforts of working with beginning year teachers in the school.

Although Kaitlyn sees herself as being very outgoing, friendly, and willing to help anyone as she builds relationships with others, she has begun to feel in her role of teacher leader, among her peers, she is becoming "like an outsider." Kaitlyn shares,

> Its little things like being nominated for teacher of the year, and team members not saying congratulations. Things like that, I don't know if other people are upset, but I am one that I care how people feel about me, or what they think, so something like that is really important to me, so it's kind of like when you're in that position people look at you differently.

Despite these perceptions, Kaitlyn perseveres and continues her role of working collaboratively with her team to meet the needs of children. "I feel that even if you're in a situation that's not good for the school, you still have to keep going and doing the right thing for children."

Kaitlyn's desire to persevere is aligned with her definition of leader. "A leader is someone who takes initiative and has drive." She recalls the moment in which she feels she developed into a teacher leader. The feedback she received from a former principal, "completely changed me."

> When I first starting teaching I worked with three other women who had been teaching 30 years, and it was kind of like here's a worksheet, here's a worksheet, do a little teaching, and when that's what you're around that's kind of okay, well this is how we do it.

However, Principal Gary came into Kaitlyn's classroom and he made new suggestions on how Kaitlyn could group children and work with them in small groups. Kaitlyn shares, "if you tell me to stand on my head, if that's going to benefit kids, I'm going to do that." She was grateful for the feedback she received and saw the benefits of implementing his suggestions. It was at that moment that she realized that other people had influenced her decisions which may not be best for kids. Kaitlyn now sees her role to "always go with what she feels is right and is working" for kids despite the influence of her colleagues. She continues to use this example as she makes decisions in her current leadership roles as well as in her efforts to continue to grow professionally. As Kaitlyn continues her journey as an elementary teacher leader, she one day hopes to get her master's degree and plans to continue serve as the grade level leadership chair where such an opportunity provides her with "a voice . . . (where I can) share my ideas . . . (and continue to) be helpful to others."

Jeff, K-5 Physical Education: Knowing Where He Stands

Jeff is a teacher leader who is willing to step up to the plate and take on

challenges "regardless of the popular vote." He has an intrinsic desire to take on extra

responsibilities outside of his current position as a physical education teacher.

> I don't just limit myself to just a PE teacher, I'm part of the Response to
> Intervention (RTI) team here at the school, Positive Behavioral Interventions and
> Supports (PBIS), and I am taking on different leadership responsibilities and
> roles, (that) definitely (are) not limiting me to just one thing. I am not one that
> really sits on the sideline to watch things. I really like to be (the) one that steps up
> and doesn't mind taking on those roles and jobs that other people really don't
> want do.

Despite Jeff's desire to assume various responsibilities within the school setting,

throughout the ten years that Jeff as served as a PE teacher, he has also experienced trials

and tribulations throughout his journey of becoming a distinguished teacher leader.

During Jeff's third year of teaching, he decided to pursue his national board

certification. "My first eligible (year), I attempted (national board certification), but I did

not make it." Jeff persevered and attempted national board certification again during his

fourth and fifth year of teaching. "I retook all three and was unsuccessful. But I didn't

let it get me down. Three times is enough." Despite Jeff's failure to accomplish this

professional career goal, he continued to seek out other opportunities which grew him

professionally. "I've never gotten complacent with just being . . . or (to) be content with

just where I am, I always feel like I can contribute more to the school (and) to the staff."

The experience of not obtaining national board certification was the moment that inspired

Jeff to become a teacher leader. Jeff went on to obtain his Masters in School Health

Education and in May 2013 he will complete the requirements for his add on licensure

for School Administration. Jeff shared,

> I think it definitely takes discipline to sit down and go through something like that
> and desire to want to do that. Everything that has happened during my short
> career . . . just having this feeling of wanting to make a change and make a
> difference, and not just limit it to the gym, but definitely branch out . . . that desire
> . . . that not a lot of people have, I mean (to) really want to make that difference.

For Jeff these experiences allowed him to take on more responsibilities and challenges

over the past ten years such as the team leader of his ENCORE team (acronym for the

teachers who teach elective classes) as well as assuming a variety of administrative

responsibilities while working on his administration licensure. Throughout these

experiences, Jeff perceives himself as a teacher leader who is the practical thinker, the

quiet one, and the simple guy within the school who attempts to make things not too

complicated.

> I mean I like to think personally if I had something to say then you know people
> are going to listen . . . I think people kind of receive me as if he has something to
> say then let's quiet down . . . I feel like they respect my opinion and my input . . .
> that when I do step up and say something . . . it is going to be something I guess
> that benefits the group . . . whether it's right or wrong . . . I feel like I have a
> voice. Being here for ten years, I think they kind of know if I have something to
> say, then I feel like they try to respect that and listen.

As Jeff continues his journey down his leadership path he shared, "I'm going to go

wherever I feel led to go and where I'm needed and which door opens up." Although Jeff

eventually desires to have the opportunity to extend his leadership experiences by

becoming a school administrator, for now "I still feel like there's work for me to do here and I can still contribute and help our administration, teachers, and staff."

Linda, First-grade Teacher: The Desire to Serve Others

Linda has been a classroom teacher for ten years. She earned her National Board Certification in 2006 and her Masters of School Administration in 2012. Linda has assumed a variety of formal and informal teacher leadership roles throughout her career including being the grade level chair for the majority of the 10 years she has been a first grade teacher. She has also led professional development for her colleagues through book studies as well as through district opportunities to share best practices with teachers outside of her school. Linda serves as a member of the district's common core team; she coordinates the year book responsibilities for the school, serves as the chair for the school safety committee, served on the school's accreditation team, and attends school board meetings to represent her school. Linda sees her role of teacher leader as an opportunity to guide and serve others.

> I am kind of motherly, cradling, and helping (others) build on their weaknesses. I benefit (from) watching another teacher grow in that area because . . . it makes me feel good. It's kind of along the same lines (of) feeling, when a kid gets something or is growing, the same kind of feeling.

For Linda the journey of becoming a teacher leader happened early within her career.

> My first two years, I ran the twenty-first century community learners grant. It was an after school program that's federally funded and I was the leader and coordinator of it for four years. That was where kind of all this leadership thing started for me; because I never thought I would be in that type of role. And I kind of enjoyed it. And so it just kind of stemmed from there. It was tough at first; I mean it was my first year teaching. The principal came to me and said would you

want to do this and I mean, I was here seven days a week, I had a classroom with a back door and I came in on the weekends because I wanted it to be right. And she knew that, and I know that's why she asked me. I wanted it be exact and right and started that at the beginning, I mean (there were) a lot of ups and downs, a lot of times I said there is no way I can do this for a living. But it was obvious the seed was being planted.

Linda continues to seek opportunities to coach and serve others.

I have learned that if you want someone to be a leader and you see leadership skills in them, you have to kind of put things in their lap to grow them as a teacher leader. I think as a teacher leader it's almost a necessity, kind of like as a classroom teacher, it's your job to develop productive citizens the best you can. I think as a teacher leader it's your job to give those skills to others because I've found over time, and it's funny I've always . . . used to do everything and then when I got pregnant and I was getting my masters, I mean all this happened at the same time, I had to delegate and by delegating I found that they (my colleagues) stepped up to the plate more and did lead more things. So we're all taking a part in that leadership. What's happened this year as far as all of us, (is that we) are kind of sharing a piece of the pie.

Although Linda is ready for the next chapter in her life, as she desires to become a school administrator someday, her work of being a teacher leader and serving other teachers is not done. Linda would like an opportunity to coordinate professional development during the school day for the staff. Her vision is to provide opportunities for different teacher leaders within the school to share best practices with each other. Linda would like to see a program which provides teachers with classroom coverage in order for them to come together during their lunch time and engage in professional development which would allow everyone an opportunity to continue the path of professional growth.

Aimee, K-5 Physical Education: A Problem Solver

From the moment Aimee and I met, it was evident that she was a take-charge kind-of-person. Aimee is an elementary physical education teacher. She also holds a Master's degree in reading and has coached a variety of teams at both the high school and college level. Although Aimee has assumed a variety of roles, she sees her role of being a teacher leader as an opportunity to "rise to the occasion."

> If I have a problem with something, if I don't see something as being adequate or if I see an area that the school's weak in, my thing has always been, I could complain about it to the administration, or I could go to them with a problem and a solution. And my thing is always go with a solution or an idea to solve what you think we're lacking in.

As Aimee attempts to problem solve various situations as a teacher leader, she also maintains the focus that,

> It always goes back to speaking up for the kids, speaking up (for) what's best for kids, and not doing it in a defiant manner, but doing it in a (way which communicates) this is how we have to get better.

Aimee's ability to collaborate and problem solve with others occurs within a variety of leadership roles she assumes. Aimee is a mentor, a member of the vision team, a member of the district healthy living core team, and recently helped lead the school's accreditation team. These opportunities have provided a forum for Aimee to "network, network, network, and just share ideas."

> The guy that I coach with, he's a science teacher. And it's not in my field but we're still learning how to motivate. We're still getting different ideas. I think that is probably the most important part of networking outside of the school. I

think that when you bring in ideas from outside it just refreshes things; it gives you a different spin on things.

In addition to the benefits of networking, Aimee shares personal benefits of being provided with opportunities to be a teacher leader. "I think I'm utilized more, which I enjoy because if I had to just sit back and do the same thing I would probably get bored." Although Aimee enjoys the various leadership roles she assumes, she also recognizes that, "my coworkers understand what I am trying to do, and I believe they want it to be done, but at the same time, they're like, oh, give me a freakin' break, you keep killing me with this." Yet, Aimee perseveres and finds herself "constantly put into a position where it's like okay, come on guys, let's go." She relates her leadership drive and desire to always find solutions to problems to her experiences with athletics. "I think that's where a lot of the leadership and striving to get to the next level comes from; (it) is my competitive sports background."

Yet, throughout Aimee's 17-year tenure career, it was not until a couple of years of ago that she attributes her leap from teacher to teacher leader. She recalls when her assistant principal said, "we have to get you to the mentor training, it's time for you to be a leader." Aimee responded, "What are you talking about, me?" Yet Aimee reflected,

> Once I kind of took that mentor training (where) hundreds of teachers are involved in this mentor training, it planted that seed. It was okay, it's time now. You've got to go off and you've got to help others and you've got to take a different leadership role here.

Aimee looks forward to future opportunities to continue her efforts of collaborating with others and networking. She desires to stay in an environment "where somebody can say,

give me your ideas (or) what do you think about this?" Ironically, Aimee shared at one point in the interview, "I don't know if I would define myself as a distinguished leader," yet as I left the school that afternoon, on the marquee sign it said, "Congratulations to Aimee, our 2012-2013 Teacher of the Year."

Kyle, Fourth-grade Teacher: Passionate about His Work

Kyle is a teacher who is devoted to student learning. He has a passionate appetite to be a teacher leader within the classroom as he encourages his students "to take responsibility for their own learning."

> I incorporate cooperative learning groups in my classroom for kids to take an active leadership role in their learning. There is a lot of experimentation going on around, a lot of cooperative learning going (on). Giving them (students) the tools that they need and letting them actually explore before I even explain anything. They become more independent and they can be problem solvers and critical thinkers. I have that compassion and that passion . . . for teaching and for learning for students to understand that it is very important to gain these types of knowledge that they need and to understand (what) they need right now to propel them to the next level in education.

Kyle is also passionate about taking active roles in leadership throughout the school. He currently serves on both the school's leadership team and vision team.

> I think it is very vital, very important (for) me to have an appetite to take it a step further. Taking an active role within my school and wanting to know the ins and outs and how to operate a school system or how to operate a school.

Yet, for Kyle he "always goes back to the student, and how it's helpful, what services and resources that they need."

That is why I chose the elementary level. I feel like I can exude my passion and dedication to student learning. Some of the kids have taken on that approach within my classroom. They see my desire and my love, how I care about them so much. So they are taking that and internalizing that, Mr. Kyle cares about me, you know, since he cares about me, I'm going to take that active approach on this. I had one student who needed some assistance; she wasn't getting it at home. I told her if you take extra time when you're here . . . you can do it. She took her recess time to work on math facts. She's got better. Her reading (has also) escalated. She saw my passion; she knew I wanted to help her.

For Kyle the defining moment in which he feels he transformed from teacher to teacher leader was when he made the choice to enroll in graduate school in order to pursue his degree in school administration.

I feel like grad school (has) helped me out a whole lot because it allowed me to see the world in a different light as opposed to a teacher and then a leader. I saw the need of me becoming a leader. I was the type of guy where I would just sit back in the back and just observe. Now I'm being propelled and pushed toward the forefront to have an opportunity, to gain an opportunity to lead. I wasn't a public speaker. I didn't like to be up front, but now I'm becoming that guy that is placed in that capacity so I am becoming more comfortable with that because you're on stage in the classroom all the time. So, you know, when I am on stage in front of my peers, I have to perform too, as well.

As Kyle continues his professional career, he hopes to eventually assume a role in school administration and eventually become a superintendent. "I just feel like those are in the future for myself . . . becoming a public figure as far as education goes." He plans to continue to assume active roles in other facets of leadership and shared future plans of leading initiatives at his school to encourage more community involvement as well as projecting his passion in order to motivate other teachers to become lifelong learners in order to "promote student achievement and increase student learning."

Pete, Fourth-grade Teacher: Ability to Reinvent Herself

Pete has been a classroom teacher since 1980 and shared how the professional

environment of schooling has changed over her time.

> When I first started teaching there was no mentor. I graduated in December. I
> walked into a classroom in February with nothing. And I think that's changed
> tremendously. We hold these baby teachers' hands. We have those mentors. We
> have those people to depend on, they have their team, they have their teaching
> community, they have all that. When I started there wasn't anything like that.
> You were lucky to get a standard course of study. Now you've got all these
> resources. You've got all these people, curriculum facilitators. It's a whole
> different ball game. The first year I taught in school I went to an elementary
> school. It was terrifying. I can't say when I first started that there were many
> leaders.

Yet for Pete it was not until she transitioned to her current school 13 years ago that she

felt that she had the opportunity to reinvent herself and became a teacher leader.

> I think whenever I was at Flemington Elementary, because I started there (when) I
> was 21 . . . (although) I was willing to be a leader . . . I felt like I was always sort
> of considered the new kid or the young one. But whenever I came here I was
> much more a veteran teacher and someone was asking my opinion. (That) was
> the turning point. And it was time to start something new. And I think sometimes
> when you start something new you become better-I became better. Starting new,
> starting fresh. After 20 years in one place and then coming here, I got better. I
> started being on more committees. I was school leadership for four years in a
> row. Whenever I started here, those teachers looked to me to take them on this
> adventure.

Since that moment Pete shared "they call me mom" when talking about her colleagues at

her school. Pete shared that her years of experience and the various trainings she has had

over the years are contributing factors of why the six teachers on her team value her

input. "I tend to be the one that is saying, okay, we need to do this in advance. I hold my team together."

It has not always been such an easy transition for Pete as she reinvented herself into a teacher leader.

> There are some strong willed women that want to be a little bossy and not collaborate and not cooperate. There have been principals that have had to step in with that kind of thing. Sometimes it wasn't so pleasant, but I think the point was gotten across.

During these times, Pete shared, "I'm mainly pretty calm, not very outspoken at meetings and everything, but I think they know oh Pete, she's going to do what she's supposed to do." Pete attributes the ability to stay calm in the face adversity by putting herself in her students' and parents' place. She shared how times had changed throughout her career and felt it was her responsibility to change with the times. "Family life has changed. So (I've) had to change with it."

As we discussed Pete's future plans as a teacher leader, a tear appeared in her eye. Pete shared her plans to retire. "I still have one more year. I'm not sure that I'm going to do much in leadership next year. But when I retire I'm not done." Pete predicts that her current school may be eligible for Title I funding in the next couple of years. She is interested in coming back and serving as a lead math teacher. "That's what I want. If I can't do it here I'll do it somewhere else." In addition to continuing her work as an educator after retirement, Pete proudly shared that her team also jokes with her by saying, "I'm going to be texting them for whenever I retire and say, have you done such and such?" After sharing this experience, Pete smiled at the thought of being needed.

Katrina, Second-grade Teacher: Resourceful to Others

Walk into Katrina's classroom and you will immediately be in awe by the wealth of resources which are neatly organized and labeled throughout the colorful and text-rich elementary learning environment she has created for both children and her colleagues. Katrina has been teaching for sixteen years; however she acquired many of these materials from her mother who was also an elementary teacher. "I think others think I am like an Edu-Play in here as far as like resources. I mean I have people from all grade levels come to me for resources." Yet, Katrina is not only seen as a resource of materials, her colleagues also recognize her ability to be resourceful through her creativity as she is constantly coming up with new ideas. "If someone's stumped they'll come and (say) hey, Katrina, what can we do with this? Do you have any ideas? So maybe (I have) a little bit of (that) creative piece." Katrina has even been approached by other grade level teams who have attempted to recruit her to become a member of their teams. Katrina shared a time when she was approached by others, "I think you're a team player, you are one that's going to come to the table with something to share." She attributes this perception to her willingness to do whatever she is asked to do within the school.

Katrina also extends her ability to be resourceful to others through the various leadership roles she assumes throughout the school. She has served on the school's leadership team, the English as a Second Language (ESL) team, the district essential standards Science Vertical team, and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) board. Katrina went on to share a time in which she felt she was resourceful to her administrative team.

> We had a triad visit and I'm not kidding, I had 18 people walk in my classroom. Do you know how intimidating that was for me? I am telling you (they) were lined up in a circle around my room and my kids are like involved. I bet I had 8 different things going on in here, you know. I'm thinking, jeez, oh my goodness, but then, you know, that's a privilege, because they didn't go in all the classrooms. She (the principal) chose my room to bring those people in here for a reason.

As Katrina reflects on such opportunities she shared,

> To me that's an honor . . . because I feel like I'm a good leader. My principal, she'll come to me . . . a lot for smart board training or training for mClass (an early literacy assessment software program). A lot of time she approaches me, are you interested in this . . . it gives me that opportunity to take on those different things.

Katrina attributes her moment from transitioning from teacher to teacher leader

due to her ability to persevere and seek help from others.

> Any time I get stumped with something . . . you know I am willing to go, hey, yeah, I am not perfect and immediately I am going to others for help. I just think that's part of what led me to where I am now, you know?

As Katrina continues her journey of serving as a teacher leader she plans to pursue her

National Board certification in the near future.

Norita, ESL K-5 Teacher: Courageous

Norita started her career in teaching 14 years ago. She came to the United States

with a Visiting International Faculty Program (VIF). She recalled,

> So many of the things that this school did I was unfamiliar with so I had to kind of learn, and then just the way the schools are set up is different but definitely has helped me, you know, all the different professional development.

Along the way Norita has assumed a variety of leadership roles such as leading the

Academic Enrichment Program (AEP) committee at her school where representatives

from each grade level meet with Norita monthly to discuss AEP students. She uses this

opportunity to provide teachers with necessary classroom and testing modifications for

the children they serve within Norita's program. Norita also serves on the school's

leadership team and the district's English as a Second Language (ESL) team where she

teaches other ESL teachers within the district about the World-Class Instructional Design

and Assessment (WIDA) standards.

However, Norita does not see herself as a distinguished teacher leader. "To me

it's just funny because I don't think-you know distinguished sounds so like wow. I try to

do my work the best I can and I participate in things that we all need to participate (in)."

In order for Norita to participate fully in various roles within her school and school

district, she had to overcome the fear of public speaking.

> I am very self-conscious of like speaking in front of other people because I know everybody's listening for the accent and they get hung up on that and they don't listen to what you are saying. I had issue with that before. So I had (to) do more kind of staff development and kind of have to put myself out there is when I think maybe that (was) the turning point. That distinguished thing. I was called to do it and I mean I really didn't want to. To me it's kind of scary. You know it's just that it is hard to kind of-but now once you tell you need me to do something I will go ahead and do it.

Over time Norita became more comfortable with speaking in front of her peers because

she has felt the support of her colleagues and administration.

> When I have to presentations or things like that, people have been very polite, very respectful. And you know they have showed me that they care, they wanted to listen to what I had to say. So I do feel like they respect as a teacher too.

Although overcoming the fear of speaking publicly was an obstacle for Norita, her future plans to extend her leadership now include reaching out to the school's Hispanic population by conducting more parent meetings in an effort to engage more parents within the school community.

Barbara, Fourth-grade Teacher: Confident

Barbara has been an elementary teacher for 21 years and holds a Masters in elementary education. She has assumed a variety of formal and informal leadership roles throughout her career such as severing on various committees, being the leadership chair and grade level representative, running an after school tutoring program, as well as always keeping an open door policy for "anybody (who) wants to talk to me at any time about anything." Although Barbara has demonstrated leading the teaching profession through the various leadership roles she has assumed, when Barbara reflects on leadership she shared,

> (It's) such a kind of nebulous term, you know? I just do what I need to do. I don't expect my administration to take care of all my problems for me. I don't mind taking on extra responsibilities. I think that's just one of those things that certain people can figure out . . . and know how to kind of maneuver. It's not rocket science, you know. I have learned how to say no to some things (too). It's not always easy. But yes, having to know that this is all I can take on right now.

As Barbara continued to reflect on opportunities to assume various leadership roles she shared her personal benefit of being a teacher leader,

Control. Is that honest enough? I like to . . . know . . . like for example, doing the schedule; I like to know what my schedule's going to be. I want to make sure that the things like in the schedule (are) where I want it. (I) just make sure that my voice is heard. Same thing with you know, school improvement, making sure that like what I feel is important is going to happen. Budget, I loved being on the budget committee. Because I'm like I can choose how things are spent. I got to make those decisions. I want to make sure things are being spent on things that I think they should be spent. So maybe it's a control issue.

As you talk with Barbara it is evident that she is confident in her ability to assume various leadership roles and she recalled that becoming a teacher leader happened early in her career.

Soon after I started teaching I had moved into that role because there wasn't anybody else in that role. Somebody had to assume leadership. And there were few people who had been there long enough because we had a very transitory staff. (I started) at a Navajo reservation and so the transition (of) people were constantly in and out, every year a whole new staff, new principal, new administration, new superintendent, new everything. After two years you're like, I'm the person who's been here the longest. There was just a group of us who had been there long enough that we were the fixture, you know? We were the ones who kind of knew the system and knew what needed to be done in order to keep the school running smoothly and make sure that the classrooms were progressing the way they were supposed to be doing.

As Barbara continues her path of "when (there is) something (that) needs to be done, I'll do it," she also has plans to eventually pursue her National Board Certification and continue her efforts of "bringing a more democratic process to things instead of making things more systematic."

Jamie, Second-grade Teacher: Humble

From the moment I met Jamie it was obvious that she is a very quiet and reserved teacher leader who shared,

> I don't see myself as a leader. But I do stick up for my kids. I just do what I'm asked, and then try to go beyond, give 110% to my job. That's just what I believe in. You have to give 110%. And if you're not going to do it, it's just not worth trying. I really don't see that people perceive me as a leader. I hope they just see me as an ordinary person, just as an ordinary teacher that's giving, you know, just coming to school, coming to work, doing her job and teaching and just doing her best, doing what she can do. I don't want to be seen as an overachiever. I just hope we're all coming here to do our main goal, which is to teach the kids and we should all be coming here to do our best. I don't want to be seen as the leader because when I think of a leader it's like one person doing everything and I don't think that's the way it should be.

Although Jamie has only been teaching six years, it is obvious through the variety of roles she has assumed that she has demonstrated teacher leadership characteristics. "I volunteer. Sometimes too much. I am on committees and whenever an email comes out needing help, you know, I volunteer. Just whenever they need help with something, I'll do it." Jamie has lead her school through the implementation of the Positive Based Intervention and Support (PBIS) check in and out process, she has served in a lead role for the school's Accelerator Reading (AR) committee; she has facilitated professional development for other teachers within her district through the elementary collaboration sessions, and had lead weekly grade level team meetings in which data is used to inform instruction.

Even though Jamie may be modest about her influence as a teacher leader, she attributes her transition toward assuming a variety of leadership roles to the opportunities that her principal provided her during her third year of teaching.

> She came to me and asked me to be on the PBIS committee and it just kind of went from there. I just volunteered and volunteered. Sometimes with more on my plate, but I got it done, so I guess that's all that matters.

Jamie went on to share that during this same period of time her principal came to her and asked her to attend a leadership workshop.

> I'm like leadership, no, no, no, no. This chick is not a leader. And she's like just go, just go. And it was so awesome because they actually sat there and taught us how you can become a leader. And I was like, wow, and then I came back to school and she (the principal) wanted us to present on the workshop and I was like, oh my, I'm sitting up here giving a presentation to my colleagues, I would never have done this before. And it actually made me feel like I was being a leader, but it was pretty awesome experience. I think you could be a born leader and learn to be a leader. And that's what the workshop talked about how some people were born and then how you could learn to be a leader.

For Jamie, assuming leadership roles continues to challenge her to step outside of her comfort zone. "I consider myself a very shy person, like this was very hard for me to come out say, yeah, I'll do this interview." Jamie perceives leaders as individuals who are outgoing and someone who is always putting themselves out there. Although, Jamie might be bashful, she certainly does not hesitate to put her herself out there by continuing to volunteer and desires to continue to grow as a professional by pursing her masters in either elementary education or school counseling in the fall.

Sue, AIG Specialist: Ability to See the Bigger Picture

Sue has been teaching for 20 years. Throughout this time, Sue has served as a middle school teacher for grades six and eight, an elective teacher, an elementary classroom teacher, a Title I teacher, and currently serves as an elementary AIG specialist. Due to the variety of roles which Sue has assumed throughout her career, she shared how these varied experiences contributed to her ability to see the bigger picture of a total school program.

So I'm kind of that leader in the school that's kind of pulling everybody together. I look at that as being a leader as far as how to pull resources in a school. I guess that part of do I need to delegate some of it, (or) do I need to pull in help from a team. What can we do? How can we meet the need? I can't always be the one to fix this, but I can try to find someone who can help in that situation.

Some days I feel like I'm not considered to not be a real teacher because I'm not in the classroom anymore. And I get that because I've been there. But for the most part I think I am probably what they would say, the teacher here (who) . . . brings (ideas) to the table. I can see where they (classroom teachers) are coming from. I can see all areas. I know what they have on their plate. I feel like I'm perceived as just being again a huge advocate, a leader, to get things done for these students. Honestly I think just because my background is so varied . . . and I'm very much an extrovert. I am assertive . . . that helps (me) because in my job I can't let certain things go. I can't let certain things happen. I'm comfortable in new situations. I've really learned about myself in the last five years, personal life and professional life, that I am okay with change, it doesn't scare me. And so I think the fact that I am outspoken and I've never met a stranger . . . if it's for the best interest of students, I go with it.

In her current role as the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) specialist, she has severed in several different schools within her district. Sue feels these opportunities have contributed to her ability be fluid and flexible and has helped her assume various leadership roles.

Last year I was at a school where I knew no one. I didn't know the principal, I didn't know anybody. So I had to kind of walk in and establish a role that I feel good about now. I've got to walk into situations totally blind . . . and that's probably helped me (become a distinguished teacher leader).

In an effort to extend her leadership opportunities within various school environments, Sue participates in a professional learning community monthly with other AIG teachers within the district. She assumes a lead role in providing professional development for her AIG colleagues within the district as she was selected to represent

the district and attend the AIG institute in Laurinburg, NC. Although Sue does not

currently serve on a school's leadership team, she shared, "I am aware of the goals of the

school as far as our school improvement plan . . . and they come to me to submit (any

changes)." She also collaborates often with grade level teams in which they analyze data

to drive their instructional planning such as designing differentiated Project Based

Learning (PBLs). In addition to Sue's informal teacher leadership roles, she formally

leads the school's Individual Differentiated Educational Plan (IDEP) team and serves on

several committees.

Sue currently holds a Master's degree in reading and is completing her future

plans to continue to grow professionally as a teacher leader. "Our AIG coordinator, I

think she's going to do another year and I think she's planning to retire. Do I entertain

the fact of AIG coordinator next?" Although Sue is still not quite sure what the next step

in her career may be, it was evident while talking to her that her various experiences have

clearly contributed to her ability to see all sides of educational issues and have allowed

her to develop the ability to view these issue in a much broader context.

Conclusion

"The Travels" collection provides an opportunity to hear the voices of each of the

11 distinguished teacher leaders who participated in this study. This is important to the

study because their individual stories revealed that there is not one clearly defined "path"

in order for a teacher to transition into a distinguished teacher leader. In fact, "The

Travels" collection uncovered that there are a variety of complex defining moments and

journeys that contribute to the development of becoming an elementary distinguished

teacher leader. Equally important, "The Travels" collection uncovered that each

participant appeared to have a dominating leadership value. This dominant leadership

value played an essential role in how each teacher leader navigated the various roles,

responsibilities, trials, and tribulations associated with being a distinguished teacher

leader.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF DISTINGUISHED ELEMENTARY TEACHER LEADERS' DESCRIPTIONS OF INFLUENCES ON THEIR WORK

The only journey is the one within. —Rainer Maria Rilke, poet and novelist

Chapter V transitions from the collections of stories from distinguished elementary teacher leaders to a discussion of specific examples of data collected from both distinguished teacher leaders and their principals. The conceptual framework from the methodology is revisited at the conclusion of this chapter with a discussion of findings related to context and resulting themes from the research study. Furthermore, this chapter presents the research findings of the data coded and categorized according to the primary and subsequent research questions which guided the study.

The Journey of Becoming a Distinguished Elementary Teacher Leader

Research Question

How do teachers develop from teacher to distinguished teacher leader?

Teacher to Distinguished Teacher Leader

As I set out to research the topic of how a teacher becomes a distinguished teacher leader, my original intent was to provide aspiring teachers with a more concrete path, a checklist, or a framework of steps one might take to become a teacher leader. However, after discussing this topic with distinguished teacher leaders and their principals, the study revealed there is not one clearly-defined path. In fact, the teacher leaders and the

principals I met shared a variety of complex defining moments and journeys which contributed to the development of becoming a distinguished teacher leader. Although there is not one clearly-defined path, there were five themes that emerged as defining factors which lead teachers to transform themselves into distinguished teacher leaders: a purpose for leading, refusing to compromise, the importance of opportunities, the desire to reach beyond the classroom, and the influence of self-awareness.

A Purpose for Leading

Schools, by nature, are intended to be united by shared values and a defined vision in which student learning is usually the common thread or purpose of schooling (Rakiz & Swanson, 2000). Although the teachers and principals who were part of this study were in schools with a similar shared school vision, the purpose for becoming a distinguished teacher leader varied among the participants and was more dependent upon individual experiences for each teacher interviewed. Some teacher leaders in this study found their sense of purpose from their work, while others found their purpose from external influences. Baldoni (2012) shares that a purpose drives the creativity necessary for high performance, but it is up to the leader to give life to this purpose through one's own behaviors and actions in order to inspire others to follow. Pink (2009) describes purpose as "doing something that matters, doing it well, and doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves" (p. 146).

For distinguished teacher leader Barbara her purpose for becoming a teacher leader happened "soon after I started teaching." At the time Barbara had worked at a school on a Navajo reservation in which the school experienced a very transitory staff.

> Every year you had a whole new staff, a new principal, new administration, new superintendent, new everything. There was just a group of us who had been there long enough that we were the fixture, you know? We were the ones who kind of knew the system and knew what needed to be done in order to keep the school running smoothly and make sure that classrooms were progressing the way they were suppose to be doing.

Barbara realized that she would need to become a teacher leader in order to promote her vision as she shared, "by then I think it was apparent that I had a vision about how I thought things should be and where we should be going and what we should be doing to become more successful."

Kaitlyn attributes her transition from teacher to distinguished teacher leader as resulting from being motivated to adjust her instructional practices. A former principal coached Kaitlyn on her instructional practices within the classroom. "He completely changed me," commented Kaitlyn as she reflected upon working at one of the lowest performing elementary schools within the district among a team of "three other women who had been teaching 30 years." Kaitlyn shared how she was influenced by her team when she first started teaching,

> It was kind of like "here's a worksheet, here's a worksheet, do a little teaching, and when that's what you're around that's kind of okay, well this is how I do it (teaching)." Then Principal Bob came in and asked Kaitlyn, "How about groups? Let's group these children up, let's work in small groups. This group needs that, this group needs this." He would come in the classroom; the academic coach would come into the classroom and show you. And I did everything that he said . . . wow this really works! Those kids were just rotating and moving based on their needs all day.

For Kaitlyn this experience led her to "keep going and doing the right thing for the children" both within her classroom and outside of her classroom despite other influences which she continued to encounter during her 13 years of teaching.

Sue's purpose to become a distinguished teacher leader was driven by her position as the Academically and Intelligently Gifted (AIG) specialist and her desire to advocate for her identified students.

> My personal mission was just to really get classroom teachers to differentiate. So that year I was just to be there for them (teachers), you know, hit their grade level meetings when I could, or after school CASA meetings which I attended every Monday. I was there just to listen and to give ideas and speak up for the higher level kids. I wasn't just there taking up space, you know, I had ideas, I had resources, and I came prepared for that during CASA meetings. The teachers here are now starting to do that (differentiation of instruction) without me. And that's great because I know I've done my job as a leader.

Sue continues her efforts of seeking opportunities to support her fellow teachers, "I do want to share, I want to lead and show them how to do that" as she reflected upon the new Common Core curriculum and instructional shifts her colleagues were experiencing this year. Although Sue seeks opportunities to lead both within her school and outside of her school through various committees and opportunities, her purpose of being a teacher leader continues to be "to make sure they (students) are being differentiated for all day, no just when I am pulling them out."

Refusing to Compromise

Refusing to compromise was a second reason that emerged from this study which motivated a teacher to transform to a distinguished teacher leader. To compromise implies to arrive at a settlement by making certain concessions. The act of compromising

may reduce the quality or value of something. Bennis (2003) claims that a leader has "a clear idea of what he or she want to do, professionally and personally, and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures" (p. 31).

When the core values or principles were tested of distinguished teacher leader Jeff, he refused to compromise. After attempting National Board Certification for the third time he shared,

> I've never gotten complacent with just being or being content with just where I am, I always feel like I can contribute more to the school, to the staff. Attempting National Boards, even though I was unsuccessful, still grew (me) as a teacher.

For Jeff this experience "definitely changed the past two or three years." He started working on various committees throughout the school and made the choice to "branch out" as well as to pursue his master's degree. "Just having this feeling of wanting to make a change and make a difference and not just limit to the gym" provided Jeff with the motivation to transition from teacher to distinguished teacher leader.

The Importance of Opportunities

With the current demands for accountability and student learning results, schools can no longer support the top-down hierarchy of administrators being the only leaders in a school. Therefore, for many of the teachers and principals who participated in this study, they spoke of the importance of opportunities that facilitated teachers becoming distinguished teacher leaders. Duffy (2010) shares, "leadership is not limited to one person; rather, it is required from people at all levels of the school system" (p. 33). The advancement of developing teacher leaders will only exist when there are opportunities

within a shared leadership model which empowers a learning community (Lambert et al., 1995). This study uncovered that teacher leadership was advanced when teachers experienced increased support and opportunities from their principals and colleagues to apply leadership skills.

Jamie contributes the moment she transitioned from teacher to distinguished teacher leader during her third year of teaching as an opportunity presented itself and she was encouraged by her principal.

> Something was just instilled in me and they (the administration) asked me, it was when we started PBIS [Positive Based Intervention Support]. They came to me asked me to be on the committee and it just took off. I went to workshops and it was actually probably the first time I've actually been asked by an administrator would you be on this committee, and it just kind of went from there. (Since then) I just volunteered, sometime with more on my plate, but I get it done, so I guess that's all that matters.

Linda also was encouraged by her principal who provided her an opportunity to become a teacher leader. Linda's principal asked her to lead an after school tutoring program for the school. "I had never been in a role like that before. It was tough at first; I mean it was my first year teaching," shared Linda. Being a teacher leader for Linda was, "not in the forefront of my mind . . . but obviously the seed was being planted." Linda coordinated and led the after school tutoring program for several years. This experience as well as other leadership opportunities encouraged Linda to pursue her Masters in School Administration. "I feel like I've gotten strong with it and now I'm to the point where . . . I'm ready for the next chapter," shared Linda as she one day hopes to become a school principal.

Unlike Jamie and Linda, who were presented with opportunities by their principals or administrators, for Pete becoming a distinguished teacher leader happened when she transferred to a new school. After 20 years of teaching at the same school, it was not until Pete transferred to a new school had she felt that she had transformed from teacher to distinguished teacher leader,

> When I came here it was a turning point. I was much more a veteran teacher (at this new school) and someone was asking my opinion (she smiled). Opportunities kind of molded you into being on more committees. I was on our math and science team. I think I was not as willing to be much of leader there (previous school) because the school was a very strong school and I felt like I was always sort of considered the new kid or the young one because . . . there were lots of older teachers.

Transitioning to a new school environment provided Pete with an opportunity to demonstrate her leadership skills in ways she had not had the opportunity to do before.

The importance of providing opportunities for teachers to become distinguished teacher leaders also was a common theme among all of the principals in this study. Principal Amy shared,

> I have several teachers who are also the ones who do my staff development. I try to match up a lot of the new initiatives, like the common core, and the essential standards, and mClass. I try to match those up with teachers who have demonstrated some strengths in those areas and staff members who are comfortable receiving knowledge or information from those folks.

Principal Christina reflected how, "I feel like we're on the same playing field where I feel like the teachers are just as important as I am and feel like we're coworkers . . . when it comes to educating the children." Therefore, Principal Christina and Principal Madeline

both spoke of a variety of strategies they used to promote shared leadership opportunities

within their schools. Principal Christina spends time encouraging individual teachers to

take advantage of certain leadership opportunities whether it is attending trainings outside

of the school or serving on various committees within the school or district. Principal

Madeline assigns her teachers to different committees "from every grade level . . . and

they've sort of formed their own leadership roles." Principal Chloe shared how she

encourages teacher leadership, "I've made opportunities available and encourage them to

take advantage of it."   Such opportunities provided to teachers by their principals are

aligned to the North Carolina School Executive Principal Standards in which school

executives "create processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles

within the school that foster their career development" (McRel, 2009b, p. 14). As a

result, Principal Chloe went on to share,

> I can see potential and I can think oh, this person will be awesome doing this, this,
> and this outside of our school or within our district or whatever, but if the person
> doesn't want it and if the person doesn't feel it, and if they're not comfortable
> with it, then I would not push it.

The Desire to Reach Beyond the Classroom

A fourth theme which emerged on how a teacher develops from teacher to

distinguished teacher leader was one's desire to reach beyond his or her classroom.

Schools which provide opportunities for leadership by reversing the top-down approach

to education reform provide teachers with flexible ways to impact the teaching and

learning outcomes beyond their own classrooms (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Teachers in this study shared a variety of leadership roles they assumed outside of their

classrooms both within their schools and within their districts. Leading beyond the classroom was defined by the participants in this study as a means to promote one's area of expertise by working collaboratively with others.

The specific leadership roles of teachers leading beyond the classroom are described later on in this chapter. However, for the participants in this study the desire to reach beyond the classroom was an intrinsic motivating factor for assuming a teacher leadership role. Teacher leader Linda shared while reflecting on ways she leads beyond the classroom, "I (have) the benefit of watching another teacher grow in that area, (it) makes me feel good. It's kind of along the same lines (of) feeling when a kid gets something or is growing, the same kind of feeling." Kyle expressed his intrinsic desire to reach beyond the classroom as he talked about a variety of ideas he has for his school,

> I need to get in a vision team meeting, what are some of the things that we can do, start an after school program, after school tutorial program, getting extra tutoring, you know starting an intervention block for students that struggling.

Jeff reflected, "I think it just goes back to willingness to search for growth and ask where can (I) benefit or apply myself more in what area of school."

All of the teachers and principals in the study recognized the importance of extending a teachers' reach beyond the traditional classroom boundaries. "It may not be higher order level leadership but sometimes just having a teacher share a good example of something that they did in her class at a staff meeting can help other teachers who are struggling," shared Principal Amy. Distinguished teacher leader Aimee shared, "I think those extra initiatives are what makes teacher leaders, it is when they (teachers) are

willing to kind of go outside their classroom and talk and discuss and try and make changes." Principal Amy reflected on when a teacher transforms into a distinguished teacher leader,

> (It is) when you are good at what you do but also recognize that there is more to it than just your classroom, that you are a piece of the whole school community . . . that is when you see that teacher leader really surface.

As for Principal Christina, she describes leading beyond the classroom as times "when they (teachers) become a mentor rather than a mentee, they've crossed that threshold."

The participants in this study shared a variety of diverse and flexible roles teachers assumed in order to lead beyond the classroom which either directly or indirectly reached larger numbers of students beyond their own classroom walls. For many of the teacher leaders, the ability to reach beyond the classroom was personally and professionally rewarding. Distinguished teacher leader Aimee shared, "I think I'm utilized more, which I enjoy, because if I had to sit back and do the same thing I would probably get bored." Distinguished teacher leader Jamie also reflected, "Being a teacher leader, you feel good about yourself. It feels worthwhile."

The Influence of Self-awareness

A final theme that was uncovered in this study as a defining factor which lead teachers to transform themselves into distinguished teacher leaders was the influence of being self-aware. Self-awareness is crucial when building a team (Tjan, 2012) of teacher leaders. As Whitaker (2003) shares, "we all struggle to achieve this self-awareness—all too often, we fall short" (p. 5). People are uniquely defined by their differences and

therefore the way we react to situations, learn, and synthesize information varies. Self-awareness then becomes essential in order to better understand ourselves. Having self-awareness empowers us to make changes and to build on areas of strength as well as identify areas where we would like to make improvements (Bennis, 2003). Bennis, in his book, *On Becoming a Leader*, devotes an entire chapter to "Knowing Yourself" and shares, "All of the leaders I talked with agreed that no one can teach you how to become yourself, to take charge, to express yourself, except you" (Bennis, 2003, p. 49).

In the case of distinguished teacher leader Norita, she recognized she had a fear of public speaking and she felt that her "turning point" towards becoming a teacher leader was her ability to overcome this fear. "I am very self-conscious of like speaking in front of other people because I know everybody's listening for the accent and they get hung up on that and they don't listen to what you are saying." Even though Norita was very much aware of her fear of public speaking, she was asked by her principal to provide professional development for her colleagues and she overcame her fear by mustering up the courage to follow through with this request. Over time Norita shared, "when I do presentations or things like that, people have been very polite, very respectful. They have showed me that they care, they wanted to listen to what I had to say."

The influence of self-awareness for Sue was when she recognized the need to further develop her knowledge and confidence within her specialist area in order to become a teacher leader. Therefore she made the choice to acquire these skills by pursuing her master's degree.

> I knew I could still be their leader, but I didn't have the knowledge and I have to have the evidence, I want them (fellow teachers) to have the data, I want them to have the research when I say we need to do this and this is why . . . so once I learned that, then I could focus on truly understanding the students and meeting the needs of students.

Distinguished teacher leader Katrina reflected, "There's a lot I have to do to improve myself. Even a distinguished teacher, you're always learning. Every day there is something new to learn."

An additional avenue of being self-aware that many of the distinguished teacher leaders in this study found to be essential in order to continue to grow professionally, involved pursuing advanced college degrees. Of the 11 distinguished teacher leaders who were part of this study, seven teachers commented on the value of developing themselves professionally in which they all were either pursuing advanced college degrees or had obtained a master's degree. The four teachers who had not obtained a graduate degree, when they were asked about their future plans of growing professionally as a teacher leader, three teachers shared they would like to obtain a master's degree, one teacher also shared she would like to pursue her National Board Certification, and one teacher had plans to retire the following school year.

As the four principals reflected on how teachers transform from teacher to teacher leader, all four commented on the importance of self-awareness. In fact, the principals felt that having the skill of self-reflection was essential in order for teachers to effectively identify both their strengths and their areas of growths while working within their professional environments. As Principal Madeline reflected about a teacher who desired to be a distinguished teacher leader, "I don't think it's her ability, it's just her drive. . . . I

just want you giving me your best when you're here and I don't think she knows what her best is." Principal Chloe spoke about the importance of self-awareness among teachers, "They have to be self-aware. And for those folks who don't have a clue how they come across to others, it's just not going to gel, it's not going to work." Another component of being self-aware as a teacher leader was related to one's ability to have self-confidence as shared by both Principal Christina and Principal Madeline. Principal Madeline commented, "When they (teachers) start feeling confident and really have that passion to share it . . . making a difference and they want everyone to share in that, that is when teachers transform into teacher leaders."

Conclusion

One's ability to transform from teacher to distinguished teacher leader does not occur through a series of steps or indicators that one can simply check off. In fact, this transformation is much more complex and is primarily driven by one's intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, and opportunities to lead. The participants in this study uncovered that having a purpose to lead directed their own behaviors and actions in order to inspire others to follow, while the influence of refusing to compromise provided teachers with the strengthen to preserve. Teachers who had a desire to reach beyond their classrooms discovered their impact on the total school program, while having the ability to be self-aware empowered teachers to build upon their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses. All the while, the study revealed the importance of leadership being shared at all levels throughout the school. Opportunities for teachers to apply leadership skills

and transform into distinguished teacher leaders were further advanced through

supportive principals and fellow teacher colleagues.

Teacher Leadership Responsibilities

The research uncovered a variety of responsibilities a teacher must assume in

order to be perceived as a distinguished teacher leader. In discussing with both teachers

and their principals the distinguished categories of the North Carolina Professional

Teaching Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*, there were five primary roles

which emerged as key factors which impact a teacher's ability to be perceived as a

distinguished elementary teacher leader: administrative, collaborative, pedagogical, data

leader, and professional development roles.

Administrative Leadership Roles

Teachers and their principals identified several administrative leadership roles to

include: the school improvement process, the decision making process, and impacting

the school's climate. Each of these roles are considered administrative since they involve

working collaboratively with school personnel in order to develop goals and strategies to

enhance student learning, the school community, and teacher working conditions. These

identified roles were found to be aligned to the North Carolina School Executive

Principal Standards in which the "school executive creates an environment of practiced

distributive leadership and teacher empowerment" (McRel, 2009b, p. 12). A common

administrative role shared was the school improvement planning process. The majority

of the teachers interviewed had served in a formally assigned role on the school

improvement team or the school's vision team at some point during their career. This

formally assigned role of serving as the leadership chair for their designated grade level or instructional support area provided teachers an opportunity to collaborate with other team leaders while making decisions for the school. Principal Amy shared, "A lot of my strong teacher leaders are ones who want see their grade levels be successful and they are willing to do just about anything." For distinguished teacher leader Barbara, serving on the school's leadership team means, "I'm representing not just my grade level; I'm representing all the teachers here at the school." Kyle values being involved in the school improvement process because it provides, "an opportunity to have a voice within the school and outside the school." Many of the teachers and principals who were part of this study spoke about how assuming an administrative role in the school improvement process provided an opportunity for individuals to have input as decisions were made for the school. Bennis (2003) describes the importance of leading through voice, "it can change the climate enough to give people elbow room to do the right things" (p. 157).

There were, however, identified distinguished teacher leaders in this study who had not served in a formally assigned administrative leadership role on the school improvement team and yet felt they were vital contributors to the school improvement planning process. Jamie shared, "I'm not actually on the school improvement team but we vote on that. We are always giving input on our feelings. Do we want to change this? How do we feel about this section?" Sue, also a distinguished teacher leader reflected,

> I am aware of the goals of the school even if I'm not on leadership, but I do have an active part. They're coming to me (and) I have a chance to read over (the school improvement plan) and I have a chance to vote and participate in that.

A second administrative leadership role involved teachers being an integral part of the decision making process concerning the infrastructure of the school. Examples shared within this area included their involvement in designing the master schedule while concentrating on the time allocated to teaching and learning, being a part of making budgetary decisions for the school, and serving as primary teacher leaders of the school. This year Barbara was elected by her peers to serve as the School Improvement Team (SIT) Chair. She shared, "I was really hoping that this year by serving as the chair of the SIT that I could kind of bring more of a democratic process to things instead of making things more systematic." Kyle, who currently serves on his school's leadership team, shared: "I take an active role within my school and want to know the ins and outs and how to operate a school. Knowing what's going on with the budget . . . how we're allocating money and things of that nature." Barbara went on to share for her being involved in the administrative decision making process means, "I like to know what my schedule's going to be. I want to make sure that the things like in the schedule are where I want it to be and it kind of works out." As Principal Christina reflected on the benefits of having teacher leaders being involved in the decision making process she shared,

> They just don't come with either a complaint or a concern, they'll come with ideas and ways to improve, to make it better and they work with the rest of the team to come up with a solution. I think that sets them (teacher leaders) apart is coming up with solutions for issues and concerns.

In addition to being involved in the school improvement process and the decision making processes of the school, teacher leaders and principals' interviewed identified a third administrative leadership role in relation to impacting the school's climate.

Examples shared within this area included teachers leading the Positive Based

Interventions and Support (PBIS) team, school safety initiatives, and community

involvement opportunities. Pete shared how she led several events with the school's

community this year,

> We just had a hero day where we had people in from our community. We had the
> minister from [name of local church]; we had the police department, and the fire
> department. We did a food drive with our grade level. We did relay for life
> where we put pink hair into our kid's hair. So I've been involved with all the
> community.

Jamie assumes a lead role in her school's effort to implement PBIS, "I am the head of the

check in/check out committee. We're constantly reflecting with our colleagues, going to

workshops continuously, and looking for opportunities to improve PBIS constantly."

Linda is the leader of her school's safety plan, "I led a lot of professional growth

thorough projects of Safe Schools. We went over our Safe School flip chart and went

over lock down drills and fire drills and things like that."

The teachers and principals who participated in this study identified three specific

examples of administrative teacher leadership roles: school improvement process,

decision making process, and impacting the school's culture. The study uncovered that

assuming an administrative teacher leadership role was not limited to being formally

assigned to the school's leadership team. Instead, the study revealed that anyone who has

the ability to lead an initiative which positively impacts and supports the total school

program would be perceived as assuming an administrative teacher leadership role.

Principal Christina captures the essence of a teacher leader's influence when assuming an

administrative role, "a leader is someone who takes charge . . . does things that they see needs to be done . . . moves her confidence, her knowledge beyond the classroom and into the school and makes an impact."

Collaborative Leadership Roles

Of all the teacher leader responsibilities and roles identified in this study, one's ability to effectively collaborate with their colleagues was one of the most important roles of being a teacher leader and described by all participants. According to the North Carolina School Executive Principal Standards, a principal's ability to effectively provide cultural leadership within a school is influenced when "the school executive creates a collaborative work environment that emphasizes a sense of community and cooperation" (McRel, 2009b, p. 13). Friend and Cook (1996) outline six attributes of collaboration: it is voluntary, based on parity, requires a shared goal, includes shared responsibility, includes shared accountability, and is based on shared resources. Bennis (2003) says, "great leaders and followers are always engaged in a creative collaboration" (p. xviii). This study found that the teacher leaders and their principals overwhelming valued the benefits of collaboration. "I am always collaborating with my colleagues; we do that all the time, daily. We're always reflecting," shared Jamie. Aimee commented, "It always comes back to collaboration . . . sitting down and planning and just throwing ideas out."

Opportunities for teachers to assume collaborate roles were provided in all four of the elementary schools either through formal weekly grade level meetings, participation on various committees, or informally as teachers interacted daily. There were additional opportunities for teachers to assume collaborative leadership roles outside of their

schools through being involved on a formal district committee or a teacher work group.

All of these collaborative opportunities described were designed within the framework of

a professional learning community or PLCs. A professional learning community in a

school is a way to organize teachers into working groups for the purpose to foster

collaborative learning among colleagues (DuFour, 2004). The teachers and principals at

all four elementary schools identified two common teacher leadership collaboration roles

to include: grade level teams and district committees.

Grade level team collaboration. In all four elementary schools, grade level team

collaboration occurred when teachers were organized by the same grade level and had a

daily or weekly common planning time to meet together as a team. All of the schools had

a designated day they would meet weekly to discuss the curriculum, lesson plans, and

student achievement data throughout the year. During this time, Principal Christina

shared, "They're (teacher leaders) always collaborating with their peers within their grade

level, they're always trying to support and help their peers in their grade level, especially

if they see one that is struggling. They plan together, they help them with ideas and they

help them especially with new initiatives." These collaborative roles appeared to

capitalize on the expertise of the teachers assuming such roles. As a result of working

with other colleagues within the teaching profession each teacher leader contributed these

experiences to the establishment of positive working conditions within the school. "I

really like guiding others along. I benefit from watching another teacher grow," shared

distinguished teacher leader Linda. She went on to share as she reflected on

opportunities to collaborate with her colleagues during grade level meeting, "during

grade level (we) just kind of (bring) things to the table." Principal Chloe also shared her

experiences when teachers come together and collaborate during their grade level PLCs,

> These teachers (teacher leaders) are not afraid of having different opinions from
> their colleagues. And if they really believe something and are really strong about
> it without being condescending, you know, taking a attitude, I know more than
> you, they share, and it is in such a way that eventually the folks on staff who are
> the most negative can't resist becoming involved because of how they interact
> with everybody else. To me that's being a leader in the building because they
> don't leave anybody out and you know sometime you get folks where you just
> don't like to be bothered with them because their attitudes are so negative. But
> these folks rise above that. They have very strong character traits, very positive
> attitudes and always a willingness to go above and beyond, and also to step
> outside their comfort zones to help somebody else in the building. So that to me
> is an excellent teacher leader in the building because they are role models and
> setting a really great example of how a teacher leaders should interact with folks
> in the building.

District committee collaboration. An additional collaborative teacher

leadership role included working with other educators outside of their schools. One

example involved Norita meeting often with other ESL (English as a Second Language)

teachers within her district. "Last year, I had a presentation to put together for the ESL

team on the WIDA standards and how to use them and how to modify them." Sue serves

on the district's AIG (Academically and Intelligently Gifted) team, "I'm not only

attending the meetings, I'm participating, and assuming a leadership role in the

professional learning community this year. We have meetings that we have to present

things that we are doing in the classroom whether it's on a certain standard or just certain

text or a math standard or an English Language Arts standard. I'm bringing the

information back and sharing it with the other AIG specialists in the county." For Linda,

"I was on the common core team and so I went every nine weeks and met with teachers

from others schools and recreated the unit plans for the upcoming common core for this year." Aimee share, "I think that is probably the most important part of networking outside of the school is that . . . you just share ideas, it refreshes things, it gives you . . . a different spin on things." Principal Amy intentionally encourages her teachers to assume leadership roles outside of the school, "I try to match up a lot of the new initiatives, like the common core, and the essential standards, and mCLASS to teachers who have demonstrated strengths in those areas and (who) staff members are comfortable receiving knowledge or information from those folks."

All of the teachers and principals involved in this study commented on the benefits of being involved in collaboration opportunities and roles. Sue shared, "I feel respected by my peers. I feel like they value my input, and I just see that as being a huge benefit. They know that I'm here to do my job to the best of my ability . . . that I'm going to carry my own weight. Our students . . . see us talking, they see us communicating, and they know we're on the same team." Jamie talked about how well the teachers collaborated at her school, "Everybody is willing to be flexible and everybody is willing to give whatever needs to be given. If you need help or you need time, they know, they're there." In a study conducted by Goddard, Goddard, and Taschannen-Moran (2007), the researchers found that elementary schools which worked collectively to influence decisions related to school improvement, curriculum and instruction, and professional development yielded a positive relationship between teacher collaboration and differences among schools in mathematics and reading achievement.

Pedagogical Leadership Roles

A third distinguished teacher leadership role identified in this study involved a

teacher's depth of knowledge concerning the processes and practices of teaching and

learning known as pedagogy. The study identified two forms of pedagogical roles which

teacher leaders assumed: sharing best practices and leading in the classroom. As

education continues to experience change, additional technical and pedagogy support will

be necessary (Barnett et al., 2010). Teachers who assume pedagogical leadership roles

support collaboration rather than competition and isolation and understand the

importance of building peer networking across the school (Barth, 2001).

Sharing best practices. Principal Amy shared how teachers share best practices

at her school,

> If there is someone on her (teacher leader Linda's) grade level that's struggling,
> sometimes they take it very personal . . . their personal responsibility to make sure
> that everybody on their grade level is successful. (They share) lesson plans . . .
> willing to do just about anything.

Principal Madeline shared, "I tell my teachers all the time you are curriculum and student

experts." Principal Amy concurred with Principal Madeline by sharing, "They have new

knowledge, new ways of engaging students and they bring a new perspective to the table.

They're more comfortable sometimes with things like technology and taking risks,

they're not afraid to take those risks." Many of the teachers in this study also shared how

they were provided with opportunities to lead professional development for their

colleagues in both formal and informal roles. Amy shared,

> We presented at the last workshop that RCS had. We presented a writing workshop where we're having a day of research in second grade for the assessment, writing assessment. We were trying to get teachers involved, you know (to see) the many resources there are out there.

Linda talked about how she would like to facilitate future professional development opportunities for her colleagues,

> I think it'd be kind of neat to survey the staff of what are some new things that you'd want to learn, and what is something that you feel you're really good at that you could teach to the rest of the staff.

Linda recently led a book study on the *Energy Bus* and did professional development on this topic with a group of teachers at her school. As Principal Chloe reflected on opportunities for teachers to share best practices with their colleagues she spoke about the importance of,

> Giving folks the opportunity to grow with staff development in the building . . . creating and making sure that the environment doesn't stunt their growth. Making sure that our school environment is a place where they will feel free to step up and step out, you know, without fear of retribution, fear of being overly criticized, you know, just giving them the opportunity to grow . . . to find themselves, to find their niche.

Leading in the classroom. For Principal Amy she describes distinguished teacher leaders in the classroom as, "the teacher that not only is concerned about the progress of her students in her class, but she's concerned about the progress of all the students in her grade level." She went on to share,

> When you walk into their (teacher leader's) classroom, they are demonstrating the cutting edge things that we're trying to put into place. You can see it on their

walls, you can see it in their instruction, you can see it through their planning and its relationship to curriculum, you can just (see it) in their day-to-day operations, there's no downtime, they have a sense of urgency in their classroom. Instruction minutes are precious to them.

Katrina reflects upon her ability to lead in the classroom, "I feel like sometimes I have to be an actress in here . . . because you've got to lure those kids in and you've got to make them interested in whatever it is that you're doing." Principal Madeline described the pedagogical role of a teacher leader leading in the classroom as one who assumes responsibility of all allowing, "students to take responsibility for their learning." Principal Chloe described teachers leading in the classroom as,

> Always encouraging their students, being responsible for their learning, encouraging students to find the answers on their own, not just wait for them to give the answer, have them work out a solution. (These) are the most active classrooms, the most engaged students because they are not just sitting waiting to be told, or waiting to be taught, they are up and moving and talking to each other and those teachers are comfortable with allowing their kids to pretty much do their own thing.

For distinguished teacher leader Kyle he spoke more about the importance of his role as serving as a teacher leader in the classroom as compared to leadership roles he assumed throughout the school.

> You're already a leader when you come and step into a classroom. You're on stage in the classroom all the time. I try to show kids how to become a leader first and by doing that, it opened up doors for their (students) . . . appetite of learning. I'm providing opportunities for them to become a leader . . . different projects that I may lead on and show them how to do those things. Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. One of things I try to do is incorporate cooperative learning groups in my classroom for kids to get a way they can lead. There is a lot of experimentation going on around, a lot of cooperative learning. I have student leaders within their groups where they are explaining the instructions

> or an example of what's going on and what's taking place within the classroom or what's going on as far as their experiment for the day. Having kids demonstrate . . . giving them the tools that they need and letting them actually explore before I even explain anything. It allows students to take ownership of their own learning (without) having the teacher hovering over them.

The distinguished teacher leaders in the study who reflected on the role of being a leader in the classroom all strived to provide interesting lessons in an effort to motivate students to learn and achieve. However, they also spoke about the importance of balancing these learning opportunities with creating a nurturing learning environment for children where trust, kindness with discipline, accountability and expectations were evident. Kaitlyn shared, "I feel that kids feel safe when they come to my classroom, I make them feel loved and wanted when they're here. I get to know them and their home life." Jeff talked about how it is important for his students to be,

> Empowered and just encouraging them, giving them a little encouragement to say, you know, they are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe environment. Just encourage them to use those manners . . . trying to teach them respect . . . saying excuse me and thank you and things like that, so really just simple life lessons that I think we take for granted.

Data Leadership Roles

A fourth teacher leadership role described by the majority of the teachers and principals interviewed in this study concerned the practice of analyzing student achievement data in order to evaluate student learning outcomes and to inform instructional practices. Analyzing student data was a common practice among all four of the elementary schools. Not only did the teachers collect and analyze data for themselves, but the majority of the identified teacher leaders also lead collaborative

discussions among their peers in an effort to examine student learning throughout the

grade level. The use of data to determine where schools are succeeding and where

schools may need to direct their efforts for improvement was identified as a key to

success in a report developed by the National Education Goals Panel (Rothman, 2000).

Distinguished teacher leader Linda described how she analyzes student data, "I'm

huge data driven. I'm constantly looking at formal and informal (data) daily, within

every lesson to see where (and) what needs to guide . . . every lesson." Kaitlyn shared

how her grade level team uses data,

> We use data to plan everything that we do. In the other room we have a data wall
> on first graders where we place those children wherever they ended up on their
> assessments and group our child . . . all of first grade so a child that's in my class
> may be in another first grade classroom working on what they need for a certain
> amount of time whether it's math or language arts. We also have a set
> intervention time.

Katrina spoke about the variety of assessments her grade level team uses to analyze

student achievement,

> We do universal screeners with oral reading fluency, we do math drills, we do the
> benchmarks. I've got like a list of them. Running records, unit tests, SRIs, we
> have spelling inventories that we give, the literacy first program . . . I take into
> account when I am looking (at this data), where are my gaps? Who needs
> intervention? We even have data days where we get together and we look at all of
> our data and group our children based on that assessment data.

As Principal Christina reflected on attributes of distinguished teacher leaders she shared,

> They (teacher leaders) know how to use their student data. They use their
> common assessments . . . plus they'll use formative and summative assessments.

They know how to observe formally and both informally, but they use that data to drive their instruction and to move their students forward in achievement.

Professional Development Leadership Roles

While talking in general about being a Distinguished Teacher Leader in North Carolina, all of the teachers and principals interviewed in this study spoke about the benefits of on-going professional growth opportunities that they either sought or provided to fellow teachers as an area which impacted their ability to continue to grow professionally as a leader. Yoon, Duncan, Wen-Yu Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) found in their study that teachers who receive substantial professional development can boost their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points. Professional development is certainly important in any career. However, for the teachers and principals involved in this study, as they reflected upon the constant changes in education they are currently facing, they felt it was important for them to stay abreast on new information surrounding teaching, techniques, and methods in an on-going effort to improve student performance.

Kaitlyn shared how she informally sought out her own professional development, "I do a lot of research online whether its articles or teaching blogs, finding new ideas that I'm sharing with my grade level, to see what's working in other classrooms (and) bring it to my classroom." Principal Chloe described distinguished teacher leaders and their professional development as,

These are the folks who go beyond the bachelor's degree or the masters' degree who moves toward you know, National Board Certification. These are the folks

who are very forward thinking and are looking at the teaching profession not just now but what is has yet to become.

As reported previously in this chapter, the vast majority of distinguished teacher leaders had advanced graduate degrees. The study uncovered that on-going professional growth opportunities continue to be an essential part of the work of distinguished teacher leaders as they shared what their future plans they had in an effort to continue to grow professionally. Jamie said,

> You're always seeking ways to better yourself through professional growth, whether it's taking classes on the weekend, during the summer, you're always looking for ways to help your kids grow. Anything that you can do. I know I'm looking at going back to school this fall.

As teachers and principals talked about professional development opportunities within their school cultures, it appeared to be more informal and derived from working with students as opportunities were available for teachers to have ongoing, experiential, and collaborative professional growth connected to the needs of each school. Sue shared, "We are always doing staff development and current research at our meetings. We may be reading a book and developing lesson plans." Principal Christina,

> They (teacher leaders) look for ways to continue to grow themselves but they look for ways to grow the school because they care as a whole that it's not just their classroom and their students but they see it as our classroom, our school, our students, and we're all responsible for them.

Conclusion

There are many roles that exist in order for teachers to be perceived as

distinguished teacher leaders. Some roles are formally assigned, while others occur due

to the collegial nature of teaching. Administrative leadership roles provide teachers with

the opportunity to lead the school improvement process, become key players in the

decision making processes while impacting the school's climate and culture. Other

leadership roles emerge through informal collaborative efforts and pedagogical support

provided when teachers share the responsibility, accountability, and resources to support

the teaching and learning process. Assuming such leadership roles reduces isolation in

which teachers can build peer networks in order to support collaboration rather than

competition. Teachers who have the ability to build peer networks where they lead the

effort to present strategies on how to use assessment data to inform instructional practices

as well as professional development on effective teaching strategies are perceived as

distinguished teacher leaders. Overall, the study uncovered that teachers who assume the

responsibility to share what they learn and know with colleagues as well as students can

be perceived as distinguished teacher leaders.

Costs and Benefits of Being a Teacher Leader

In August 2006, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted a new

mission. This mission led to the establishment of the North Carolina Professional

Teaching Standards Commission who developed "a new vision of teaching" to include

six standards that define what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to teach

students in the 21st Century (NCDPI, 2008). Standard One, *Teachers Demonstrate*

Leadership, defines how teachers who assume leadership roles can make valuable contributions to their classroom and the school (NCDPI, 2008). For the first time in North Carolina, teachers are being held accountable for their leadership contributions to the educational profession. As a result, the participants in this study were asked to share the benefits and costs associated with being a distinguished teacher leader as defined by the newly designed North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. The study found that, based on participants' responses, there are more benefits and positive outcomes resulting from teachers who assume leadership roles. However, the participants also identified potential costs and concerns that are associated with being a teacher leader.

The following responses and information related to benefits and costs associated with distinguished teacher leadership status. First, Figure 2 outlines the overlapping themes that both teachers and principals felt were the benefits of being a teacher leader as well as identify themes that were specific to either the teacher leader group or the principal group in this study. Further below, Figure 3 outlines the overlapping theme that both teachers and principals felt were the costs associated with being a teacher leader as well as identifies additional costs themes that were shared by either the teacher leaders or the principals in this study.

The Benefits of Being a Distinguished Teacher Leader

The teacher leaders and the principals in this study identified three common themes related to the benefits of being a teacher leader to include: having a voice, shaping and sharing a vision and decreased isolation (see Figure 2).
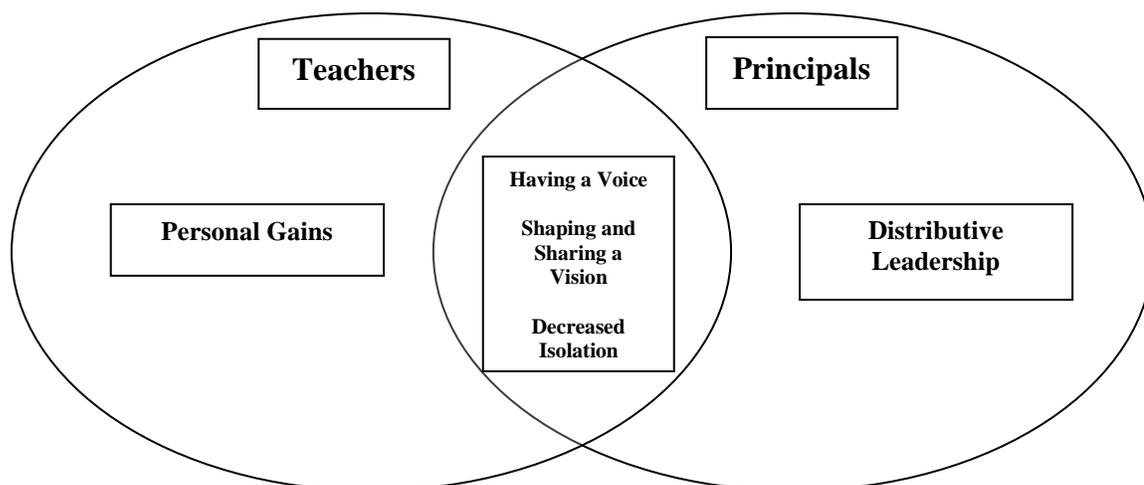
Figure 2. Benefits of Being a Teacher Leader.

Having a voice. An effective school culture of discourse allows all stakeholders

an opportunity to discuss and think about significant issues related to improving teaching

and learning. Equally important, all members within an effective school culture

demonstrate respect for each other by valuing differences of opinion and are open-

minded to the ideas of others (Center of Collaborative Education, 2001). As the teachers

and principals in this study reflected on the benefits of being a teacher leader, a

prominent theme that emerged was that the role of teacher leader provides an opportunity

to have a voice within the educational environment.

Principal Chloe discussed how it was important for her to welcome the voices of

teacher leaders even if they were in disagreement, "These are the folks who advocate for

the teaching profession and are willing to step up and step out. They are not afraid to

speak publicly and really not afraid to stand up for what they believe." Other participants

in the study addressed that when you create a culture of distinguished teacher leaders who

can openly voice their opinion; these voices provide opportunities to challenge the group

to collectively think in a deeper level. Principal Madeline described her efforts of taking

the time to raise the quality of teacher discourse in her school,

> I really want people here to feel like their voice is heard, because then they do a
> good job. When they're in that leadership role they get to see the big picture.
> You know it's not just me in my classroom . . . we've got to collaborate and do it
> together.

Distinguished teacher leaders Sue, Kyle, and Kaitlyn shared that the number one

benefit for them serving as a teacher leader was the opportunity to have a voice. Sue

commented, "I feel like they value my input and I just see that as being a huge benefit."

Kyle concurred by sharing,

> We have the opportunity to have a voice within the school capacity and outside
> the school capacity too. We have a voice as a leader to understand that, hey, we
> have a concern, or we have a problem. I actually have an opinion about certain
> things with the school environment.

For teacher leader Kaitlyn having a voice means, "I can share my ideas, like being

helpful to others."

The benefit of "having a voice" was addressed throughout the interviews by the

majority of teacher leaders in this study. They spoke about being eager and willing to

invest their time and energy in order to have an opportunity to provide their input on

various topics which affected student learning and the school culture. Equally important,

all four principals in this study commented on the value of having teacher input and

recognized that the voices of teacher leaders mattered in order to directly impact student

achievement.

Shaping and sharing a vision. A second benefit of being a teacher leader that was shared by both teachers and principals involved the opportunity to collectively shape and share the vision for the school. Principal Madeline reflected that when a teacher becomes a leader, "it helps you have a vested interest in your school." Teacher leader Sue shared how she contributes to the total school program as a teacher leader, "we are on the same team and we try to help in any way." Distinguished teacher leader Barbara commented on the roles she assumes while contributing to school wide goals and programs which impact her school, "I don't mind taking on the extra responsibility . . . I think that's just one of those things that certain people can figure out, I guess like the way this works."

As Principal Chloe reflected on the benefits of teacher leadership she recalled a recent collaborative effort in which teacher leaders throughout her school were directly involved in shaping and sharing the vision of the school. The teacher leaders developed the school's annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) plan. Principal Chloe shared,

> Teacher leaders were given a component of the CNA and what I charged them to do was not just to work on that component themselves, but to recruit other people in the building to work with them and to research that component and then they were given times when we had to bring it back to the group as a whole. For almost all of them, they had to step outside their grade level which is a biggie.

She went on to share that when teacher leaders are directly involved in the creation of school plans, such as the school's CNA plan, it promotes collective efficacy as the

teachers identify areas of growth and provide input in ways to directly shape the culture and vision of the school.

Decreased isolation. The third common theme shared among teachers and principals concerning the benefits of teacher leadership involved the opportunity to decrease teacher isolation. In a recent study, Sleppin (2009) found that schools that provide opportunities for teachers to work together reduced feelings of isolation, increased a personal connection to the learning community, and reduced attrition rates.

Teacher leader Aimee shared, "I am utilized more, which I enjoy, because if I had to just sit back and do the same thing I would probably get bored." For Kyle the benefit of serving as a teacher leader means that he has, "exposure to other facets of the school environment, knowing what's going on." Jeff shared, "I definitely think more responsibilities and more challenges" is a benefit of being a teacher leader. For Katrina being a teacher leader means,

> There's a high expectation set for me here. We had a triad visit and I'm not kidding you I had 18 people walk in my classroom. Do you know how intimidating that was for me? I'm thinking, jeez, oh my goodness, but then, you know, that's a privilege, because they didn't go in all the classrooms. She (the principal) chose my room to bring those people in here for a reason. And to me that's an honor.

As Principal Madeline reflected on the importance of providing opportunities for teachers in her building to extend their influence beyond their classrooms while utilizing them in various leadership roles she stated, "There is just no way. We have close to 700 kids. Thirty-four teachers."

Additional Benefits of Being a Teacher Leader

The study also uncovered two additional benefits of being a distinguished teacher leader: intrinsic benefits and distributed leadership. The teacher leaders spoke about the personal gains of being a teacher leader, while the principals identified that developing teacher leaders provided an opportunity to increase shared leadership within the school.

Intrinsic benefits. Several of the teacher leaders spoke about the intrinsic benefits of being a teacher leader. Amy and Katrina shared that being a teacher leader made them feel that they were making a difference. Amy commented, "You feel good about yourself. It feels worthwhile . . . you know you're doing something special." Katrina reflected, "Even with the community . . . just knowing that you're talked about in a positive way . . . that feeling inside knowing that what I'm doing here is working . . . I feel like I am doing something good, you know?"

For Kaitlyn and Barbara, the intrinsic benefit of being a distinguished teacher leader allowed them to feel empowered. "What I like about being on leadership is that I know what's going on. You don't get it second hand," shared Kaitlyn. As Barbara reflected on her personal benefits of serving as a teacher leader she said, "Control. Is that honest enough? I loved being on the budget committee. Because I'm like I can choose how things are spent. I got to make those decisions. So maybe it's a control issue."

For teacher leaders Norita and Linda the intrinsic benefit lay in their ability to feel appreciated by others. Linda reflected on how she enjoyed, "Guiding others along . . . kind of motherly, cradling, and helping build on their weaknesses. I really benefit from watching another teacher grow . . . that makes me feel good." Norita shared how it was

important that, "administration thinks highly of you and so . . . it kind of shows that you are appreciated (in) what you are doing. It is kind of your personal satisfaction."

Distributive leadership. All four principals in this study spoke about a common benefit of developing teacher leaders' as being increasing opportunities for distributive leadership throughout the school. Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, and Bergman (2012) define distributive leadership as when two or more members engage in the leadership of the team in an effort to influence and direct fellow members to maximize team effectiveness. In a study conducted by Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006), the effect of distributed leadership enhanced opportunities for the organization to benefit from the capacities of more members capitalizing on a range of their individual strengths, resulting in enhancing the organization as a whole.

Principal Chloe shared,

> A school administrator cannot do it all, cannot be it all, cannot know it all, cannot see it all. And having strong teacher leaders in the building, especially when there is no assistant principal, helps not only the administrator but helps the school as a whole. I know I can count on folk to do certain things that I don't have to micromanage . . . I know that independently these folks will get the job done . . . that is a huge benefit.

Principal Madeline also shared that developing teacher leaders was a benefit towards creating an environment for distributive leadership. However, she was also forthcoming as she stated,

> I think the hardest part moving into a principal role was to be able to let go of some of that control and letting people be leaders, but I see it in my role as developing leaders amongst my whole staff.

Principal Amy elaborated on her role as principal in order to develop teacher leaders and

provide opportunities for distributive leadership when she shared,

> If you don't have a good pulse on developing those teachers leaders (then) you're just going to be leading by yourself. You have to seek folks who are demonstrating and working hard towards the same goals that your vision is. Then you have to celebrate that and you have to really cultivate that, otherwise, you are the only person going down that road.

As Principal Christina commented on the benefits of developing teacher leaders she

shared, "they're (teacher leaders) going to come into their own and be very confident in

what they're doing and they may even want to move forward . . . to become an

administrator or an instructional coach or some (other) leader type," as she described the

potential to build staff capacity. She also went on to share, "the more leaders that you

have . . . the more raise (in) student achievement overall."

Principal Christina and Principal Amy shared how they strategically focus their

efforts to develop teacher leaders to promote distributive leadership. Principal Christina

said,

> When they're (teachers) willing to grow themselves, then to me they're worth developing, because in the long run (they) can develop into a distinguished leader, but if you have someone who does not take your suggestions, who thinks they're already distinguished when they're really in fact developing, then you've got a problem. They may be able, but they're not willing to accept your help, or not willing to improve or because they may not even see themselves as needing improvement. I'd hate to say they're not worth it.

As Principal Amy reflected on building distributive leadership opportunities among her

staff she commented,

I think looking at brand new teachers is really important . . . recognizing that they have leadership capability. Even for a teacher who's struggling significantly, just sometimes finding a good example of something that she did in her class and sharing it at a staff meeting . . . showing that they have some of the same leadership qualities that you are looking for in your entire staff. So looking for even small examples is important.

The Costs of Being a Distinguished Teacher Leader

Both the teachers and principals in this study identified one primary common cost associated with being a distinguished teacher leader: its impact on teacher relationships. There were three additional cost-related themes identified by either the teachers or the principals. The additional cost theme for teachers concerned that being a distinguished teacher leader required additional work outside of the classroom. The principals discussed that an additional cost was associated with the time teacher leaders spent outside of their classrooms in addition to the potential risk for teacher burnout.
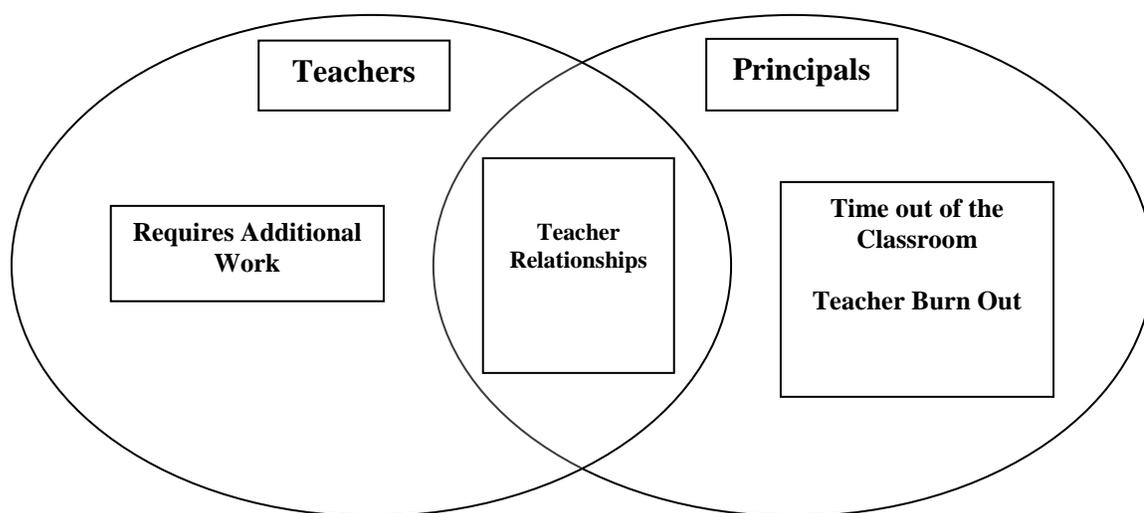

Figure 3. The Costs Associated With Being a Teacher Leader.

Teacher relationships: Jealousy and conflict. Education in the 21st century has become extremely complex and challenging as teachers are faced with various changes with educational reform efforts. In North Carolina, this includes a newly-defined teacher accountability model (NC State Board of Education, 2012). Therefore it could become essential for teachers to have peers with whom they can collaborate and on whom they can lean as they are faced with the various changes. Wang and Haertel (n.d.) address how professional relationships among teachers adhere to the norms that govern the ways teachers ask for and provide help to their peers. Their research indicated that increasing the quality of teachers' work-relationships requires professional and organizational change which establishes an environment where teacher's work is collaborative, coordinated, and interdependent (Wang & Haertel, n.d.). Although the current study uncovered a variety of examples of how all four schools coordinated opportunities for teachers to collaborate, the study also revealed that a primary cost of being a teacher leader dealt with the potential for adversary relationships between distinguished teacher leaders and other teachers in the school. The teachers and principals in this study identified two areas that are associated with teacher relationships when one assumes the role of distinguished teacher leader: jealousy among teachers and encountering conflict among teachers.

Jealousy was one cost associated with being a distinguished teacher leader. Principal Christina shared,

> From time to time there were teachers who did seem jealous of other teachers if another teacher was given a little more attention. (For example) there were domineering and overbearing (teachers) who thought they should be the one

chosen for everything and when you try to level that out and choose other people for things they did get jealous.

As Kaitlyn reflected on her role as a teacher leader she shared,

It is getting to the point now where it's kind of feeling on my grade level like an outsider. And this is the first time of feeling that way after 13 years. And you know its little things like [being] nominated for teacher of the year, and team members not saying congratulations. Well my husband says it jealousy. But my thing (is) what do they have to be jealous about?

Principal Amy shared how she attempts to avoid jealousy among her teachers,

If you over rely on one particular person, you know, staff members will view them as . . . the precious lucky teacher or the favorite. And so very quickly that person can lose ground with their staff and with the relationships that they have.

Principal Christina also spoke of a strategy she uses to avoid potential jealousy among teachers, "You have to be careful who you eat lunch with and that kind of thing. You just eat lunch with everybody or no one at all. I learned that quickly."

In conjunction with potential jealousy among teachers and teacher leaders, encountering conflict between educators whether teacher to teacher or teacher to administrator is often a difficult matter and was determined to be a cost associated with be a teacher leader. Several of the participants in this study spoke about a variety of conflicts teacher leaders had encountered in their various roles and responsibilities. Each participant shared how they handled such conflict in a variety of ways. Coleman and Deutsch (2001) share that when conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship. However, having the skills to address conflict resolution in a respectful and

positive way and provide an opportunity to strengthen the bond between people

(Coleman & Deutsch, 2001). The principals and teachers shared a variety of conflicts

that teacher leaders encountered.

Teacher leader Norita reflected on how encountered conflict among teachers in

her school as she worked with children assigned to their classrooms,

> Administration have always been really receptive to anything that I have asked or suggested . . . I see more with the colleagues, the teachers, I work with. Maybe . . . being an outsider and coming from a different country people doubt everything that you say and the things you do, and the way you do things because it's not the same way that they are doing, you know. Some people had kind of a lot of resistance for me taking their kids out of their classroom and what are you going to do with them and you have an accent, how can you teach them English, and things like that. But you just kind of blow it all, just whatever, and you just do your thing and don't pay any attention and move on.

Pete shared how she experienced conflict among several teachers in her building when

there was disagreement surrounding an issue or concern,

> There have been some years gone past there's been some incidences of bullying among women . . . it's a tough group to work with . . . women. And there are some strong willed women that want to be a little bossy and not collaborate and not cooperate. There have been principals that have had to step in with that kind of thing. Sometimes it wasn't so pleasant but I think the point was gotten across.

Jeff also spoke conflict he has experienced among teachers at his school and how he

navigated through such situations,

> Not everybody's going to be on board . . . there are a few teachers here that are very opinionated and vocal about things . . . you (just) focus your energy and efforts on those that are going be on board rather than just kind of focusing and losing energy and wasting time on those that aren't.

Katrina recalled an uncomfortable moment when she had to handle conflict between her

and a fellow teacher,

> I've had times where a colleague on my grade level we may not see eye to eye,
> and I'm like we've to come to a mutual agreement because the end result is with
> the kids learning, and it can tough, I mean when you get two personalities from
> one extreme to the other . . . but we got through it.

As Principal Christina reflected on the potential conflict that may arise as teachers work

toward building relationships among teachers and teacher leaders, she shared one strategy

she uses to help promote a collaborative and less confrontational professional

environment,

> I think if you have teachers who do not like each other, who do not want to work
> together . . . that's a hard situation. So at staff meetings sometimes we will do
> assigned seats. You know it's time for everybody to come out of their little
> cliques, their little groups, and talk to somebody else, so we will mix it up from
> time to time.

Additional Costs of Being a Teacher Leader

The study uncovered three additional costs of being a distinguished teacher

leader. The teacher leaders identified as a cost, the necessity having to do additional

work outside of the classroom. Similarly, the principals identified as a cost of developing

teacher leaders the necessity for them to physically be out of their classrooms while

school was in session, as well as a concern for potential teacher burnout due to assuming

additional responsibilities.

Requires additional work. As the teacher leaders in this study reflected on costs

associated with the various roles they assume, many of the participants addressed the

reality that being a distinguished leader does require additional work outside of the daily classroom responsibilities. Table 4 outlines specific examples of the roles and responsibilities that distinguished teacher leaders assume outside of the classroom.

Table 4

Examples of Additional Work Outside of the Classroom

Facilitator Roles	Leadership Roles	School and District Committees Roles
• College Day for Grades 3-5 • Grade Level Meetings • Professional Development • Sharing Best Practices • School Yearbook • School Fundraiser • Professional Learning Communities (i.e. Book Studies) • Community Service Projects • Grant Facilitator • Student Assemblies • Volunteers • Student/Parent Handbook	• School Leadership Chair • NCWISE Grade book School Trainer • After school Tutoring Coordinator • Athletic Coach • Teacher Mentor • School Compact Model Writer • School Accreditation Leader	• Positive Based Intervention and Support (PBIS) • Student Service Management Tem (SSMT) • Academically and Intelligently Gifted (AIG) • Individual Plan Team (IPT) • Collaborating Around Student Achievement (CASA) • Vision Team • District Physical Education Team • Limited English Proficient Team (LEP) • Science Core Team • Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) • Math Vertical Team • English Language Arts Vertical Team • Response to Intervention Team (RTI) • North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) • Safe Schools • District Pacing Guides

Aimee shared, "It puts more work on the teachers. So understandably and justifiably I know that the teachers are like really, you're going to do this to me, you're going to add one more thing on my plate?" The additional responsibilities that Barbara assumed throughout her career led her to make the decision to leave the classroom at one point during her teaching career. Barbara reflected on how her efforts to help other teachers and their students took away from her own students,

> I actually had left my classroom and became a media coordinator because my other duties were pulling me out of the classroom so much I felt like I was not giving to my students anymore. I had become basically the reading facilitator at my school, but I was still in the classroom. I was the tech coordinator at my school taking care of all the technology, but I was still in the classroom. I was running an after school program for a different agency with all the SCS I was overseeing and I just felt like I was being pulled out so much I might as well just leave the classroom.

Barbara went on to share after this experience,

> I missed the classroom so much. I missed having contact. And I think now being back in the classroom . . . I want to be with my kids all year long and watch them progress from the time I get them until the time they leave and yet not be pulled out to that point, you know, feeling like I need to leave the classroom. And so I have learned to say no to some things. It's not always easy, because you're like, okay, I feel so bad. But having to know that this is all I can take on right now.

Pete also shared her concerns with the extra responsibilities that are required of her this year, "I am a little frustrated this year because they spread me a little thin." As Pete went on to reflect on various roles and responsibilities teachers are expected to assume she commented,

My daughter is graduating from college this year and a lot her friends are getting their teaching degree. It scares me for them coming out into it now. I'm not sure if they're going to be able to hang in there and do this type of job in the future. Because it's not getting easier. I mean with my years of experience it's still hard. I'm still here at 6:30 am. I'm still leaving at 5:30 pm. And I'm wondering how is a young teacher going to be able to handle everything that is being thrown on their plate?

Teacher leader Aimee also reflected on how being a teacher leader requires additional work, "The work load that is on classroom teachers, it's a lot. So to be able to take that extra initiative to either run another program or do something else that takes a lot."

Requires time out of the classroom. There are a variety of elements that a teacher must demonstrate leadership beyond the classroom in order for teachers in North Carolina to be rated "distinguished" on Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*. As all four principals shared examples of indicators related to this rubric, several examples included teachers spending time outside of their classrooms by either attending professional development or serving on various district committees. As a result, two principals who participated in this study shared that one cost of being a distinguished teacher leader was the time that teachers needed to spend outside of their classrooms and the potential impact this may have on their students' achievement.

Principal Madeline shared how she struggles with finding a balance for her teacher leaders to receive professional development,

I've had to really give them time . . . I've had to pull them out of the classroom on times and that's been kind of hard . . . we've tried to figure out is a whole day better for professional development, is a half day better you know. Trying to squeak that time in.

Principal Madeline went on share other examples of times in which teacher leaders were having to be pulled out of their classrooms, "I sent two teachers . . . to mClass training . . . so they're kind of in charge of implementing that process" for the other teachers within her school." There is one teacher at Principal Madeline's school who is "doing all the writing professional development," while two other teacher leaders "are going to a district level grading practice (committee) and bringing it back and sharing it with the staff."

As Principal Chloe reflected on the time teacher leaders in her building spent time outside of their classroom she shared, "(when they) step outside of the classroom (they are) taking on not just a teaching role but a managerial role, a human resource role, a political role" all of which requires time being spent on initiatives within the school or district which may not directly impact the individual students in their classroom.

The risk of teacher "burnout." An additional cost of being a distinguished teacher leader that was identified by two of the principals, dealt with the potential risk of teacher "burnout." In a study conducted by Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) they found that one of the causes of the 17% annual attrition rate among educators is attributed to teacher burnout. While many issues play a role in teacher burnout, such as dwindling school resources, low pay, high expectations for test scores, changing assessments of student performance, lack of parental involvement, and pressure from non-teaching tasks such as reports and deadlines (Rosales, 2011), the principals in this study identified an additional potential cause for teacher burnout to include overly relying on teacher leaders within a school.

Principal Chloe shared,

> There is the risk of burning them (teacher leaders) out. There is the risk of just giving them too much to do, you know, overburdening them. As an administrator this year I have had to be very careful about that because I'm new to this building. I've relied on certain teachers leaders to fill me in, to show me, to teach me, to get me acquainted with what I need to know. And I've had to kind of catch myself a couple of times about going back to these folks and asking for more or ask them to do more because they know what they are doing. So I think that is one of the things that as school administrators we have to be aware of not overextending them.

Principal Amy also shared a strategy she uses in order to prevent potential teacher burnout, "so you have to really look at all kinds of leadership styles and try to find some balance among all of that and not just rely heavily on one person." Principal Chloe also offered advice for teacher leaders who may experience stresses related to the role which can lead to potential burn out,

> Being a teacher leader requires a lot of work and anyone who fulfills that role needs to be able to take care of themselves and not be afraid to step away and have some down time, some family time. A characteristic of being a teacher leader is taking time away to process and think and rest. Everybody can't run full tilt all the time and this profession can and will wear you down if you let it. And I think those folks who become those distinguished teacher leaders have a lot of pressure and they just need to be able to have time to vent and rest and regroup.

Conclusion

Although the teachers in this study were being recognized for their contributions of meeting the indicators of being a distinguished teacher leader within their schools, they did not mention being provided with any monetary or other extrinsic compensation for the extra responsibilities they assumed. It is evident that many of the teachers that were

interviewed are intrinsically motivated to assume a variety of leadership roles outside of their classrooms. However, do the benefits really outweigh the potential costs for teachers who assume additional leadership responsibilities beyond "leading in their classroom"? Furthermore, when one considers that North Carolina requires at minimum that teachers obtain a "proficient" rating on the Professional Teaching Standards rubric for *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership* as well as the fact that during the 2010–2011 school year that only 9.7% of teachers were rated "distinguished" on this standard, it might become more difficult to establish what is needed to motivate other teachers to aspire to achieve a distinguished teacher leadership rating.

Encouraging and Limiting Factors, Conditions, and Attributes

The study yielded a variety of contributing factors, conditions, and attributes that either encourage or limit one's ability to develop into a distinguished teacher leader. The "*Portals toward Becoming a Distinguished Teacher Leader*" explores three categories that the study found to be contributing factors for the development of distinguished teacher leaders. The "*Obstacles toward Becoming a Distinguished Teacher Leader*" uncovered four barriers that may limit one's professional growth potential of becoming a distinguished teacher leader as identified by the participants in this study.

Portals toward Becoming a Distinguished Teacher Leader

The study resulted in three categories that are contributing factors, conditions, and attributes that encourage the development of becoming a distinguished teacher leader to include: organizational structure, school culture, and leadership values. On one hand, the organizational structure is a factor of a school that establishes roles and attempts to

create more leadership within the school. These efforts focus on attaching teachers to

created leadership responsibilities and opportunities aligned to the needs within the

school. On the other hand, the school culture is a condition that contributes to the

development of informal teacher leadership opportunities within the community of

professional practice as relationships are established and teachers further contribute to

needs within the school in a more indirect manner. The third category or attribute

identified in this study is the importance of one's ability to understand and recognize their

primary leadership value. Recognizing and understanding our core values helps us (a)

become more self-aware, (b) make ethical decisions, (c) prioritize our tasks, and (d)

develop credibility as a leader (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). The study uncovered that each

teacher who was interviewed had a dominating unique leadership value which

contributed to their development of becoming a distinguished teacher leader.

Organizational structure. Bennis (2003) shares, "only a handful of

organizations have begun truly to tap into their primary resource, their people, much less

given them the means to do what they are capable of doing" (p. 173). The study found

that the organizational structure of a school can assist with the development of teacher

leaders by establishing roles that attempt to create more leadership within the school.

The participants in this study identified the organizational structure of their schools as

being an essential contributing factor that promoted teacher leadership. However, the

design of this organizational structure appeared to be primarily influenced by the

principal at each school as opportunities for teachers to assume a variety of formal

teacher leadership roles were represented, created, or assigned.

For example, Principal Amy reflected on strategies she uses to promote teacher leadership she shared,

> I try to give teachers responsibilities of doing things like professional development . . . presenting in front of the staff. I also sort of supplement or spoon feed some of the things that go along with (the school needs and goals), and then ask them (teachers) to help with that.

Furthermore, Principal Madeline shared how she strategically organized her school this year in order to structure opportunities for teacher leadership,

> I kind of shook up the cart this year when I started, because in our handbook they had all these committees and they were all over the place, and before I started I met with individual staff members and grade levels. So . . . I assigned people to different committees. I don't want the same person doing everything and I had to cut down on these committees that they had. And at first they freaked, because they were like this is so much and I'm like you're meeting once a month. Some of them were on a health and fitness committee to do positive things for the staff. I made all of them (teachers in the building) do one or the other, RIT or PSM. I kind of pushed them in that sense at first and for the vertical teams I picked someone from every grade level to be on the different contents. I let the teachers elect who they wanted on the leadership team. It was interesting one of my grade levels elected someone that wasn't doing anything. They're like she needs to step up and be a leader. I just feel like this helps to provide the opportunity . . . so you can get a lot of different points of view.

Additionally, distinguished teacher leader Kyle, who also works at Principal Madeline's school, shared how having these opportunities to be on various committees and teams has helped him develop into a teacher leader, "I think being on those committees and being on those teams and in those capacities . . . have propelled me into that leadership role." A committee that distinguished teacher leader Pete was recently on at her elementary school this past year empowered her to represent her colleagues and have input in the decision

making process as she shared, "this past year I was on the committee to hire (the new principal)." All three of these are examples of the principal's influence on the organizational structure of the school.

The teachers and principals in this study identified a variety of teacher committees and teams that were created at each school as they reflected upon the indicators within the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Rubric for Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*. The participants in this study also shared that schools which organize themselves to provide a variety of teacher committees and teams helps to encourage non-teacher leaders to emerge. Principal Madeline shared the importance of providing such forums in order for teachers to have an opportunity to engage in conversations with their fellow teachers as well as promote leadership from within,

> I think we had the underground leadership for a while and now I've made that surface and I have really kind of pushed them to be involved in decision making and everything from budget to how we're going to use our data, to what do you think about making some structural changes with procedures and policies.

All four principals at each elementary school who participated in this study had established a variety of committees and teams for their teachers. However, distinguished teacher leader Linda shared, that simply the creation of committees within the school's organizational structure was not enough to promote teacher leadership. In order for teacher leadership to emerge, principals must also encourage teacher input into the decision making process within such structures. As Linda reflected on this year's experience with her current principal she shared, "(There is) not a whole lot of room for colleague input." Linda went on to share, "He (previous principal) didn't lead the school.

We led the school with him. She (current principal) leads the school. We follow."

Although Linda shared that this current school year she was provided with opportunities

such as, "Leadership team meetings, like I said I've been attending all of those. The

accreditation team, being on that accreditation team," she went on to share,

> I will be honest she (current principal) doesn't really provide a lot (of
> opportunities). She's not real big on us talking. Not a whole lot of room for
> colleague input. I think maybe she's afraid of what might come out, I don't
> know.

As demonstrated by the participants' responses, the study found that the

organizational structure within the school can promote the development of teacher

leadership. However, if the organizational structure or the creation of various committees

and teams within a school do not serve as the primary function for the decision making

process, then the structure may become counterproductive in developing teacher leaders.

Suttle (2013) shares how developing an effective organizational structure enables the

distribution of authority, it is crucial for communication among stakeholders, and is

important in order to achieve desired goals and results. As distinguished teacher leader

Aimee reflected on the various committees and teams that are a part of her school she

commented, "I don't care what anybody says . . . you need the support from your

administrators and the teachers have to buy into it," in order for the organizational

structure to be effective.

School culture. While the organizational structure of a school is important in an

effort to establish formal teacher leadership roles, the study also found the school culture

can have an impact on the establishment of informal teacher leadership roles. Peterson

and Deal (1998) assert that in order to shape a school culture one must have school

leaders from every level. Principals, teachers, and parents help to identify, shape, and

maintain a strong, positive, student-focused culture (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The current

study uncovered the importance of having a supportive school culture in order to foster

the underlying norm of collegiality, a shared sense of purpose, and opportunities for

informal networking. With such conditions in place, the participants in this study

described how informal teacher leadership subcultures emerged within their schools.

Distinguished teacher leader Jamie reflected upon her school culture,

> I just hope we're all coming here to do our main goal, which is to teach the kids and we should all be coming here to do our best. I don't want to be seen as the leader because when I think of a leader it's like one person doing everything and I don't think that's the way it should be.

As Katrina reflected on her professional relationships with her colleagues and how these

opportunities have promoted an informal subculture of diverse teacher leadership she

shared, "I think it's just working with other great leaders, just experiencing the influence

of others has really impacted me." Distinguished teacher leader Jeff shared how he

promotes a culture of informal teacher networking among his colleagues, "I make myself

available . . . I wouldn't really call that a program or a strategy . . . I'm willing to do

whatever, where can I be used, where can I benefit the most, you know," as he spoke

about supporting others within his school.

There also were several strategies that school leaders used to help support and

sculpt their school cultures in an effort to foster opportunities for collegiality and

informal teacher leadership networking. Principal Chloe first read her school culture as

she shared, "I am still learning with teachers and I have to rely on them to keep me on the ball." She went on to share how it was important to,

> Create or make sure that the environment doesn't stunt their (teachers) growth. Making sure that our school environment is a place where they will feel free to step up and step out, you know, without fear of retribution, fear of being overly criticized, you know, just giving them the opportunity to grow, to find themselves, to find their niche, to find the place they are comfortable.

Principal Madeline shared her efforts to help shape a school culture where teachers can choose to become leaders,

> When I came here I told them, I'm like, if you've got an issue or there's something you're concerned about, I want you to come to me, but you need to come to me with a resolution, because if you don't, you're just complaining. And so that's been interesting because to watch them, (they will say), I'm not coming to complain, I am coming with a possible solution. And so I don't hear the grumblings . . . that's been an interesting culture shift, I think for some of them.

This study uncovered that both teachers and administrators contribute to the establishment of a school culture that encourages the development of distinguished teacher leaders. A primary contributing condition of developing such a school culture was establishing an environment where teachers did not fear retribution from either fellow teachers or administrators while assuming various leadership roles within the school. The study also found this condition to be an essential factor in order to develop a trusting culture of collegiality, a shared sense of purpose, and opportunities for informal networking and leadership. Furthermore, the principals and teachers who participated in this study shared that when such conditions are in place, informal teacher leadership roles

continue to emerge and further support the development of a school culture that promotes

distinguished teacher leadership.

Leadership values. The establishment of an effective organizational structure

and the creation of a nurturing school culture are the factors and conditions that

encourage teacher leadership. However, the study also uncovered an attribute that

encourages the development of distinguished teacher leaders to include having a

"leadership value." This study uncovered that one's "leadership value" is a dominating

trait that guides individuals toward developing credibility as a leader. The teachers and

principals in this study were asked to define in their own words, the word "leader." The

various definitions of the word "leader" that were shared throughout this study also were

congruent with the predominant leadership values that emerged in Chapter IV, *The*

Travels of Elementary Distinguished Teacher Leaders. Each of the predominate

leadership values identified in this study played an essential role in how teacher leaders

navigated through the various roles, responsibilities, trails, and tribulations associated

with becoming a distinguished teacher leader. Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1995) refer to

the attribute of having core values as the influence which guides our actions over time.

Having a clear set of values helps to build the credibility and trust that facilitate

leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

There were 11 leadership values identified in this study which contributed to

one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader: relationship-building, knowing

where one stands, the desire to serve others, the importance of being a problem solver,

the influence of being passionate, the ability to reinvent one's self, the influence of being

resourceful to others, the ability to be courageous, the importance of confidence, the influence of being humble, and the ability to see the bigger picture.

  Relationship-building. A leadership value that surfaced within this study was one's ability to build relationships. Although relationship-building is essential in order to establish connections among various stakeholders, the study found this leadership value also was an important aspect of generating ideas within the school community. The more teachers you meet, the more ideas you will get. Distinguished teacher leader Kaitlyn shared,

> A leader is someone that has a relationship with the parents, a relationship with kids, relationships with colleagues and is looking for new ideas and things like that, reflecting on your work, changing it to work, and trying to meet the needs of all your kids.

Distinguished teacher leader Linda also shared the benefit of having a grade level team who worked well together and had the opportunity to, "bring things to the table and people . . . sharing with others and benefiting from that (experience)." The teachers and principals in this study recognized the importance of developing effective professional relationships and how building such relationships provided opportunities to come together, exchange diverse ideas, and attain better results.

  Knowing where one stands. In the simplest terms, the study uncovered that knowing where one stands is the ability to feel in control over one's life as well as having the ability to live up to one's ideas. Distinguished teacher leader Pete shared, "You are in charge. You make the plans. You make sure they are carried out, you set a good example," as she described a leader. Other participants in this study shared that in order

for others to willingly follow a leader, they must have a sense that the leader knows where he or she is going. Principal Amy spoke to this attribute when she commented, "I think a leader is someone who has a vision in mind and is purposeful in everything that they do." The leadership value of knowing where one stands attributed to providing teacher leaders in this study with a sense of direction in order to embrace challenges, overcome obstacles, and stay focused on their goals.

Service to others. A third leadership value shared by participants in this study was the desire to serve others and how such a leadership value provided teachers with a feeling of connectedness to their professional environments. Teachers who felt needed by others in their leadership roles also experienced a sense of purpose as they demonstrated care for their constituents. Distinguished teacher leader Linda feels that her role as a teacher leader is "To guide and serve others. I benefit from watching another teacher grow . . . it makes me feel good." As distinguished teacher leader Katrina reflected on what defined the word "leader" she shared, "A leader is someone who is willing to be a mentor or someone who doesn't mind taking on a student teacher." Teacher leaders who had the desire to serve others were generous with their time and continually sought opportunities to help others. Barbara reflected upon her definition of a "leader" as she shared, "a leader is somebody who helps others when help is needed."

Problem solving. A fourth attribute that promotes teacher leadership is the leadership value or ability to be a problem solver. Principal Chloe shared, "A good leader, in my opinion, has to be able to think logically, critically, and analytically." Distinguished teacher leader Barbara commented, "I don't expect my administration to

take care of all my problems for me, but to help me figure out how to take care of issues that I might have." The study found that schools that encourage teachers to help resolve school problems or challenges helps to enhance productivity and also promotes a greater propensity for improved staff morale as teachers felt their voices were heard and their problem solving abilities were valued.

Passion. Several participants in this study spoke about experiencing a variety of motivating indicators that attributed to becoming a distinguished teacher leader to include both intrinsic and external factors. However, a prominent leadership value which emerged among teacher leaders in this study was being motivated by the intrinsic passion to perform their roles and responsibilities within their school environments. This passion of wanting to make an impact as a teacher leader promoted intrinsic feelings of satisfaction and accomplishments for participants in this study. For distinguished teacher leader Kyle as he described his passion for teaching he also shared how others recognized this internal drive in him, "She saw my passion; she knew I wanted to help her." As Principal Chloe reflected on teacher leaders who are passionate and intrinsically motivated she shared, "they are not just sitting and waiting to be told, or waiting to be taught . . . becoming a teacher leader, you have to want it, it's got to come from in here."

Reinvention. A sixth leadership value which emerged in this study as an attribute that encouraged teacher leadership was ability to reinvent one's self. For distinguished teacher leader Pete having the opportunity to transition into a new school environment after being in the same school for 20 years provided an opportunity for her to define and showcase in her strengths. This experience led Pete toward developing a

clean slate in order to design a new professional role of serving as a teacher leader. Pete

shared,

> After 20 years in one place and then coming here, I got better. I started being on
> more committees. I was on school leadership for four years in a row. Whenever I
> started here, those teachers looked to me to take them on this adventure.

For Pete having the leadership value of embracing an opportunity to reinvent herself in a

new setting allowed her to take control of her career and capitalize on her strengthens as a

leader.

Resourcefulness. The leadership value of being resourceful to others is about

optimizing what you have to work with. Teacher leaders who were resourceful to others

in this study appeared to be more aware of the vast amount of possibilities and

opportunities around them. As distinguished teacher leader Katrina described a leader

she shared, "A leader is someone that people can come to and say do you have any

resources on magnets or something that they are teaching." Distinguished teacher leader

Linda felt that being resourceful to others also meant a leader who, "takes initiative to

step up to the plate and kind of helps guide others to get to that end point." The study

uncovered that teachers who valued being resourceful to others in their leadership roles

were leaders who do not try to control the energy, but instead channel the energy within

their professional environment as they capitalize on opportunities surrounding them.

Courage. An additional leadership value that emerged in this study was told

through personal stories of courage as teacher leaders challenged the status quo, sought

out new opportunities, overcame their fears, or made tough decisions while remaining

true to their core values. As Jeff defined the word "leader" he shared a leader is, "someone who is willing to step up to the plate and take on challenges regardless of the popular vote." Other participants in this study described the leadership value of courage as one's ability to find the strength to move ahead in the presence of fear. As distinguished teacher leader Norita confronted her fear of public speaking she now defines a leader as, "Someone who is kind of the first person to try something new and then show other people how to do it. Maybe a person that's not afraid to kind of speak in front of a group of teachers . . . not afraid to do that." Teacher leaders who demonstrated the leadership value of courage in this study appeared to have earned the trust and loyalty of those who surrounded them that allowed them to move forward in the presence of uncertainty.

Confidence. The importance of being self-confident was another teacher leadership value that was a contributing attribute toward becoming a distinguished teacher leader. Distinguished teacher leader Aimee described such confident leadership as, "I would say leadership is more initiative, finding areas that either need help or need work and just taking the initiative to get gaps filled. Rising to the occasion." Principal Christina also described distinguished teacher leaders as being confident by, "taking charge and doing things that no one else wants to do or doing things that they see needs to be done that is proactive." The study uncovered that having the leadership value of self-confidence promoted one's ability to be resourceful, determined, and optimistic while assuming various teacher leadership roles.

Humility. An essential discovery within this study was that as participants were asked to define the word "leader," none of the participants described leadership as one having authority or as a person who holds a position in which they tell others what to do. Nor did they describe leadership as being someone who is better, smarter, or more skilled than others. In fact, teachers and principals in this study described an attribute of being a teacher leader in terms of one's ability to be compassionate and humble servants to others. Several participants in this study described leadership as one's ability to recognize the importance of others within their schooling environments. This leadership value of being humble was further revealed as participants in this study were asked, "why do you think your principal considers you a distinguished teacher leader?" Distinguished teacher leader Jamie commented, "I don't' know because I don't see myself as a leader. I just stick up for my kids." Distinguished teacher leader Norita also shared a similar comment when she was asked the same question, "I'm not sure, to tell you the truth. I try to do my work the best I can and I participate in things that we all need to participate in. I try to have a good attitude and collaborate with other people. I try to enjoy what I do 'cause your students are what it is all about."

Seeing the big picture. A final leadership value that was shared by participants in this study was one's ability to broaden their outlook beyond their individual classroom or having the ability to see the bigger picture. Principal Madeline described a leader as, "I see leaders, especially in the school situation as someone that can see the whole picture and move people towards that. It's not just me in my classroom, we've got to collaborate and do it together." Teacher leaders in this study, who had the ability to cultivate the big

picture of the school environment, also seemed to embrace the complex and diverse

needs faced by the school. For example, principal Chloe described such leaders as,

> Someone who can not only see the individual components of the situation or
> school, but someone who can see the whole picture and know what the group
> needs to be carried out in order to successfully move a school or program or
> situation forward.

"Big-picture" distinguished teacher leaders also have the ability to gain insight from a

variety of stakeholders in an effort to enhance this trait. Distinguished teacher leaders in

this study spoke about the importance of seeking out input from various perspectives. By

doing so their own thinking was broadened as Kyle described the big-picture attribute as

one's ability to, "be able to see things in the future, potential things that could be

beneficial to their organization and also see some things that not."

Obstacles toward Becoming a Distinguished Teacher Leader

While the school's organizational structure, culture, and one's leadership values

are contributing factors, conditions, and attributes that encourage the development of

distinguished teacher leaders, the study also uncovered a variety of factors, conditions,

and attributes that can limit one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader. These

obstacles were revealed as the 11 distinguished teacher leaders and four principals were

asked, "Do you think all teachers have the potential to be distinguished teacher leaders?

Why or why not"? Their answers yielded the following results: six teachers said "yes,"

five teachers said "no," and all principals said "no." As a result, the study uncovered four

obstacles which may limit one's professional growth potential of becoming a

distinguished teacher leader to include: motivation/desire to lead beyond the classroom, ability to lead others, personal anxieties, and level of commitment/passion.

Motivation/desire to lead beyond the classroom. Being motivated is literally having the desire to do things. Luthans (1998) asserts that motivation is the process that arouses, energizes, directs, and sustains behavior and performance. By nature of the teaching profession, in order to be an effective classroom teacher, it requires educators to be motivated leaders in their classrooms as they take responsibility for all student learning and establish a safe and orderly learning environment. However, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, Standard One, *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership,* not only holds teachers accountable for leading in their classrooms, but also requires that teachers demonstrate leadership in the school and the teaching profession while advocating for schools and students as well as demonstrating high ethical standards (McRel, 2009a). Yet, the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness Data from 2010–2011 revealed that only 9.7% of teachers in North Carolina were rated as distinguished teacher leaders.

The current study uncovered that one of the factors that may limit a teacher's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader is one's *desire* to lead beyond their classroom. Principal Chloe shared her experiences with teachers, who seemed to lack the desire to lead beyond the classroom,

> There are some folks who just want to teach, they just want to be in the classroom one-on-one with their kids, and they are awesome at that. And they're just not comfortable stepping outside the classroom and doing more. And that's a personal thing. I think that a person can become distinguished as a teacher but not necessarily as a teacher leader.

Principal Christina also commented on why some teachers do not desire to become a

leader beyond their individual classrooms,

> Some people I think are just not cut out for it. They don't want it. They just want
> to stay in their little comfortable environment. They may do a really good job in
> their classroom, but that's as far as they want go. They do not want to take on
> that role, and they may be very capable of doing it, and you may want them to
> very much. And no matter how much you encourage them, they just don't want
> to do it. I can't make them come out of their shell.

Principal Amy shared while reflecting on whether all teachers could become

distinguished teacher leaders, "I think there are people who pour their heart and soul into

any job, and then there are other people who come to work with the whole idea of what

time do I get off?" Distinguished teacher leader Barbara commented on a teacher's

motivation to become a leader,

> I don't think all teachers want to be. It's not that they are not contributing in their
> own way, they are just, you know, kind of more on the sidelines, help out in
> different ways but maybe not so actively as the people who take on leadership
> roles.

Distinguished teacher leader Jeff shared, "I think it just comes down to them questioning

whether or not they want to be a teacher leader, but some people are just content with the

status quo, and call it a day and go on home." Aimee, also a distinguished teacher leader,

commented, "It is wanting to do that. The work load that is on classroom teachers, it's a

lot. So to be able to take that extra initiative to either run another program or do

something else—that takes a lot." Principal Chloe summarized one's motivation or

desire to lead beyond the classroom as a potential barrier toward becoming distinguished

teacher leader,

> Becoming a teacher leader, you've got to want it, it's got to come from in here,
> and that's personal. You know, that's not something I can control. I mean I can
> see potential and I can think this person will be awesome doing this, but if the
> person doesn't want it and if the person doesn't feel it, then I would not push it.

Ability to influence others. Another obstacle the study uncovered is one's

ability to lead others. Leadership is about influence and any person has the ability to

influence others or situations and thus we all have the ability to lead (Yin & Fritz, 2001).

However, even though we may all have the ability to influence others or situations, the

study uncovered that not all teachers have developed the skills and qualities that may

allow them to lead to others.

Principal Christina shared,

> I think sometimes it's a matter of personality, that they may not be popular or well
> liked with the other peers. Or they may be shy. They may be a quiet person who
> does a good job . . . but they're not outgoing. (On the other hand) you may have
> that person who is outgoing and outspoken and loud, it just probably gets on
> everybody's nerves, you know, so everybody tries to ignore that person.

Principal Chloe also commented on a teacher's ability to lead others, "They have to be

self-aware. For those folks who don't have a clue how they come across to others, it's

just not going to gel, it's not going to work." Distinguished teacher leader Norita

commented, "There are obviously some areas that some people might have some trouble

with, you know," as she spoke about various examples of teachers interacting with one

and another.

The reported data for this study also uncovered that one's inability to lead others or influence situations were more directly related to a teacher's understanding of how "they came across to others." Bennis (2003) shares that one of the most essential things for leaders to do in order to influence others involves "knowing yourself" and "knowing the world." Understanding the processes involved in order to seek self-knowledge and self-awareness is a lifetime skill (Bennis, 2003). However, one of the most difficult things for aspiring leaders to do is to communicate consistently and effectively with all levels of the organization (Cummings, 2013).

Personal anxieties. The third obstacle towards becoming a distinguished teacher leader dealt with one's personal anxieties. Anxiety may be trigged by a variety of factors, but it is generally associated with a feeling of worry, nervousness, or uneasiness concerning an event or something with an uncertain outcome (Henig, 2009). The participants in this study shared examples of personal anxieties that some teachers experienced in relation to demonstrating leadership within the schooling profession.

The common anxiety that was identified by several teachers and principals who participated in this study concerned the fear of public speaking. Distinguished teacher leader Pete shared, "Some teachers are not comfortable speaking in front of their peer group. Some teachers are not comfortable expressing their opinion." Kyle, also a distinguished teacher leader shared, "there are some teachers that want to stand behind the scene, so to speak, they don't want to be pushed out and because they're so timid and hesitant . . . they afraid of the responsibility." Teacher leader Barbara commented,

> I know teachers here who would think it was facing death if you wanted them to stand up in front of a group of teachers and talk to them and would break out in hives and hyperventilate at the thought of, you know, talking to adults.

Teacher leader Sue went on to share, "There are some people with extreme issues over leading things like that," as she referred to examples of leading professional development for their colleagues. Sue went on to share as she reflected upon the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standard One, *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*,

> Teachers may hit distinguished in a lot of those areas when it comes to the students . . . but seeks opportunities to lead professional growth activities . . . that stops me. I think there are just people who may not ever get that checked off. And I think that's okay.

Although there were a variety of personal anxieties that surfaced related to one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader, the prominent anxiety shared by both principals and teachers concerned one's fear of public speaking. However, the study also revealed that there were two distinguished teacher leaders who participated in this study who shared their own experiences and personal anxieties over public speaking and leading professional development for their colleagues. For these two distinguished teacher leaders they had the ability to overcome such a fear. However, this discovery may leave one to ponder, is it necessary to have the ability to speak publicly in order to become a distinguished teacher leader?

Level of commitment. A final barrier the study uncovered was one's level of commitment towards the profession. Being committed is a dedication to a particular organization, cause, or belief, and a willingness or passion to get involved. Wadud,

Berkowitz, Schultz, and Lowewenstein (2013) share four reasons why commitment is the

backbone of any organization to include: (a) the more committed people are, the more

effective they are at influencing others, (b) people who are committed are the ones who

don't take discouragement seriously, (c) people who are committed cooperate at a higher

level by fostering camaraderie, trust, and caring, and (d) people who are committed to an

organization will learn what they need to know to be more effective.

     As Principal Amy reflected on one's ability of becoming a distinguished teacher

leader she shared,

> It just really depends on the level of commitment and the level of passion that
> a person has for their job as to whether or not they would rise to the surface as
> a leader, because again there may be some people in this world who are not as
> committed or for whatever reason have things going on at home or in their
> lives that doesn't allow them the energy or the stamina to be that leader at that
> point in time.

Principal Chloe commented,

> I think it depends on the person and do they want to, are they willing to put
> into what needs to be done to move forward to overcome. Teacher leaders
> have to be backbones in the school and they've gotta be shining bright
> examples.

Principal Amy continued to reflect on a teacher's ability to become a distinguished

teacher leader as she shared, "It just depends on where you are in life." Distinguished

teacher Linda commented, "You can provide opportunities and you can kind of coach

them (other teachers) in that direction but I think in the end, whether somebody wants to

grab onto those strings and go with it," as she eluded to one's level of commitment to the

profession. As teacher leader Linda went on to reflect upon the question, "Can all teachers be distinguished teacher leaders? Why or why not?" she shared, "Before I would have said yeah, but I've learned now I don't think so," as she continued to share examples of teachers within her school who were encountering various obstacles that prevented them from transitioning from teacher to distinguished teacher leader.

Summary

Chapter V, *Analysis of Distinguished Elementary Teacher Leader's Descriptions of Influences on Their Work*, uncovered how teachers develop from teacher to distinguished teacher leader, what responsibilities teachers are assuming to be perceived as distinguished teacher leaders, what the costs and benefits are of being a distinguished teacher leader, as well as the factors, conditions, and attributes that either encourage or limit one's professional growth potential of transforming from teacher to distinguished teacher leader. The findings within this study may still leave one pondering the age old question, "Are leaders made or are they born?" Warren Bennis (2003), a leading leadership researcher, believes that one cannot be taught to become a leader but one can learn to become a leader over the years through life and work experiences. Several of the participants in this study also concurred with Bennis's theory as they shared their thoughts of becoming a leader.

Principal Christina reflected, "I don't think all teachers are born to be distinguished teacher leaders. But I do think they can grow into it if they wanted to. I think it's all about what you want, and some don't want it." Principal Madeline shared her thoughts on one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader, "everybody's got

the potential to be a leader, it's just if they have the confidence in that area to do it."

Distinguished teacher leader Kyle also shared his thoughts, "I really feel like every

teacher can become a leader. But it depends on the individual in looking at their

philosophy of education or how they want to expand their education and expand their

teaching career in this profession." Principal Madeline concluded her thoughts about

one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader by sharing, "I can lead you there,

but you've got to be able to do it."

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. —John F. Kennedy

The purpose of this study was to uncover how one transitions from teacher to a distinguished teacher leader while examining the roles and responsibilities a teacher leader assumes, the costs and benefits associated with being a teacher leader, as well as the factors, conditions, and attributes that either encourage or limit one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader. Findings were reported as distinguished teacher leadership roles and themes emerged from the perspectives of the teachers and principals who were a part of this study. This chapter will revisit the conceptual framework, discuss the conclusions of the research findings while providing recommendations for administrators, teachers, and policy makers. Chapter VI also suggests future research studies and concludes with a professional connection to the study in relation to "My Future Journey as Dr. Finberg."

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework with Findings

Revisiting the conceptual framework as a result of the stories told by the distinguished elementary teacher leaders and principals provides findings on the work of elementary distinguished teacher leaders. The revised conceptual framework (see Figure 4) indicates categories of findings to include themes which emerged during the data analysis process.
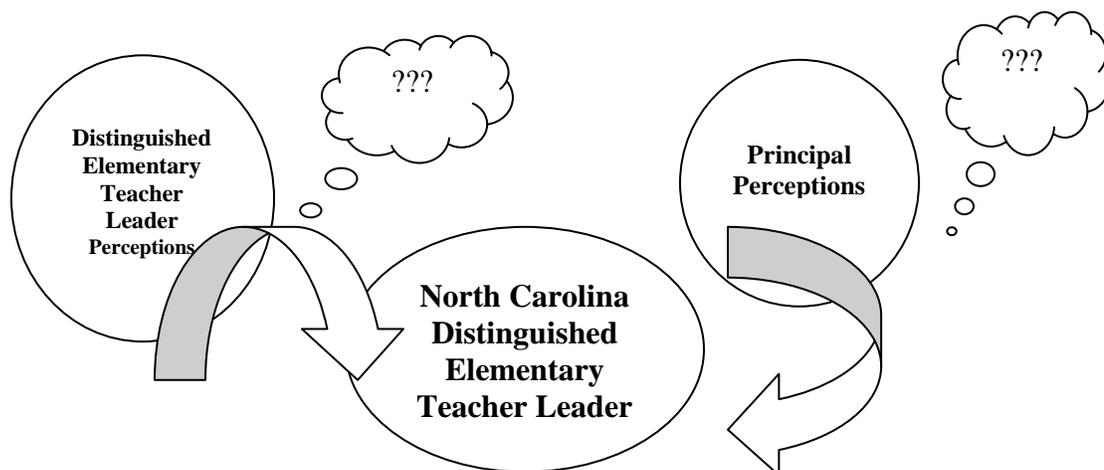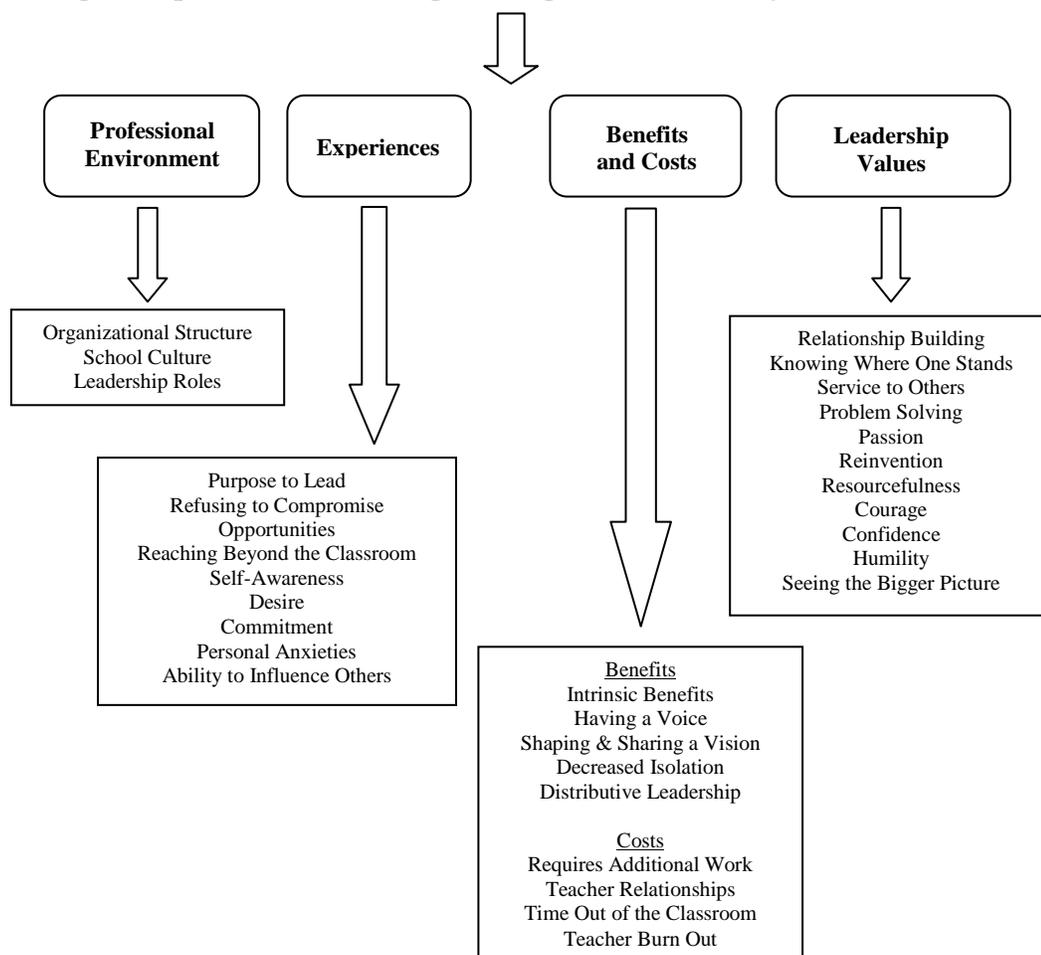
Figure 4. Revised Conceptual Framework.

Context

The personal attributes which influence the factors or the conditions that either encourage or limit one's ability to become a distinguished teacher leader has been replaced with leadership values. The leadership values which emerged include: (a) building relationships, (b) knowing where one stands, (c) serving others, (d) being a problem solver, (e) passionate about their work, (f) ability to reinvent one's self, (g) being resourceful to others, (h) being courageous, (I) confident about your work, (j) being humble, and (k) the ability to see the bigger picture. These leadership values were one of the contributing attributes for each teacher's ability to transition from teacher to distinguished teacher leader. The research also uncovered additional resulting themes for the following categories: professional environment, experiences as well as the benefits and costs associated with assuming the role of distinguished teacher leader.

The Unspoken Journey: Silences within the Research

The research revealed that there were several silences or unspoken topics pertaining to becoming a distinguished elementary teacher leader. Throughout the interviews of both the teachers and principals, there was an examination of each element within the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership (McRel, 2009a). Although the participants shared many examples related to the descriptor elements within the Standard One on how one may demonstrate the ability to be a distinguished teacher leader, there were two areas embedded within the rubric that neither the teachers nor the principals spoke of directly. The two elements that were not

discussed addressed the political advocacy role of being a distinguished teacher leader and the component of being a model tenet of demonstrating high ethical standards.

The North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Rubric states teacher leaders "advocate for schools and students" by "actively participating, promoting, and providing strong supporting evidence for implementation of initiatives to improve education" (McRel, 2009a, p. 22). Although several of the participants in this study shared examples of actively participating in the local school and district decision making processes, there was a lack of discussion concerning their participation of serving in a teacher leadership political advocacy role at either the state or national level. In addition, the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership has an entire element that addresses "teachers demonstrate high ethical standards" (McRel, 2009a). The research uncovered there was also a lack of discussion concerning how distinguished teacher leaders demonstrated "ethical principals including honesty, integrity, fair treatment, and respect for others while upholding the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators" (McRel, 2009a, p. 22).

Conclusion: Once a Distinguished Teacher Leader, Always a Distinguished Teacher Leader?

Beginning the school year of 2011–2012, all licensed teachers in North Carolina were evaluated on Standard One: *Teacher Demonstrates Leadership*. Since then, all North Carolina teachers have been evaluated annually on Standard One: *Teacher Demonstrates Leadership*. The purpose of this annual evaluation system is to promote and support effective leadership, quality teaching, and student learning (McRel, 2009a). The process of evaluating teachers annually is designed to encourage professional

growth, to be flexible and fair to the persons being evaluated, and to serve as the foundation for the establishment of professional goals and identification of professional development needs (McRel, 2009a). The instrument is designed along a growth continuum as teachers are rated from "not demonstrating" to "developing" to "proficient" to "accomplished" and then to "distinguished." The intent of any growth continuum is to continue to improve upon your practice in an effort to eventually obtain the highest rating. However, this study uncovered that once a teacher reaches the "distinguished" rating, it does not necessarily imply that the teacher will sustain this "distinguished" rating from year to year. In fact, the study revealed that there are multiple factors that could impact a teacher's overall rating from year to year in the area of being a distinguished teacher leader. The participants in this study shared that it was more likely that a teacher may be rated as a distinguished teacher leader one year and not the next. The implication of such a finding counteracts the intended professional growth model of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Instrument that states, "The intended purpose of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process is to assess the teacher's performance in relation to the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and to design a plan for professional growth" (McRel, 2009a, p. 4).

As the teachers reflected upon the indicators and descriptors within Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*, there were several factors that impacted a teacher's ability to assume various distinguished leadership roles from year to year to include: (a) personal reasons such as maternity leave, health issues, and family needs, (b) graduate school commitments, (c) letting someone else assume the role, (d) new evaluator, and (e)

annual school assignments and placements. For example distinguished teacher leader

Sue's position as the Academically Intelligently Gifted teacher may be assigned to two or

more schools from year to year. Therefore, meeting the indicators in standard one may

be difficult as she explained,

> This year I am here 80% of the time. When I can devote four full days to a school then I feel like I'm a stronger leader. There have been years past when I'm here three days and I'm in another school too. I'm not trying to make excused, but I know I am only one person, and I can only do so much. I can't still be doing things for the other school when I am physically at my other assigned school. I can't be at all the planning meetings and the CASA meetings and I can't plan after school things for both schools. In my heart I know I am still that same leader and I know that I am doing the best I can for these kids and as long as I'm doing that for them every single day, I'm okay with that (not being rated distinguished every year).

Distinguished teacher leader Norita shared,

> Last year I did several things, but this year because of my maternity leave I haven't done it. I don't expect to get everything distinguished, I mean some years you might and you're like "woo hoo," but we're not perfect and we're all working on different things and every year is different. So some of these are not distinguished . . . I don't think it's so important as long as you know you are doing your job and your children are doing well, really it's just paper.

Distinguished teacher leader Pete also experienced her distinguished rating changing this

year as she shared,

> I just had my observation with our new administration and in areas that I was distinguished in last year, I have stepped down from some of those positions and I am not considered distinguished this year. I am wondering if someone else looked through my file would they think that I have slacked up . . . that's very frustrating to me. If you've been in charge of leadership for four years in a row then it's time to let another baby teacher come in and take some reins. It's like I've slacked up, it makes me feel bad, and it makes me look bad. When I'm here

at 6:30 in the morning, I'm not so much worried that I am not distinguished, I am worried that I'm meeting the needs of my children. So as long as I know I'm doing my job, I'm not going to get so bent out of shape about it.

Distinguished teacher leader Barbara also reflected on this growth continuum,

I guess you have to look at this as a continuous change and you can't think . . . from now on I'm distinguished, unless you're doing things to move yourself into that category. Honestly I don't feel like I have done enough here this year. I mean it says seeks opportunities, I haven't done that this year.

Principal Madeline also shared how she interprets the evaluation continuum, "teachers that (are) developing (means) you do it sometimes, proficient is you're doing your job most of the time and doing it well, accomplished is you're outstanding, and distinguished is you're an example." However, she went on to share, "distinguished . . . you may reside there, but you're never a permanent resident." This principal's interpretation of the teacher evaluation instrument requires teachers to demonstrate various distinguished leadership indicators from year to year. This research uncovered that what is considered for a teacher to be distinguished one year, may or may not be considered distinguished the following year. This further supports the subjectivity of this intended growth instrument for teachers. Principal Madeline shared her professional opinion about the continuum ratings as she said, "If you are distinguished in every single area then you need to get a different job. You've maxed yourself out, you're not challenging yourself."

If the purpose of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric is to encourage professional growth, once a teacher reaches the "distinguished" category where does one go from there? Furthermore, if a teacher receives the "distinguished"

rating one year and not the next, have they regressed in their ability to support effective

leadership, quality teaching, and student learning? Although this study uncovered a

variety of factors, conditions, and attributes that promote one's ability to transition from

teacher to distinguished teacher leader, it has also uncovered an unanticipated conclusion

that once one becomes a distinguished teacher leader, he or she may not always be a

distinguished teacher leader.

Even though this discovery did not directly relate to the research questions that

were part of this study, it was an essential finding that needed to be reported as part of the

conclusion of the study. As a result of this finding and other findings derived from this

study as they relate to the research questions, the following recommendations have been

created for administrators, teachers, and policy makers in relation to teacher leadership.

**Recommendations for Administrators: Excursions within the North Carolina
Professional Teaching Standard 1—Teachers Demonstrate Leadership**

Teachers and principals who participated in this study were asked to examine the

elements of Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership* in the North Carolina

Professional Teaching Rubric. The participants were also asked to share examples that

would demonstrate a distinguished rating for each of those elements to include: teachers

lead in the classroom, teachers demonstrate leadership in the school, teachers lead the

teaching profession, and teachers advocate for schools and students. A cross analysis of

this qualitative data was then conducted in order to examine the responses from the

various groups used in this study that included: teachers and principals at the same

school, teachers and principals within the same district, all teachers in the study, and all

principals in the study. As a result, the analysis uncovered that there were some

similarities among each of these study groups especially in relation to teachers leading in their classrooms and teachers demonstrating leadership in the school. However, the study also found that there were misalignments among these study groups while sharing examples for teachers leading the teaching profession and teachers advocating for schools and students. Furthermore, the study uncovered that while the teachers provided explicit examples for each indicator, principals, in stark contrast, spoke in very broad terms. Table 5 lists the indicators for each element of Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership* that were shared from each group used in this study.

Table 5

Distinguished Indicators of Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership

	Teachers lead in their classroom	Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school	Teachers lead the teaching profession	Teachers advocate for schools and students
Teachers School A LEA 1	Using Data Using Technology Collaborative Learning Teacher Accountability	Various School Committees Grade Level PLC Leadership Team	Leading PD District Roles Research Roles	Member of NCAE Community Involvement Policies/Practices
Principal School A LEA 1	Using Data Collaborative Learning PBIS	Grade Level PLC Other School Teams	District Roles	Provide for kids outside of the classroom.
Teachers School B LEA 1	Student Leadership Using Data PBLs Collaborative Learning	Various School Committees Getting MSA Leadership Team Mentor Tutoring Programs	Graduate School National Boards District Roles	School Vision Team Develop Policies Grant Writers
Principal School B LEA 1	Purposeful Instruction No Downtime Cutting Edge Practices	Strong, sound instruction	Leading PD Getting our school's name on the map	Can See Bigger Picture Systematic Planner
Teachers School C LEA 2	Using Data Using Technology Collaborative Learning	Various School Committees Sharing Best Practices Leadership Team	Seeking opportunities for professional growth	Develop Policies "Whatever your administration wants you've got to support."
Principal School C LEA 2	Using Data Outgoing Teachers Instill Learning	Collaboration with Peers Leadership Team	Positive Attitude Leading PD	Professionalism Know Policies Active Participants

Table 5 (Cont.)

	Teachers lead in their classroom	Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school	Teachers lead the teaching profession	Teachers advocate for schools and students
Teachers School D LEA 2	Using Data Collaborative Learning	Various School Committees Leadership Team Tutoring Programs	Participates in Professional Development Evidence of Student Growth Seeking opportunities for professional growth	A Mentor Encourages Professional Conduct "This is hard one for me."
Principal School D LEA 2	Collaborative Learning Innovative Practices	Leadership Team Positive Attitude Steps Up	Graduate School National Boards Public Speaker	"The bottom line is what is best for their students."

The teachers and principals who participated in this study shared a variety of
examples for each descriptor within the evaluation rubric. Using a rubric to assess a
teacher's performance provides a set of criteria that is far more descriptive than a single
rating (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998) such as the previous North Carolina Teacher
Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI) that used a rating scale of unsatisfactory to
above standard. The Public Schools in Chicago used a similar teacher evaluation rubric
and conducted a study of this instrument called the Excellence in Teaching Pilot of
Chicago (Sartain et al., 2011). The study revealed some positive outcomes of using a
similar teaching evaluation rubric to include that principals and teachers reported they
had more meaningful conversations about instruction (Sartain et al., 2011). However, the
study also uncovered that principals were more likely to use the distinguished rating in
order to preserve relationships with teachers (Sartain et al., 2011). Overall, The
Excellence in Teaching Pilot of Chicago study revealed that while principals and teachers
reported having better conversations than they had in the past, both principals and
teachers still have much to learn about how to translate a rating on an instructional rubric
into deep conversations that drive improvement in the classroom (Sartain et al., 2011).

The Public Schools of North Carolina are also having similar conversations about the new teacher evaluation instrument as well as the annual rating outcomes reported to the public each year. Recently in July 2013, the Department of Public Instruction for North Carolina facilitated a Summer Institute Seminar for district leaders across the state. One of the sessions addressed interrater reliability concerns using the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Rubric. A qualitative assessment using two or more raters must establish interrater reliability to ensure that the results generated will be useful (Auerbach, La Porte, & Caputo, 2004). In an effort to strengthen the interrater reliability, clear guidelines need to be established as well as thorough experiences (Auerbach et al., 2004). Auerbach et al. (2004) went on to share that if the observers are given clear and concise instructions or guidelines on how to rate or estimate a behavior, this helps to increase the inter observer reliability.

Not having interrater reliability in using the North Carolina Professional Teaching Instrument will result in variances of what constitutes distinguished teacher leadership from school to school across the state. In an effort to strengthen the interrater reliability of Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*, a recommendation for administrators is to engage in dialogue with teachers at their school in order to generate a clear and concise list of descriptors for each element within Standard One. Once these lists are created at each school within a district, the next step would be sharing this data with all other principals across the district. This would provide an opportunity to engage in further dialogue and generate a consensus of what a distinguished teacher leader looks like within each school district across the state. In an effort to further ensure interrater

reliability across the state, this process would then be duplicated within each region and eventually at the state level in order to develop a clear and concise list of indicators which explicitly defines a North Carolina Distinguished Teacher Leader.

Recommendations for Teachers: Setting Sail to Become a Distinguished Teacher Leader

For many teachers the focus is to get through the day, the week, the month, or even the hour. Devoting time and attention to develop and understand how one might begin to transition towards becoming a distinguished teacher leader may seem somewhat abstract or unattainable. However, this study offers teachers a new perspective on *"setting sail to become a distinguished teacher leader"* with the following recommendations:

Understand Your Instructional Role

"At first your leadership is going to be more of just being well acquainted with the curriculum and knowing what is expected of you with regards to instruction. Knowing the curriculum . . . being a strong sound instructional teacher," was advice shared by Principal Amy. Principal Madeline recommends to "focus on number 4 (teachers facilitate learning) . . . obviously facilitating learning has to be really strong, that is a common thread." And finally, Principal Christina shared, "if you can't (provide a) conducive learning (environment) than I don't know how you are going to get any further," as she provided advice for teachers aspiring to become teacher leaders.

Learn Your Environment

"Spend some time to sit back and learn first. Kind of absorb the whole system. I think a lot of people make the mistake of jumping in and then it leads to burnout," shared

distinguished teacher leader Linda. Distinguished teacher leader Kyle also offered some advice while learning your environment, "Don't bite off more than you can chew. Try to take baby steps."

Share

"Share some things, new ideas, or new strategies . . . this is the best way you can earn some respect from your grade level peers . . . being able to support that instruction," commented Principal Amy. Distinguished teacher leader Katrina shared, "collaborate . . . be open minded, take suggestions, don't just think that your way is the only way, and just be willing to try new things."

Become an Effective Teacher First

"That can make a huge dent in earning credibility in leadership by just being good at good old-fashioned teaching," shared Principal Amy. Distinguished teacher leader Jamie commented, "You have to get your class under control . . . and then everything else is going to come into place."

Embrace Opportunities

"Try to take an active role in becoming a leader . . . you're already a leader when you come and step into a classroom," shared distinguished teacher leader Kyle. "Go with what you feel is right, getting involved, and building relationships," was the advice from distinguished teacher leader Kaitlyn. While Principal Chloe shared, "Don't be afraid to change things, to tweak things, in order to meet the needs of kids. Take advantage of professional development outside of the building and begin to develop networks outside of school."

Self-reflect

"I think it's a very self-reflective process. Try and take your strengths and figure out how you could make the school or the classrooms better for kids," shared distinguished teacher Aimee. "Be willing to move beyond, maybe your comfort zone," was advice from distinguished teacher leader Barbara.

Recognize the Importance of Peers

"Find another teacher in your school who might be your mentor or somebody in your grade level that you feel can be a good role model for you and kind of pay attention to what they do and ask questions," shared distinguished teacher leader Norita. Principal Chloe commented, "Talk to other teachers, not just in this building, but outside of the building and outside of the district. Understand it's a learning process."

Recommendations for Policy Makers: Competing Demands

In my travels, I have met several distinguished teacher leaders who are committed and passionate about meeting the needs of children, despite the ever changing political landscape, accountability measures, and on-going budget shortfalls surrounding public schools. In spite of such challenges a most recent MetLife Survey for the American Teacher (2013), uncovered that 51% of teachers are engaging in leadership and continue to seek opportunities to serve in other leadership capacities within their profession. Furthermore, 51% of teachers said they are at least somewhat interested in teaching in the classroom part-time combined with other roles or responsibilities in their school or district, while 23% are extremely interested in this option (MetLife Survey for the American Teacher, 2013). Research has also found that teachers who serve in

leadership roles promote a school-wide focus on learning, inquiry, shared decision making, team work, and sharing best practices (Barnett et al., 2010; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2008; Herzber, 2006; MSP, 2010). Other studies have found that effective leadership is a variable that influences student achievement (Miller, 2003; Suranna & Moss, 2002; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). This study uncovered that while there are multiple benefits of being a distinguished teacher leader, one cost that is associated with being a teacher leader involves finding a balance between the competing demands of leading in the classroom and leading within the school as well as the teaching profession. In order to effectively foster, promote, and sustain teacher leadership opportunities within our schools, we need the support of policy makers.

The North Carolina Professional Teaching Standard One: *Teachers Demonstrate Leadership* currently holds teachers accountable for taking responsibility for the progress of all students in order to ensure that they graduate from high school (McRel, 2008). This by itself is an awesome responsibility for which we hold teachers accountable. However, within this same standard, teachers are also held accountable toward assuming various leadership roles outside of their classroom. In order for North Carolina teachers to obtain a distinguished rating, in addition to taking responsibility for every child's annual academic progress within their classroom, they also must collaborate with colleagues to improve teaching and learning, assume a leadership role in implementing the school improvement plan throughout the building, demonstrate the ability to lead professional growth activities, actively participate in the decision-making processes, and

promote strong supporting evidence for implementations of initiatives to improve

education (McRel, 2008). The implications of trying to balance teacher leadership

responsibilities within the classroom and outside of the classroom may indirectly impact

student learning as well as teacher retention rates. Therefore, we need to re-examine the

current system that teacher leaders operate within in order to find an effective balance

between leading within the classroom and leading outside of the classroom.

Such an initiative would involve support and funding from our policy makers.

This study recommends three actions that policy makers can take in order to help our

teacher leaders balance the competing demands of their various roles and responsibilities

to include: (a) allocate time for teacher leadership roles, (b) require districts to provide

teacher leadership academies, and (c) provide a performance bonus for distinguished

ratings.

Allocate Time for Teacher Leadership Roles

Imagine the possibilities if schools and districts across our state had flexibility in

order to provide time for teachers to assume leadership roles. This flexibility would

enable schools to schedule part of a teacher's time in the classroom teaching while the

other part of position may involve time to research and write curriculum and assessments,

time to mentor new teachers, time to draft educational policies, and time to facilitate

professional learning communities. In order to create such an opportunity it would

require us to be innovative and daring in order to break away form the traditional daily

school schedule. Such an initiative could open the door to an ever-widening realm of

leadership roles within the school setting. The simple act of providing teachers with the

needed time and tools in order to balance the competing demands of leading in the classroom with leading outside of the classroom could potentially re-frame the educational structure and system in unimaginable ways.

Require Districts to Provide Teacher Leadership Academies

Requiring districts to implement Teacher Leadership Academies across the state would be a comprehensive way to build a system in order to ensure that teachers are provided with a common quality preparation program to expand their leadership roles, skills, and opportunities to practice their work with colleagues. This initiative would also serve the purpose of providing the necessary time for collaboration and professional learning to occur among teachers within a school, district, or across the state. If all teachers in North Carolina are being held accountable for demonstrating leadership both within the classroom and outside of the classroom, then it is only fair to ensure teachers across the state are being provided with equitable opportunities to learn how to become a leader.

Provide a Performance Bonus for Distinguished Ratings

As North Carolina continues to brace for another year of pay freezes for state employees as well as hold the rank of 46th in terms of teacher pay among the National Education Association (Maroney, 2013), policy makers are urged to explore some alternative means to recognize the efforts of our teachers. North Carolina legislators continue to remain undecided on how to address teacher salaries and introduce merit pay tied to value added student achievement data (Brown, 2013). However, the state legislators are looking to allocate and fund a budget to support pilot programs for teacher

merit pay in the 2014–2015 school year (Brown, 2013). This study recommends to policy makers to make part of this pilot program an opportunity for teachers to receive bonus pay for each overall distinguished rating they receive on their summative annual evaluation. Just as many employees in other professions are rewarded for their performance, so should teachers. However, in an effort to avoid the implication of principals being pressured from teachers to inflate distinguished ratings, the pilot program should include measures to ensure interrater reliability. If our state cannot afford to increase the salaries annually for all state employees, then the state should at minimum allocate funding to reward our teachers who have demonstrated being a distinguished teacher leader.

Future Research

Although the evidence of the impact of teacher leadership has not yet developed, we are learning a great deal about the factors, conditions, and attributes that either encourage or limit the development of teacher leaders and teacher leadership in schools. There are several next steps in order to continue to examine teacher leadership. First, a similar study of distinguished teacher leaders and their principals at the middle and high school levels could produce different results and would be worthy of investigating. Second, a study that involved a comparative analysis between distinguished teacher leaders and proficient teacher leaders could help to identify additional factors, conditions, and attributes that support or impede the development of teacher leaders. A third study might involve a comparison between states who are using similar professional teaching standards to measure *teachers demonstrate leadership*. Fourth, a longitudinal study that

examined the summative ratings of *teachers demonstrate leadership* over several years

would be worthy of investigating. Finally, an interesting study would be to examine the

correlation between the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standard One: *Teachers*

Demonstrate Leadership and the most recent Standard Six: *Teachers Contribute to the*

Academic Success of Students.

A Professional Conclusion: My Future Journey as Dr. Finberg

Becoming a leader isn't easy, just as becoming a doctor isn't easy and I believe

anyone who claims otherwise is fooling herself. But learning to lead is a lot easier than

most of us may think it is, because I believe that each of us have the capacity for

leadership. If we stop and reflect, almost every one of us can point to some leadership

experience. Leadership takes place among children, in neighborhoods, at home, in

sports, meetings, in families, at work, and the list could go on and on. As a young adult I

once believed that leaders were born, not made. I always heard from family members

and teachers growing up, "she is a born leader" and "she could be a politician."

However, overtime through my personal and professional experiences as well as

uncovering the outcomes derived from this study, I firmly believe that leaders are made,

not born. I also agree with Bennis's (2003) theory that leaders are made more by

themselves than by any external means. Furthermore, I believe that leaders do not

necessarily set out to become leaders. For example, after graduating from college with a

teaching degree in art education seventeen years ago, I would have never thought then

that I would have spent the last twelve years as a school administrator nor would I have

imagined completing a doctoral dissertation on leadership. I believe that leaders do not

necessarily set out to become a leader; instead I believe that over time leaders begin to uncover a means to fully express themselves. What I mean by this statement is that leaders are driven by their own interests and purposes in life and as a result of expressing such thoughts they begin to inspire others to follow their lead.

So what does all of this mean as I begin the journey of becoming Dr. Finberg? I have begun to realize that leadership is more than just a word; leadership in fact is much more complex than I ever imagined it to be. However, leadership to me has become the act of leading by the right example, demonstrating deep caring for those whom you lead, nurturing team building, and having a clear vision of where you are going. This study has allowed me to uncover that teachers become distinguished teacher leaders in very different ways, some more quietly than others, but that every teacher has the ability to become a distinguished leader if they so desire. As Dr. Finberg, just as I have been inspired by so many wonderful educators through my journey, I hope I will continue to be afforded with opportunities to inspire others to find their inner "leader." I believe that once someone uncovers their internal drive or their purpose in life, they begin to open doors and opportunities to inspire others to follow their lead. I firmly believe that everyone has the ability to influence others and situations, they just may need either the opportunity or a motivator to help them discover such an influence. With all that being said, that brings me to my anticipated journey of being Dr. Finberg. As Dr. Finberg, it is my hope that I will inspire a movement of leadership discovery by creating the necessary conditions for individuals to understand themselves, to express themselves thoroughly, and to inspire others to follow their lead.

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APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name_____School_____Date_____

Basic demographics of participant:

Number of Years Total in Education _____ Number of Years at This School _____

Number of Years in Administration or Administrative Role _____

Male/Female_____   Ethnicity:_____

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1. In your own words, define the word *leader*.

2. How do you use this definition of *leader* for your work as an administrator?

3. Who are the distinguished teacher leaders at your school? What makes them distinguished?

4. When examining Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership, could you share some roles you have observed *"distinguished" teachers* demonstrating in relation to teachers *leading in their classrooms*?

5. What are some examples you have observed of distinguished teacher leaders as they demonstrate leadership *within the school*?

6. What are some examples you have observed of distinguished teacher leaders *leading the teaching profession*?

7. What are some examples you have observed of distinguished teacher leaders *advocating for the school and the students*?

8. Do you feel there are benefits of developing teacher leaders? Why or why not?

9. Do you feel there are potential costs toward developing teacher leaders? Why or why not?

10. Describe when it is important for you to have teacher input.

11. Describe when it is not important for you to have teacher input.

12. What advice would you give a beginning year teacher in order to meet the North Carolina Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership?

13. At what point do you feel a teacher transforms from teacher to distinguished teacher leader?

14. What strategies, techniques, and/or programs do you use to develop distinguished teacher leaders?

15. Do you think all teachers have the potential to be distinguished teacher leaders? Why or why not?

APPENDIX B

DISTINGUISHED TEACHER LEADER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name_____School_____Date_____

Number of Years Total in Education _____ Number of Years at This School _____

Highest Formal Degree Obtained (i.e., Bachelor of Science [B.S.]) _____

Are you a National Board Certified teacher? _____

Grade Level _____

Male/Female:_____   Ethnicity:_____

1. In your own words, define the word *leader*.

2. How do you use this definition of *leader* for your work as a teacher?

3. Who do you feel are the distinguished teacher leaders in your school? What makes them distinguished?

4. Why do you think your principal considers you a distinguished teacher leader?

5. When examining Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership, could you share examples of roles you have assumed this year which have demonstrated the distinguished descriptions in the following elements . . .

    a. (teachers lead in their classroom);

    b. (teachers demonstrate leadership in the school);

    c. (teachers lead the teaching profession); and

    d. (teachers advocate for schools and students).

6.   What are the benefits of being a teacher leader?

7.   Have you ever experienced any barriers or resistance as you developed into a distinguished teacher leader? If so, how did you overcome these barriers?

8.   How do you think you are perceived by others in your teacher leadership roles? What are your thoughts about these perceptions?

9.   At what point do you feel you transformed from teacher to distinguished teacher leader? What do you feel were the contributing factors?

10.   What advice would you give a beginning year teacher in order to meet the North Carolina Standard One: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership?

11.   Do you think all teachers have the ability to become distinguished teacher leaders? Why or why not?

12.   What strategies, techniques, people and/or programs have helped you in order to develop into a distinguished teacher leader?

13.   Describe your personal attributes and characteristics. How do you think these factors have helped your ability to influence others?

14.   Do you feel the support of your colleagues and your principal is essential in order to develop into a distinguished teacher leader? Why or why not?

15.   What (if any) future plans do you have in order to continue to grow professionally as a distinguished teacher leader?