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Historically, roles associated with instructional leadership in schools have been the sole responsibility of the school's principal. Increased accountability has intensified the pressure on school personnel causing a paradigm shift that has progressively acknowledged the contributions of teacher leaders as an essential component of the school improvement process. Traditionally, teacher leaders have fulfilled varying leadership roles in their schools, many of which have been administrative. With a greater call for accountability in the school improvement process, there has been a gradual shift from teacher leaders serving in *administrative* roles to teacher leaders serving in *instructional* roles. Although bureaucratic infrastructures within school systems sometimes impede teacher-focused reform, this paradigm shift supports the disposition in favor of teacher involvement in the school improvement process. In fact, scholars suggest that without the integral involvement of teachers who possess diverse and specialized skills, school improvement efforts could not achieve systematic progress towards sustainable goals (Tomal, Schilling, & Wilhite, 2014).

As our nation continues to grapple with the complexity of sustainable school improvement, this dissertation introduces an innovative approach to school reform that focuses on building the instructional capacity of the teacher workforce through the development of a *new group* of teacher leaders—teacher instructional leaders (TILs). Three individual teacher cases and their respective school administrators participated in this qualitative case study. The following research questions guided the study: How do

teachers practice as teacher instructional leaders (TILs)? How do school principals promote the development of teacher instructional leaders (TILs)? What is the impact of teacher instructional leaders (TILs) on the whole school and the teacher?

Assuming that our nation is concerned with reforming our failing public schools, it would be beneficial to consider the contributions of this qualitative case study to scholarship related to educator effectiveness, teacher leadership, instructional leadership, and teacher instructional leadership. *For the fate of our country will not be decided on a battlefield, it will be determined in a classroom* (Weber, 2010).

MORE THAN JUST A TEACHER: EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES OF

HOW TEACHERS SERVE AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

by

Jessalyn Woods

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Approved by

Rick Reitzug_____
Committee Chair

In Loving Memory of

Grandma Jessa Ruth Woods and
Crystal "Sissy" Leigh Bryant

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

As I reflect on final thoughts of my dissertation work, I cannot help but think about my own life as a student. In retrospect, I have always had to fight for my education. When I say I had to fight for my education, I do not mean with physical punches, I mean using strategies to navigate a system that was not originally designed to promote my success. You see, at an early age, My Grandma Jessie and my Mom taught me how to fight bureaucratic systems. In their day (and presently), systems represented barriers to success too massive to knock down or that were invisible (even though you knew they existed). As I thought about my personal journey through the education system, it dawned upon me that I have always had to fight. I have always had my feet on top of the ground learning the topography of the system while simultaneously navigating underground to discover secret pathways to success.

Why did I have to use that approach? Simply because of existing structures within the system that attempted to exclude me from certain opportunities. For example, my mother had to help me navigate the system when ethnic barriers prevented me from taking rigorous courses in high school. I had to learn how to navigate the system when standardized test scores in math and reading became a barrier between the academically gifted classes and me (tracking). I had to learn how to navigate the system when my

teachers—not believing that I had the capacity to score well—evaluated my work numerous times.

My Grandma and Mom customized a strategy for me by encouraging me to put God first and do my best in school. "You have to get up twice as early and be twice as good," Grandma said. "If you want to fight, use your brain and your books, Mom said, they cannot take that away from you." Mom and Grandma believed education was a major game changer in life and I believed it too. As a result, I developed a razor sharp focus on becoming an excellent student. What would I have done if I did not have a Grandma and Mom fighting for me and teaching me how to navigate systems not designed for my success? Would I have earned a doctoral degree?

Pondering these questions took my mind to a documentary I watched and a book I reviewed recently—***Waiting for Superman***. As I watched, the room on TV was filled with silence, as the audience waited in suspense to hear Anthony's name/number called. You see, Anthony was an inner city student growing up in Washington, DC who was looking forward to a greater educational opportunity. His Grandmother had entered him in the lottery to attend the Seed School (a successful charter school where students resided on campus). There was a brief pause and the cameras went to the other students— Francisco, Bianca, Daisy and Emily who were also awaiting their names/numbers to be called in their respective schools. Would they get in? Then the cameras switched back to Anthony who had been waitlisted. Emily got into her school choice, but Bianca, Francisco, and Daisy did not get into their school choices. The schools were good schools, but they had few spaces. To make the process fair, students were selected by

lottery. The good news, Anthony was later accepted. As I sat in shock, numbed by this process, tears streamed down my cheeks and an unrighteous indignation kindled within. I was angry to see the lives of these students and future generations suspended in midair because there were not enough "good" schools to attend. As the documentary alluded, the students were ***Waiting for Superman***, to swoop in and save the day (that's what superheroes do). Who would fight for public schools? Who would help save our schools? It was at this point that I knew my dissertation was definitely valuable to the reformation of education systems and education scholarship.

As I continued watching the documentary, it reminded me, of today's notion of school reform—send in a superhero principal to turnaround a failing school and everything will be just fine. Geoffrey Canada, one of the school reformers in the documentary, made the startling illumination that no one—not even Superman—was coming with enough power to save schools (Guggenheim, 2010). Why not? There are more than 2000 Dropout Factories (schools with 40% or more of the student population not graduating on time) across the country (Weber, 2010). Even if Superman *did* show up—what could he do *alone*? He is only *one* person—superhero or not.

The notion of a superhero principal swooping in to save the school is antiquated for the work of transforming schools is too laborious for one person to accomplish. As a result, I believe that the answer to improving our schools is hidden within great teachers. "When you see a great teacher, you are seeing a work of art. You are seeing a master and it is I think as unbelievable as seeing a great athlete or seeing a great musician" — Geoffrey Canada. If I could add to Geoffrey's quote, I would add that when you see a

great teacher, you are witnessing a superhero in action. Great schools will not come from

winning the lottery or from Superman. Great schools will come from developing the

instructional capacity of teachers. Great schools will come from unlocking the superhero

within teacher instructional leaders and calling them together to create great schools. The

problem of fixing schools is complex, but the steps are simple: we must first begin with

helping teachers become the very best that they can become, challenge leaders on all

levels to remove barriers to change, engage all stakeholders to commit to schools, and be

willing to take a risk to act. This dissertation study supports actively engaging the teacher

workforce in the process of winning the battle against failing schools for the fate of our

country will not be decided on a battlefield, it will be determined in a classroom

(Guggenheim, 2010).

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

In efforts to reform the state's schools, North Carolina policy makers recently implemented a graded report card model for the state's schools, with schools assigned a letter grade ranging from A to F, depending on their performance. A school's report card grade is calculated based upon the number of proficient students plus the percentage of students showing growth in one school year. In previous years, the state recognized schools based upon student growth (www.ncpublicschools.org/src/). In a panic to quickly demonstrate improvement in schools, North Carolina policy makers created the hybrid model that encompasses student proficiency on standardized tests in conjunction with one year's worth of student growth. Consequently, the media has focused public attention on schools—demanding responses to, and resolutions for, poor school performance while schools battle to defend their efforts.

According to comprehensive school reports such as *A Nation Accountable* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), schools are failing to meet the needs of their students. An increased need for specialized services for diverse student populations, steadily declining graduation rates, and a continual increase in the achievement gap between white and non-white students on standardized tests, render current practices in schools insufficiently effective. Amidst the dilemma of increasing achievement gaps, the frustration associated with having inadequate resources to serve diverse student

populations, and steadily declining academic performance on standardized tests, is the ongoing accusation that teachers are not getting the job done in the classrooms.

The drive for improved educational performance has resulted in a form of accountability that places tightly prescribed targets at the center of systemic change (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Efforts to increase student achievement for all students regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, disability, and/or academic ability have proven to be a daunting task. Though school administrators are essential to the leadership and success of the organization (Bennis, 2009), how principals engage teachers as agents of school improvement may be equally, if not more, critical.

Lambert's (1998) work, *Building Leadership Capacity,* offers an in-depth look into the possibilities of increasing leadership capacity among teachers as one solution for sustainable school reform. Since school administrations change frequently, Lambert contends that teachers provide more stability in schools for sustainable school improvement. Thus, school districts potentially gain momentum toward reform by developing the leadership capacity of its teachers. Lieberman and Miller (1999) state, ". . . without teachers' full participation and leadership, any move to reform education— no matter how well-intentioned or ambitious—is doomed to failure" (p. ix).

Leadership Capacity

A clear focus on building leadership capacity is one method by which schools can engage in sustainable and continuous improvement efforts (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). Capacity building involves the processes and practices used to increase the potential ability to perform in schools (Wilcox & Angelis, 2012). In such a high stakes time for

schools, the burden to effectively implement strategies to improve schools can no longer be the sole responsibility of the principal as principals are much too transient to provide the necessary foundation for sustainable and continuous school improvement. As a result, transitions in building level leadership often cause anxiety among stakeholders in the school's community and potentially disrupts progress toward school improvement, as will later be discussed in Chapter III.

In his work titled *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School*, Fullan (1996) contends that teachers can be instrumental agents of change in schools. Fullan (2003) proposes that the most sustainable changes will occur as a result of the work administrators accomplish *through* teachers. Subsequently, school leaders must actively engage teachers in the school improvement process in order to co-construct results. If the collective work for school administrators and teachers—in relation to school improvement—is to have stability and sustainability, then teachers and school administrators must be considered "major team players" in reform efforts.

Though leadership has traditionally been equated with one person, role, or set of traits, Lambert (1998) challenges this notion. She suggests that leadership becomes a pervasive and shared practice of the whole school community where skillful teachers understand the shared vision of the school, the school's full scope of work, and the value of being adequately equipped to execute the school's vision with fidelity. Leadership, therefore, should encompass a collaborative group of people who learn together as they construct meaning and knowledge.

This ideology challenges the notion that most school improvement initiatives flow from the outside (federal, state, district offices) of the school to the inside of the school (Grubb & Tredway, 2010). Fullan, Hill, and Crevola (2006) suggest that the education community refocus its efforts to the inside of the school which would involve the process of building leadership capacity. If building leadership capacity is to be used as a strategy for improving schools, principals must consider cultivating teachers as instructional leaders and create collaborative work opportunities involving both teachers and principals that positively impact school improvement.

Distributed Leadership

Teachers play a pivotal role in every facet related to schooling. Administrators outside of the school funneling top-down initiatives into the school are ill-equipped to accomplish the changes necessary for sustainable school improvement. Because of their deep knowledge of the school and its students, the school's history, and previous reform efforts, teachers play a critical role in building leadership capacity (Grubb & Tredway, 2010). This positions teachers who serve as instructional leaders as assets to principals and practical participants in sustainable school improvement.

Teacher leadership deliberately focused on instruction births teacher instructional leadership (TIL). How principals promote the development of teacher instructional leaders (TILs) and the manner in which teacher instructional leaders practice within their schools impacts the school and teachers.

Distributed leadership is a prerequisite condition for building leadership capacity. School administrators develop the leadership capacity of teachers through the paradigm

of distributive leadership. This task includes empowering teachers to lead and working alongside teachers as they engage in the collaborative work of leadership conducive to cultivating sustainable school improvement (Crowther, 2011). Within this dynamic, the teacher—who leads classroom instruction—is recognized by the principal as a trusted and collegial expert capable of working as an instructional leader in the school. The work involved in this joint collaboration, though laborious and daunting, potentially represents the transformative practices to which Fullan et al. (2006) alluded in the previous section.

 In schools where leadership is distributed effectively, leadership capacity is expanded while responsibility and accountability for student learning is increased (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Consequently, schools are transformed into spaces conducive to shared collaboration. Subsequently, the quality of teaching and learning improved thereby improving the learning in the whole school.

Teacher Leadership

Traditionally, the role of a teacher leader encompassed being the spokesperson for the principal and an extension of a larger bureaucracy (Reid, 2011). Currently, teacher leaders are involved in the intricacies of curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy (Tomal et al., 2014). In fact, teacher leaders are called upon to develop a new mindset that includes a core passion for learning, a commitment to collaboration, and a shared vision of the organization (Lieberman, 2011; Reid, 2011). Bond (2015) defines teacher leaders as professionals who remain in the classroom and use their specialized knowledge and skills to improve student achievement, influence others, and build organizational capacity. Lambert's (2003) work provides specific characteristics identifying the practices of

teacher leaders to include: reflective, inquisitive, focused on improving their craft, action-oriented, and accepting of responsibility for student learning. Lambert describes teacher leaders as individuals who know their intentions well enough not to be intimidated into silence by others, as individuals who are open to learning, and as individuals who understand the three dimensions of learning in schools: student learning, the learning of colleagues, and their own learning (Lambert, 2003).

The concept of teacher leadership is broad in that it includes a variety of both formal and informal roles (Zepeda, Mayers, & Benson, 2003). Formal roles may include the teacher as an instructional lead teacher, instructional coordinator, grade level leader, and department chair. Other informal roles that may or may not have titles include mentors and committee members (Zepeda et al., 2003). Informal roles encompass the behaviors and actions in which teacher leaders engage within their classrooms and school community that do not require them to assume defined responsibilities associated with formal roles. Teacher leaders who assume informal roles of leadership may exhibit the following characteristics: demonstrate depth in content knowledge, employ strong pedagogical practices, use research-based practices to inform teaching, assume the role as the go-to-person for fellow colleagues, lead their own learning, model exemplary practices, collaborate and speak up within the school community (Bond, 2015). Additional informal roles for teacher leaders may include reviewing textbooks, engaging in staff development and other learning opportunities, attending graduate school, or participating in civic events within the larger community (Zepeda et al., 2003).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a practice most oriented towards improving instructional, curricular, and assessment practices to improve pedagogical quality and raise student achievement (Printy, Marks, & Bowers, 2009). Developing educators as instructional leaders equips them to use effective instructional practices and curricula that can be employed to increase student achievement. In this light, instructional leadership is designed to ensure that every student receives the highest quality of instruction every day (Center for Educational Leadership, 2014). Typically, in the professional literature, instructional leadership is a responsibility ascribed to principals. For example, Gulcan (2012) describes the principal's role as an instructional leader who globally encompass processes, programs, and development of people including; identifying the vision and mission of the school; programming and administering education; developing staff; monitoring and assessing the teaching process; and creating and developing a positive school climate. Some of these practices have an indirect impact on student learning—e.g., creating and developing a positive school climate—while other practices directly impact the quality of teaching and learning which directly impacts student achievement—e.g., developing staff.

Although the task of instructional leadership has traditionally been assigned to the principal, in recent years, the role has expanded to include other educators—especially teacher leaders. The ideal of sharing responsibility and accountability for instructional leadership is described in Spillane's (2006) and Spillane and Diamond's (2007) distributed leadership framework where the leader-plus aspect recognizes that leading

and managing schools can and should involve multiple individuals in addition to the school principal. Educators involved in shared instructional leadership may be formally and/or informally designated leaders within the school.

Teacher leaders provide the most direct means by which schools can improve pedagogical and assessment practices, raise student learning experiences and achievement, and ensure students' welfare and well-being (Tomal et al., 2014). If building leadership capacity of teachers as instructional leaders is to be a sustainable school improvement strategy, there must be a concerted effort to delineate between the practices of teacher leaders described in current literature and the impending expectations of a teacher who is an *instructional leader*.

Teacher leaders—formal and informal—are an integral part of the whole school community where every constituent must engage in shared leadership to construct knowledge (Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent, & Richert, 1996). The fidelity of this process is cultivated within the professional learning community where teacher leadership takes on an instructional focus—a process which builds the leadership capacity and contributes to whole school improvement.

Problem Statement: Purpose of the Study

The nation continues to grapple with the complexity of sustainable school improvement for even the best ideas of reformers have proven no match for the powerful resident culture (Fullan et al., 2006). Increased accountability has intensified the school improvement movement causing a panic. Many changes in schools are the result of policy demands and impositions for establishing standards-based reforms, close

partnerships with business, implementation of new technologies, value-added accountability measures of school performance, portfolio and performance-based assessments, charter schools and other kinds of school choice, and a whole range of subject-specific initiatives (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997).

Teachers fulfill varying leadership roles in their schools—lead teachers, mentors, department chairs, professional learning team facilitators, and site-based chairperson—to mention a few. Roles that were traditionally hierarchical—those associated with administrators and instructional leadership—are no longer off limits to teachers. Indirectly or directly, teachers who work to meet the needs of diverse learners engage in the practices of instructional leadership in their classrooms.

Although a myriad of roles for teacher leadership exists, this study is designed to expand the conception of teacher leadership to explicitly include teacher instructional leaders (TILs). The process of developing teacher leaders can be broadened by focusing on the instructional aspect of teacher leadership—pedagogy. Pedagogy is the educational science most concerned with *how best to teach*. How teachers practice as instructional leaders impacts the leadership capacity needed to produce whole school improvement. Without the integral involvement of teachers who possess diverse and specialized skills, school improvement efforts cannot achieve systematic progress towards sustainable goals (Tomal et al., 2014).

In this study, I explore multiple perspectives of how teachers serve as instructional leaders, their impact on building leadership capacity, and the effect their TIL

development has on sustainable approaches to improving schools. The findings of this study are designed to explicitly contribute to the scholarship related to teacher leadership, expand conceptions of teacher leadership to include teacher instructional leadership (TIL), and offer suggestions for sustainable school improvement.

Guiding Research Questions for the Study

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers practice as instructional leaders?

2. How do principals promote teacher instructional leadership as a part of the school improvement process?

3. What is the impact of teacher instructional leadership…?

   a. On the school?

   b. On the teacher?

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter III

The chapter begins with a section on school improvement followed by the emergence of teacher leadership in school policy. Chapter III provides an overview of teacher leadership literature and its impact on the larger context of the school improvement process. A detailed explanation describes how each of the following are related to and/or have influenced the school improvement: teacher leadership, instructional leadership, and teacher instructional leadership. Additionally, school administrator and teacher leader roles in relation to the school improvement process are

illuminated. The chapter culminates with a section describing various barriers to teacher leadership.

Chapter IV

Qualitative methodology was employed to conduct this study and is described within Chapter IV. This was a comparative case study focusing on the teacher instructional leadership work of three in-service, secondary school teachers serving in a small school district in North Carolina. Interviews, observations, and document review were implemented to capture how each teacher practiced as an instructional leader, how their respective principal/assistant principal promoted their development as an instructional leader, and how their practice as an instructional leader affected them and the whole school.

Chapter V and Chapter VI

Chapters V and VI introduce rich narrative data collected in relation to each teacher case. The chapters captured the responses to each research question and was organized by the titles of each respective school where the teacher instructional leaders served. Though each chapter was titled by school name, the data collected focused on each teacher instructional leader as the "case" not the school where each teacher served. Stella practiced as a teacher instructional leader at Center City Middle School. Chapter V encompasses the teacher instructional leadership narrative of Stella Luna and her assistant principal, Noel Douglas's narrative related to how Stella practiced as an instructional leader. Chapter VI is organized in the same manner as Chapter V, capturing the responses to each research question from two teacher instructional leaders—Bee

Christian and Beth Johnson—who served at Have Faith Middle School under the leadership of their principal DJ Jordan.

Chapter VII

The final chapter revisited each research question in relation to the conceptual framework and categories that emerged from the data. Chapter VII discusses findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the research. Recommendations to policy makers, district level administration, school administration, teachers, and higher education were suggested followed by my reflection as Dr. Jessalyn Woods.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Students are educated in schools where leadership flows from the top down and is traditionally ascribed to the principal. As efforts have been employed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the nation's schools, the effectiveness of this organizational dynamic describing who leads improvement reforms has been challenged. In many instances, the continued use of this hierarchical structure has not produced the results for which stakeholders hoped.

This literature review examines nontraditional approaches to leadership in K-12 schools including developing teachers as instructional leaders. The review of literature includes sections on *school improvement*, *the emergence of teacher instructional leadership in policy*, *an overview of teacher leadership*, *instructional leadership, and barriers to teacher instructional leadership.* It begins with a section that focuses broadly on school improvement as this relates to the core reason for engaging in the study. School improvement is followed by a section illuminating the emergence of teacher leadership in policymaking. The literature review culminates with two final subsections devoted to barriers to teacher leadership and teachers as instructional leaders.

School Improvement

School improvement refers to the processes that schools employ to ensure that students achieve at high levels. The school's improvement team, which is compiled of representatives from each stake-holding constituent group--school personnel, parents, community representatives, and students—deliberates the plans, strategies, and processes for improving the school. The purpose of the school improvement process is to assess the school's educational needs and to create a comprehensive plan that meets those needs while simultaneously enlisting the participation of the entire staff—those responsible for the daily implementation of the plan. As described by Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), school improvement processes are designed to use available resources to improve the quality of life for all.

Although all stakeholders are invited to participate in school improvement development, school administrators and teachers are centrally located within this process as they are dually responsible for the daily oversight and implementation of the school improvement plan. Collaboratively, school administrators and teachers are engaged in shared leadership designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning within schools. This dual role gradually diverges from formal hierarchical leadership roles and positions both school administrators and teachers as instructional leaders in multidirectional roles (Printy & Marks, 2006). This shift to a more multidirectional paradigm of leadership can be attributed to the fact that both teachers and school administrators have leadership impact on learning in schools (Printy & Marks, 2006).

Whitaker (2013) describes school improvement as a simple concept that is complex to accomplish. Though an intricate process, he attributes two strategies for significant improvement in schools: getting better teachers and improving current teachers. Hence, the success for improving schools depends primarily on people development not program development.

According to Grubb and Tredway (2010), most school improvement initiatives emerge from outside (federal, state, district offices) the school and migrate to the inside of the school. At times, initiatives flowing externally from the school appear in the form of programs and are often met with opposition from stakeholders within the school (Whitaker, 2013). Such oppositional responses to programmatic reform illuminate the importance of including teachers' contributions as part of the school improvement process. When treated as partners in the school improvement process, teachers are fully vested in school-wide efforts (Johnson et al., 2014). As a result, Fullan et al. (2006) suggest that the education community refocus its efforts less on program implementation and cultivate the leadership capacity of the people who serve inside of the school—teachers.

Emergence of Teacher Leadership in Policy

The National Board Certification (NBC) process has been slated as the first policy designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teacher leaders and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], n.d.). Engagement in this certification is optional, requires assessment fees, and is limited to teachers with three or more years of teaching

experience. Though not all teachers pursue NBC, Loeb, Elfers, and Plecki (2010) illuminate the NBC process as a method of preparation for teacher leaders who make positive contributions to the school improvement process.

National Board Certification is a legislated program for advanced teacher leadership development that creates opportunities for formal and informal teacher leader roles. Teachers who desire to engage in the NBC process must hold a bachelor's degree (with the exception of career and technical education teachers), have taught for three full years, and possess a valid teaching license. Rewards to engaging in the NBC process include being awarded automatic licensure renewal within the year of the attempted certification process even if NBC is not granted. Teacher leaders successfully completing the NBC process receive a 12% pay increase. Although empirical studies link the success of National Board Certified Teachers to improved student achievement, not all teachers pursue this leadership development opportunity. Some teachers do not pursue NBC due to the out of pocket expense associated with assessment fees and missed time away from the students as teachers must construct portfolios for review (NBPTS, n.d.).

North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Instrument

In efforts to standardize and measure teacher effectiveness, North Carolina has implemented a teacher evaluation instrument that provides a platform for teachers to develop as teacher leaders. Teacher evaluation processes differ in design from state to state but most include a component for teachers to develop their leadership skills. In this process, the decision for a teacher to engage in developing as a teacher leader is optional and can include various leadership development pathways. Although empirical research

illuminates the benefit of teachers developing their leadership practices, teachers are not required to advance their leadership skills.

The teacher evaluation process implemented by most states has the dual purpose of not only monitoring teacher effectiveness, but also being used by teachers as a tool to promote their own professional growth. The mindset of teachers related to perceptions of the evaluation process has occasionally acted as a barrier to how teachers approach their own development as leaders. Sometimes perceived as a "gotcha," teachers have overlooked the opportunity embedded in the evaluation tool that positions them to promote their own development as leaders. At a minimum, teachers fulfill the professional development requirements for licensure renewal without maximizing the use of their evaluation instrument as a springboard for leadership development (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; McRel, 2015).

The North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) instrument includes six standards by which teachers' effectiveness is measured (McRel, 2015). Five of the six standards, in combination with the scholarly literature, were instrumental in establishing the six baseline criteria used in this study as positive indicators for teacher instructional leadership. Within each standard, there are three or more sub-standards. The sub-standards were designed to help teachers narrow their focus for professional development. Teachers have the autonomy to select—through an individual professional development plan—their standards of focus. Making a selection from the six standards and more than 20 professional sub-standards can be an overwhelming process. In efforts to simplify the selection procedure, teachers are encouraged to select a standard

accompanied by an accomplishable number of sub-standards for which they would like to improve their practice. Since there is no standardized format for the order in which teachers should select standards, this process is entrusted to the teacher with the support of administration, mentors, and/or peers.

Five indicators delineate the extent to which teachers demonstrate competency. The indicators have a progressing range that begins with practice *not demonstrated*, followed by *developing*, *proficient*, *accomplished,* and *distinguished.* It is noteworthy to understand that—just like student development—teacher development is a gradual process, is influenced by professional development choices, and is expected to improve over time. The sixth standard is linked to student performance and provides teachers with a quantitative parameter by which to measure their academic success with students. Assuming that each classroom teacher who interacts with students during the school year is (at minimum) proficient in each of the previously mentioned five standards, the state expects each teacher to have a positive growth impact on all students in each content area. The indicators for the sixth standard begin with teacher *does not meet expected growth*, teacher *meets expected growth*, and teacher *exceeds expected growth* (McRel, 2015).

The first standard is designed to help develop the leadership skills of teachers inside and outside of the classroom. Within standard one—teachers demonstrate leadership—there are five areas. Teachers can employ practices in the following areas to foster their development as teacher leaders:

- *teachers lead in their classrooms,*

- *teachers lead in their school,*

- *teachers lead the teaching profession,*

- *teachers advocate for schools and students*, and

- *teachers demonstrate high ethical standards* (McRel, 2015).

The second standard is designed to help teachers establish and maintain a

respectful environment for a diverse population of students. Within standard two—

teachers impact the learning environment—there are also five areas. The five areas are:

- *teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing*

  relationship with caring adults;

- *teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world*;

- *teachers treat students as individuals*;

- *teachers adapt their teaching for the benefit of students with special needs*;

  and

- *teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the*

  lives of their students (McRel, 2015).

The third standard is designed to help teachers know the content they teach.

Within standard three—teachers impact student learning—there are four areas. When

teachers become competent in the following areas, they have a positive impact on student

learning:

- *teachers align their instruction with the North Carolina Standard Course of*

  Study (now Common Core and Essential Standards),

- *teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty,*

- *teachers recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines, and*

- *teachers make instruction relevant to students* (McRel, 2015).

The fourth standard is designed to help teachers effectively facilitate learning for all students. Within standard four—how teachers facilitate learning—there are eight areas:

- *teachers know the ways in which learning takes place, and know the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students;*

- *teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students;*

- *teachers use a variety of instructional methods;*

- *teachers integrate and utilize technology in their instruction;*

- *teachers help students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills;*

- *teachers help students work in teams and develop leadership qualities;*

- *teachers communicate effectively; and*

- *teachers use a variety of methods to assess what each student has learned* (McRel, 2015).

The fifth standard is designed to help teachers reflect on their practice. Within standard five—teachers gain a deeper understanding of their practice via self-critique and analysis—there are three areas:

- *teachers analyze student learning,*

- *teachers connect professional growth to their professional goals, and*

- *teachers function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment* (McRel, 2015).

The sixth standard is designed to monitor the impact that teachers have on a student's academic success (growth) within a school year. When considering teacher impact on student learning, the state expects the work of the teacher to result in acceptable, measurable progress for students based on established performance expectations using appropriate data to demonstrate growth. This data is computed based upon student achievement performance and how well schools meet their Annual Measurable Objectives—AMOs (McRel, 2015; North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

The evaluation instrument captures a baseline of competencies which teachers should pursue. Absent, however, from the process of development is a comprehensive plan detailing how each teacher might approach their development. The creation and implementation of the actual professional development plan is the responsibility of the teacher and those who serve as their support. The evaluation tool establishes minimum parameters for which teachers might develop their professional practice, but the teacher possesses the autonomy to select which standards and sub-standards are priority for development, and what resources are needed to accomplish their professional development goals. Some teachers are astute and comfortable engaging in this depth of professional learning. Other teachers need guidance when selecting the most effective professional development resources that will yield successful and sustainable results geared toward improving student achievement (McRel, 2015). As a result, how teachers

and support staff approach the creation and implementation of professional development plans for teacher standards remains questionable.

Overview of Teacher Leadership

The body of literature supporting teacher leadership includes both formal and informal roles of practice. Formal roles include those teacher leader assignments that are accompanied by a formal title and job description while informal teacher leadership assignments are not accompanied by formal titles and job descriptions (Bradley-Levine, 2011; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Most formal roles have administrative duties associated with them. In both formal and informal leadership roles, teachers engage voluntarily, are recommended by peers, and/or are strongly encouraged by school leadership. Although not an exhaustive list, teachers serving in formal roles may assume the responsibility of union representatives, department heads, curriculum specialists, mentors, or members of a site-based management team—all of which have administrative duties associated with the assignment.

Harrison and Killion (2007) contributes an additional teacher leadership category that includes semi-formal teacher leadership opportunities. As described by these two scholars, informal roles are self-initiated by teachers and require the permission from outside parties. An informal teacher leader is described as a resource provider (one who helps colleagues by sharing instructional resources), catalyst for change (a visionary never content with the status quo), and learner (one who models continual improvement and uses what they have learned to help students achieved). Semi-formal roles are system supported and the opportunities to serve in this capacity must exist. They include

classroom supporter (one who works inside the classroom to help teachers implement new ideas) and data coach (one who leads colleagues into data conversations that can be used to inform instruction). Formal roles are highly structured and have roles that must exist. The following are included—instructional specialist (one who helps colleagues implement effective teaching strategies), curriculum specialist (one who helps teachers understand and use teaching standards, curriculum guide, pacing and create common assessments), learning facilitator (one who facilitations professional learning opportunities among staff), mentor (guiding and developing novice teachers), and school leader (one who shares the responsibility for whole school success).

The roles of teacher leaders have expanded over the years to include the following: operating in administrative leadership roles, leading in their classrooms along with their peers, evaluating educational initiatives, and leading peers in professional learning communities. As the ideals associated with the work of teacher leaders has progressed, the central focus of their work has changed to include the embedded work of continuous improvement in teaching and learning of the nation's schools that would lead to increased student achievement for all students (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). More than three decades ago, public schools in the U.S. were labeled as broken (*A Nation at Risk*; U.S. Department of Education, 1983). As a result, the frenzy to fix the nation's schools began. Strategies to improve the nation's schools have ranged from school redesign to enlisting the leadership of strong top-down administrators, many of which have focused on school maintenance while neglecting authentic improvement (Paredes Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010). Buried among the myriad of tactics used to improve schools has

emerged one approach that positions teacher leaders as an integral part of school improvement (Tomal et al., 2014). This notion exists with tension as the school principal was once considered the *only* instructional leader in a school while teachers in leadership roles were administrative extensions of the principal. Helterbran (2010) challenges this notion and questions the idea that teachers are only the passive recipients of directives from principals. This paradigm sets the stage for expanding teacher leadership to include teacher leaders who are instructional leaders or TILs.

Teachers enter leadership development journeys for various reasons. Some teacher leaders desire to deepen their instructional knowledge, prepare themselves for future promotions, and/or be involved in the decision-making processes of the school. Most scholarly literature describes teacher leaders as educators who have substantial teaching experience, have a reputation for being excellent teachers, and are well respected among their peers. The majority of teacher leaders possess a high level of instructional expertise, collaborate, reflect, and have a sense of empowerment. They are midcareer and midlife educators who are well organized and effectively use their interpersonal skills to promote the learning of their students and adult peers. Teacher leaders represent those educators who at times have wrestled with a need for achievement and affiliation. In terms of accomplishment, teacher leaders have experienced success because they willingly engage in their leadership development while simultaneously being accepted as leaders among colleagues (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Lieberman, 2013; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wetzler, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Over the last 20 years, teacher leadership has evolved from ideals of teachers working in isolation to new norms that promote collaborative and collegial work among teachers. Teacher leadership can be described as a stand-alone leadership discipline or may be embedded within other leadership paradigms like instructional leadership. As a component of instructional leadership, teacher leaders engage in practices that focus on their behaviors as they engage in activities that directly affect the growth of students (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). The expertise of teacher leaders is used within the instructional leadership paradigm to increase the leadership capacity within schools. In most recent years, the work of teacher leaders has emerged as a strategy to address issues of educational improvement and reform. Within this model, teacher leaders are acknowledged as essential in the daily operation of schools and in the functions of teaching and learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Leadership capacity involves building the professional competencies of teachers by increasing their instructional coherence. Such strategies not only increase the confidence of teachers but also improves student performance within schools (Johnson et al., 2014). Subsequently, building leadership capacity within schools serves a dual role that includes boosting teacher confidence and improving student performance. However, there is another aspect of school improvement that is highly impacted by building leadership capacity—adding stability to the school community. This aspect will be further discussed in the section on teachers as instructional leaders.

Finally, as noted by Tomal et al. (2014), teacher leaders have always been in our schools. Tomal and colleagues illuminate four nontraditional categories of teacher leaders

who serve in the teacher leadership role. The categories include revered teacher leader, advocate teacher leader, appointed teacher leader, and passionate advocate teacher leader. These categories describe teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles.

Because of personality and congeniality, *advocate teacher leaders* have gained the trust of colleagues who depend on them as change agents for students and teachers within the school. They are the most vocal about what matters most to teachers in the school. Advocate teacher leaders shape a professional climate that promotes teachers and students. As related to working conditions, they usually have the support of the majority of the faculty and have a voice in the school's culture. They often speak up on issues that may include instructional materials, budget allocation, school goals and compensation. Collegial acceptance knighted them as teacher leaders and they may serve as formal and/or informal teacher leaders; however, much of their role is associated with administrative leadership.

Appointed teacher leaders are teachers who are responsible for guiding and planning programs. They also lead teams of teachers in initiatives that improve instruction, classroom practice, and the learning environment for students. These teacher leaders commonly assume the following positions: chairs, coordinators, supervisors, team leaders, or coaches. Some appointed teacher leaders also evaluate and supervise fellow teachers. Although these teacher leaders may serve in formal and/or informal roles, their work is most associated with administrative leaders. This is evident by the titles associated with their assignments.

Revered teacher leaders are those who have gained this title because of the number of years they have served in the school, the knowledge of the community, and expert pedagogy. These teacher leaders represent, for example, those who have taught entire families of students through the years. Emotional links to families and a reputation for delivering quality instruction set them apart from other teachers. Their colleagues seek them out for advice, support, and guidance. This type of teacher leader may serve as an informal and/or formal teacher leader focused on pedagogy and instructional leadership.

Passionate advocate teacher leaders are those who speak up at every opportunity to help colleagues develop student-centered curriculum. They work diligently to promote programs that increase student engagement and assist colleagues as they work to improve classroom practices. These teacher leaders usually volunteer for curriculum committees, task forces, or small study groups that write and implement instructional programs beneficial to improving student performance in their schools. Passionate teacher leaders may serve in formal and/or informal leadership roles mostly focused on instruction.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is described as the power and behaviors employed by school principals, teachers, and other school personnel to influence the individuals and situations in schools. Gulcan (2012) define instructional leadership as the process of creating job satisfaction and an efficient work environment for teachers, and setting up and maintaining the desired learning conditions for students. The foundational basis for instructional leadership is to develop instruction and to design a school environment that

aligns with effective instruction (Çelik, 1999; Gulcan, 2012). In a broader sense, instructional leadership is defined as a process of performing all leadership activities that may affect learning at the school which include coordinating and motivating school staff and students to reach academic goals (Gulcan, 2012).

Instructional leadership encompasses behaviors exhibited by the principal or others that will increase student success. The role of the principal as an instructional leader includes: identifying the vision and mission of the school, programming and administering education, organizing and implementing staff development, monitoring and assessing the teaching process, and creating and developing a positive school climate (Gulcan, 2012).

Before the 1980s there were neither coherent models nor validated instruments available for studying instructional leadership (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). During this time, instructional leadership focused predominantly on the principal who was responsible for coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the schools. Birthed out of the role elementary principals assumed, this ideology was to establish strong leadership role models in poor urban schools (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Hallinger, 2003).

More than 40 years later, the notion of having a single person as the instructional leader of schools that will yield improved student achievement has become overwhelming for one person to accomplish singlehandedly (Gronn, 2003). Instructional

leadership has evolved from a linear, hierarchical process to a multidirectional collaboration demanding an instructional partnership between administrators and teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Instructional leadership has morphed into a task shared between administrators and teachers. This paradigm supports the emerging ideology that teachers can and must educate every student. In order for teachers to educate every student, administrators must be willing to develop teachers as instructional leaders who share in the accountability of improving student achievement (Printy & Marks, 2006). Administrators accomplish this complex task by distributing their leadership authority and expertise, which builds the leadership capacity within the school (Lambert, 1998; 2003). Consequently, members of the school community—especially teachers—become more productive participants in increasing the leadership capacity of the whole school (White-Smith, 2012).

Schools seem like simple organizations on paper. When considering the needs of all stakeholders, this dynamic changes. In recent studies, the school principal's role as an instructional leader is essential to the success of the organization (Knapp, Copeland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Mendels, 2012). In fact, Grissom and Loeb (2011) note that the principal's effectiveness in organizational management as the instructional leader is a consistent predictor of student achievement and growth. As the principal remains instrumental in allocating leadership within the school, students benefit (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009). Since principals have more formal authority than anyone does in the school, how they allocate authority to lead is essential. They can deliberately

promote, redirect, or restrict the exercise of leadership by anyone in their school (Johnson et al., 2014).

As the concept of instructional leadership has evolved, administrators have shared instructional leadership responsibilities with teachers. Within the parameters of shared leadership, teachers are willing to take over responsibility and engage in professional development that will improve their leadership skills (Printy & Marks, 2006). When teachers are included in the decision-making process in a school, they are encouraged to develop their pedagogical competence and act in student-centered ways, while increasing their usage of research based teaching techniques (Printy & Marks, 2004).

Regardless of their role, competent educators are needed to facilitate the complex process of improving student achievement. Administrators—who are also learners— assume an instructor role for their teachers. When engaging in the process of developing teachers as instructional leaders, administrators focus on core competencies to guide the learning. The core competencies include: understanding the learning needs of others, organizing social and interactive environments, encouraging learning expertise and appropriate tasks, motivating others to improve themselves while imposing sanctions, and providing sufficient sources of support for learning (Stein, & Nelson, 2003).

Teachers as Instructional Leaders

Scholarly literature mostly describes teacher leadership in terms of what teacher leaders do. Bond (2015) defines teacher leaders as those professionals who remain in the classroom and use their specialized knowledge and skills to improve student achievement, influence others, and build organizational capacity. Although some teacher

leaders remain in the classroom, other teacher leaders transition out of the classroom to fulfill various leadership roles. Subsequently, teacher leadership provides numerous individual and collective opportunities for teachers to serve in various ways—none of which confine teachers to remaining in the classroom.

Various formal and informal roles allow teacher leaders to focus on instructional leadership. Some of these assignments may include serving as a peer coach to colleagues, resolving instructional issues, encouraging parents to participate in their students learning, leading grade level teams or working with small groups of colleagues, modeling reflective practices and/or articulating the school's vision for improvement (Lambert, 1998; Lieberman, 2011; Reid, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Aligned with the notion of teachers developing as instructional leaders, Jackson (2013) proposes a bold notion that any teacher can become a master teacher. Although her ideal—that any teacher can become a master of their craft—has been met with resistance, Jackson remains resolute in her conviction that transforming mediocre teachers into good teachers, who focus on teaching with excellence, can improve schools. In fact, her ideology aligns well with Lambert (1998), who suggests building leadership capacity among teachers is a viable strategy for whole school improvement. Lambert's rationale for this approach relates to the school district's authority to move school administrators at will from school to school. The untimely transitions in building level leadership can disrupt progress toward school improvement. As a result, leadership crises can occur. Lambert (1998) illuminates this dilemma at Belvedere School in support of building leadership capacity in schools by developing teachers as instructional leaders:

When the principal left Belvedere School, the faculty and the parents lacked the capacity to sustain its efforts at renewal. The gap left by her leaving was too large and too strategically placed (the things that she did were done only by her). The walls came tumbling down—at least, so it seemed. The reforms begun at Belvedere had created a good foundation for further capacity building: teachers were working together, decisions were being made jointly, a shared vision was emerging—certainly enough for teachers from other schools to notice. Belvedere was at a crossroads, one that was so fragile that those who were unsure wavered. Now would be the time for teachers and the new principal to recall their accomplishments and push forward, to use their leadership skills to further the capacity of the school for self-responsibility—this time with broader-based engagement (p. 10).

Schools, which effectively implement sustainable improvements, must possess a balanced relationship between the level of *participation* in the school's daily work and the level of professional *skill* of the stakeholders in the school community who execute the work. The relationships are displayed in Table 1. Along the continuum, the goal is for each constituent in the school's community to be *highly skilled* and *highly engaged* in the work of leadership capacity building. In order to accomplish this degree of engagement and participation in schools, Lambert suggests that building leadership capacity among teachers be a priority in schools.

Teacher instructional leadership is essential to school improvement. The development of teacher instructional leadership has the potential to impact teaching and learning inside schools and educational improvement outside of the school. One such way in which teacher instructional leadership has affected the educational movement is in the establishment of teacher-led schools. These schools operate as public schools, not charter schools (Nazareno, 2013). Teacher-led schools are centers for learning where groups of teachers design and operate their own "district run" school, like the

Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy (MSLA) in Denver, Colorado. MSLA is one of approximately 50 schools in the nation solely operated by teams of teachers who work within the parameters of distributed leadership. Students are the central focus of these schools where the teacher leaders encourage every constituent to be a learner, teacher, and leader.

Table 1

Leadership Capacity Matrix

	Low Degree of Participation	High Degree of Participation
Low Degree of Skill	• Principal as autocratic manager • One-way flow of information; no shared vision • Codependent, paternal/maternal relationships; rigidly defined roles • Norms of compliance and blame; technical and superficial program coherence • Little innovation in teaching and learning • Poor student achievement or only short-term improvements on standardized tests	• Principal as "laissez faire" manager, many teachers develop unrelated programs • Fragmented information that lacks coherence, programs that lack shared purpose • Norms of individualism; no collective responsibility • Undefined roles and responsibilities • "Spotty" innovation; some classrooms are excellent while others are poor • Static overall student achievement (unless data are disaggregated)
High Degree of Skill	• Principal and key teachers as purposeful leadership team • Limited use of school-wide data; information flow within designated leadership groups • Polarized staff with pockets of strong resistance • Efficient designated leaders; others serve in traditional roles	• Principal, teachers, parents, and students as skilled leaders • Shared vision resulting in program coherence • Inquiry-based use of data to inform decisions and practice • Broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility reflected in roles and actions

Table 1

Cont.

	Low Degree of Participation	High Degree of Participation
High Degree of Skill (cont.)	• Strong innovation, reflection skills, and teaching excellence; weak program coherence • Student achievement is static or shows slight improvement	• Reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation • Highly or steadily improving student achievement

Barriers to Teacher Leadership

There are various barriers—personal, professional, and systemic—that present challenges to teachers developing their leadership skills. Developing as a teacher leader presents a learning opportunity for teachers in various areas including research, observation, instruction, and interaction with other peers. As teachers grow in their leadership skills, their relationships with peers experience stress. There are instances where tensions exist between the teacher leader and administrators. This tension exists in part due to the administrator's authority and the pending development of the teacher leader (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Another barrier to developing as a teacher leader is the perception from colleagues that teacher leaders think they are superior. Teacher leaders want to experience a sense of belonging to their professional community; however, sometimes their decision to develop their leadership skills is misunderstood by colleagues. The development of such tensions cause teacher leaders to be ostracized from their peer groups (Loeb et al., 2010). Barriers to becoming a teacher leader can also be manifested personally. Teacher leaders devote quality time to developing their leadership skills and

sometimes experience tension in personal relationships. This translates into personal

sacrifice with family (Harris, 2003; Loeb et al., 2010; Printy & Marks, 2006; York-Barr

& Duke, 2004).

Amid the complexity of improving schools, teacher leaders grapple with the

thought of being respected as professionals and face challenges on their journey to

developing their leadership skills. As a result, teacher leaders struggle to embrace the

possibilities of their impact on large-scale student achievement (Helterbran, 2010). The

teaching workforce seems to describe the impact of their position as less important,

adopting the mantra of "I am just a teacher." Though this notion has been challenged by

the findings of empirical studies, little will change until teachers believe that who they

are and what they do is extremely valuable to the school improvement process.

Issues of Power

There are various barriers that deter teachers from promoting and cultivating their

development as leaders. In order to understand this dynamic, one must resist for a

moment the urge to illuminate the teacher's role in the learning process and focus on the

teacher as an integral part of a whole social construct that includes the character of the

teaching job, teachers as workers, and schools as workers. Amid the fact that teachers

serve as mentors, instructors, and surrogate parents, they are employees of larger

organizations. In order to achieve a collective goal, these organizations—state boards of

education, local education agencies (school districts)—are focused on managing and

controlling individuals serving their organization. As a result, larger organizations

implement infrastructures that push them closer toward the goal while simultaneously

dissuading teachers from furthering their professional development as teacher leaders (Ingersoll, 2003).

In order to succeed, organizations must coordinate and control their individual members. What of those actions alienates individuals from cooperating with and committing their expertise—with good will—to the organization? This becomes an issue of power, autonomy and accountability in organizations like schools. As teachers work to develop as leaders, they are challenged with issues of disempowerment. How effectively schools manage this delicate balance determines the organization's success.

Existing power struggle between schools and its members (administrators, teachers, etc.) illuminates a basic tension faced by all organizations. In one light, too much control over members may reduce morale, underutilize, and eventually antagonize employees. On the other hand, too little control may undermine performance and viability. Such contention leaves organizations pondering how to harness employee expertise while simultaneously meeting the need for both control and consent, for both accountability and commitment, for both organizational predictability and employee autonomy. Teachers working to develop as instructional leaders are positioned in the middle of this tug of war (Igersoll, 2003; Sleeter, 1990).

As one major group of players within large educational organizations, they and others sometimes view teachers as powerless. This paradigm is a result of teachers being physically situated on the bottom of the educational hierarchy as people who carry out tasks developed by professionals that are more knowledgeable. This could not be further from the truth. Teachers have power to use of their professional discretion, which is

considered the foundation upon which teaching becomes professionalized. In the midst of this tension, is the question of whether or not teachers are aware of their power?

Within this era of high stakes testing, teachers are expected to implement curricular policy stipulated by others—in which they have had little or no input. In this area of intense accountability, teachers are expected to implement curricular policy that may need modifications for various students—but feel as if they cannot make necessary changes. Teachers are expected to assume full responsibility for the progress of students based upon curricular policy without having had professional input into the substance of the curricular policy. Consequently, when teachers question, push back on, or resist curricular policy, they are perceived as defiant (Jacobs, Burns, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2015; Marks & Louis, 1997; Smith, 2005; Webb, 2002).

Wherever tensions exist there is a group of *haves* and *have nots*. In the case of power constructs involving teachers and the notion of teachers developing as instructional leaders, principals have become concerned. If administrators empower teachers as instructional leaders (a paradigm assigned to principals for more than a decade), do they lose their power as administrators? Administrators who operate unilaterally would be uncomfortable releasing their power to teachers; however, to encourage teachers to operate within their professional expertise requires a different type of administrator. An administrator confident enough to cultivate teachers as instructional leaders supports teachers in their efforts to improve their classroom instruction/ performance and acknowledges teachers as the locus of instructional control in relation to the following: determining curriculum content, selecting materials and resources, making

decisions about student assessment, and determining effective teaching strategies customized for student needs. The administrator who is successful at empowering teachers recognizes their teachers as professionals—having a high level of expertise (Ingersoll, 2003; Kavina & Tanaka, 1991; Sprague, 1992; Talbert, 2003).

Teacher Demoralization

The power construct existing among teachers as members of school organizations, the officers of the organization (administrators), and the organization itself, has the potential to diminish teacher autonomy and demoralize teachers. Globally, teachers are reported as being demoralized. Demoralization is defined as the experience of being unable to cope coupled with feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, meaninglessness, subject incompetence and diminished self-esteem. This definition of demoralization is similar to the teacher term "burnout" which describes the negative emotional experiences teachers may possess toward their jobs (Clarke & Kissane, 2002; Noddings, 2008; Seeberg & Zhang, 2014; Tsang & Liu, 2016).

In addition to disempowerment and demoralization, Smaller (2015) posits that teachers—especially in state systems—have suffered from de-professionalization and or de-skilling—leading to little or no autonomy. This shift in professional practice has resulted in increased standardization and bureaucratization of student (and teacher) assessment processes, and/or imposition of enhanced core curriculum requirements—all resulting with little policy input from teachers. Smaller (2015) further suggests that states implement these practices as a method to maintain and enhance social control over teachers.

If indeed social constructs of empowerment serve to simultaneously bury the strategies—such as developing teachers as instructional leaders—faster than ideas can be exhumed, what implications exist for developing teacher instructional leaders as a strategy for school reform in relation to this study? Teachers are crucial agents of school improvement and have a profound impact on students and society. How to improve the effectiveness of teachers and teaching has emerged as an important theme in the realm of school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2009). However, teachers have had little control over the processes of school reform. In the midst of increased workloads, altered roles, increased work hours, and increased responsibilities and accountability, teacher job security and professionalism has been undermined (Sullivan, 1993; Tsang & Liu, 2016).

Summary

According to scholarly literature, there are few formal teacher leadership preparation programs. Teachers are being asked to fulfill leadership roles without having the proper training that would help them function proficiently in their new roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). In addition to providing training for teacher leaders, there must also be training for administrators to accept, work with, and empower teacher leaders (Crowther, Kagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002). In times past, tension has developed between would be teacher leaders and inadequately prepared administrators (Printy & Marks, 2006; Harris, 2003).

Instructional leadership encompasses multidirectional leadership between administrators and teachers. Teacher leadership is primarily about change in the way teachers approach their craft in order to respond to demands from multiple

stakeholders—colleagues, students, parents, employers, education authorities, and numerous community groups—all of whom have different expectations and requirements (Tomal et al., 2014). Embedded within the process of developing the leadership skills of teachers is the ideology that people are more important than programs (Whitaker, 2013). When administrators focus on developing the people (teachers) who implement the vision within their schools, students will benefit from these practices (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Whitaker, 2013).

Finally, if teachers are to develop as instructional leaders, stakeholders responsible for creating and implementing policies that govern schools must address systematic barriers that undermine teacher autonomy, power, and professionalism. If these issues are unaddressed, the work into which administrators and teacher instructional leaders seek to engage, as a strategy for sustainable school improvement will be hampered.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how the instructional leadership of teachers influenced school improvement. Though the role of instructional leadership is frequently ascribed solely to school administrators (Halverson & Clifford, 2013), this research was intended to illuminate a partnership where teachers as instructional leaders work collaboratively with administrators to improve the school as a whole. It was my hope that the findings of this study would be beneficial in the school improvement process for all school stakeholders responsible for establishing and implementing school policy and programs that meet the academic needs of all students. This group of stakeholders include pre-service and in-service teachers, school leaders, local educational agencies (LEAs), policy makers, and institutions of higher learning. Three research questions guided this study: *How do teachers practice as instructional leaders? How do principals promote teacher instructional leadership as a part of the school improvement process? What is the impact of teacher instructional leadership on the school and its teachers?*

Within a natural setting, qualitative research closely examines various social phenomena and how humans interact in relation to those phenomena (Lichtman, 2013). Qualitative researchers seek to make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which

they intersect (Glesne, 2011). The phenomenon highlighted in this study was the practice of teacher instructional leaders and how their interaction with school administrators (principals/assistant principals) affected their development as teacher instructional leaders and the school improvement process.

The theoretical framework undergirding this study was interpretivism as this model's approach broadens the researcher's understanding about the relationship between human interactions and specific phenomena (Glesne, 2011). Researching through an interpretative lens allowed for multiple truths (that of the research participants, documents, and researcher) that shaped a knowledge that was always negotiated within culturally informed relationships and experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Polkinghorne, 1989, 1988). In this study, my understanding of the behaviors of teacher instructional leaders, the behaviors of principals and assistant principals in developing teacher instructional leaders, and the collaborative interaction between teacher instructional leaders and principals/assistant principals was broadened.

Initial Research Design

The initial plan for this study, proposed a minimum of three to four teacher participants who would contribute four types of data collection: initial interview (minimum of one hour), colleague interview (minimum of one hour), principal/assistant principal interview (minimum of one hour) and two follow-up interviews (minimum of one hour each). When the dissertation committee reviewed the proposal, they believed that the interview accounts of colleagues working in close proximity of the teacher cases could cause tension in the teachers 'professional and personal relationships. During the

proposal hearing, the dissertation committee suggested that I, in lieu of collegial interviews, conduct observations of each teacher participant as they exhibited teacher instructional leadership practices.

Revised Research Design

This was a comparative case study focused on the instructional leadership practice of three secondary teachers and their school administrators (one principal and one assistant principal). The study was conducted in a small public school district in the central region of North Carolina. Although teacher instructional leaders from both elementary and secondary schools in the district were invited to participate in the study, only secondary teachers—specifically middle school teachers—volunteered for the study. The three teacher cases were Bee Christian, an eighth-grade science teacher at Have Faith Middle School, Stella Luna, a sixth through eighth grade ESL (English Second Language) teacher at Center City Middle School, and Beth Johnson, an eighth-grade math and science teacher at Have Faith Middle School.

Each teacher participated in one initial interview (approximately one and a half hours long) with the exception of Stella Luna whose initial interview was approximately two hours long. At the end of each teacher's initial interview, they were asked to identify an area of their teaching practice that most demonstrated their abilities as a teacher instructional leader. This would be the area they would select for me to observe. Bee selected a STIC (Sustaining Teachers in Curriculum) meeting where she led novice teachers in curriculum practices. Bee's session with the teachers lasted for approximately two hours long. Stella thought that knowing when she would be observed would make

the observation less natural so she provided available days and times as she wanted me to just "drop in" unannounced. During the day and time of Stella's visit, I would either observe her working with small student groups or engaging in collaborative team planning with her colleagues. The day I "dropped in" to observe Stella's work as a teacher instructional leader, she was collaboratively planning with two other colleagues—Crystal, an ESL teacher and Bridget, her teacher's assistant. I unexpectedly collaborated with them during their planning as they needed expertise in eighth grade science (I am certified in this area). Stella's observation was approximately two hours long. Lastly, Beth—like Stella—wanted a fluid and natural observation. Encouraging me to "just drop in," Beth also provided available days and times for her observation. On the day I visited Beth, I observed two of her eighth grade math classes. Beth's observation lasted for approximately one hour and a half. After each observation, I scheduled follow-up interviews with each teacher. During the follow up interview, I asked questions related to various occurrences seen during their observations while also following up on data from their initial interviews. Each follow-up interview lasted for approximately one hour and a half.

As part of data collection (which will be discussed further in the Data Collection section), each teacher's principal/assistant principal was interviewed. The purpose of interviewing the principal/assistant principal was to draw upon the insights of whole-school instructional leaders and engage the person who observes teachers practicing within the instructional setting. Bee Christian and Beth Johnson were teachers serving at Have Faith Middle School where DJ Jordan served as principal. Principal Jordan's

interview lasted approximately two hours and a half. Stella Luna's school, Center City Middle welcomed a new principal who had not had the opportunity to become familiar with Stella's teaching practice. Stella's original principal was still employed within the school district but had been assigned to the school where I worked. This presented a conflict of interest. To resolve this issue, I invited Stella's assistant principal, who had worked with Stella for more than three years, to provide insights on her teaching practice. Assistant Principal Noel Douglas' interview lasted for approximately one hour and a half.

Collectively, the research participants provided insights and multiple perspectives about the following: how teachers viewed their role as instructional leaders, how teachers practiced as instructional leaders, how teachers engaged in their professional development, the practice principals/assistant principals employed to develop teachers as instructional leaders, and the impact that the collaborative work of principals and teachers had on school improvement.

The final data collection component included the following: a document review of the district's goals/priorities, Have Faith Middle School and Center City Middle School's demographics, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), and School Report Cards for the 2014–2015 school year. Together, the data from the documents listed above, influenced the editing and creation of each school's improvement plan for the 2015–2016 year—the document that is responsible for guiding schools toward continuous improvement.

Definitions and Concepts

Definitions of terms and concepts that were significant in the study follow.

1. A teacher leader, as operationalized in this study, is a professional whose core responsibilities are classroom instruction, but who use their specialized knowledge and skills to improve student achievement beyond their classroom, influence other teachers, and build the school's organizational capacity (Bond, 2015).

2. A formal teacher leader is one who has officially-appointed roles such as instructional lead teacher, instructional coordinator, grade level leader, and department chair.

3. An informal teacher leader is one who practices behaviors and actions associated with teacher leadership but does not have a formal leadership role beyond her/his classroom (Zepeda et al., 2003). Teacher leaders who assume informal roles of leadership may exhibit the following characteristics: demonstrate depth in content knowledge, employ strong pedagogical practices, use research-based practices to inform teaching, assume the role as the go-to-person for fellow colleagues, lead their own learning, model exemplary practices, collaborate and speak up within the school community (Bond, 2015).

4. Pedagogy is the art and science concerned with how best to teach (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

5. Distributed leadership involves the dissemination of leadership to others who are not the designated leader of a school and can be either social or situational. Social distributed leadership refers to how tasks are shared or co-created across multiple actors. Situational distributed leadership refers to how tasks are shared or co-created in response to specific situations (Halverson & Clifford, 2013).

6. Distributed instructional leadership applies concepts and techniques of distributed leadership to study how school leaders create learning environments for teachers and students (Haverson & Clifford, 2013).

7. A teacher instructional leader (TIL) is a teacher who does the following:

   a. Creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning.

   b. Knows their content and works hard to ensure that the instruction they facilitate is centered on what each student needs.

   c. Uses a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful.

   d. Takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help support student learning.

   e. Takes the lead in communicating to their school leaders and support team the type of professional development they need to improve their teaching practice.

f. Willingly shares her/his ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others (Bond, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Grubb & Tredway, 2010; Jackson, 2013; Lambert, 1998, 2003; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010; Maxwell, 2005; McRel, 2009, 2015; Murphy, 2005; Reeves, 2008; Starratt, 2012; Tomal et al., 2014; Whitaker, 2012).

8. Leadership capacity refers to the broad-based, skillful involvement in the work of leadership in schools (Lambert, 1998).

9. Instructional leadership is a practice oriented towards improving instructional, curricular, and assessment practices to improve pedagogical quality and raise student achievement (Printy et al., 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The literature describes teacher leaders as those who remain in the classroom and use their specialized knowledge and skills to improve student achievement, influence others, and build organizational capacity. However, in this study, I explicitly delineated between the teacher leader who might serve as a quasi-administrator and the teacher instructional leader (TIL) whose primary focus is on instructional and pedagogical activity. This study served to expand the role of the teacher leader from administrative duties to that of instructional leadership with a focus primarily related to pedagogical practices and collaborative work geared toward school improvement. Therefore, a teacher leader does not necessarily serve as a teacher instructional leader; however, a teacher instructional leader is always a teacher leader. In essence, what makes a teacher instructional leader different from a teacher leader is the teacher instructional leader's

undistracted focus on instructional practices and pedagogy that will improve student achievement.

There were six criteria informing the conception of teacher instructional leadership used in this study. These six characteristics were derived from my analysis of the scholarly literature and the North Carolina Educators Evaluation System—NCEES. Each of the six baseline characteristics are associated with one or more of the NCEES standards and have been aligned below (see e.g., Bond, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Grubb & Tredway, 2010; Jackson, 2013; Lambert, 1998, 2003; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010; Maxwell, 2005; McRel, 2009, 2015; Murphy, 2005; Reeves, 2008; Starratt, 2012; Tomal et al., 2014; Whitaker, 2012).

Six professional standards govern the practice of North Carolina teachers:

- Standard One: Leadership

- Standard Two: Learning Environment

- Standard Three: Content Knowledge

- Standard Four: Facilitating Learning

- Standard Five: Professional Reflection

- Standard Six: Academic Success

The first five of the six standards have been aligned with the TIL criteria to which it is most related. A list of the six criteria and the appropriate NCEES standard are aligned below.

- Creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning (NCEES Standard Two: Learning Environment).

- Works hard to ensure that instruction is centered on what each student needs (NCEES Standard Two: Learning Environment & Standard Four: Facilitating Learning).

- Uses a variety of research-based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful (NCEES Standard Four: Facilitating Learning).

- Secures outside resources to support student learning (NCEES Standards Three: Content Knowledge & Standard Four: Facilitating Learning).

- Communicates to school leaders and support team the type of professional development needed to improve their teaching practice (NCEES Standard Five: Professional Reflection).

- Willingly shares ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others (NCEES Standard One: Leadership).

Figure 1 graphically illustrates the Conceptual Framework.

Three research questions guided the study. The questions considered were:

1. How do teachers practice as instructional leaders?;

2. How do principals promote teacher instructional leadership?; and

3. What impact does teacher instructional leadership have on the school and teachers?

Six criteria emerging from scholarly literature and the North Carolina Educator Evaluation Instrument established an initial baseline for how teachers practiced as instructional leaders. The study was designed to capture valuable data from research

participants that could contribute to the depth of knowledge surrounding teacher

instructional leadership and their practices.
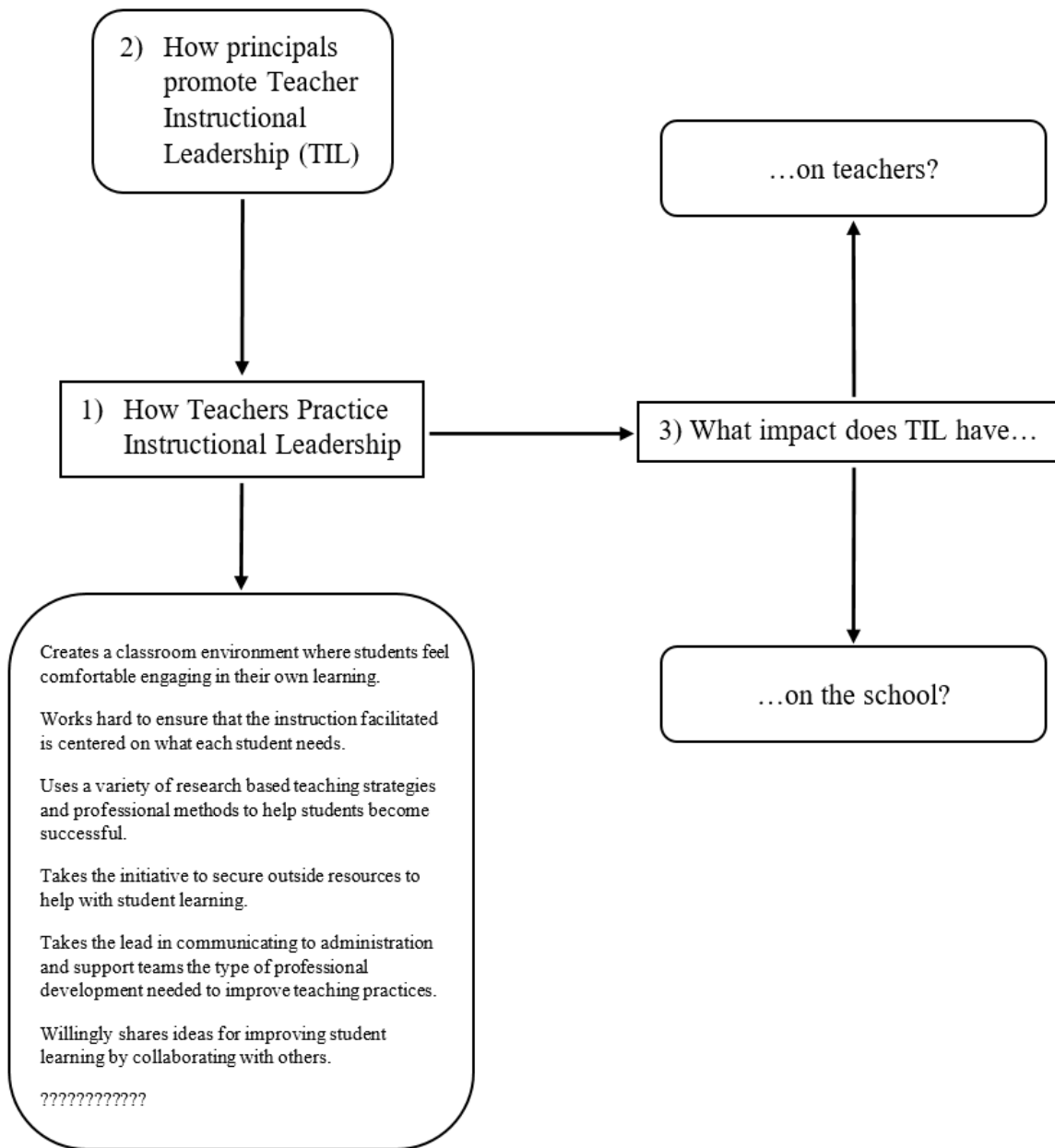
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Research Participant Selection

In preparation for gathering participants, I created an invitation to solicit
participation for the research study and sent the electronic version of the invitation to the
Director of Research and Development of the school district. After the director reviewed
the invitation, she suggested that since I only needed a small number of participants, it
might be best to forward the invitation directly to school principals for dissemination
instead of sending the invitation out via listserv to all teachers. In hindsight, if I were to
repeat the study, I would have chosen to send the invitation directly to the teachers and
bypass the principals, as their schedules were extremely busy. I was concerned about
whether or not all teaching staff received the email invitation. The Director of Research
and Development emailed the invitations to all principals in the school district—
elementary and secondary. Principals were to forward the invitation to their teaching
staff. In addition to email invitations, one of three methods listed below could have
selected participants.

1. *Principal's recommendation of them as a teacher instructional leader.*
   Principals/assistant principals are whole school instructional leaders who
   possess an insight about how teachers practice within their instructional
   setting. Based upon the six baseline criteria, principals/assistant principals
   identified teachers who practiced as instructional leaders.

2. *Instructional services personnel recommendation of teachers as instructional
   leaders.* Instructional coaches and other instructional personnel work closely
   with teaching staff and can readily identify a teacher's instructional practices.

Bee Christian was recommended as a teacher who practiced as an instructional leader by a district level instructional coach.

3. *Self and/or colleague recommendation of them as a teacher instructional leader.* Teachers receiving the email invitation to participate in the study could recommend themselves and/or colleagues based upon the six baseline criteria for practicing as a teacher instructional leader. During the first week the invitations were emailed, Stella Luna excitedly replied "yes" as a TIL willing to participate in the study. In most schools, teachers work collaboratively with others teachers in Professional Learning Teams. In those teams, teachers can readily identify colleagues who have strengths in various areas. After Bee Christian accepted the invitation based upon the recommendation of a district level instructional coach, I asked her if—based upon the six baseline criteria—there was anyone she could recommend. Bee recommended Beth Johnson. After sharing the invitation to participate in the study with Beth Johnson (based upon Bee Christian's recommendation), Beth accepted the invitation to participate in the study.

I contacted each of the participants and scheduled initial contact. During the initial contact, I explained the study in-depth and informed each teacher case that their principal/assistant principal would be invited to provide an administrator's perspective related to their practice as a teacher instructional leader for the study. They all agreed with their administrators being asked to participate and volunteered to inform their

administrators of the forthcoming contact from me. After I explained the participant's

consent form and responded to questions, each participant signed the consent form.

The purposeful recruitment and selection process led to information-rich cases for

in-depth study (Glesne, 2011). "Information-rich cases are those from which one can

learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the study…"

(Patton 2002, 46). Bee Christian from Have Faith Middle School had approximately 25

years of service in education. Stella Luna of Center City Middle School had

approximately 12 years of service in education. Beth Johnson, who transitioned into

teaching from corporate finance, had approximately 11 years of service in education.

One could assume that once the teacher participants were selected, their

principal/assistant principal would automatically be a part of the study. However, all

research participants had the right to decline the initial invitation to participate and/or

terminate their participation at any time during the research process. After the teacher

participants were selected, I expediently emailed each of their administrators—Principal

DJ Jordan and Assistant Principal Noel Douglas. It was noteworthy to reiterate nuisances

associated with coordinating schedules with school administrators. They both had full

plates; however, after numerous attempts, we finally connected and scheduled initial

face-to-face contact and interviews. During the interim between the initial contact and the

actual interview dates, I maintained electronic contact with each administrator as a

preventative method for potential cancellations. Additionally, I maintained positive

interactions with a warm and gentle disposition with all participants. Patience and

persistence were mandatory.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection was used for this comparative case study. Forms of data collection included the following: one-on-one interviews with each participant (one initial interview with all participants and one follow-up interview with each teacher participant), an observation of each teacher participant (the type of observation was selected by each teacher participant), an interview with their principal or assistant principal, and document review (2015–2016 district goals/priorities, 2014–2015 AMOs, 2015–2016 School Improvement Plans, and 2014–2015 School Report Cards). The order in which the data were collected began with each teacher's initial interview, followed by each teacher participant's observation, principal/assistant principals' interviews, each teacher participant's follow-up interview, and document review. Multiple methods of data collection were used to reveal new dimensions of social reality where people do not always act consistently; therefore, triangulating the data strengthened the study (Gibbs et al., 2008; Glesne, 2011).

Initial Interviews

Each initial interview was approximately one and a half hours in length with the exception of Stella Luna's interview which lasted approximately two hours. With the exception of Stella Luna's initial interview, all remaining interviews (initial and follow-up) were conducted face-to-face in each participant's professional space (classroom of each teacher participant and school office of each principal/assistant principal participant) using the appropriate interview guide (see Appendix A). Stella Luna's initial interview was conducted in a public venue. This setting presented challenges with being able to

control distractions that naturally accompany public spaces (background noise, conversations of other patrons in close proximity, and the movement associated with employees working). Being in each participant's professional space ensured fewer distractions.

The interview guide for data collection was divided into four components: demographic information and educational background (questions asked to all research participants), teacher interview protocol (questions asked of teacher participants only), and school administrator interview protocol (questions asked of principal/assistant principal participants only). After participants stated their name and educational role, the initial interview followed with demographic information (see Appendix A).

Observations

Based on the six criteria of TILs, each teacher participant selected the type of observation they wanted to highlight. Bee, a teacher instructional leader for novice science teachers, chose to have me observe a meeting where she facilitated learning for new science teachers. The sessions, which are a part of the Sustaining Teachers in Curriculum (STIC) program implemented by the district to support novice teachers, lasted for approximately two hours after school. In preparation for the session, Bee provided an agenda and curriculum resources.

The day I observed Bee, two teachers (Jordan and Dwyla who worked at the same school but in different grade levels) were scheduled to attend. As the meeting time approached (3:30 PM), Bee shared how sometimes the teachers arrived a little late because of their commutes from their home schools. The agenda, which included detailed

items for discussion, was emailed to all novice teachers prior to the meeting. A detailed

account of their interaction is chronicled in Bee's narrative in Chapter VI.

Stella desired for me to drop in unannounced as she wanted to create a naturally

flowing observation. I observed her collaboratively planning with colleagues. In

preparation for her observation, Stella provided available days and open blocks of times.

Dependent upon the day (A-day or B-day) and time, I would observe Stella either

facilitating learning for her students or team planning with her colleagues. The day I

arrived for Stella's observation, she and two colleagues were team planning for their

eighth-grade students who were working on the ecosystem unit. The students were

preparing for their unit assessment and a research project. After greeting Stella and her

colleagues—Crystal a fellow ESL instructor and Bridget her teacher's assistant—Stella

remembered that I had expertise in teaching eighth grade science. As a result, she asked

my input about how they might organize key vocabulary in a nonlinguistic form as a

strategy to increase student comprehension and deepen student understanding. A detailed

account of our interaction is chronicled in Stella's narrative in Chapter V.

Lastly, Beth invited me to observe her practice as a teacher instructional leader

within her classroom as she facilitated learning for her students. She provided a window

of time to observe and available days for the observation. Beth—like Stella—wanted a

fluid and natural observation; therefore, she did not want to know the specific date and

time I had selected from her list of availability. I observed two same-subject math classes

(this would give me a chance to gather a sense of student interactions within their groups,

what they were working on during collaborative time, and how they interacted during

transitions). A detailed account of Beth's interaction with her students is chronicled in Beth's Narrative in Chapter VII.

During the teacher observations, I used the Observation Guide (see Appendix B) with all teacher participants as they engaged in self-selected TIL roles. Detailed accounts of each teacher participant's observation is recorded in their respective narratives in Chapters V and VI. In a previous iteration of the data, I had separated each teacher participant's narrative into two sections—interviews and observations. To improve the coherence and readability of the analysis, I merged the sections into one narrative per teacher participant. Each teacher participant's narrative is divided into three subsections: Meet the TIL, TIL Narrative, and Observing the TIL. In Chapters V and VI, I have denoted the data source at the end of each paragraph as either "interview," "observation," or "interview and observation" as needed.

Follow-up Interviews

Each teacher observation was followed by a second interview. The second interview provided an opportunity to inquire about connecting ideas between data from the initial interview and each teacher's observation. Clarifying questions from the initial interview protocol were posed in addition to follow-up questions provoked by the observations. The follow-up questions for the second interview varied depending upon each teacher's response from the initial interview, observation data, and clarifying questions asked by the researcher. Beginning with Bee, all follow-up questions for each teacher's second interview are listed below. Bee' second interview questions included the following:

1. Bee, can you talk about what the focus of STIC (Sustaining Teachers in Curriculum) is?

2. What would you say, if any, is a priority for you when facilitating learning for teachers?

3. How do you prepare yourself to coach new teachers?

4. If you had to think about criteria or characteristics of teacher instructional leaders, what kind of things would you think of (in terms of) a teacher instructional leader? What characteristics do you think about when you think of a teacher who is an instructional leader?

5. I'm going to give you six characteristics of teacher instructional leaders and I want you to tell me whether or not the characteristic describes your practice. I may ask you to elaborate on your answers (based on the six criteria of TILs).

6. How would you say being a teacher instructional leader could impact the state of our school (if in any way)?

7. When you think about global conversations going on about our schools, in what ways—if any—do you believe TILs might impact the state or condition of our schools?

8. I just want to give you an opportunity to share anything you'd like to add or say in terms of TILs, school improvement, and/or the research study.

Stella's follow up questions for her second interview included the following:

1. Stella, can you talk about the planning dynamic that happened when I arrived for your observation?

2. What type of interaction drives the review lesson that we collectively designed?

3. How do you decide what types of activities you all will use or design for your students?

4. What kind of conditions do you think are necessary, if any, to promote joint collaboration (similar to ours) outside of the school?

5. I heard you guys talk about a terrarium project, creative projects, and STEAM. Can you talk about those components? Could you explain why those types of assignments would be really important?

6. Remind me of what STEAM means.

Beth's follow up questions for her second interview included the following:

1. Beth, there were three aspects of your observation that really stood out: positive rapport with your students, classroom culture getting things done, and organization. Beginning with rapport with your students, could you talk about the work that you put into establishing that?

2. In what ways, if any, would you say spending time to really get to know the students would benefit a teacher instructional leader?

3. The other two components: establishing a "get it done" culture and organization—can you talk about those classroom norms?

4. Teachers differentiate in many ways. You showed the students through a "real-world" problem how to identify the "naked" math that needed to be

done. Could you talk about the importance of that process? What are your thoughts about that?

5. How important is it to you to model for them the way you want them to stay administratively organized?

6. You have established a collaborative culture in your classroom. Students want to help each other. The teacher is not the only expert in the classroom. Can you talk about that?

7. Students had a choice in the type of work they wanted to engage in. Could you talk a little bit about that (differentiation)?

Document Review

The final data collection component was a document review of the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) and the district's goals/priorities. Included within the documents reviewed were demographics for both Have Faith Middle School and Center City Middle School, and each School's Report Card for the 2014–2015 school year. The document review was not a component of the initial research design. Subsequently, the addition of the document review satisfied the primary purpose of establishing the context for the interrelationship among the practices of TILs, how administrators promoted TIL development, and the impact TIL development had on each teacher and the whole school—especially the school improvement process. The information emerging from the document review was used to construct the performance snapshot of each TIL's school. Analyses of the school documents were embedded in the section preceding reflections of

research question one in Chapters V and VI. Therefore, the document review does not appear as a separate section in the study.

Have Faith Middle and Center City Middle Schools' district had established goals/priorities based upon district performance in relation to each school's AMOs. The Annual Measurable Objectives were established federally to ensure that all academic needs of all students were met. Schools determined how best to chart their path toward achieving their AMOs by implementing measurable action steps in their School Improvement Plan (SIP). Both Have Faith Middle and Center City Middle Schools' previous year's performance data (AMOs and School Report Card) was used to revise both schools' SIPs (see the detailed analysis of these documents included in Chapter V and VI).

Data Analysis

Overview

I employed qualitative data analysis techniques that included the following processes: coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing the raw data in preparation to create thick narratives and meta-narratives of each participant's story as seen through the reflexive lens shaped by my own story. Using this method of data analysis illuminated the importance of understanding that all participants within a narrative inquiry are simultaneously involved in living, telling, retelling and reliving stories. Therefore, research with teachers in schools involved jointly living out three groups of people's narratives—the teachers, the administrators, and the researcher—making the meta-

narrative a joint construction (Bold, 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2013; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

Construction of the Narrative

I created narratives that were constructed from the Conceptual Framework of the study. Recall that Figure 1, the Conceptual Framework, encompassed the three research questions guiding the study:

1. How do teachers practice as instructional leaders?;

2. How do principals promote teacher instructional leadership?; and

3. What impact does teacher instructional leadership have on the school and teachers?

Questions from the Interview Guide (see Appendix A), in addition to the parameters of the Observation Guide (see Appendix B), were designed to capture rich data aligned to each research question guiding the study. Each participant's narrative was constructed from data analyzed from the participant responses to the initial and follow-up interview questions and field notes from the observations. The interview questions were selected from the following sections: Section III of the Interview Guide titled Teacher Interview Protocol questions and Section IV titled School Administrator Interview Protocol questions.

Focused on increasing the coherence of the analysis, I organized the research participant narratives in Chapters V and VI in the following manner:

Research Question One:	Meet the Teacher Instructional Leader (TIL)
	Teacher Instructional Leadership Narrative
	Observing the TIL
	Administrator's Narrative of the TIL
Research Question Two:	Meet the Administrator
	Administrator's Narrative: Perspectives of TIL
	Teacher's Narrative: Administration Promoting TIL Development
Research Question Three:	Administrator's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges to TIL Development
	Teacher's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges to TIL Development

Sections I and II of the Interview Guide (see Appendix A) were analyzed to construct rich introductions of the TILs in "Meet the Teacher Instructional Leader" and the school administrators in "Meet the Administrator." I systematically searched for meaning in the data by organizing and interrogating the data in ways that illuminated patterns, categories, relationships, explanations, tensions, critiques, queries and comparisons (Hatch, 2002). This methodology allowed the inquiry process to flow from the research questions which engaged the research participant's inner, subjective reality while simultaneously making meaning of some aspects of their experience as teacher instructional leaders and administrators of teacher instructional leaders (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999).

Initially, the analysis of data for each research question was organized in its own chapter (i.e., Research Question 1 was organized in Chapter V, Research Question 2 was organized in Chapter VI, and Research Question 3 was organized in Chapter VII). The emergence of rich data from the document review evoked the reorganization of the

chapters from a research question theme to chapters organized to capture each teacher

instructional leader's practice within the school where each teacher served. In lieu of this

change, Chapters V, VI, and VII were condensed and reorganized into Chapters V and

VI. Chapter V highlighted a TIL from Center City Middle School while Chapter VI

recognized TILs from Have Faith Middle School. The chapters were reorganized by

school to capture the rich data constructed from the document review that established the

context in which the TILs practiced as related to school improvement. Though the

chapters were identified by school, it is important to emphasize that the cases studied

were the teachers, not each individual school.

Prior to data collection, I identified six baseline criteria from my synthesis of the

literature that described generally how teachers practiced as instructional leaders in their

schools. The parameters for data selection was based upon these six criteria for practicing

as a teacher instructional leader. Rich accounts of how teachers practiced as instructional

leaders in each of these six areas emerged from the data collected. Raw data from each

interview (initial and follow-up) were closely reviewed, transcribed and coded in efforts

to identify recurring categories that could be connected to broader concepts. Field notes

from observations were closely reviewed, coded, and compared to the initial interview

transcripts in efforts to identify similar categories and concepts. Raw data from follow-up

interviews were also closely reviewed, coded, and compared to the initial interview

transcripts in efforts to identify similar categories and concepts. School documents were

carefully reviewed, reorganized into tables to improve coherency, and then coded to

identify broad concepts that triangulated with other types of data (Glesne, 2011; Lichtman, 2013).

The research participants contributed rich data for how teachers practiced as instructional leaders. The compilation of their contributions can be found in Tables 3, 7, and 8. Additionally, in-depth interviews and observation data gathered from each research participant deepened the meaning of the data and was used in conjunction with the document review of each school's achievement data to construct implications inferred from the data (Glesne, 2011; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lichtman, 2013).

During data analysis, I identified initial codes that included: empathy, content and pedagogical competence, building relationships, differentiating instruction, passion for teaching, establishing high expectations, collaborating with colleagues, mentoring others, holding students accountable, connecting lessons with real work application, advocating for teachers and students, and securing outside resources for student learning. Based upon the similarities, the initial codes were restructured into the following a priori codes: emotional and professional safety, teacher competition, preparation for teaching and learning, teacher competency, tensions between teachers and teacher instructional leaders, advantages and disadvantages of developing as TILs, promoting teacher instructional leadership (self and administrator), efficacy for TIL, personal well-being for TIL, professional satisfaction for TIL, and power structures and barriers to developing as TILs. Three broad categories emerged from the a priori codes—professionalism, pedagogy, and emotional intelligence (see Chapter VII).

Following the coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing of the raw data, I further

analyzed the data to obtain a profounder meaning of different situations (related to the

practices of TILs) that emerged from the interviews, observations, and documents

revealing each research participant's understanding of teacher instructional leadership

practices through their lens. Aligning with current qualitative research in social settings,

this task was both iterative and retrospective which meant frequently revisiting the

interview transcripts, field notes, document notes, codes, and categories for deeper

meaning—metaphors, stories, and achievement trends (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou,

2013; Bold, 2011; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; Josselson & Lieblich, 1999). This was a

complex process in that there was no specific format or particular structure for engaging

in narrative analysis and inquiry (Bold, 2011).

Significance of Research Study

The work of qualitative research in this study emerged from a small group of

purposefully selected research participants from K-12 public schools invited to question

whether or not a change in teacher practice—as instructional leaders—might improve the

overall conditions of schools. The research participants' similar experiences and stories

are reliable in the sense that their accounts were purposeful for the context in which the

study took place and had significance for others in similar contexts and places (Bold,

2011; Hays & Singh, 2012).

More than 30 years have passed since *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of

Education, 1983). Since that time educators have continued to test best strategies in

efforts to improve schools (Marzano, 2003). New federal legislation for education

emerged at the end of 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) urging schools around the nation to ensure all children engage in learning with highly qualified teachers. Offering solutions to the education profession from multiple directions, this research study emerged at a crucial time. The findings in this study are significant to the current body of scholarship related to teacher leadership and school improvement, as it illuminated innovative strategies to build leadership capacity in schools through the development of teacher instructional leaders. Empirical studies reveal that the biggest impact on students—whether economically disadvantaged or non-economically disadvantaged—was not their financial resources, but the quality of the teacher who facilitated learning for them (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). The findings in this study addressed the development of teachers as instructional leaders. This approach led to sustainable school improvement, as teacher instructional leaders are key in all processes involving student learning (Bond, 2015).

Teacher instructional leaders play an integral role in school improvement. They fill an important leadership role in implementing reform models to increase student achievement, improving classroom instruction, and creating a professional teaching climate (Tomal et al., 2014). Gathering insights on how school administrators and teacher instructional leaders approached their respective and collaborative roles in the processes of improving student learning led to meaningful strategies suitable for sustainable school improvement. This disposition could change the way in which the education community approaches school improvement.

Researcher Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Qualitative research welcomes the acknowledgement of the researcher's subjectivity recognizing that the researcher's judgment and analysis is shaped by personal values, beliefs, opinions, and feelings. Consequently, as the researcher, I had to deeply and thoroughly examine my thoughts, actions, practices and the processes of my research, along with my role in that research (Glesne, 2011; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lichtman, 2013). As a former assistant principal, curriculum facilitator, and currently practicing teacher, it was essential for me to sort through biases and think about how they affected various aspects of the research. I had to accept that my professional assignments would immensely impact my interpretation of meanings for I was the instrument through which all meaning would evolve. I shaped the research and the research shaped me (Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2013; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

In this light, my reflexivity—the willingness to change one's life as a response to knowledge about one's circumstances—was an essential component when making meaning of the data gathered in the study (Holmes, 2010). In collaboration with the research participants and using research documents, I resisted the urge to think I already knew the answers while simultaneously welcoming and carefully considering the research participants 'perspectives and contributions—especially those that challenged my way of thinking.

I have practiced in the education field for 20 years. While reflexivity required deep self-reflection, a sense of power accompanied my 20 years of service in education. Reflexivity challenged this power while simultaneously encouraging me to recognize the

power of the research participants in relation to my own (Pillow, 2003). Emerging from this view was the importance of sharing my personal story that was shaped by the same demographic questions asked of the research participants. This practice created a greater level of transparency and illuminated potential areas of bias.

My Personal Story and Positionality

Raised in the early 1970s by my grandmother, I was the daughter of two teenaged parents who never married each other. I was born in New York and moved to North Carolina where my grandmother took care of me while my mother went to college on scholarship. My family, though limited in financial resources, believed in education. In fact, my grandmother required all of her children to graduate high school and go to college. Since money was scarce, my grandmother strongly encouraged each of her children to study hard in order to earn scholarships to pay for college. She believed that education was one key to a successful life—a belief to which I continue to hold dear.

After my mom graduated from college, she accepted a teaching job in our small rural home town—we only had one stop light. As a young child, I spent many days in my mother's middle school classroom writing on the chalkboard, designing bulletin boards, organizing my lessons, and grading papers for my small group of students (dolls, teddy bears, and a few imaginary pupils). I absolutely loved it—being a teacher. In the 70's (maybe not much different than now), teachers did not get paid a lot of money. Although my mom was an awesome teacher, she began to discourage me from becoming a teacher—she thought teachers were not paid enough money to meet their financial needs. I attributed her response to the fact that she was financially responsible for my grandma,

two younger brothers, and me. Occasionally she would bring home a student in need. I have to admit that I was a bit confused because she was a phenomenal teacher whom I thought had celebrity status for everywhere we went people of all ages acknowledged her. When she began to provide alternate career suggestions for me, I was confused.

Just like my grandma, my mother was the type of teacher (and parent) who was an advocate for me and other underserved children. She upheld high expectations for me and her students—an attribute that informs my current practice as a teacher and parent today. My mother was that teacher and parent who fought for children of color to have a place in the AG (academically gifted) classes. This was a huge issue as schools that had "integrated" continued to separate children of color from white children via academic tracking like AG classes. She tirelessly fought for me and other students. I share this component of my story to reveal the source of my passion for the work I do daily inside and outside of the classroom. I am not arrogant to think that I can *save* the students, but have witnessed the impact of a compassionate teacher like my mom who was willing to *serve* the students. The work she did changed the lives of numerous students and families—especially my own. As a result, I desire to continue the legacy of service to students and their families

In this light, I am my mother's daughter in that I graduated high school at the top of my class, attended the same college she did (on a full teaching scholarship), and began my teaching career at 23 years old. I was married for 17 years but have now divorced. I am the proud mother of two amazingly brilliant daughters—one of whom is beginning college (on full scholarship) and the latter entering her final year of middle school. I have

served in non-Title I schools situated within affluent communities as well as Title I schools where the academic, social, and emotional needs of students have seemed greater. I have served as a classroom teacher, curriculum facilitator, teacher liaison, and an assistant principal. The most fulfilling assignments have been that of a classroom teacher and curriculum facilitator (teacher of teachers). Although I am able to work well with diverse groups of students and families, I have found a satisfying niche in schools serving disenfranchised and marginalized student populations and families.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Biology Secondary Education, a Master in School Administration, and an Education Specialist Degree. I am a highly qualified licensed teacher with a middle grades science certification and superintendent's license. As a parent and an educator, I am personally and professionally vested in what happens in all schools. Therefore, my story as an educator has driven me to engage in this study to improve all schools.

As I engaged in the study, I gained a greater awareness of biases revealed by my story and the mandate to employ open reflexivity such as making researcher notes about my initial reaction to research participant responses (Bold, 2011). As a researcher, I was involved in every aspect of my work. Through my eyes, ears, and other senses, data were gathered and interpreted. I made meaning from a mixture of words, images, and interpretations. A creative work representing who I am, and who I am becoming came into fruition. I do not claim to know everything. Therefore, I am thankful for the insights contributed by the research participants, who simultaneously challenged my thoughts and

broadened my understanding of teacher instructional leadership as we co-constructed meaning from the study (Lichtman, 2013).

As I complete this study, I have finished my fifth year at the school where there have been three principals (most recently welcoming principal number four). In my opinion, the influx of principals is indicative of the external efforts local school districts (influenced by state legislation) employ to create a *quick fix* for struggling schools. My school is similar to the Belvedere School (Lambert, 1998) in that sustainable practices to provide academic stability are not quite pervasive throughout the school's daily culture. Leadership capacity is in its infancy in that two of the three principals did not have the opportunity to expand the leadership capacity of the teacher workforce. As a result, there was uncertainty and anxiety associated with the school's future success circulating within the school's community.

I personally believe that building leadership capacity among teachers through the development of teacher instructional leaders is one key to improving schools (Lambert 1998, 2003). Contrary to the ideology of "principal as the only instructional leader," a school's academic stability and potential to improve is connected to the development of the teacher workforce as instructional leaders. Principals are moved from school to school like pieces on a chess board. While some teachers may be affected by the move of principals, teachers have a longer tenure in schools in comparison to principals. Consequently, teachers are much like roots of a tree having the potential to anchor the school down (Crowther, 2011; Crowther et al., 2002).

In order to experience sustainable and continuous improvement in schools, school districts should focus more on developing teachers as instructional leaders. I believe this shift in how districts allocate resources would improve schools. However, various recognizable barriers to this shift persists—one more prominent than others—*self-efficacy among teachers*. If only teachers recognized their potential to improve schools and began to believe that they are more than *just* teachers (Grubb & Tredway, 2010; Hallinger, 2005, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Helterbran, 2010).

Although I already believed that teachers working as instructional leaders had a positive impact on school improvement, as a result of conducting this study, I discovered internal and external barriers that could inhibit a teacher's development as an instructional leader. Such findings from the research participants contributed depth and dimension to the study while also provoking me to think of strategies to help navigate internal and external barriers to developing as a TIL.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential in all qualitative research studies as it allows the qualitative researcher to describe phenomena outside the parameters of quantitative research (Given & Saumure, 2008). Trustworthiness ensures plausibility of the study (Glesne, 2011). As suggested by Hays and Singh (2012), research studies should meet certain criteria to be considered trustworthy. These criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, coherence, sampling adequacy, ethical validation, substantive validation, and creativity.

The strategies for trustworthiness that were used in this study included the following: reflexive margin notes/field notes (Hays & Singh, 2012), member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), data triangulation (Lambert, 2007; Tobin & Begley, 2004), peer debriefing (Patton, 2002), simultaneous data collection/analysis (Maxwell, 2012), negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002), thick description (Maxwell, 2005; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001), and audit trail (Hays & Singh, 2012) prolonged engagement, and persistent observation (Hays & Singh, 2012). I employed multiple strategies that addressed the research process, data interpretation, and data reporting that included maintaining reflexive journal notes, maintaining field notes from observations, inviting research participant's to review data analysis and provide input, data triangulation [interviews, observations, and document review], peer debriefing with doctoral colleagues and committee chairperson, implementation of narrative inquiry strategies for simultaneous data collection/analysis, implementation of research participant stories to create thick descriptions, and maintaining audit trails compiled of all documents used in the study (Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lichtman, 2013).

CHAPTER V

**TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AT
CENTER CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Introduction

This chapter was written as a narrative to preserve the rich description of data

contributed by each participant (Reitzug & Reeves, 1992; Riessman, 1993; Andrews,

Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). Using narrative analysis not only preserved rich data, but

also helped make sense of the stories told by the participants. These stories illuminated

the perspective of human beings related to the social and educational situations in which

they found themselves (Bold, 2011). Furthermore, narrative inquiry illuminates the many

diverse ways humans experience the world around them. Within the educational setting,

narrative inquiry and analysis cultivates the construction and reconstruction of personal

and social stories where teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own

and other's stories (Clandinin, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Chapter V highlights the practices of a TIL serving in Center City Middle School

(CCMS), while Chapter VI features the practices of TILs serving in Have Faith Middle

School (HFMS). This chapter structure helps communicate the school context in which

the TILs practiced. Though the chapters are aligned by school, the individual teachers

constitute the case studies, not the schools.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the driving forces of the school

improvement process, which provides the context for the school improvement efforts of

each of the schools in this study. Since the schools' improvement efforts are influenced

by federal, state, and district factors, pre-establishing such context is essential. In this

section, school documents are analyzed in an effort to paint an academic snapshot of each

school which contextualizes the instructional leadership practices of both teachers and

administrators. This section includes an overview of Annual Measurable Objectives—

federal factors influencing school improvement, followed by the district's goals,

priorities, and comprehensive needs. Subsequently, the overall achievement performance

of the school is described. After establishing the context from school performance data, I

present the narratives of the teacher instructional leader—Stella Luna and her

administrator, Assistant Principal Noel Douglas. TIL and administrator narratives are

presented in sections corresponding with each research question.

The first research question—*How do teachers practice as instructional leaders*?

—is subdivided into four sections: Meet Stella, Stella's Teacher Instructional Leadership

Narrative, Observing Stella, and Assistant Principal Noel Douglas' Narrative of Stella as

a TIL. The second research question—*How do principals promote teacher instructional

leadership as a part of the school improvement process*? —is subdivided into three

sections: Meet Assistant Principal Noel Douglas, Assistant Principal Noel Douglas'

Narrative: Perspectives of TIL, and Stella's Narrative: Perspectives of How

Administrators Promote TIL Development. Research question three—*What is the impact

of teacher instructional leadership on the school and teacher*? —is subdivided into two

sections: Assistant Principal Noel Douglas's Narrative, Benefits and Challenges to TIL

Development followed by Stella's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges to TIL

Development.

Driving Forces of the School Improvement Process

Overview of Annual Measurable Objectives

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) are a series of performance targets that

states, school districts, and schools must meet on designated assessments for specific

subgroups: School as a Whole (all students), American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic,

Two or More Races, White, Economically Disadvantaged Students, Limited English

Proficient, Students with Disabilities, and Academically or Intellectually Gifted. Targets

must be met each year to satisfy the requirements of the ESEA (Elementary Secondary

Education Act) and NCLB (No Child Left Behind) legislation. AMOs drive district

goals/priorities, the school's improvement plan, and the type of professional development

teachers select as part of their professional development plan (PDP). The AMOs measure

the academic performance of specific subgroups over time and are designed to reduce the

number of non-proficient students in subgroups. The purpose is to maintain a spotlight on

performance gaps among groups of students so that these gaps can be closed over time

(NCDPI, 2014).

To be counted for proficiency, target students must meet the full academic year

attendance criteria of 140 days in a school. If a student does not meet this criterion their

data is not used to calculate proficiency for the school. In order to ensure that all students

are included in accountability measures, schools are held to the standard of including at

least 95% of their students on assessments administered in their school. In order for

participation to be reported, the subgroup must be at least 30 students. All students are included in participation regardless of the number of days the student is in a school (the 140-day full academic year criterion does not apply to participation). Participation targets are set on the following:

- EOG Reading (Grades 3–8)

- EOG Math (Grades 3–8)

- EOG Science (Grades 5 and 8)

- EOC English II (Grade 10)

- EOC Math I (Grade 10)

- EOC Biology (Grade 11)

- EOC Current Year Assessments (course enrollment)

- The ACT (Grade 11)

- ACT WorkKeys (CTE Concentrator graduates; NCDPI, 2014).

As a component of the school improvement process, schools use their AMO performance and achievement data to prioritize district goals and to create a School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP is designed to lead schools as they work towards meeting their AMOs. Schools use their yearly progress towards AMOs and achievement data to continuously tweak and/or create their SIP. CCMS and HFMS are part of the same school district. In the next section, district goals/priorities that drive school improvement efforts are listed. Additionally, Center City Middle School's 2014–2015 AMOs, school performance data and priority goals for the 2015–2016 SIP are presented.

District Goals—Priorities—Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Center City Middle School is part of a small school district that adopted three

primary goals designed to drive all school improvement decisions made within each of its

schools. The three goals include the following:

- By 2020, 90 percent of third-grade students will read on or above grade level;
- By 2018, the graduation rate will be 90 percent;
- By 2018, the performance of all subgroups will be increased while the achievement gap between subgroups will be closed by 10 percentage points. (District Goals, 2015)

In addition to the three goals, the district identified four priorities that when implemented

would influence the progression towards meeting the three primary goals. Included

within the list of priorities is a goal that focuses on the development of strong

instructional leaders. The complete list is recorded below:

- Provide all schools and departments the differentiated support they need to reach the full potential of the Continuous Improvement Process to maximize student outcomes.
- Train and support individuals to be strong instructional leaders and hold them accountable for achieving district goals.
- Equip staff to support struggling students.
- Intentionally engage parent and community partners in understanding, supporting and advocating for district goals in service of students (District Priorities, 2015).

Each school district has an established direction for each of its schools that is

influenced by federal legislation. Federal education legislation identifies a series of

performance targets that, when accomplished, moves each school towards reaching its

district goals. In order to meet the federal targets and the district goals, schools

implement a School Improvement Plan (SIP) as a roadmap to follow. As a part of this process, schools review the Annual Measurable Objectives ascribed to them by federal education legislation. The AMOs dictate the school's targets that must be met in order for the school to be considered as an institution that sufficiently provides for the academic needs of all students.

Student results on standardized assessments and other AMO targets determine the performance grade of each school. As a component of the continuous school improvement process, school districts and school personnel review their performance data and determine their comprehensive needs within the school. From this process, priority goals evolve that become a part of each school's improvement plan (SIP). While the SIP plan becomes the guiding instrument for the entire school to follow in pursuit of sustainable school improvement, each teacher simultaneously constructs a professional development plan that directly impacts how effectively schools achieve the goals outlined within the SIP. In essence, how effectively teachers develop as instructional leaders not only impacts the SIP, but also influences the schools' progress towards AMOs. Subsequently, the SIP should include strategies for improving the teaching and learning process in schools so that all AMO targets are met in the upcoming school year. The performance data that influences Stella Luna's practice as a teacher instructional leader follows in the next section.

Center City Middle School's Overall Achievement Performance

Center City Middle School's Annual Measurable Objectives

The performance data that follows for CCMS is based on the 2014–2015 school year and was instrumental in the creation and organization of their 2015–2016 school improvement plan that will be discussed in the next section. The AMOs have been organized into a table below based upon the individual AMO categories, the number of targets met, the number of targets assigned, and the percentage of targets met (see Table 2). As indicated by the data, CCMS met 37 out of their 50 assigned targets (North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

Table 2

CCM School's 2014–2015 AMOs

AMO Categories	Number of Targets Met	Number of Targets Assigned	Percentage of Targets Met
Reading Grades 3–8[**]	12	18	66.7
Math Grades 3–8[**]	12	18	66.7
Science Grades 3–8[**]	10	11	90.9
Current Year EOC[*]	2	2	100.0
Attendance Rate	1	1	100.0
Total Targets	37	50	74.0

Note. [*] EOC (End-of-Course); [**] Denotes Unmet **Target**

Recall that North Carolina schools receive a report card grade based upon student proficiency (80%) and growth (20%) in designated courses (see section on overview of annual measurable objectives). Earning an overall growth score of 66.1, CCM School did

not meet growth. They earned an achievement score of 44%, EOG (end-of-grade) reading

score of 48% (letter grade of a D), and EOG math score of 41% (letter grade of a D), and

an overall school performance score of 49% (letter grade of a D). In relation to the

mastery of content standards, the higher the achievement score the more proficient and/or

college/career ready students are. The inverse is also true. The lower the achievement

score the less proficient and/or college/career ready students are. Based on their overall

performance data, CCM School would be considered a low performing priority school

(North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

Center City Middle School's Improvement Plan

CCMS is a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Magnet

School. CCMS is a Title I Focus School—legislated by the ESEA to provide financial

assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) with high numbers or high percentages of

children from low-income families. The Title I designation is designed to ensure that all

students receive the academic support needed to meet challenging state academic

standards. CCMS serves approximately 597 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students.

The school operates on a traditional school calendar and has an average attendance rate of

approximately 92.3%. The average class sizes include approximately 22 sixth-grade

students, 21 seventh-grade students, and 22 eighth-grade students. There are

approximately 1.14 students per Internet-connected digital learning device (desktop,

laptop, and/or tablet) attending Center City Middle School (NCDPI, 2016).

Schools evaluate their performance data in order to create priority improvement

goals for the year. Within the SIP, the SIT (school improvement team) recommends

professional development opportunities designed to expand the instructional capacity of the teaching staff. The manner in which teachers practice as instructional leaders directly impacts sustainable school improvement. CCM School used their 2014–2015 AMO and performance data to create a school improvement plan for the 2015–2016 school year. CCMS selected a simplified vision of "Inspiring minds." Their mission included the following:

- Integrating STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) to inspire students through curriculum, collaboration, and creative problem solving to become global leaders (SIP, 2016).

Center City Middle is a school that educates a large number of underserved students. Although white and intellectually or academically gifted students met the AMO targets in reading, math, and science, other subgroups of students fell short. CCMS met 37 out of the 50 AMOs. As a component of improvement for 2015–2016, one priority goal with two subcomponents emerged from CCM School's data:

- Closing the achievement gap in math and reading for economically disadvantaged students.
- Increase math proficiency for students with disabilities.
- Implement STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) as a strategy to deliver Common Core and Essential Standards across core (math, science, reading, and history) curricula (SIP, 2016)

Research Question One: Practices of a Teacher Instructional Leader at Center City Middle School

Meet Stella

Stella is a medium tall middle aged Caucasian English as a Second Language teacher (ESL) with dark shoulder length hair. She has a kind disposition that is welcoming to students and is committed to using diverse methods to help students understand concepts. Stella has a tenacity for seeing her students learn and succeed. She is that teacher who goes beyond normal and would stand on a chair to *act out* words or bring in artifacts from home to help her students comprehend. As an ESL teacher, Stella supports the learning that students in grades six through eight receive in their core subjects (math, reading, science, and history) and some encore (elective) subjects. She shares the responsibility of facilitating learning for her students with two other colleagues (Crystal an ESL teacher and Bridget her teacher's assistant). Stella has lived in different countries and traveled the world. She uses her experiences to inspire her students most of whom are English language learners. Although Stella's students speak more than six different languages, she does not allow this dilemma to be a negative barrier to their learning. Consequently, she holds high expectations for her students and willingly supports them in diverse ways [observation & interview].

Stella has 12 years of teaching experience. She serves a culturally diverse population of students and families who are from more than 10 different countries—speaking at least six different languages. She takes pride in the fact that she and her colleagues work collaboratively and strategically to build positive relationships with the

students and their families. She has earned both bachelors and master's degrees in education. Stella believes that her duty as an ESL teacher is to assess her students' English listening, speaking, reading, and writing aptitudes in order to customize their learning so that academic content is comprehensible. She visualizes herself as an invaluable resource to her school staff—especially to the regular education teacher—as she works collaboratively to create lessons that explain and reinforce student learning in academic courses. Initially, Stella did not consider herself a teacher instructional leader; however, as the interview questions probed deeper into her practice, she knighted herself a teacher instructional leader *in cognito* [interview & observation].

When you walk into Stella's classroom, the entire space commands your attention. It is like walking through an interactive museum—students can actually touch, feel, and physically use the information with which they are interacting. There are informational bulletin boards with pictures (content and life skill specific), vocabulary flowcharts with pictures (various subjects), and models of student work (creative robot projects embellish the tops of bookcases, storage shelves, and table tops). This is extremely important for Stella's students who need vocabulary to understand contexts for knowledge acquisition. Stella customizes various seating options for her students which include independent work space at computers, independent work space at tables, and creative collaborative spaces (used for student-teacher and/or student-student collaboration). The organization and design of Stella's classroom invites students to engage in their own learning, take risks, and ask questions [observation].

Stella's Teacher Instructional Leadership Narrative

At one point in life, I thought I wanted to become a college professor. When I was an undergraduate, getting my four-year degree, I thought I wanted to go get my master's and then my PhD to teach at the university level. As life happened, I was sidetracked because I had kids. I wanted to teach, but the question was which age group. I knew that I liked young people and that I didn't want to teach older people. I completely switched gears. I got my master's and then decided that I wanted to work with young people [not little kids] versus college kids. My decision to become a teacher was somewhat influenced by the events that happened in my life.

As an ESL (English Second Language) teacher, I have many duties outside of directly teaching students. Some of them include attending professional learning meetings with the various grades and disciplines [reading, social studies, and science], attending vertical planning meetings, and grade level meetings. I'm currently the LEP (Limited English Proficient) coordinator at my school, so I have meetings with testing coordinators and EC (Exceptional Children) coordinators. I have to attend IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings to serve those kids who are both identified as needing special services through the EC department and that have Limited English Proficiency status. I'm responsible for putting modifications and accommodations in place for those students. In my job, I try to create environments where our second language learning students can access content in English. As they're learning to speak English, they're also gaining access to the content that they are responsible to learn, as they take all the same EOGs (end-of-grade) and EOCs (end-of-course) tests as native

English speakers. They're expected to perform at a certain level or they're considered failing students. Because they are new to English—there are unlimited gaps—so we just try to support them as they learn the English language and content in core classes. I define a teacher instructional leader as a competent and empathetic risk taker. They are advocates of the teacher and the students. They are careful listeners. They are not afraid to try something and maybe fail 50% of the time. They put their neck out there. They encourage teachers to be brave, courageous, and take risks. They have an understanding of the content that they are teaching. They understand how it relates to the other things that are happening in that student's academic setting. They are able to give you strategies to help you make that content comprehensible making connections between the various content areas [interview].

I am a teacher instructional leader incognito. I say this because I'm really self-conscious about how I never want teachers to think that I'm telling them how to do their job. So I always collaborate with the teachers who come knocking on my door and say I don't know what to do with your students—they all failed my social studies exam. I know they [teachers] know some of this stuff, but what can I do [to help the teachers help the students]. I will bend over backwards to help those teachers figure this stuff out. But I am very self-conscious, very insecure when it comes to me putting myself out there for a teacher who doesn't come knocking on my door. If I do approach teachers who have not directly asked for my help, I feel like I'm being pushy, a know-it-all, tripping them up, and adding things to their plate. I'm not comfortable in that role. I only share when I'm

asked to share by specific groups of people. This is the reason I describe myself as a teacher instructional leader incognito.

I create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. I think that is the first step to reaching our students. They have to feel safe and comfortable in that classroom. My students feel insanely comfortable. They sometimes kick off their shoes. It's like their own living room. I have to be an advocate for each one of my students individually. I really try to learn about their language background, cultural background, and where they came from. I ask what region they came from, so that I can learn about that. I try really hard to form something with them. I have students from ten different countries who speak six different languages in that classroom. I try to meet with each one of my students outside of the classroom. I try to engage them in conversation constantly.

I work hard to ensure that the instruction I facilitate is centered on what each student needs. I collaborate with students. I meet with parents. I've done home visits. It's sort of a fun challenge to see what will work with the student. I will get on a chair and act out flying. I'm completely engaged trying to figure out how to make that content comprehensible. I teach everything. We teach content as we're teaching language

asked to share by specific groups of people. This is the reason I describe myself as a teacher instructional leader incognito.

The most important aspect of my job is building trusting relationships with students. It is the most important thing I do. So many of our students come to us with a lot of hard life experience. I have to be an advocate for each one of my students individually. I really try to learn about their language background, their cultural background and where they come from. I try really hard to form something with them.

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acquisition. You can't be an ESL teacher if you're not willing to do that. Absolutely! Yes-I work hard to ensure that the instruction I facilitate is centered on what each student needs.

I use a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful. This is an ongoing area for me. Crystal and I were trying to figure out a way to front load our students with science-ecology terminology so that when they launch into their research project they've already had some acclimation to the words. You [researcher] came in and sort of almost collaborated with us at that time about those pictures. I was like it's so funny because she [researcher] came in and did the exact thing that her whole piece of research is about. Each of us [teachers] is a volume of an encyclopedia, but unless you're willing to pull it out and actually collaborate, you don't even know what other teachers have or are equipped with. Teacher experiences give them resources that you don't have. Our science teacher came in while our kids were doing that activity that we kind of just threw together in our conversation and he asked if he could borrow it to do with his eighth-grade class tomorrow. They're gonna do it in the library. He's gonna set it up like a scavenger hunt and we gave him our process.

I take the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. We had an artist come to our school. We're doing a literacy/engineering project with a sculptor who came and talked to our students. Any time students can do something other than memorize information, learning becomes fun, exciting, and engaging. These opportunities let students use what they know. Crystal and I intentionally incorporate some sort of art project to show what they [students] know. They can work individually,

with a partner, or a group. Students are getting arts integration. It's astonishing how many times these projects lead to language development in ways that we do not ourselves anticipate. Right now we're reading this book about science, technology, and sustainability. It's a novel and the kids like it. Each kid is making a scrapper from recyclables.

We had an artist come in. Most of our kids don't know any real professional artists. She talked about upcycling trash and how it would be fun for the kids to make robots. Their robots would have a name and a job. We've had robots that go into the hospital and translate in 500 different languages. So if there are people in the hospital that speak a language that none of the doctors speak there's a little robot that will go in and translate. Another robot was created to perform as a professional dumpster diver. The dumpster diver sends this little robot into the trash dumps to look for valuable things. In the course of him looking for valuable things, all of these random materials get stuck in his crazy hair. The student who created the dumpster diver robot didn't know what any of this stuff was, so he learned a whole lot of content and learned a lot of vocabulary words. There was a public speaking component. We filmed kids talking about their robots. They had to write a script out that included them talking about the various materials. Then they wrote their robot story. We displayed 63 robots and 63 stories that students created. We collaborated with the librarian.

I do not take the lead in communicating to my administrators and the support team the type of professional development I need to improve my teaching practice. I do it myself. I don't ask them for anything. I don't ask them because my expectation is that the

LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students are not a priority. I think they (LEP students) fly under the radar. Even when we have these big proclamations about closing the achievement gap, I don't think that they're [administrators] thinking how reaching these students who don't speak English can improve our schools.

I willingly share my ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. I enjoy that. I am a mentor to two first-year teachers at my school this year. I love that process of getting to know her [mentee] and showing her the ropes. I help her understand the physical aspects of the school. I've tried to help her. If you're teaching Latin, you're doing the same work I'm doing, you're just teaching Latin. If you are relying solely on a textbook to teach Latin to kids who speak English, you're going to have the same struggles I have teaching English to kids who speak Hindi.

If I had to add anything to the list of six instructional criteria for practicing as a teacher instructional leader, I would say that teacher instructional leaders should surround themselves with other strong teacher leaders. They should intentionally connect with other strong teachers in their teacher community. They must be willing to share insights or concerns. They must have suggestions on how to solve problems that they see, while trusting that what they're seeing or feeling is probably real. They must create strong relationships in their school community—which is the first thing. They need to be a part of a group of people that they can start forging power with. They must find the people who understand them and have the same vision for the school. [Teacher instructional leaders must] strategically and intentionally create community in their school.

Observing Stella

Stella wanted a fluid, unannounced observation experience of her practice as a teacher instructional leader. In preparation for her observation, Stella provided available days and open blocks of times. Dependent upon the day (A-day or B-day) and time, I would observe Stella either facilitating learning for her students or team planning with her colleagues. The day I arrived for Stella's observation, she and two colleagues were team planning for their eighth-grade students who were working on the ecosystem unit. The students were preparing for their unit assessment and a research project. After greeting Stella and her colleagues—Crystal a fellow ESL instructor and Bridget her teacher's assistant—Stella remembered that I had expertise in teaching eighth grade science. As a result, she asked my input about how they might organize key vocabulary in a nonlinguistic form as a strategy to increase student comprehension and deepen student understanding.

In minutes, we {Stella, Crystal, Bridget, and I} spontaneously began collaborating on review activities. Stella's mainly focused on how vocabulary words (to be written on chart paper and hung on the wall) might be conceptually organized for greater student understanding. We began using the ecosystem unit planning resource that included most of the key vocabulary words required for student learning. I recommended that the words be grouped based upon their relationship within the unit, accompanied by a picture (drawn or cut from a magazine), and strategically affixed near the word. Students could use the word, pictorial representations, and their current knowledge of the word to orally review meanings.

After we organized the words by concepts, Crystal used chart paper to sketch pictures beside each word. While she worked on that component of the assignment, I worked with the Bridget to create the second part of the assignment—an Ecosystem Picture Gallery. Once the activity was completed, Stella shared it with the eighth-grade science teacher who used a modified version of the Ecosystem Picture Gallery with his other classes.

Stella has used professional collaboration with other colleagues as a resource to deepen student understanding and to expose students to real world learning. She partnered with the school's media coordinator and a community artist to organize the ESL Collaborative STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) Project. In preparation for the construction of a robot project, Stella and the collaborative team invited the entire school to donate recyclable materials and hosted a local artist to speak with the students about their project. The artists provided ideas for constructing their robots through a concept called upcycling—reusing materials to create a high-quality product. Stella's account is documented below.

> With our students it's astonishing how many times these projects lead to language development in ways that we do not ourselves anticipate. We're reading this book {Scrap City} that is sort of a science, technology book. It highlights issues about sustainability of resources. Each kid is making a scrapper {robot} from recyclable materials. We had an artist from Saw Tooth come in to discuss their job as an artist and to give them ideas. Most of our kids don't know any real professional artists, so we have an artist come in who talks about upcycling trash. They [students] didn't know the word *buttons*. They didn't know the word *container*. Some of our students didn't know the word *attach*. They didn't know the word *mechanical*. This was important because we encouraged each kid to make their scrapper with at least one removable part (either arms, legs, head, neck), so the word mechanical was brought up again and again. They used tools they didn't know like a *saw*. That's how small some of their worlds are, so any time we can

get away from *just* reading and writing, we do so and give students a broader opportunity to learn more, now all of a sudden as we're reading this book and we're talking about recycled plastic computer keypads or something, students know the word and have a reference for that.

Stella was convinced that creative projects provided an opportunity for her students to engage in sustainable learning, deepen their knowledge, engage in student centered learning, select the type of learning suitable for their learning style, enhance comprehension of content knowledge, and strengthen their language development. Though her students struggle in terms of reaching state proficiency standards (scoring a level three or higher on standardized assessments), Stella was sure that the learning experience in which her students engaged added value to their lives that cannot be solely measured by scores on standardized tests [interview & observation].

During the follow-up interview for Stella's observation, she expressed her excitement about the collaborative planning in which we engaged. She expressed how our interaction was an extension of her thoughts expressed during her initial interview as she had emphasized the benefits of teachers bringing their various tools of expertise together to help improve student learning. She described our collaborative work as a primary example of the research study being conducted.

> So Crystal and I {Stella} were trying to figure out a way front load our students with ecology terminology so that when they launched their upcoming research project they've already had some acclimation to the words. We talked about the words and used the words. When you {researcher} came in and began to collaborate with us at that time about the words and pictures, it was exactly the right thing. I even said to the girls {Crystal and Bridget} it's so funny because she {researcher} came in and did the exact thing that her whole piece of research is about. Each of us is a volume of an encyclopedia, but unless you're willing to pull out your resources and actually collaborate, you don't even know what other

people have or are equipped with—their experience—that gives them resources that you don't have. Together these resources can help improve student learning [observation].

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas's Narrative: Stella Luna as a Teacher Instructional Leader

Stella creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. She's an ESL teacher and there are fewer students in her classroom. That makes a difference to where you can have more room for conversation with the students to get to know them a little bit better as you identify their strengths and weaknesses. She has an opportunity to spend a little bit more time designing lessons and instructions. She gets to know the families. She talks about things that they can do outside of class. That's important that you guide students in how to do that. They feel very comfortable. She's so upbeat and she does hold them accountable.

I think I would agree that Stella works hard to ensure that the instruction she facilitates is centered on what each student needs. She does that by getting ESL instructors into the classroom. We've got to make a stronger connection in this area. While I feel like she is facilitating the instruction on individual students, I would like to see that extend outside the classroom into the core areas. We've got to strengthen that and make getting into more classrooms a priority. If you own that, you're going to do it on your own, seeking opportunities to get into more classrooms without me having to tell you.

I'm going to say I believe Stella uses a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful. I can't answer

that completely. We are looking at materials like different textbooks. She's worked

closely with our ESL instructional coach. She has a passion for these students. She truly

cares for the students, but as far as her research-based teaching strategies, I'm not really

sure. I believe she works closely enough with the ESL instructor that she probably does,

but I can't really say that she does this, this, this, and this. She's familiar with the SIOP

[Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol] model.

I would say Stella takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help with

student learning. She doesn't have to come in on a Saturday. She takes the initiative to

come in [on designated Saturdays] to make sure that parents know the importance of

being involved in their child's education. As far as resources with what they do in their

class, yes, they have everything that they need. Does she go outside the building to ask

for things? I don't know that, but she's going to make sure that for whatever lesson she's

having with the students she's going to make sure she has things. So I would say yes, she

does secure whatever she needs.

I would say no, Stella does not take the lead in communicating to us and the

support team the type of professional development she needs to improve her teaching

practice. I don't think many teachers do that. It has to do with the fact that either they

don't know, or there's no money. I just want a teacher to tell me what they need.

I believe Stella willingly shares her ideas for improving student learning by

collaborating with others. She could do more. She needs to get in there to the classroom

to find out what the heart of the matter is. Where are the students succeeding and where

they're not succeeding? Then ask the question, what she can do to assist. Table 3

highlights how Stella and Assistant Principal Noel Douglas described her practice as a

teacher instructional leader.

Table 3

Stella's TIL Practice

Stella's Practices as a TIL	Assistant Principal Noel Douglas' View of Stella's Practice as a TIL
• understands the vision and mission of the school • empathetic • risk taker • an advocate of teachers and students • careful listener • unafraid to try and fail; courageous • encourages others • competent in pedagogy • helps the learner relate real world issues to their academics • integrates content among various disciplines • collaborates with other colleagues • builds trusting relationships with students and families • customizes lessons to the learners' needs • exposes learners to real world professionals and their careers • takes the initiative to get the resources students need • mentors others • builds a strong network of quality colleagues • open and willing to share best practices • contributes solutions to complex problems • leverages and strategically uses influence • competent in content area	• builds positive relationships with students and families • enthusiastic • holds students accountable • differentiates lessons for all learners • passion for teaching students • cares for students • uses research based strategies to facilitate learning • Secures resources for student learning • assesses student learning and makes necessary adjustments

Research Question Two: Administrative Support for TIL Development

Meet Assistant Principal Noel Douglas

Ms. Noel Douglas is a middle-aged Caucasian female assistant principal serving at Center Middle School where Stella Luna serves as a teacher instructional leader. She has served for 20 years as an educator in both private and public schools. Assistant Principal Douglas has served as a National Board Certified chorus teacher, voice coach and an assistant principal. She has served CCMS for five years.

It is noteworthy to remind the reader that Assistant Principal Douglas represented Stella Luna's administrator in this study. Stella's former principal had moved to a different school and could not participate in the study due to his current relationship with the researcher. Stella's assistant principal's narrative follows in the next section.

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas's Narrative: Perspectives of TIL

We distribute leadership in this school and in our district. Distributed leadership is a pervasive way of thinking and leading in schools. I really see distributed leadership more as a type of leadership tool. It's a way of thinking about school leadership. When you're talking about distributive leadership you're learning to share leadership. It can have a huge impact on a school if you're having that communication because it takes everybody moving together. It [distributed leadership] can be very powerful in regard to instruction and student achievement. Distributive leadership is a tool used for conversation about where we want to see a school go. These conversations are based on not just academic performance data.

We just talked a little bit about how you can't, as an administrator have all the knowledge. The curriculum coordinator is one example of how we distribute leadership in the school. The role of the curriculum coordinator is to oversee PLTs [professional learning teams]. So to me distributed leadership involves engaging *key players* in your building in the leadership process of the school.

Various leadership opportunities are available for teachers in the school; however, I wish that teachers would take the initiative to seek out more opportunities. Teachers can serve on the school improvement team; lead PLT meetings, grade level teams, and committee meetings. It works pretty well having the teachers be responsible for their own grade level meetings and team meetings. Administrators can either be present or not present. We choose to be present. We made it very clear that if there was something they were interested in doing that we had not mentioned, bring that to us. We encourage them [teachers] to have that internal drive and passion. If they really want to be a leader they're gonna look for ways to be a leader. They should do that. We encourage them to lead as much as they possibly can lead. Their first place to lead is in the classroom. We have teachers who are designated leaders. With the exception of building and safety, most teacher leaders should lead in everything in the building. Everybody has to know how everything works in the building.

A teacher serving as an instructional leader is the core design of a teacher's role. *I do not see the difference between an administrator as an instructional leader and a teacher as an instructional leader*. Is that any different than what they should be doing? When a teacher is in the classroom they are the instructional leader in the classroom. It's

their responsibility. It should be their desire to know everything there is to know about instruction. What strategies are gonna work? It's their job to know their students and their learning styles. It's their job to figure out how they're going to communicate that information. It's their job to grow that child, even if it's just by a point. They may have to really work for that point. The instructional part is just knowing what they have to teach, but if they don't know the children, they have to figure out the way they teach. They have to deal with every student in their classroom—whether it's 30 to 40 students. *I guess for me I don't see an administrator as an instructional leader any different than the teacher as an instructional leader, I don't see a divide.*

I think preparing teachers as instructional leaders should be a dually engaging process between the teacher and administration. It is a collaborative partnership between colleagues. I think that's instruction that has to do with administrators being present and asking the questions. I can't know every standard of every curriculum. It's more about getting teachers to think and to reflect on the lesson. What I observe the students doing is not necessarily about what the teacher is doing. It's more about how the students are responding to what the teacher has presented. I used to tell my students to practice every day as if you're performing. That's what I tell my teachers. Practice every day as if you are in a performance. Then you're going to be that instructional leader. You're going to know what the students need to know. You will know what the learning target is. You're going to know if you're students have it, whether they are mastering it, where their gaps are, and what you need to do. *I think that administrators are just an extension of the*

teacher's arm. We are working alongside the teacher, not being over the teacher. We are

in a partnership.

Administrators are an extended arm of the teacher and vice versa. I think teachers should make the time to see the administrator and have a conversation. Promoting teachers to develop as instructional leaders has to be a reciprocal process. The teacher has to be willing to talk to the administrator as well. The meetings don't have to happen as a scheduled meeting. They can be impromptu meetings. These type meetings are usually the most important because you get the most information out of that. This reciprocal process includes the teacher letting the administrator know when things are happening in their classroom and keeping them informed. When they have information bring your data to the table. Sharing your information to educate administration. As a teacher, you know what you did in that classroom. There's no way I'll be in your classroom every day. What information have you gathered from your instruction that you might come and have a meeting with the administrator to say this is the lesson that I did. This was the focus of the lesson. Teachers have to commit and initiate conversations about where instruction needs to go. I guess for me I don't see an administrator as an instructional leader any different than the teacher as an instructional leader, I don't see a divide. I see that we think in hierarchy. You can't do that in education anymore. There might have been a time where you could, but the stakes are too high now. We can't work like that anymore.

Stella's Narrative: Administrators Promoting TIL Development

My principal is brand new to my school this year and has a very full plate. My principal has never worked in a school with an LEP [Limited English Proficiency]

population before. My principal has no idea what I do. I think she's probably created this assumption from talking to other people in our school—maybe the principal who was there last year—that the ESL department knows what they're doing. They are doing things more or less the right way. They are collaborating with other teachers, using research-based strategies, and actively lesson planning to meet the needs of our students. You guys just keep doing what you're doing, because I have all these other problems to solve. That's what I feel like. We have an open-door policy. She can come in any time, but she's like I don't have to worry about you—you've got it. I'm worrying about that thing down there. That's been our communication more or less with her. She's like you guys got this, I got other things to worry about. So she is doing nothing!

I hope that in the future she can fully appreciate the possibility that what we're doing can support what teachers are doing. I wish that there could be more time for us to be in those classrooms with the teacher or teachers being in our classroom. Most teachers do not step foot in our classroom. They don't know what we do with their students to help them gain access to content. I would like for my principal to say this is the classroom where these two ESL teachers are working. They're doing something that could help our students. Look at them and see what kinds of things they're doing—training and strategies. I want her to see there's more opportunity for us to show what we know and share what we know that works. For example, like co-teaching. We could closely work together in a classroom setting not just in a meeting. Deliberate is the best word. I wish that she was more deliberate and intentional about creating collaborative situations between the ESL teachers and regular education teachers. Table 4 describes

how both Assistant Principal Noel Douglas and Stella describe ways to promote the

development of teacher instructional leaders.

Table 4

How Assistant Principal Douglas Promotes TIL Development

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas's Perspective	Teacher Perspective
- encourages teacher participation as school improvement team member - encourages teachers to lead PLTs (professional learning community meetings) - encourages teachers to serve as chairpersons of committees - encourages teachers to serve as grade level team leader - visits classrooms - inquires about the details of daily lessons - implements school-wide professional development - encourages teachers to initiate conversations with administrator - encourages teachers to inform administrator of classroom lessons/activities	- administrators plan collaborative time between specialists (ESL) and regular education teachers - administrators require regular education teachers to team teach with specialists (ESL) - administrators permit teachers to lead trainings for other teachers - administrators permit teachers to show what they know - administrators make deliberate efforts to highlight what teachers do - administrators plan more classroom time with regular education teachers

Research Question Three: Impact of TIL Development on School and Teacher

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges of TIL

Development

Developing teachers as instructional leaders has many benefits. It situates "key players" engaged in the process of teaching and learning on the "same page." Educators communicating and executing a common mission and vision designed to improve student achievement position themselves for whole school improvement. When we are all on the same page we are going to have conversations about what good or bad instruction looks like. This process includes getting up and not being afraid to present to the faculty, designing lessons, and having your lesson plans. Everything should be reflective of that. If lesson plans are required, then what has to be included and what does that look like? What does guided practice look like? At the same time, our meetings should be the same way. The only way we're going to be able to do it is if we are all doing the same thing— not necessarily the same way. That's where the creativity comes in and your strengths come out. You still want to have that creative element. If we're all mirroring the same way, then we will get instruction where it needs to be. The goal is that you're growing the children—not just academically. This is one more advantage of developing teachers as instructional leaders.

There are no real disadvantages to developing teacher instructional leaders. Teacher instructional leaders and school leaders must be committed to doing the complex work of developing as instructional leaders. The work is arduous and complex; therefore, "key players" must stay focused on the goal of the work not the "title" associated with

doing the work. Teachers must be committed to their professional growth not depending on administrators to "jumpstart" them. If there was a disadvantage, I would say it has everything to do with the teacher leader and how they see teacher leadership. Just like administrators serving as instructional leaders, I don't see teachers serving as instructional leaders any differently. Some think of a title, as more than it's not. If we are truly focused on instruction and that's the goal of instructional leaders, I don't see how there could be negatives to that.

The only way that I would see a negative is if when the teachers shut their door, they aren't doing the same thing. I don't really see a lot of disadvantages. I do believe that players in your building make the building. You can talk about instruction all day long. You can know where you're supposed to be and what your target is. If you're really developing instructional leaders they're going to want to have these discussions about what does effective instruction look like. If we're having those conversations, I don't see how it can be a disadvantage. When we lose the focus of our target—children and effective instruction—there are disadvantages. If we focus on each and every child who comes to the table with a plate that looks different every day and let our work be guided by that, how can becoming a teacher instructional leader be a disadvantage?

If I could offer advice to teachers desiring to develop as instructional leaders and to the school administrators who must support their development, I would suggest that teachers and administrators know their strengths and weaknesses individually and collectively as a staff. This is one key to accomplishing the vision and mission of a

school. Administrators who know the strengths and weaknesses of their staff are

empowered to effectively distribute leadership among staff within the school.

If I don't know my people, I don't know what talents they bring to the table. I

have to know my people first. Who is in my building? What strengths do they have?

What weaknesses do they have? I want the best person in that job. We also have to have

the same thought of where we want to go. We really do have to be on the same page with

how we're gonna get there. Every bit of this goes back to relationships, communication,

and completely being honest with themselves first. When you're distributing leadership

amongst your players, you can't do it without knowing who the strong players are. The

goal is that you're growing as leaders. It comes down to whether or not you're a servant

leader because you are here to serve the students, parents, teachers, and any other person

that comes into your building. If everyone has that mindset, distributed leadership would

kind of just roll in line because it would be something that teachers would want to do.

Teachers would want to put those measures in place. They see the need for it because it's

a norm—part of what they do. When they go to bed at night they're thinking about why

that lesson did not go the way they needed it to and how to change it. No lesson works

the same because people are not the same every day. The goal is to do our best every day.

Stella's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges of TIL Development

Developing as a teacher instructional leader makes a positive impact on student

learning. The positive aspect would be on student learning and working a trusting

relationship with other teachers. This would ultimately help teachers enjoy their job and

increase student achievement. People who are happy have a more positive effect on the

kids. The collegial feel of the school becomes more positive and friendly. We believe we're in this together and even though we might have this struggle, we can do it. If we collaborate we can tackle at least part of the struggle.

When teachers develop as instructional leaders they are willing to learn things that are hard. This may include learning different content from their own, different strategies, and learning different ways of teaching in the classroom. They are willing to open themselves up to others. They are brave and not overly sensitive. They make the school feel like a community. This takes a lot of courage.

This year I am mentoring two first-year teachers at my school. I gain a sense of personal satisfaction when I serve as a mentor. I think I'm more in tune with both the teachers' struggles, insecurities and the things they're trying to work on. Serving in this way as a teacher instructional leader also makes me aware of how passionate most of my coworkers are about what they do every single day. I go to work every day with a phenomenal group of people, and that makes me happy, makes me want to go to work. I love my job, I love my school, because I work with phenomenal individuals. This attitude makes the school a better place to work.

A challenge of developing as a teacher instructional leader is that time is stretched thin. Time is a precious resource and teachers feel that their time is so, so, limited. They want to collaborate but they don't have time to update their Virtual Learning page, do their lesson planning, go online, and register for professional development. Meanwhile, all of these emails just keep piling up. They want to do stuff for the kids. Time is one of the most critical and valuable elements of a teacher's life. We never ever feel like we

have enough. We are stretched thin. So if you are a person who is asked to be an instructional leader, you're just like oh my God, it's one more thing. It's time. Balancing my personal life at home is another challenge. I generally try not to bring school work home. I try to finish up what I need to do at school. Sometimes, I don't walk out of the building until about four or four-thirty because I don't want to take school work home. I try not to make it take up my time with my family. I try to draw a line.

A teacher instructional leader might feel judged, rejected, devalued or ignored sometimes—and these are all ego problems. Sometimes egos are a little bit fragile. Fellow teachers can either give you two thumbs down or two thumbs up. I am really amazed at teacher instructional leaders who really take on those positions of like putting themselves out there embracing of all of us. Even though they might be judged they're not making anybody feel judged. This is a challenge of serving as a teacher instructional leader.

Developing teacher instructional leaders impacts school improvement. I think that we have teachers in every single school that have interests, talents, life experiences and resources that can improve schools. For example, a lady who is a science teacher is working on her PhD. Her research is focused on specifically boys, minority boys in Title I schools, and the pressures, influences, and strategies to crack the code for these particular boys. She is a secret resource in our school that nobody knows about. I used to live overseas and am a second language teacher now, and used to be a second language learner when I was a kid. We're 60 people with so many skills, internal resources and experiences. Developing our skills as instructional leaders can improve schools. The

impact of teacher instructional leadership on the whole school and teachers is

summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Teacher Instructional Leadership Impact on School and Teacher

Benefits	Challenges
• Boosts teacher confidence • Increases student willingness to follow teachers • Inspires students to work harder • Improves classroom effectiveness • Maximizes instructional time • Benefits students the most • Increases instructional growth • Increases student achievement • Increases professional growth • Increases leadership capacity • Builds community • Improves teacher and student efficacy • Builds commitment • Reduces apathy • Produces better teachers • Prevents teacher burnout • Builds collegiality • Promotes authentic collaboration • Increases personal and professional satisfaction • Increases positive school climate • Improves school culture • Improves human resources in school • Increases innovation in school • Improves overall school	• Managing time • Prioritizing work projects • Keeping current with technology, data, and research-based strategies • Maintaining focus • Navigating envious relationships among colleagues • Losing good teachers to training positions • Balancing work and family • Feeling judged and devalued

CHAPTER VI

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AT HAVE FAITH MIDDLE SCHOOL

Introduction

Similar to Chapter V, Chapter VI is written as a narrative to preserve the rich description of data contributed by each participant (Reitzug & Reeves, 1992; Riessman, 1993; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). Chapter VI highlights the practices of two TILs serving in Have Faith Middle School (HFMS). The chapter is structured to help illuminate the school context in which the TILs practiced. Though the chapters are aligned by school, the individual teachers constitute the case studies, not the schools.

A discussion of the driving forces of the school improvement process, which provides the context for the school improvement efforts of each of the schools in this study, was discussed in Chapter V. Therefore, the chapter begins with a snapshot of HFMS performance data. Since the schools' improvement efforts are influenced by federal, state, and district factors, pre-establishing such context is essential. After establishing the context from school performance data, I present the narratives of the teacher instructional leaders—Bee Christian and Beth Johnson with their administrator, Principal DJ Jordan. TIL and administrator narratives are presented in sections corresponding to each research question.

The first research question—*How do teachers practice as instructional leaders*?—is subdivided into eight sections: Meet Bee, Bee's Teacher Instructional Leadership

Narrative, Observing Bee, Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative of Bee as a TIL, Meet Beth,

Beth's Teacher Instructional Leadership Narrative, Observing Beth, and Principal DJ

Jordan's Narrative of Beth as a TIL. The second research question—*How do principals*

promote teacher instructional leadership as a part of the school improvement process?

—is subdivided into four sections: Meet Principal DJ Jordan, Principal DJ Jordan's

Narrative: Perspectives of TIL, and Bee and Beth's Narratives: Perspectives of How

Administrators Promote TIL Development. Research question three—*What is the impact*

of teacher instructional leadership on the school and teacher? —is subdivided into three

sections: Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges to TIL Development

followed by Bee and Beth's Narratives: Benefits and Challenges to TIL Development.

Have Faith Middle School's Overall Achievement Performance

Have Faith Middle School's Annual Measurable Objectives

Recall that North Carolina schools receive a report card grade based upon student

proficiency (80%) and growth (20%) in designated courses (see section on overview of

annual measurable objectives). The performance data that follows for HFMS is based on

the 2014–2015 school year and was instrumental in the creation and organization of their

2015–2016 school improvement plan. The AMOs have been organized into a table below

based upon the individual AMO categories, the number of targets met, the number of

targets assigned, and the percentage of targets met (see Table 6). As indicated by the data,

HFMS met 48 out of their 52 assigned targets—the individual subgroups are identified in

the following section (North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

HFM School met growth with a score of 76.7%. They had an achievement score of 73%, EOG (end-of-grade) reading score of 72% (letter grade of a B), and EOG math score of 64% (letter grade of a C), and an overall school performance score of 74% (letter grade of a B). The higher the achievement score the more proficient and/or college/career ready students are in relation to mastery of content standards. The inverse is also true. The lower the achievement score the less proficient and/or college/career ready students are. These scores are used to report school progress to the general public (North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

Table 6

HFM School's 2014–2015 AMOs

AMO Categories	Number of Targets Met	Number of Targets Assigned	Percentage of Targets Met
Reading Grades 3–8	18	18	100.0
Math Grades 3–8[**]	14	18	77.8
Science Grades 3–8	12	12	100.0
Current Year EOC[*]	3	3	100.0
Attendance Rate	1	1	100.0
Total Targets	48	52	92.3

Note. [*]EOC (End-of-Course); [**] Denotes Unmet Target

Have Faith Middle School's Improvement Plan

The data that follows for the design of HFM's improvement plan was based on AMO and performance data from the previous school year (2014–2015). HFMS is a traditional middle school serving approximately 1181 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade

students. The school operates on a traditional school calendar and has an average

attendance rate of approximately 94.8%. The average class sizes is 28 in sixth grade, 27

in seventh grade, and 25 in eighth grade. There are approximately 2.12 students per

Internet-connected digital learning device (desktop, laptop, and/or tablet) attending Have

Faith Middle School (NCDPI, 2016).

HFM School used their 2014–2015 AMO and performance data to create a school

improvement plan for the 2015–2016 school year. The vision for the 2015–2016 school

year included preparing all students for success in the 21st century by building

connections with students, staff, and community in pursuit of excellence in academics

and society (SIP, 2016). Their mission included the following:

- Building lasting connections through using technology in the classroom to

  enhance all subject matters for student learning.

- Creating connections through the new Common Core and Essential Standards

  and the relationship to students both in the community and globally.

- Sharing the responsibility of developing strong ties between parental and

  student involvement in community service in and outside of our school.

- Maintaining high academic expectations.

- Cultivating a staff who expects that all students are prepared to excel in their

  own performance.

- Using instructional practices and parental support to foster a sense of

  connection with our students to promote higher order thinking and excellence

  (SIP, 2016).

While a large group of students at Have Faith Middle School performed proficiently on state tests, 2014–2015 data revealed gaps in their Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Economically Disadvantaged (EDS) subgroups in addition to their Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial subgroups. HFM School failed to meet 4 of the 52 AMOs (White students in Math, African American students in Math, 2 or More Races students in Math, and Economically Disadvantaged students in Math). As a component of improvement for 2015–2016, five priorities emerged from HFM School's data:

- Identify the non-proficient students that fall into multiple AMO subgroups and use this information to identify necessary interventions for these students.

- Continue to address Students with Disabilities proficiency for all subject areas.

- Continue to address Economically Disadvantaged proficiency for all subject areas.

- Continue to address the achievement gaps between the various subgroups.

- Utilize instructional opportunities to foster positive growth and to maintain proficiency for all students in all subject areas.

Research Question One: Practices of Two Teacher Instructional Leaders at Have Faith Middle School

Meet Bee

Bee is a petite middle-aged Caucasian teacher with short medium brown hair. She has a bubbly and inviting personality. At first glance, her warm and bubbly personality causes the eighth-grade science students to misconceive her kindness as weakness. Make

no mistake about Bee's disposition. She possesses high expectations for student learning and definitely is no pushover.

Through classroom instruction, training other teachers, and serving education agencies, Bee has contributed more than 25 years of service to the education profession. She displays a passion for helping students learn science and is committed to helping other teachers sharpen their teaching craft. Bee has worked in various public school settings and has served in instructional coaching roles with the U.S. Department of Education. She mentors novice teachers and facilitates sessions for new science teachers that are designed to support them throughout their beginner years in the teaching profession. In addition, Bee has served in various leadership roles that include department chairperson, grade level team leader, and district committee member for new teacher programs.

Bee holds a master's degree and is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher. In addition, she has earned numerous teaching awards including, but not limited to, Teacher of the Year and outstanding teaching awards in science. Though Bee has earned many awards, she prefers that people not publicly celebrate her accolades. Bee considers herself a teacher instructional leader for students and teachers.

When you walk into Bee's classroom, you may hear the sounds of positive and uplifting music playing softly in the background. The walls and space in Bee's classroom speak in diverse ways. For example, the walls communicate and reinforce student expectations for interactions. They display instructions for how students are expected to

navigate the classroom. They provide learning resources—like vocabulary and models—that substantiate content and are adorned with student work [observation].

The whiteboard in front of her classroom serves as a dual space for daily homework (nestled in the left-hand corner) and design space for modeling examples for the lesson. Bee has a teacher computer workstation and 60-inch flat screen television from which she launches media presentations and other interactive tools. In addition to the teacher computer station, all of Bee's students have access to an individual laptop computer. Bee invests quality time in organizing each lesson as indicated by the neatly aligned lesson handouts—activity/lab instructions and daily homework—that rest atop of her teacher workstation. Bee organizes the student workspace in various ways depending upon the lesson and the type of student interaction required. Regardless of the workstation arrangement, students most often collaborate with each other to complete tasks [observation].

Bee's Teacher Instructional Leadership Narrative

My choice to become a teacher just kind of evolved. I did not have an "aha" moment like others who decided that they were going to be a teacher. As a child I used to play teacher a lot but had no plans to go to college [my brothers and sisters had not]. It was a teacher that influenced that [my decision to go to college]. He convinced me to run track, of all things, and then my senior year he said Bee, this [track] could pay for your college. It was at that point going into my senior year that I realized that wait a minute, maybe I can go to college. After being accepted, I got into my major and found we had more connection with our professors [smaller classes]. They really cared for me. One

time, I had one professor, Dr. Simpson, who knew that I was on the track team. In class,

he noticed that I was losing weight. He went to the track coach and he talked to her about

my well-being. She's very thin and is not eating enough.

I tried different things in college and kept coming back to being a teacher. When I

went into education, my guidance counselor had told me, he said well because I was in

sports, well you're going to want to be a PE teacher. I just thought, okay, you know,

you're my counselor. But I realized quickly this is not what I want to do. So then I

tried—recreation. That wasn't it. Then I started taking some classes with athletic training

and that was not it. I realized, no, I want to be a teacher in the classroom, and so my

major was health education. I loved it, but I couldn't separate health education from PE.

By divine intervention I ended up working for the Department of Education doing teacher

training, and loved it. When I moved back to North Carolina, I realized that I wanted to

be in the classroom. I wanted to teach science. I knew it, but it [science certification]

wasn't on my certificate. Well, I took my national teacher's exam, sent all my

information to North Carolina, got my certification back, and I had so many science

courses I was certified. So it [becoming a teacher] was meant to be.

I define a teacher instructional leader as a strong leader and humble follower. I

see an effective instructional leader as someone that is leading in a way that they're

willing to share. They lead in a way that sometimes they're a facilitator, kind of like my

STIC [Sustaining Teachers in Curriculum] group. I'm supposed to be leading them and

I'm learning from them too. In any leadership situation there's an opportunity for the

leader to learn too. If I share something, I say tweak it, change it if you want, find a way

that works better. Then share it so that I can make my idea better. Don't be offended—be willing to share it because that's huge.

I am a teacher instructional leader. It's not something that I set out to do. When I was with the Department of Education I was doing teacher training. When I went into the classroom it wasn't a goal at that time. It has kind of evolved into that. The most important aspect of my job is building relationships with students. On the first day and the second day [of school], I build relationships with those students. And then they'll get on board. They know that I care about them. There's a quote—they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. That is so true.

I create an environment where they [students] feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. I begin my year very deliberately. I call it my first 48. The first 48 hours are the most important of the school year. You're establishing and building that foundation. Students don't see me joking very much. I put a T-chart on the board and I put "strict" on one side and "mean" on the other. They have to put adjectives that describe a "strict" teacher and one that's "mean." I want them to know right away that I am not mean, I'm strict, because I care. That's establishing that environment. After the first couple of days they start to understand why respect and structure are important. As we move along they will tell me later, Mrs. Christian, we were afraid of you at first. Parents will even tell me, oh my child, at the beginning of school was a little bit scared of you. They just love you now. It's not my intention for them to be scared of me, but it is my intention to let them know that I am the leader in the class. We're all going to be respectful. At the end of the first quarter, I want to know the truth. If I had started the

year off joking with you guys [students]—letting you do your thing—would you be on task doing all the activities in here? One hundred percent of them said no, we'd be goofing off. That whole classroom environment and establishing that, it's not something that just stays the same, it grows and it develops.

I facilitate instruction centered on what each student needs. I use two strategies called hard listening and total participation. Having students just raise their hand to give you feedback all the time is not total participation. I have them engaged. I have creative ways of having them share information that has them on their toes, ready to go at any time. I have a number of ways that I have students engaged in total participation, whether it's the activity, whether it's the review I've tried to improve, it works.

I use a variety of research-based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful. I love to learn about how people learn. I'll give you an example. The district offered a program through UET (University of Excellent Teachers) that was looking at reducing the achievement gap and stereotype threats—all based on research. It was a three-year commitment. I just stayed and worked and I learned so much. It was really research that was applicable to math and reading, so to be totally honest, we had to read all this research, all these studies. I started to see how that same research was applicable in any class. I came out with two main things—hard listening and repetition. I've been using it ever since. It works. I was reading some research on total participation, total engagement and it works. I was listening to National Public Radio about this researcher talking about the use of color and how the brain will actually

store information in more than one place. If it's [research-based methods] with purpose, I'm trying that too. I am open to anything that is research based that I can try out.

I take the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. If I'm listening to the news and something applies to what I'm teaching, I make a note, write it down and attach it to my keys. When I come back, I'll have that news clip. During class, I say oh you guys did you see that little segment in the news on biotechnology and genetic engineering. Look what was in the news last night. It makes it [learning] relevant.

I communicate to my administration and support team the type of professional development I need to improve my teaching practice. I wanted to expand my ability to work literacy into the science class. I went and asked my principal, who is incredibly supportive. He said absolutely, you can go. The conference was all about STEM and literacy. If I see something that's an opportunity like the Governor's Teachers Network, I consider it. I ask myself what could I learn from that and how could I benefit.

I share ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. I love doing that because everyone shares. I love doing that because I know I really appreciated it when people shared with me. A teacher told me this my first year when I moved to this county. She said when we were going to these meetings and we were sharing, people just didn't share a lot. She said when I started coming to these meetings and I would share everything, bring my flash drive, just giving every folder, every lab activity, other people started sharing more. I think that creates a fantastic professional climate. I also help with STIC (Sustaining Teachers in Curriculum) a support system for teachers who are newly

licensed or those that are lateral entry. They have support from the central office and

engage in other sessions where they can get help with anything that a new teacher might

face. They have four meetings that they have to attend.

The first meeting was targeted on how to get your year started, open house, and

[things] you need to know as a new teacher. They cover topics like the standards, pacing

guide, and things just to help them get started. They share and then I start by asking what

some of your concerns are. I like to really start with successes. What really went well this

week? They're starting off on a good positive note. Sometimes they don't feel like

they're getting the support that they need from the administration. Now whether or not

that's true, I don't know. But if they feel that way, that's a big thing. I really believe it

would benefit administrators if they knew some of these frustrations. But their plates are

full too. If we want to retain new teachers, that has got to be put at the top of that priority

list. Helping new and veteran teachers with classroom management and empowering that

teacher instead of taking care of the teacher's problems should be a priority.

Administrators should empower them [teachers] to develop strategies of their own.

We've discussed that at every single meeting. I guess one thing that is most frustrating to

me is sometimes I can't fix those concerns.

If I had to add anything to the list of six instructional criteria for practicing as a

teacher instructional leader, I would say being passionate and allowing the students to see

that passion in them. They [teacher instructional leaders] should really love what they're

doing and have a sense of humor. That's important for students, not to the point of losing

control and being a comedian. An instructional leader, I think, can build relationships

with the students—good quality relationships. They are organized, they know their content and they know how to present it [content] in such a multitude of ways that's not boring to the students. They can present the information and explain it in more than one way, and they can reach all [students], at some point in time. They can reach all the learning styles, and can differentiate [instruction]. They're continuing to push and can get that student to think higher.

Observing Bee

Bee is a teacher instructional leader for novice science teachers. Bee chose for me to observe her facilitating a two-hour afterschool support session with novice science teachers. The sessions are part of the STIC (Sustaining Teachers In Curriculum) program implemented by the district to support novice teachers. During the school year, Bee serves as a curriculum content support, pedagogy resource, and a sounding board for teachers. In preparation for the session, Bee provided an agenda, curriculum resources, and light refreshments. The day I observed Bee, two teachers were scheduled to attend. As the meeting time approached (3:30 PM), Bee shared how sometimes the teachers arrived a little late because of their commutes from their home schools. The agenda was sent via email to all novice teachers prior to the meeting.

The session began when the first participant (Jordan) arrived around 3:40 PM. Bee welcomed her with a warm smile and distributed additional meeting materials. During the "Group Feedback/Questions/Updates," Bee provided time for her to decompress from the day's events and the commute. Shortly after Jordan began reflections about her day, Dwyla arrived—appearing exhausted and out of breath. Bee

also welcomed Dwyla with a warm smile, distributed meeting materials, and prompted her to begin the decompression process following Jordan. Both Jordan and Dwyla were quite frustrated with student behavior (tardiness, truancy, loud outbursts, and defacing computers) as it impeded the learning process for the entire class. The school had adopted a research-based behavior plan that both teachers felt was ineffective. In fact, Jordan and Dwyla, in frustration about classroom discipline, often withheld hands-on activities from the students and prescribed "seat work." Bee was frustrated because she wanted so much to help her colleagues, but did not know how. Bee questioned whether or not she could be successful with the students from Jordan and Dwyla's school.

It was evident that Bee wanted to provide a safe space for the novice teachers to share their thoughts from their day while also creating a space for them to strengthen their instructional practice. Bee strategically progressed to the next agenda item, *Literacy in Science*. Bee had recently returned from the science teacher's conference and had plenty to share about science and literacy. Before sharing though, she asked Jordan and Dwyla what literacy strategies they already used in their classrooms to engage students with informational text. Both Jordan and Dwyla used a free Internet resources titled Newsela (Newslea, 2016). This resource provided current science news with a feature to adjust articles to the student's reading level (Lexile). Jordan and Dwyla used Newsela to jumpstart student interests in the lesson, strengthen reading strategies and to review the lesson (there are summative assessment questions available). Students also have the option to select articles of interest at their reading level while working at their own pace.

Bee transitioned to the final agenda item, *Sharing Best Practices*. She reserved this time for each teacher to exchange their resources with each other and to create a completed product (strategy or activity) that could be used immediately in their classrooms. Before Jordan and Dwyla began working on their product, Bee shared a literacy resource from the science conference using Newsela and a vocabulary strategy.

After working through these activities with the teachers, Bee introduced her final strategy which was titled "Make the Connections (Bumper Words)." After Bee distributed copies of the strategies, she asked about other questions, concerns and feedback from the teachers. There were no other questions, concerns or feedback. As she concluded the session, Bee asked the teachers to please send her an electronic copy of the products they created so those resources could be shared with teachers who were unable to attend. The meeting ended after about two and a half hours. Jordan and Dwyla gathered their materials, bid goodbye to Bee, and exited the building.

Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative: Bee Christian as a Teacher Instructional Leader

Bee creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. The kids can't wait to get to that classroom. They're halfway through their previous class thinking, Ms. So-and-So can you be quiet. I just want to get this over with so I can get in there and get involved in some hands-on activity that I'm gonna remember for the rest of my life. Bee absolutely, hands down, creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning.

Bee works hard to ensure that the instruction she facilitates is centered on what each student needs. She will have four or five mini lesson plans for different students in

one class that are all covering the same topic. Students are coming at all different levels. I really gave her some challenging classes. Bee had students that would have been in resource reading and math but were going out for science and social studies in the same class as kids in AG [academically gifted] reading, math, and science. They were all in that science class together. The knowledge base that the kids were bringing in was as different as you could get. She found a way to reach all of them with different things. Yes, Bee works hard to ensure that the instruction she facilitates is centered on what each student needs.

Bee uses a variety of research-based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful, but I don't think she sometimes realizes they're research-based strategies. I think she uses them because she has seen positive results and positive growth from using these things. Throughout her whole career, administrators have typically said that was awesome what you did in class today. I don't think she goes home and reads educational journals trying to gain a wealth of knowledge about the latest thing out there. What she does is research-based, but she may not even realize how research-based some of the stuff is.

Bee takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. If you walked into her classroom you would absolutely see evidence of that. She scares me to death with some of her outside resources. I'm petrified of them because of the source of instruction and real world look. If you can feel it and touch it, she's gonna bring it in. They were talking about bacteria and instead of just saying this is what bacteria looks like, she gave students Q-tips and a petri dish. They swabbed things around the school to

see how much bacteria were on your things. It's hands-on, it applies to them and they learn it. Yes, yes, yes, Bee takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning.

Bee takes the lead in communicating to me and her support team the type of professional development she needs to improve her teaching practice. She's that one who promotes her own development. She approached me over the summer wanting to present this or wanting to go to this workshop. When she had a large increase in teaching a number of EC [exceptional children] students last year, she sought out professional development around the state. She wanted to learn how to become better at working with low-performing students. She sought those opportunities and took advantage of them. Yes, Bee takes the lead in communicating to me and her support team the type of professional development she needs to improve her teaching practice.

Bee willingly shares her ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. She's so bubbly talking with you, but she is actually shy when it comes to the whole staff. She willingly shares things but, I have to prod her sometimes. Because she's smart enough to know what her scores are and how other people don't share the same outstanding results that she has every year, she is very conscious about coming across as somebody who knows everything. So she willingly shares, but she's more willing to share if you prod her a little bit. She doesn't want to be put on the whole stage in front of the whole staff. That's why I give her some small groups. But I'll bet you she's had 20 different teachers in the past year from other schools who just come and visit her. She loves that stuff. She's a down to earth person. She never wants to be

perceived any other way. Bee wins awards that she emails me and she says I'm only gonna tell you this if you promise not to share it with the staff. Bee does not want to come across as being better than everybody else. She'll say, I'm not better than anybody else. The stuff I do in the class isn't rocket science, anybody can do it.

Table 7 highlights how Bee and Principal Jordan described her practice as a teacher instructional leader.

Table 7

Bee's TIL Practice

Bee's Practices as a TIL	Principal DJ Jordan's View of Bee's Practice as a TIL
- competently leads and facilitates learning for others - follows the lead of others when appropriate - empathizes with others - open to and accepting of critique - competent in content area - competent in pedagogy - continuously initiates own learning - passionate about teaching - cultivates the best characteristics in all learners - customizes learning for all pupils - creatively and innovatively engages learners in real world experiences - does not accept the status quo - researches and employs best teaching practices - establishes high expectations for all learners	- sparks the desire within students to learn - holds students accountable - makes a strong emotional connection with learners - designs the lesson to the learners' needs - connects the in-class lessons to the real world - engages students through hands-on experiences - invests in her own professional development - rejects mediocrity - sought after to share best practices with others - accomplished in her practices - award-winning - benefits from numerous years of teaching and lived experiences

Table 7

Cont.

	Bee's Practices as a TIL	Principal DJ Jordan's View of Bee's Practice as a TIL
	• cares about and builds meaningful relationships with learners • imaginatively and enthusiastically engages learners in stimulating ways • organized • challenges learners to think critically	• believes that all students can learn • understands and uses assessment data to inform instruction

Meet Beth

Beth is a tall middle-aged Caucasian math teacher with dark shoulder length hair. She matriculated into teaching on a nontraditional trajectory from the world of business finance. Beth has a passion for building positive relationships with her students that helps her develop eighth graders as *little people*. She strategically employs her business acumen as a resource for accomplishing this goal.

Beth contributes more than 11 years of nontraditional teaching experience—six years as a substitute/volunteer and five years as a classroom teacher. She has a personal passion for not only helping students learn science and math, but also for helping students learn valuable life lessons. She has embarked upon a non-traditional journey to education as she has a degree in finance and served for many years in the business world. Beth was drawn to teaching during her experience as a volunteer at her children's school followed by substitute teaching. She holds degrees and/or certifications in various areas, including math, science, language arts, communications, and academically gifted. Beth has earned a

master's degree, has worked as a teacher in three states and brings a wealth of knowledge into her teaching journey.

Beth's passion and focus of teaching includes her willingness to organize well-thought out lessons, build a collaborative classroom climate for student engagement, and teach students life lessons. She considers herself a student of her work, an evolving teacher instructional leader, and believes that the most important aspect of her job is helping students develop into well-rounded people.

When you enter Beth's classroom, you immediately recognize her savvy for engaging students in collaborative processes that establish classroom and academic expectations. Group work norms co-constructed by Beth and her students adorn the walls. While working in groups, students use these expectations to clarify how they should navigate the classroom. Among the showcase of student work decorating the classroom walls are course content models that deepen student learning (math and science vocabulary/models/formulas) and a student extra-curricular board highlighting student involvement outside of the classroom.

Beth uses the whiteboard in front of her classroom as a place to dock homework assignments, a space for collaborative problem solving, science notes, and the construction of science models. Beth has a teacher computer workstation and a 60-inch flat screen television from which she launches media presentations and other interactive tools used to facilitate learning for the students. In addition to the teacher computer station, all of Beth's students have access to an individual laptop computer. Workstations are designed to accommodate collaborative pairs. Each student has a post-in-note that

they use to determine with which partner they are to work for the day. This system, which was designed by her students at the beginning of the year, provides an opportunity for diversified collaboration among all students. Beth's teacher workstation is draped with daily handouts, assignments, and a hole-puncher (kept handy as she requires students to organize materials in three-ringed binders). Beth invests more than 10 hours per week planning lessons and has strategically organized notebooks (play books) neatly housed on a book shelf near her teacher work station. Beth launches each lesson from those *play books*. If for some reason Beth does not teach the same subjects in the following year (note that she has not taught the same subjects consecutively while serving in this assignment), she willingly passes the notebooks (accompanied by electronic copies) on to her successors.

Beth's Teacher Instructional Leadership Narrative

I think the beginning thoughts about becoming a teacher started when I served in the PTA [Parent Teacher Association] at my children's school. They [the school] had a desperate need for substitute teachers. I had volunteered a bunch with the kids as a PTA volunteer. I was the science coordinator for my kids growing up through first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. Then I was a classroom volunteer. I'd come in and help read to kids or administer reading tests when my daughter was in first grade. I loved being in with the kids so I started to do substituting. I kind of fell in love with it [teaching]. The kids all told me I needed to have my own classroom. I just decided with the hours—it just worked with my kids' schedules plus I liked it. So I started my master's

in one state, then we moved to another state. I finished my master's in our new home state and then started teaching there.

My journey to becoming a teacher was definitely non-traditional. I started out in the finance world and corporate world. I loved doing that, but it didn't work with my kids' needs. As an accounting manager, we had month-end close and so I was working and traveling a lot to all the different plants that my company served. My husband had an hour and 45-minute commute one way. We hired a nanny to help out when I had my kids. Even with that help, there'd be times where she'd have to leave, I'd have month-end close [I had my whole department to close] and my husband would miss the train. Somebody had to come home. So it just reached a breaking point where there was just an issue and it was just kind of a blessing. My husband got an opportunity to move with his job and my nanny told me I needed to stay home with my kids. I took her advice. When we moved with my husband's job, I made a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches until I started getting into substituting. My journey to becoming a teacher was definitely a very non-traditional route.

I define a teacher instructional leader as a collaborator and mentor. In the classroom or from a department, a [teacher instructional leader] is somebody who is bringing those ideas and helping to guide and mentor other people. I have a lot of people guiding and mentoring me right now which is nice. They help me look at what does work and doesn't work. Instructional leaders help those kids who need help, encouraging those who are doing it well. They gauge what's working, what isn't working and adjust [teaching strategies] and tweak [teaching strategies] based on that.

I am an evolving or emerging teacher instructional leader. I'm still learning. Every teacher has something that I can learn from [them]. The more I can work with other people and find out what they're doing, I'm learning. I love walking into people's classrooms and seeing how their tables are lined up and what they've written up on the boards. Different ways work for different people. I'm still learning because it's just my fifth year [as a fulltime classroom teacher]. Now I can figure out how to make it better. Now I can really concentrate on the kids—not so much the curriculum—but how the kids are learning. I haven't mastered all of that yet, by any means, but I'm getting over that hump. I'm evolving.

The most important aspect of my job is to be able to teach, grow, and help the kids form as little people. Even though I'm teaching subjects, there are a lot of other skills that I believe are really important to teach that helps to make them [students] whole. These include organizational skills and helping them to retain information. I help them understand how to organize themselves. I make sure that by the end of the year they feel comfortable raising their hand, speaking, learning to work in groups, learning to work with people. I develop [students] as people.

I create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. I do a whole lot of stuff in partners because you'll get more people to volunteer and participate if you are in groups or partners. I establish days of the week for partners so they don't get sick of each other all the time when they're partners. People who were shier, who normally wouldn't have raised their hand are talking and tend to be

more engaged. They have to talk through what the answers are. We established great group work behaviors the first week of school. I set up my expectations.

Facilitating instruction centered on what each student needs has been harder for me to develop. I'm still working on this. I know some kids are more visual and organizational. I am trying to include a wide variety of ways that we do, but I can't do that with every lesson. I'm working on that. I'm emerging on that one.

I'm working on using a variety of research-based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful. I'm pulling a lot of my resources like Tubbs University's microbiology resources, Eric Jensen, and growing your brain strategies. We use Thinking Thursdays. We get into groups and use vocabulary words to work at building your memory.

Sometimes I take the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. I'm emerging on that. I do it with some things, but not with other things. I reach out with Coin County and bring in a lot of stuff from Illinois that I came with or from my [teacher] friends I visited. I have teacher friends still up in Chicago and I go up there every summer. I get some things from their educator warehouse.

I sometimes take the lead in communicating to administration and the support team the type of professional development I need to improve my teaching practice. I have made suggestions more times to the curriculum director than to the principal. I have sometimes made suggestions to the principal about what I think we might need. I am not at a place right now in my life that I can go out and do stuff. I still have a daughter at school and two kids off in college. I'm also learning all new curriculum.

I willingly share my ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. I definitely do that by bringing stuff [teaching resources] to meetings. I give entire flash drives to people. I've done that for every position I leave. I leave all the binders. Bee did that for me when I transitioned into teaching eighth grade science. She gave me everything she had. Yes, I do share. Anything I have is up for anybody else to have if they want it.

If I had to add anything to the list of six instructional criteria for practicing as a teacher instructional leaders, I would say that teacher instructional leaders should be a resource outside of the school. I've had teachers or teacher candidates come in and do observations. I know how hard it was for me to get into the schools to do any observations. Not many teachers wanted to [open their classrooms]. A teacher instructional leader must be a resource [for aspiring teachers] outside of the school.

Observing Beth

Beth invited me to observe her practice as a teacher instructional leader within her classroom as she facilitated learning for her students. She provided a window of time to observe and available days for the observation. Beth wanted a fluid and natural observation; therefore, she did not want to know the specific date and time I had selected from her list of availability. I observed two same-subject math classes. When I arrived in Beth's classroom, the workstations were organized for collaborative pairs. There were approximately 22 students in this class. The students were preparing for their weekly assessment (scheduled for Friday) and had a choice to engage in independent or group work/practice using "consecutive numbers," independent or group work/practice using

"perimeter and consecutive numbers," or teacher guided practice at the whiteboard using "coins." All student worked collaboratively with their table buddy as Beth circulated the classroom to ask probing questions and answer student questions. No students opted to work individually with Beth at the whiteboard.

As class concluded, Beth distributed a homework assignment that reinforced concepts for their assessment and passed the whole-puncher around (prompting students to punch holes in the assignment in preparation to place work inside the three-ringed binder). Preparing for dismissal Beth reminded students—in addition to their written homework—to study for their upcoming quiz the next day and made a final call for questions. Beth dismissed class by wishing her students a good rest of the day and took her place in the hallway to monitor student transitions.

Beth's next class of eighth grade math students began to flood into the classroom (25 students were in this class). As they entered, one student excitedly exclaimed to her peer, "It's Thursday, I get to work with you today!" Both girls seemed really happy to work together. It was evident that the students work with different partners. This system was part of the group work norms developed by Beth's students. While Beth stood at the door, she assertively directed the students in and reminded them to quickly get out their homework from the previous night. They would use the assignment to jumpstart the day's lesson which was an in-depth review for their weekly assessment. Beth followed the last student into the classroom (counting down—5, 4, 3, 2—Rachel where is your seat). The student quickly took her seat. Voices off. Beth greeted the entire class and launched the

day's lesson. The day's schedule was written in dry erase marker in a section of the white

board: check coin homework, review, partner challenge, partner review work.

Near the whiteboard close to the front of the classroom was a 60-inch flat screen

television monitor. On Beth's computer station rested a document camera that displayed

a digital image of the homework assignment. While Beth displayed the homework for the

entire class, each student was expected to have their homework out on their desktop

following along. A table that helped students simplify their approach to solving coin

problems (given a set number of various coins) was displayed at the top of the homework

page. As students discussed with their table partner their results, they periodically

glanced up at Beth's solution on the television screen. Most students had the same

calculation as Beth, except one student who had been absent. During student choice time,

this student was invited to join Beth at the whiteboard for individualized instruction.

Beth collaborated with the students on all of the coin problems. Once completed,

she reiterated the students' work choices: independent or group work/practice using

"consecutive numbers," independent or group work/practice using "perimeter and

consecutive numbers," or teacher guided practice at the whiteboard using "coins." All

students, except one student who had been absent, chose to work collaboratively on more

practice using "consecutive numbers and/or perimeter." The student who had been

absent, joined Beth at the whiteboard for clarification associated with problem solving

using coins.

While Beth worked with the student individually at the whiteboard, she also

monitored the other students—glancing around at them working. She maintained a

collaborative setting where most students remained on task. When a student slightly got

off task, she gently reminded Declan that the group expectations called for "good

behavior." He cooperatively replied, "yes ma'am," and immediately resumed his work.

When another student needed help, Declan was one of the first to assist his peers.

Students repeated this behavior—a willingness to help others—over and over again,

without Beth's prompting. In fact, students (Jackson and Meredith) asked assistance from

peers before they asked of Beth for help. It was evident that Beth had created an

environment where students comfortably engaged in their own learning as the students

displayed ownership of the group norms they had established.

As class concluded, Beth distributed the same homework assignment as the

previous class and passed the whole-puncher around. Preparing for dismissal Beth

reminded students to practice the coin problems and to study for their upcoming quiz the

next day. She made one final call for questions. Beth bid her students a good rest of the

day, dismissed class to ELA (English Language Arts), and took her place in the hallway

to monitor student transitions.

During Beth's observation, it was evident that she had used positive relationships

to establish a classroom environment that invited students to contribute to and implement

cultural norms. Beth was well organized in her lesson planning and used student

collaboration to build student confidence and leadership as students worked together to

solve problems. As a teacher instructional leader, Beth invested quality time in

developing and implementing processes that prepared her students to operate in the real

world.

Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative: Beth Johnson as a Teacher Instructional Leader

Beth sometimes creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning. This teacher has lots of great ideas but sometimes will fall back on the belief of "this is how I do it." If you don't get it, you're just going to have to work harder. This is the one flavor of ice cream [learning strategy] I offer. If you don't like it now, you're going to have to acquire a taste for my flavor [or adjust yourselves to this one learning strategy]. I don't offer a lot of different flavors [learning strategies]. Ever-so often I'm going to bring in a different flavor.

Beth needs growth in the area of facilitating instruction centered on what each student needs. Everybody doesn't need the same flavor [strategies for learning]. You might have one or two flavors. Some kids need one flavor [learning strategy] then you might need five or six different learning strategies for a particular classroom. Administratively, we tried to create a team makeup [for Beth] that the majority of the students are in line [aligned with Beth's teaching strategies] with that particular flavor. We see where she works well and try to set her and her students up for success.

I think she is knowledgeable of a lot of different strategies and has great intentions. She's trying to do a lot of different strategies. In reality, Beth does not actually use a variety of research-based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful as often as she might think it's happening in the classroom.

Beth absolutely takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. She is not afraid to bring different props, items, and manipulatives to the

classroom. She is very willing to seek advice from other people. The problem is that she doesn't heed some of the advice, but she's getting better. She's improving.

Beth does not take the lead in communicating to administration and her support team the type of professional development she needs to improve her teaching practice. She doesn't hunt me down and say I really think I'd like to get better at this, this, and this. This teacher does not come to me and say I need this. She just doesn't.

Beth is absolutely willing to share her ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. She knocks that out of the ball park. She will volunteer to do anything. She's from another part of the country and brings in a lot of new ideas. Quickly in coming here, she was very willing to share ideas. She's the co-chair of SIT (School Improvement Team). She really works hard and puts a lot of effort into trying to come up with creative solutions and ideas. Implementation is where it sometimes falls short.

Table 8 highlights how Beth and Principal DJ Jordan described her practice as a teacher instructional leader.

Table 8

Beth's TIL Practice

Beth's Practices as a TIL	Principal DJ Jordan's View of Beth's Practice as a TIL
• collaborator	• uses innovative ideas
• continuous learner	• uses a variety of methods to facilitate learning
• encourages and willingly helps others learn	• knowledgeable in content area
• develops learners as well-rounded people	• secures outside resources to engage learners

Table 8

Cont.

Beth's Practices as a TIL	Principal DJ Jordan's View of Beth's Practice as a TIL
• cultivate successful metacognitive skills • serve as a resource for pre-service teachers • builds partnerships with universities and community organizations to gain access to resources • networks and shares with fellow professionals to exchange resources • develops the confidence in learners to work collaboratively • establishes high expectations for learning	• seeks advise from competent colleagues • collaborates and plans lessons with others • takes the initiative to lead in various areas

Research Question Two: Administrative Support for TIL Development

Meet Principal DJ Jordan

Mr. DJ Jordan is a middle-aged Caucasian male serving as the principal of Have Faith Middle School where Bee Christian and Beth Johnson serve as teacher instructional leaders. He has served as principal of this school for four years but has been an educator for about 20 years. He has served as a business teacher, a coach, and an assistant principal.

Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative: Perspectives of TIL

Teacher instructional leadership is an extended area of distributed leadership. Educators experience growth when administrators entrust them with leadership responsibility. To me distributed leadership means entrusting the people that you work

with to make sound decisions that are well thought out. Being able to make these decisions allow them to grow professionally and gain more confidence in the classroom. Everyone has the opportunity to grow—teachers, TAs [teacher assistants], and assistant principals. They grow as leaders themselves the more opportunities they are put in to have a chance to succeed. Teachers get better when they grow. When they learn more about themselves—their strengths and their weaknesses—they learn how to adapt to change through situations you give them.

Effective distribution of leadership increases leadership capacity within the school. If there is no distributive leadership they're [teachers] not getting the opportunities to practice, to present, to share ideas, to lead, to work on SIT (school improvement team), and different committees. If you don't get opportunities to practice, you're never gonna get better at those skills. The more teachers we can expose to those distributive leadership opportunities; the more capacity just magnifies ten-fold. It's the difference between having 18 people share strategies with lots of other people versus me sharing one strategy with 100 people. 18 people sharing 18 different strategies with multiple groups of people allows18 people to train six people and then those six people at the next professional development train people. [Leadership capacity] it just magnifies and grows a lot quicker.

Teachers serving in instructional leadership roles, not just formal or informal leadership roles, make a positive impact on overall school achievement. Formal teacher leader roles include school improvement team chairperson or co-chair, grade level chairs, department leaders, and PLT [professional learning team] facilitators. Those are some

formal roles. The formal leaders are awesome, but the formal leaders probably don't have as much influence in the school as the informal leaders do. Informal leaders are the people on your staff that other people go to when they need advice. They are the people that have shown themselves to be wise people on the staff who are honest and have integrity. They protect people's environment—or privacy. You can ask them for ideas and you're psychologically safe to talk to those people. The decisions informal leaders make and the advice that they give their colleagues probably have a greater impact on what happens possibly at the school than the formal things that we do. When people have an issue, who are they going to get advice from? They go to their team captains. Those people are huge.

Various leadership opportunities are available for teachers in the school. In a large school it is easier. Teacher leadership comes in the form of official chairpersons of committees, PLTs [professional learning teams], grade level or department chairpersons, after school activities, athletics clubs, and HIP [Homework Intervention Program]. We probably have more opportunities for distributive leadership than sometimes we have people wanting to take advantage of those opportunities.

The work of an instructional leader is essential to the success of the school. Strong instructional leadership inside and outside of the classroom is important. There are many benefits to serving as an instructional leader within a school, but the process begins with the credibility of those in leadership. Being an instructional leader means I have the ability to coach and teach the people that work with students how to be most effective in teaching those students—regardless of the subject. An instructional leader is not

somebody that knows everything because nobody has the content knowledge mastered in all those areas. An instructional leader is somebody that can educate, work with, coach and train people on strategies that you can use in the classroom to get the biggest bang for your buck [maximum student achievement]. So my role as the instructional leader is to be able to recognize when that is happening and recognize when it's not happening. I must be able to work with people when it's not happening. When it doesn't happen the kids suffer.

Anyone who is teacher should be an instructional leader. I welcome the idea of teachers developing into instructional leaders. Developing into a teacher instructional leader should be a requirement. It is imperative that they [teachers] are an instructional leader in the classroom. I look at that as not being an option—that's a requirement. You can't be effective in the classroom if you're not an instructional leader. Teachers have to be trained immediately on that. That's [being trained as a teacher instructional leader] the number one requirement. That's their motor of the car.

I prepare teachers on my staff as instructional leaders and promote their development through staff facilitated professional development. Other methods vary depending on the needs of the teacher. The type of professional development is largely dependent upon the specific teacher. Some promote their own development. Those are the people that are coming saying can I share at a department meeting or can I talk at the staff meeting. Everybody needs to grow and devote time, resources, and attention to that. One of the things we do with our new teachers or beginning teachers is that we expose them to the school. We introduce them to the culture of the school and explain clear

expectations. We do this after school at the BT [beginning teacher] meetings once a month. The sessions are facilitated by different people on the staff—administrators, curriculum coordinator, lead teachers, and dynamic teachers. We have different topics and cover different sessions. Topics might include how to structure a smooth flowing class, how to engage kids, how to engage the disengaged and classroom management.

I wish that teachers on my staff understood the importance of differentiation for each student, embraced an innovative mindset, engaged students creatively, used diverse teaching strategies, and continuously strived for excellence even in the shadow of past success. We must understand that every student is different. They need the different flavors of instruction within one lesson—differentiation. I wish teachers did less teaching the same way every day in the classroom. You don't need a lecture every day. There are days when you need hands on. There are times when you need some bookwork. You gotta have a lot of tools in your toolbox. I wish teachers lessened the mindset of thinking because we've been successful in the past we're going to keep going down that road. That road is good, but don't you want to be great. I wish less teachers settled for being good.

If I had to add anything to the list of six instructional criteria for practicing as a teacher instructional leader, I would say that they understand the impact of their influence. They hold in their hands people's futures. They hold in their hand the ability to send a kid to college instead of sending him to jail. Teachers make a difference. They must understand that they have the ability to teach them [students] to persevere through

all these things that they're [students] going to encounter in their lifetime. That's what we're really teaching.

Bee's Narrative: Administrators Promoting TIL Development

Our principal is fantastic. He comes around and asks how it is going. He really cares and lets us know it. He's done so much to improve the school climate—just little things. He gives us the supplies we need and notices things that you do. He comments on them. He initiated this homework intervention program for the school to try to increase student homework getting done. He has done so many things like giving me permission to go to that conference. If you've invested that money in me, then I feel like I've got to come back and invest in the school with the students and anyone that wants to share the ideas. He invests in us that way. One early dismissal day, instead of trying to bring people in, he recognized teacher leadership within the school. He asked people to do a session. I did one at the last early release day. We're able to go to these various sessions, see best practices in action, and get resources. We were able to get various things that are applicable to us. Teacher leaders at the school did it. If we have questions the person is right here in this school. We can go ask them. That worked out really well. He's fantastic.

Beth's Narrative: Administrators Promoting TIL Development

Well, he made me eighth-grade chair this year. I guess he knew that I liked to take charge. He's really good about checking in and asking how are you doing. Do you need anything? Do you need any resources—that type of thing? He just stops in. Some people are more leaders in our school. They've been here longer and have more expertise in

certain subjects. They're getting up in front of people to do different things more so than me right now.

I wish he would offer more types of training where we had all the teachers volunteer for different things that we could be training other teachers on. That really helped us in a lot of different areas to become that instructional leader because you were given different tools. Some of the training we go to doesn't give you any tools. If you're going to seminars he will pay for substitutes.

Table 9 lists perspectives of how Principal DJ Jordan promotes the development of teacher instructional leaders.

Table 9

How Principal Jordan Promotes TIL Development

Principal DJ Jordan's Perspective	Teacher Perspectives
• providing training for beginning teachers	• providing training for beginning teachers
• encouraging teacher-led staff development	• visiting classrooms to check on teachers
• facilitating their own staff development	• asking about teacher instructional needs
• leading PLTs (professional learning community meetings)	• encouraging teacher-led staff development
• serving as grade level chairpersons	• offering trainings where teachers lead professional development
• serving as department chairpersons	
• coordinating clubs and after school activities	• permitting teacher participation in conferences
• serving as chairpersons of committees	

Research Question Three: Impact of TIL Development on School and Teacher

Principal DJ Jordan's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges of TIL Development

The work of teacher instructional leaders within the classroom complements the work of administrators who serve as instructional leaders of the whole school. This complementary work has the potential to impact whole school improvement. Assistant principals and principals don't have time to be the mentor of every new person in the building. You take those instructional leaders and have them help develop relationships and good rapport with new people in your building or with people who are struggling. We can strategically use those instructional leaders to help present in breakout sessions for professional development to show some of their best practices.

The goal of teacher instructional leadership is to have students learn more effectively in the classroom. I am concerned if the teacher does not understand why I want them to grow. If you grow, you become more confident. When you're more confident, students breed off of your confidence. As a result, they become more confident in their own abilities. If I can't convince you of the benefit of being a teacher instructional leader, it's not gonna have the overall impact that I want it to have. The end result is not just having better teachers, but making sure every decision is in the best interest of students.

The greatest benefit to teachers serving as instructional leaders is having a committed followership from their students. The student of a teacher instructional leader will work harder in their class than in the class of a teacher who has not developed as a

teacher instructional leader. The teacher is getting better. They are making class more effective. They are maximizing instructional time in the classroom.

The definition of a leader is that people follow. If you're really a leader in the classroom, then the students are following that lead and gaining knowledge and value every day they're in your classroom. The greatest advantage of a teacher developing as an instructional leader is the positive impact for students. I ask students why do they work themselves to death for this teacher, but is completely disengaged in a different class. The response unanimously is that they don't want to let that teacher down. That teacher won't let me settle for less than my best. I know I can get by with it in the other teacher's classroom. *The same kid that will disengage in one classroom will run through the brick wall for an effective teacher instructional leader in another classroom.* That's what we're all here for anyway—to get that kid to reach that high expectation and grow to their potential. If teachers don't effectively know how to do that as an instructional leader it's a whole lot harder to get that kid to come along with you.

Students are the biggest benefactors of the work related to developing teacher instructional leaders. Students grow and teachers become stronger instructional leaders. When this happens there are more teacher instructional leaders on the staff than not. As a result, the students benefit—everybody benefits. I don't think you would be here today if it weren't for a teacher instructional leader. I don't know how you came about Bee Christian. I'm betting that somebody told you that she was phenomenal. You wanted to know what is she doing that's great and how can I be a part of that. When you're a great teacher instructional leader, other people want to be like you. When you're the best

player on the ball court, people want to find out how you are practicing. What are you

doing that makes you so good? The students are the ones that reap the benefit of that.

Teachers think they're getting the benefit, but the kids are the ones that are really gaining.

They are the ones who are truly gaining. The teacher is getting better, making class more

effective, and maximizing instructional time. They are taking more of those kids that are

giving up in this classroom and helping them succeed. Now they've [students] got a

teacher that they're going to run through the wall for [so to speak]. The more teachers

that you can build of that mold, the more benefits for kids. That's the benefit.

There are a few challenges I see in my role and a teacher's role as an instructional

leader. Some of them are time management, prioritizing work projects, and keeping

current with the data, technology, and research-based strategies. I haven't been in the

classroom in nine years as an active, everyday teacher. Teaching changes and evolves

every year. I've never seen education change as much as it has over the last ten years—

especially with such a greater emphasis on data and assessing. A challenge for me is

making sure that I'm investing time to keep up with the latest research that's out there.

I'm hiring young people that are coming out of teacher education programs and know

things that I don't know about. I gotta be able to know what I'm telling them based upon

what they're learning. Teachers have to believe that you're credible and have confidence

in what their boss or leader does. If I'm not credible they're not going to truly give me

their best effort. Teachers are typically willing to listen and let people help them with

things they're struggling with. They've got to know that I know what I'm talking about.

I've had a superintendent before, not in this district, that was never a teacher or a

principal. Even though the person may be super nice, your first impression is—why should I listen to this person? They've never been here and done this. It's important for teachers to believe that Mr. Jordan's been here and done this. He's willing to help me. That's an advantage—the principal being that instructional leader. I've gotta make sure I'm asking them to do the things that are research-based and that bring positive results. If I don't, they're quickly gonna see through that and determine he doesn't even know what he's talking about.

Another challenge is time for everything. You have to be very careful not to spend the bulk of your time and effort in things that don't bring the biggest impact or have the biggest results. That's hard. Principals are no different than teachers. If you are not careful poor time management will take you away from your real calling—to be here to help the students learn. It's a balancing act of doing those things. You can't let your work consume your personal life. I quickly saw that I was disconnecting from my family and my kids.

If you're developing true teacher leaders, I don't see disadvantages. What you've got to be careful though is to make sure that when people are beginning to share their strategies with other staff members that they're doing it for the right reasons. Am I signing up to present because I really have knowledge that I want to share with other people, or am I signing up because I want the principal to check that box on my evaluation. A teacher instructional leader with the right motives guides colleagues and shares best practices. You can see pretty quickly through those people doing it to check the box. They'll continue to want to do more things, not because they want to really

improve the school, but because they want to build a pedestal for themselves. It may sound horrible to say, but let's face it, we have people in education that don't belong in education. That's a disadvantage. Can people get too much power if they think they start developing as leaders or start to think that they're more powerful and influential than they really are? This sometimes causes them to start using that perceived power and influence for personal motives rather than what's best for students. I think good leaders are able to decipher and discern quickly what side of the fence those type people fall on. We have to ask, are you doing this to make things better for kids in the classroom, or are you doing this to put on your resume.

If I could offer advice to teachers desiring to develop as instructional leaders and to the school administrators who must support their development, I would suggest that teachers do a lot of reflection before they start trying to develop into a teacher instructional leader. Throughout the process they need to reflect on why I am wanting to do this. What is the end result that I want to happen? When they discover that end result, that gives them a better game plan for what type of things they need in order to achieve that end result. When you try to grow as a teacher instructional leader, you may be met with resistance from your colleagues. Do not let that stop you. Don't let the critics keep you from doing it. If you want to be dynamic, be dynamic. Don't let people stop you.

I would suggest that administrators help them [teachers] do it [develop as teacher instructional leaders]. If you don't, you will work yourself to death. I will never achieve the satisfaction I want in my position if I don't see that my teachers are achieving satisfaction in themselves. Invest time. *I can bring fish to every teacher in my building*

every day for the rest of my life, but I'd be a whole lot smarter to teach my teachers how

to fish for themselves. They're going to be so much better; as a result, I'm going to be

better. I get better when they get better.

Bee's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges of TIL Development

Developing as a teacher instructional leader builds the confidence of teachers and

encourages them to support each other. This indirectly and directly improves the school

climate. The happier the workplace is; everyone benefits—from the custodian to the

cafeteria worker. Effective teacher instructional leaders build that confidence. Overall,

when the leadership is sharing, helping everyone develop better strategies to use in the

classroom, the students and the school climate's grow. The leadership is positive.

Teachers are teaching and leading with a purpose. The students learn more and feel better

about being in the school. They benefit.

We collaborate across the curriculum more—language arts, science, social studies

and math—even art. Students see how learning applies from many directions. The more

leaders you have collaborating, there's really, almost a food web, where everyone is

collaborating compared to few people sharing.

A benefit to developing as a teacher instructional leaders is that you always come

out better. When you're sharing, regardless of the topic, you always, not sometimes,

come out of the situation with better ideas, strategies, and instructional materials. As long

as teachers feel safe, they'll share. It's always a good thing that comes out of it. Honestly,

I think it helps prevent teacher burnout. I did some research on how teachers that tend to

get burnt out are oftentimes the ones who have such high standards and high

expectations. Because of the stress of the job and external factors, if they're not reaching those expectations, they start to get burnt out. Sharing and engaging in leadership opportunities can help prevent teacher burnout. It's like education CPR. After a certain point in time I think you get into the mindset of sharing. This is a benefit. You're always creating things in a way that you're ready to share. This causes you to always strive to get better. In fact, I think that any teacher instructional leader, is always striving to get better and always thinking in their mind how could this help somebody else?

There's a sense of satisfaction. In the last meeting everybody was just so excited. Even though that group was looking at me to be the leader, I put it back on them because we all have some good stuff to share. You just feel so happy when you're in a position of being a teacher leader and you have an audience or a group that appreciates whatever you share. They gain a sense of satisfaction when they see that you appreciate them and their ideas. It is such an incredible rush. I try to include everyone by always asking others to share their good ideas. When we all share, it keeps our battery charged.

Sometimes my level of satisfaction depends on the time and how students are responding to the lesson. When I've had to plan something and implement it, and I see it come to fruition in the classroom it's just amazing. I take pictures of the students and show them as a reflection at the end of the year. On the other hand, when I plan something that I feel is not working and/or the students are responding apathetically, my level of satisfaction drops. But I can't let it stay there too long.

One challenge of developing as a teacher instructional leader is time and teacher resentment. If I'm going to do something, I really want to be committed and do so with

quality. There's a time factor involved in that type of work. Sometimes it requires time that you really don't have. Every year there's less and less and less time to plan. That's a challenge. In some situations, people are resentful of teacher leaders. It's hurtful when you're in a situation that someone feels threatened. There's a power struggle and people are very negative or resentful of anyone that is in a leadership role other than them. Being a teacher leader it's not always a good thing. You have to be real humble and careful not to come off too strong like I know everything. Look at me. I'm telling you guys what you need to do. To be really effective and not shut out, you have to sometimes view your role not necessarily as a leader, but as a facilitator. You are a teacher facilitator throwing ideas out there and getting teachers excited so they can make their teaching practice better and see how good they really are. That's a key part of being an effective leader.

The role of a teacher instructional leader requires a different mindset. There are some people who are very open to your role as a teacher instructional leader. If you're in a teacher leader role working with people who are resentful of being in the situation who may not want to learn, or maybe do not want to participate, it's almost like a hurdle you have to get over to even get them receptive. I was in a situation one time in this school where a particular teacher was very controlling and negative. She resented everything. The administration wanted to change that, so instead of one person in any department doing everything they gave other teachers opportunities to be leaders in different areas. When some of the control was taken away from her, the person was very resentful, always negative, complaining, and criticizing. So Mr. Jordan asked me to be the department chair. I said go ahead—put that target on my back.

Beth's Narrative: Benefits and Challenges of TIL Development

One benefit of developing as a teacher instructional leader is internal satisfaction. Teachers gain a good amount of satisfaction when things work. When you see it clicking with the kids, there is satisfaction because part of the whole mentality of being a teacher is that you like helping people. It's a different level of satisfaction. Instead of getting so caught up in the day-to-day challenges, it's being able to take a step above and say how this might work better. Sometimes, I get frustrated with myself because I haven't perfected everything yet. I feel good that I can walk in and not feel like oh my God, what am I doing today or where are we headed. I'm getting more satisfaction now than I did before.

Teachers having a willingness to share is a challenge. In both Illinois and Georgia, teachers were group planners. We had common assessments and common lessons. We were covering basically the same thing. Each teacher put their own individual character and spin on things. You helped everybody and no one held anything back. When I left, I gave a flash drive of my whole year to my successor. Those teachers were so sharing, but here it's very different. Teachers don't share as much. There's a lot held back. In Georgia, we did group community planning and would all share. If I came up with something, everybody else would use it unless someone really didn't like it. If someone had planned something we would all use it. That doesn't happen here as much. I'm still trying to figure if that's a North Carolina thing because in Illinois it was more collaborative. Here nobody seems to want to go their PLT meeting. People don't share. There are stubborner people here than there were in Illinois and Georgia!

Time and personal sacrifice are also challenges to developing as teacher instructional leaders. Getting it all done and giving up your personal life are challenges. My husband works a lot of hours. My daughter is involved in a lot of stuff right now. I've got two kids away at college. The only person who needs me is my dog. As long as I can clear my head and give her a good walk, I can come back and get work done. She'll just sit out next to me and we're good to go. Life is good. I don't feel guilty. I could not have done this when my kids were younger. I would not have had the time. I see teachers who have young kids who need to buzz out and drive their kids places. My kids all have driver's licenses so they can get to places by themselves. If I was not at that point I could not do what I'm doing or put the time into it that I do right now, that's for sure. Balancing my family life and spending a lot of hours here when I probably should be getting out and making new friends in this new environment here is a challenge. My friends are the ones here at work. I would love to have the ladies in my subdivision over for dinner a few nights but because of work, I haven't been able to do that. I'd like to work out more, but work, and family life balance challenges me. It's a time drain to be able to really look at research-based methods, to share best practices, and to mentor others.

If you teach teachers well, they want you to leave the classroom and coach. If somebody gets to that point they really don't have to be in an elementary, middle, or high school. They can move on to a college, non-traditional route, or maybe be a curriculum instructor. It's not a disadvantage to that person, it's probably an advantage to that person, but it's a disadvantage to the school because then you're losing a good asset.

Table 10 summarizes the impact and benefits that developing teacher instructional

leadership had on the school and teacher.

Table 10

Teacher Instructional Leadership Impact on School and Teachers

Benefits	Challenges
• boosting teacher confidence	• managing time
• increasing student willingness to follow teachers	• prioritizing work projects
• inspiring students to work harder	• keeping current with technology, data, and research-based strategies
• improving classroom effectiveness	• maintaining focus
• maximizing instructional time	• navigating envious relationships among colleagues
• benefiting students the most	• losing good teachers to training positions
• increasing instructional growth	• balancing work and family
• increasing student achievement	• feeling judged and devalued
• increasing professional growth	• managing power and influence
• increasing leadership capacity	
• building community	
• improving teacher and student efficacy	
• building commitment	
• reducing apathy	
• producing better teachers	
• preventing teacher burnout	
• building collegiality	
• promoting authentic collaboration	
• increasing personal and professional satisfaction	
• increasing positive school climate	
• improving school culture	
• improving human resources in school	
• increasing innovation in school	
• improving overall school	

CHAPTER VII

FURTHER ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction: The Emergence of Teacher Instructional Leadership

Chapter II of this research study described how two leadership paradigms—instructional leadership and teacher leadership—strategically collided to establish the foundation for the emergence of teacher instructional leadership (TIL) into scholarly literature. Recall that instructional leadership is a practice most oriented towards improving instructional, curricular, and assessment practices to improve pedagogical quality and raise student achievement (Printy et al., 2009). Instructional leadership is a leadership method ascribed mostly to school administrators (Halverson & Clifford, 2013). Twenty decades of teacher leadership literature described teacher leadership in a broad sense ranging from teachers serving as extensions of the administrators' arms to teachers serving as curriculum specialists (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

In this study, I explicitly merged two leadership ideologies to create an innovative way of expanding teacher leadership to include instructional leadership—a term I coined as Teacher Instructional Leaders (TILs) and Teacher Instructional Leadership. I used scholarly literature (Bond, 2015; Printy et al., 2009) as a foundation to define teacher instructional leaders as professionals seeking to influence other teachers and build leadership capacity by serving inside and/or outside the classroom. As illuminated during the dissertation discussion, the aforementioned definition could also describe the work of

teacher leaders. Emerging from the data and discussion was the question: *What makes teacher leaders different from teacher instructional leaders? A teacher leader does not serve as a teacher instructional leader, but a teacher instructional leader is always a teacher leader.* Additionally, TILs are self-starters and are engaged in a committed work that benefits others. As I carefully pondered this notion, I identified the *teacher instructional leader as one who has an undistracted focus on instructional and pedagogical practices that improve student achievement.* While teacher leaders are inundated with administrative duties, *teacher instructional leaders focus on instruction and pedagogy that can be implemented to positively impact student achievement.* As a result, *I defined TILs as teachers who employ specialized knowledge and skills to improve the pedagogical quality of teaching and learning, by improving instructional, curricular and assessment practices that raise student achievement.* Consequently, the work of TILs has a positive impact on student learning inside and outside of the classroom as TILs not only take responsibility for their own learning, but also influence the instructional practices of others (Woods, 2016).

In the midst of high stakes testing and high accountability, teacher instructional leaders serving inside and/or outside the classroom who collaborate with school administrators serving as whole-school instructional leaders must collectively engage in the complex work of school improvement. In this study, I explored the possibilities of the following: How teachers practiced as instructional leaders. How principals promoted TIL development. How TIL development impacted the schools and teacher. The implications

of this research study are discussed in this chapter. Chapter VII begins with a

recapitulation of the three research questions that guided the study.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Overview

There is great concern in our nation regarding the quality of teaching and learning

in schools. The burden to improve public education depends on the collaborative efforts

of stakeholders—especially school administrators and teachers. Amidst the diverse

strategies implemented by districts and states to improve schools—redesign models,

turnaround models, closing low performing schools, common core and essential

standards, common standardized assessments, merit-based pay, implementation of the

business model in schools, and increased rigor—few have produced sustainable

improvements (Fullan, 2011; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Wilcox & Angelis, 2012).

In the absence of viable changes, schools continue to struggle as they strive to

design, redesign, and create innovative methods leading to increased student achievement

and continuous school improvement. The pursuit for such answers situates school

administrators and teachers at the center of this quest. Now, the collaborative work of

school administrators and teachers as instructional leaders has never been more important

as it has the potential to provide answers to rebuilding and sustaining schools (Hopkins &

Jackson, 2003; Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 focused on the research participants' perspectives of how

TILs practiced as instructional leaders. Scholarly literature and the North Carolina

Educator Evaluation instrument established the practices of teacher instructional leaders.

Six baseline criteria established the initial parameters by which TILs practiced.

Collectively, the TILs in the study contributed additional criteria for the practices of

TILs. A summary of how TILs practice within the parameters of the six baseline criteria

and the contributions of the research participants follow in the next section.

Stella, Bee, and Beth are empathetic teacher instructional leaders who focus on

building positive relationships with their students and colleagues. They are

compassionate about the holistic development of their students. They are knowledgeable

in their content areas and continuously seek ways to improve their teaching craft. Stella,

Bee, and Beth establish high expectations for their students and hold students accountable

for their learning. They all strive to relate teaching and learning to real world scenarios

that peak student interests. Stella, Bee, and Beth have a focused commitment to being

continuous learners (see Tables 3, 7, and 8, respectively).

If teacher instructional leadership were represented by a continuum, Stella, Bee,

and Beth would be at varying places along the continuum. Concerned about potential

animosity with fellow colleagues, *Stella described herself as a teacher instructional

leader incognito.* Although Stella possessed pedagogical practices for facilitating learning

for her students and would willingly share best practices with fellow educators who

"asked" her for help, she was reluctant to initiate conversations offering colleagues help.

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas applauded Stella for her willingness to share her ideas

for improving student learning with other educators but wished she could do more (see

Chapter V). Stella's personal account from Chapter V explains why she assesses herself

as a TIL incognito.

> I am a teacher instructional leader incognito. I say this because I'm really self-conscious about how I never want teachers to think that I'm telling them how to do their job. So I always collaborate with the teachers who come knocking on my door and say I don't know what to do with your students—they all failed my social studies exam. I know they [teachers] know some of this stuff, but what can I do [to help the teachers help the students]. I will bend over backwards to help those teachers figure this stuff out. But I am very self-conscious, very insecure when it comes to me putting myself out there for a teacher who doesn't come knocking on my door. If I do approach teachers who have not directly asked for my help, I feel like I'm being pushy, a know-it-all, tripping them up, and adding things to their plate. I'm not comfortable in that role. I only share when I'm asked to share by specific groups of people. This is the reason I describe myself as a teacher instructional leader incognito. (see Chapter V)

Bee described herself a teacher instructional leader of students and teachers. She

imaginatively and enthusiastically engaged learners in stimulating ways, cultivated the

best characteristics in all learners, and competently led and facilitated learning for others.

Bee sparked the desire within students to learn and fellow colleagues have sought her out

to share best teaching practices. She was the teacher instructional leader who invested in

her own professional development. Earning numerous awards, Bee demonstrated strength

as a TIL, but did not want the staff to know about her accolades. Principal DJ Jordan

provided a detailed account below.

> [Bee] She willingly shares things but, I have to prod her sometimes. Because she's smart enough to know what her scores are and how other people don't share the same outstanding results that she has every year, she is very conscious about coming across as somebody who knows everything. So she willingly shares, but she's more willing to share if you prod her a little bit. She doesn't want to be put on the whole stage in front of the whole staff. That's why I give her some small groups. But I'll bet you she's had 20 different teachers in the past year from other

schools who just come and visit her. She loves that stuff. She's a down to earth person. She never wants to be perceived any other way. Bee wins awards that she emails me and she says I'm only gonna tell you this if you promise not to share it with the staff. Bee does not want to come across as being better than everybody else. (see Chapter VI)

Beth was a TIL who collaborated and networked with other professionals. She developed students into well-rounded people and encouraged confidence as students worked collaboratively. Beth willingly sought advice from competent colleagues with whom she could collaborate and plan lessons. She was knowledgeable in her content area and used a variety of methods to facilitate learning. *Although Beth has 11 years of teaching experience, she described herself as an evolving TIL.* A detailed account of why Beth described her TIL practice as evolving is below.

I am an evolving or emerging teacher instructional leader. I'm still learning. Every teacher has something that I can learn from [them]. The more I can work with other people and find out what they're doing, I'm learning. I love walking into people's classrooms and seeing how their tables are lined up and what they've written up on the boards. Different ways work for different people. I'm still learning because it's just my fifth year [as a fulltime classroom teacher]. Now I can figure out how to make it better. Now I can really concentrate on the kids—not so much the curriculum—but how the kids are learning. I haven't mastered all of that yet, by any means, but I'm getting over that hump. I'm evolving. (see Chapter VI)

Research Question 2

Research question two focused on how principals promoted TIL development as part of the school improvement process. Principal DJ Jordan and Assistant Principal Noel Douglas believed that leadership development involved distributing power to the TILs. Distributed Leadership was described as the manner in which principals/assistant

principals allocated leadership responsibility within schools (Haverson & Clifford, 2013; Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Both administrators believed that the first place for TILs to demonstrate instructional leadership competency is in their classrooms. They identified the ability to lead in the classroom as the core design and requirement of a teacher's role. This notion is well aligned with NCEES number IA, teacher leads in the classroom (McRel, 2015).

Assistant Principal Noel Douglas and Principal DJ Jordan promoted TIL development by encouraging the following: teacher participation on SIT, in PLTs, on subcommittees, as grade level leaders, as department chairpersons, as advisors of after school activities/clubs, in collaborative planning between regular education teacher and specialists, and as a facilitator of school-wide professional development. AP Noel Douglas wished that teachers took the initiative to seek out more opportunities to lead and that they understood the impact of their leadership. A detailed account of Assistant Principal Noel Douglas' perspective is below.

> Administrators are an extended arm of the teacher and vice versa. Promoting teachers to develop as instructional leaders has to be a reciprocal process. I think preparing teachers as instructional leaders should be a dually engaging process between the teacher and administration. This reciprocal process includes the teacher letting the administrator know when things are happening in their classroom and keeping them informed. There's no way I'll be in your classroom every day. I guess for me I don't see an administrator as an instructional leader any different than the teacher as an instructional leader, I don't see a divide.

Principal DJ Jordan shared his perspective on how the distribution of leadership among TILs fosters professional growth.

Educators experience growth when administrators entrust them with leadership responsibility. To me distributed leadership means entrusting the people that you work with to make sound decisions that are well thought out. Being able to make these decisions allow them to grow professionally and gain more confidence in the classroom. Everyone has the opportunity to grow—teachers, TAs [teacher assistants], and assistant principals. They grow as leaders themselves the more opportunities they are put in to have a chance to succeed. Teachers get better when they grow. When they learn more about themselves—their strengths and their weaknesses—they learn how to adapt to change through situations you give them.

Research Question 3

Research question three focused on the impact of TIL development on the school and the teacher. Research participants identified more benefits than challenges to developing as a teacher instructional leader. As described by the research participants, tensions influenced teachers to either pursue their development as instructional leaders or retreat from their development as instructional leaders. Teachers choosing not to embark upon the journey of developing as teacher instructional leaders could be perceived as taking a *commonly* traveled road when compared to their counterparts who, for various reasons, pursued their development as teacher instructional leaders.

When teachers developed as instructional leaders, the whole school benefited and teacher efficacy increased. The school culture for teaching and learning strengthened, leadership capacity expanded, and researcher participants perceived that school climate and culture improved. The school as well as the teacher experienced an increase in student achievement, personal and professional satisfaction, and a reduced teacher burnout. Teachers documented that TIL development promoted authentic collaboration, built commitment, community, and collegiality among teachers while simultaneously

reducing apathy. Additionally, developing TILs focused the TILs attention on their professional growth.

Teachers and administrators shared that time management was one of the biggest challenges to developing as a TIL. Both administrators and teachers grappled with total life management—balancing work and family life. Teachers struggled to balance time for planning quality lessons and planning quality time with family. Administrators were challenged with issues of transferring power to teacher instructional leaders; teachers struggled with jealously that emerged from colleagues. In addition to time challenges, Beth highlighted losing classroom assets—teacher instructional leaders—to leadership positions outside of the classroom. Beth's account is documented below.

> If you teach teachers well, they want you to leave the classroom and coach. If somebody gets to that point they really don't have to be in an elementary, middle, or high school. They can move on to a college, non-traditional route, or maybe be a curriculum instructor. It's not a disadvantage to that person, it's probably an advantage to that person, but it's a disadvantage to the school because then you're losing a good asset.

Teacher participants expressed how fellow colleagues interacted negatively—in an envious manner, pitting them in an "us" and "them" posture. Teachers were genuinely concerned about collegial perceptions and were concerned with how their colleagues perceived them. Teachers documented feelings of being rejected, devalued, and ignored by colleagues. Stella shared her account of negative interactions among colleagues below.

> A teacher instructional leader might feel judged, rejected, devalued or ignored sometimes—and these are all ego problems. Sometimes egos are a little bit

fragile. Fellow teachers can either give you two thumbs down or two thumbs up. I am really amazed at teacher instructional leaders who really take on those positions of like putting themselves out there embracing all of us. Even though they might be judged they're not making anybody feel judged. This is a challenge of serving as a teacher instructional leader.

Other benefits of developing TILs relating to student interactions and outcomes emerged. Principal DJ Jordan expressed how the students of TILs worked harder for them than the students did for their non-TIL teachers. Principal DJ Jordan's perspective is cited below.

The greatest advantage of a teacher developing as an instructional leader is the positive impact for students. I ask students why do they work themselves to death for this teacher [TIL], but is completely disengaged in a different class. The response unanimously is that they don't want to let that teacher [TIL] down. That teacher won't let me settle for less than my best. I know I can get by with it in the other teacher's [non-TIL] classroom. The same kid that will disengage in one classroom will run through the brick wall for an effective teacher instructional leader in another classroom.

Teacher Instructional Leadership Categories

Illuminated by the stories of the research participants (Lichtman, 2013), three broad categories related to the ways in which teachers practiced as instructional leaders emerged from the codes. These broad categories emerged after closely identifying patterns evident from the examination of coded data and the ways the coded data could be chunked together in the creation of broader categories (Hays and Singh, 2012). These categories included pedagogy, professionalism, and emotional intelligence. A description of each category along with the related TIL criteria is included in the sections that follow.

Pedagogy, the first category, is the art, science, or profession of teaching that most focuses on how best to teach. In this category, teachers who practice as instructional leaders are strong pedagogical practitioners who maximize their expertise inside the classroom and share their expertise with other educators outside the classroom. The basis for the work of teacher instructional leaders is predicated upon their ability to know and understand their content well enough to effectively facilitate learning for all students and adults. Although a teacher's willingness to share expertise with others is partially influenced by their level of pedagogical competence, the decision to engage other adults is a professional practice. As a result, pedagogy is directly related to two TIL criteria:

1. Teacher works hard to ensure that the instruction they facilitate is centered on what each student needs;

2. Teacher knows and understands how to deliver content.

Professionalism, category two, is defined as the skill, good judgment, and behavior expected from a person who is trained to do a job well. In category two, teachers practicing as instructional leaders demonstrate professionalism in their craft by exhibiting sound judgement in decision-making (inside and outside the classroom), through their interactions with fellow colleagues, and by actively engaging in professional development and professional learning communities. There are four TIL criteria directly related to professionalism:

1. Teacher uses a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful;

2. Teacher takes the lead in communicating the type of professional development needed to improve their teaching practice;

3. Teacher takes the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning;

4. Teacher willingly shares ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others.

Emotional intelligence, category three, describes how teacher leaders handle themselves and relationships. In category three, teachers who practice as instructional leaders possess emotional intelligence through which they foster healthy relationships within the school community. This includes but is not limited to their personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, interpersonal skills, managing people, and leadership (Golman, 1995; Goleman, Boyatizis, & McKee, 2002).

There is three TIL criteria directly related to emotional intelligence:

1. Teacher creates a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning.

2. Teacher takes the lead in communicating the type of professional development needed to improve their teaching practice;

3. Teacher willingly shares ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others.

Significance of Categories

It is essential to understand that when referring to a teacher who serves as an instructional leader, I delineate between a teacher leader who engages in administrative

work and a teacher leader who engages in instructional work. A teacher leader assumes a variety of administrative duties that range from serving as department chairperson to coordinating afterschool club activities. A teacher instructional leader's work focuses on the instructional, professional, and emotional practices that directly and indirectly impact student learning. *While a teacher instructional leader is a teacher leader, a teacher leader is not a teacher instructional leader*. Therefore, the reader must not assume that the two terms are used synonymously because they are not. I desire each reader to easily identify the characteristics of a teacher instructional leader as illuminated by the accounts of the research participants.

Teachers practiced as instructional leaders by implementing a variety of pedagogical, professional, and emotionally intellectual practices. Teachers practicing as instructional leaders are competent in their content knowledge, implement research based teaching strategies that positively impact student learning, and willingly collaborate with colleagues to plan and critique lessons. Although the foundation of the instructional work executed by TILs is pedagogy, data collected from research participants led to a deeper analysis of how teachers practiced as TILs. Based upon the collected data, teachers who practiced as instructional leaders not only demonstrated pedagogical competence, but also employed emotional intelligence.

For example, a TIL who collaborates with other colleagues must possess content competence, good judgment and confidence in their practice to engage in professional learning with fellow colleagues. Bee's account below is an example of this competency.

A teacher told me this my first year when I [Bee] moved to this county. She said when we were going to these meetings [PLTs] and we were sharing, people just didn't share a lot. She said when I [Bee] started coming to these meetings and I [Bee] would share everything, bring my flash drive, just giving every folder, every lab activity, other people started sharing more. I think that creates a fantastic professional climate.

A TIL openly and willingly shares best practices with others serving as a resource for pre-service and in-service teachers. Consider Beth's account below of how she practiced these competencies.

I willingly share my ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others. I definitely do that by bringing stuff [teaching resources] to meetings. I give entire flash drives to people. I've done that for every position I leave. I leave all the binders. Anything I have is up for anybody else to have if they want it. I've had teachers or teacher candidates come in and do observations. I know how hard it was for me to get into the schools to do any observations. Not many teachers wanted to [open their classrooms]. A teacher instructional leader must be a resource [for aspiring teachers] outside of the school.

A TIL who invests in building positive student relationships serves as a springboard to cultivating the best characteristics in learners and developing them as well-rounded people. Beth shared an example of this competency below.

My job is to be able to teach, grow the kids, and help them form as little people. Even though I'm teaching subjects, there are a lot of other skills that I believe are really important to teach that helps to make them [students] whole. These include organizational skills and helping them to remember. I help them understand how to organize themselves. I make sure that by the end of the year they feel comfortable raising their hand, speaking, learning to work in groups, learning to work with people. I develop [students] as people.

Lessons Learned from the Study

During the industrial age, Thomas Jefferson expressed support for public education when the task of schools was to produce mostly factory workers. In his address to the state of Virginia, President Jefferson described schools as a mechanism for raking a few geniuses from the rubbish. Jefferson's ideology was aligned with the graduation data highlighted in *Waiting for Superman* where the top 20% of seniors at Woodside High School were tracked to graduate and pursue careers as doctors, lawyers, and CEOs. The next 20% of seniors were tracked to graduate and pursue careers as accountants, managers, and bureaucrats. The remaining 60% of seniors were tracked to enter into the workforce as farmers and/or factory workers (Guggenheim, 2010; Weber, 2010; Vollmer, 2010). The original composition of America's public schools met the needs of an industrial workforce; however, the factory model for schools is no longer adequate in an information and technology age.

On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed a new education law—Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). With the bill, President Obama illuminated the moral imperative to provide a quality and equitable education that would unfold the potential in every child. "Every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). In aligning with this mission, the U.S. Department of Education is committed to promoting student achievement and preparing students for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In theory, this legislation and

commitment from the U.S. Department of Education is "spot on" as we work to identify

what is needed to reform our nation's schools and meet the demands of our current times.

When school reformers take bold steps—Geoffrey Canada (Harlem Children's Zone),

David Levin (KIPP Schools), and Mike Feinberg (KIPP Schools)—and encounter

massive opposition from the bureaucratic infrastructures undergirding legislation, what

should be the next course of action (Guggenheim, 2010; Weber, 2010)?

Administrators and teachers are situated in the center of the school improvement

process. Their hands—like other reformers—are shackled by bureaucratic infrastructures

that inhibit them from engaging in the work necessary to accomplish the mission outlined

in the education bill, ESSA. As school administrators work to balance the micro-political

dynamic of their jobs, they encounter bureaucratic checkpoints that provoke fear of job

loss and/or structures that stifle the school improvement processes. As teachers,

instructional leaders engage in the work of school reform; they are confronted with

bureaucratic structures that reduce their autonomy thereby disempowering them as

participants in the school improvement process. One example is the implementation of

uniform lesson plans created by district level educators as opposed to teachers having the

autonomy to create their own lessons. This dynamic creates tension between the

education system and those responsible for the daily delivery of an equitable education in

schools.

As I reflect on the need to improve our nation's schools, I struggle with the

question: How might we overcome or navigate obstacles that make up a system in need

of major improvement. As I ponder possible solutions to this dilemma, I am reminded of

how Harriet Tubman as the "conductor" of the Underground Railroad led many slaves to freedom. She not only was the "conductor" of the Underground Railroad, but she was an armed scout and spy for the United States Army during the Civil War. In essence, she used her resources as a "part of the system" to navigate a "secret route" through the system leading many to freedom. Harriet Tubman's bold stand to lead slaves to freedom underground was about making a decision to do what was right for people. Could her courageous actions as an abolitionist for civil rights serve as an inspiration and ideology for the work of administrators and teacher instructional leaders? After all access to an equitable education for all students is a civil right (Policy - ED.gov, 2016)

If teachers could operate with full autonomy or navigate the topography of the school system without barriers, we could focus attention on helping TILs understand how their practice as instructional leaders (or not) impacts whole school improvement.   In order to accomplish the mission of an equitable and quality education for all students, it is essential for teachers to initiate their personal and professional development process towards becoming teacher instructional leaders. Additionally, school administrators must simultaneously take action to promote three foundational principles:

1. Understand their practice as instructional leaders in facilitating the development of teacher instructional leaders;

2. Effectively distribute leadership among teachers to promote their development as instructional leaders; and,

3. Empower teachers by transferring their instructional leadership power to teacher instructional leaders.

Barth (2001) posits that even in the face of contrary evidence, we must believe that all children and educators can learn. Without making a generalization about all teachers, the teachers participating in this study were learners, self-starters, and driven. There interaction with their students and colleagues was influenced by their desire to help others become better. TILs experienced tension when attempting to balance the benefits of becoming a better instructional leader with increased spotlight and recognition. Bee and Stella were quite concerned about being perceived by their colleagues as a "know it all," or "goodie two shoes." Why would developing as a teacher instructional leader create discomfort for both the developing TILs and their colleagues? As I pondered their interaction, I was reminded of the story about the crab mentality—*if I can't have it, neither can you*. This story described the fate of the courageous crab climbing toward the top of the barrel, but was pulled down by fellow crabs (Miller, 2015).

Teacher Contributions to TIL Criteria

Teacher participants contributed additional criteria that they believed would make an intelligent addition to the six baseline criteria for the work of teacher instructional leaders. Teacher instructional leaders should surround themselves with other strong teacher instructional leaders. They should intentionally connect with other strong teachers in their teacher community and be willing to share insights or concerns. They must have suggestions on how to solve problems that they see and create strong relationships in their school community. They must find the people who understand them and have the same vision for the school. Teacher instructional leaders strategically and intentionally create community in their school. TILs should be passionate and allow the students to see

that passion in them. Teacher instructional leaders should really love what they're doing and have a sense of humor. Teacher instructional leaders must be organized; know their content and know how to present content in a multitude of ways and can reach all students, at some point in time.

Instructional Leadership + Teacher Leadership = TIL

The possibility of merging two paradigms—instructional leadership and teacher leadership—illuminated sustainable strategies for improving schools but is not without opposition. As I complete the analysis of this study, I had the opportunity to meet with state educators in North Carolina. State officials were providing highlights about the process each state had to employ to create the details for the newly legislated ESSA. At the end of the presentation, the state officials compelled teachers to get involved in the process of developing the parameters of school policy (after all teachers would be the implementers). The teachers in the audience cried out to the state officials—just tell us what to do. As I sat in the audience, I began to think of the interviews with teachers and administrators conducted for this study. It dawned upon me that there are no consistently defined roles for TILs nor is there a defined framework or roadmap for developing teacher instructional leaders. Just as the state officials were asking, teachers along with administrators will need to engage in the process of building the roadmap. Though the work of improving schools is complex, there is hope that implementing effective processes for developing teachers as instructional leaders and cultivating authentic collaboration among educators in schools would reveal answers beneficial to support the continuous improvement process in schools. Teacher instructional leaders and school

administrators cannot engage in this work alone (Vollmer, 2010). Authentic progress will involve the efforts of all stakeholders. Recommendations for those stakeholders follow in the conclusion.

TIL Continuum

Multiple continua emerged from this study to include TIL Development, TIL Acts of Service, TIL Tangible Outcomes, and TIL Intangible Outcomes. The TIL Development Continua (Figure 2) describes teacher instructional leadership as a developmental process whereby teachers begin development as they initially enter the teaching profession. Over time, teachers develop their core foundational competencies as a successful *TIL in their classroom*. As a teacher builds competency and confidence in their classroom practices, they are on a trajectory toward working with fellow colleagues as *TILs in their school* and eventually as *TILs in their school district*. A TIL who has influenced instruction at the district level may also look for opportunities to impact policy at the district and/or state level. This progression does not happen overnight and is indicative of the story that Beth shares about her evolving TIL development. I am suggesting that the continuum begins with a novice classroom teacher who focuses on developing as a TIL first in the classroom, then facilitating instruction within their school, and eventually facilitating instruction and/or impacting policy at the district/state-level. A TIL's progression is predicated on their personal and professional focus (see Figure 2).
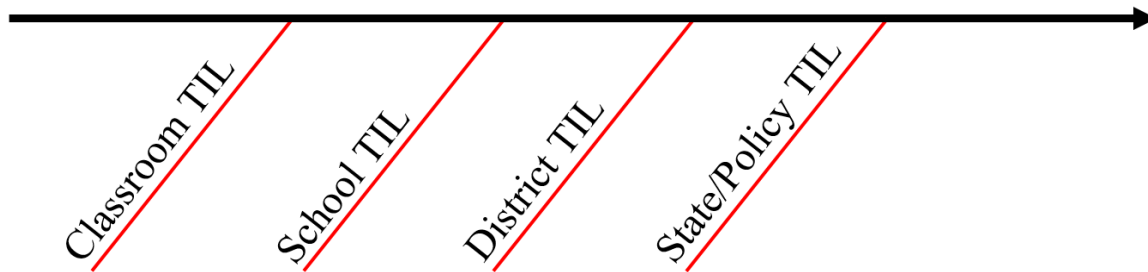
Figure 2. TIL Development Continuum.

Recall that TILs practice in various ways and provide a myriad of services in their educational environment (classroom, school, and district). The TIL Acts of Service Continuum (Figure 3) describes the gradual progression of a TIL as they build their personal competency in their classroom and beyond. In their classroom, TILs provide knowledge to their students. As they become proficient and confident in their skillset, they begin to provide knowledge to their colleagues. In so doing, TILs progressively gain the competencies required to provide support for other teachers and to facilitate collaboration among colleagues. At each point along a TILs trajectory, they can provide support and/or facilitate collaboration within their schools and/or at the district level. A TILs influence increases as they build their instructional capacity and experience success working with their colleagues. At the classroom level, TILs advocate for their students; while simultaneously advocating for policy that will benefit student achievement and inform the work that teachers do to affect student achievement. Finally, TILs gain a level of competency and confidence that provokes them to question and protest practices and policy that are counterproductive to increased student achievement (see Figure 3).
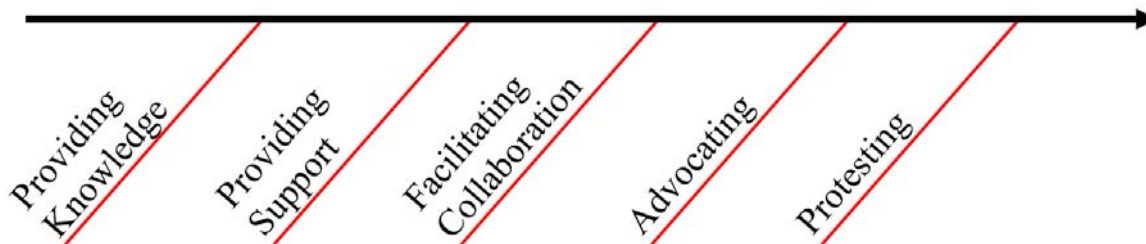
Figure 3. TIL Acts of Service Continuum.

When teachers develop as instructional leaders they increase their teaching quality and instructional capacity. As a result, test scores improve, schools improve as a whole, and an alternative vision for teaching and learning emerges. These deliverables are categorized on the continuum as TIL Tangible Outcomes (Figure 4). Scholarly literature in conjunction with data analyzed from this study support five strategies that promote increased student achievement—quality teachers, more classroom time, high standards, high expectations, and accountability. At the top of the list is quality teachers (Weber, 2010; Guggenheim, 2010). When TILs engage students in learning, students experience more than the minimum curriculum standard from the pacing guide. They are exposed to an alternate vision of education that hooks and draws them into a world of learning that ignites a spark for developing a broader understanding. The TIL understands how to provide rich learning experiences for their students without being held hostage by the pacing guide and oppressed by an over abundant amount of standardized testing. TILs eliminate "drill and kill" teaching that disengages students and expose them to adventurous, exploratory learning that develops them as complete human beings (see Figure 4).
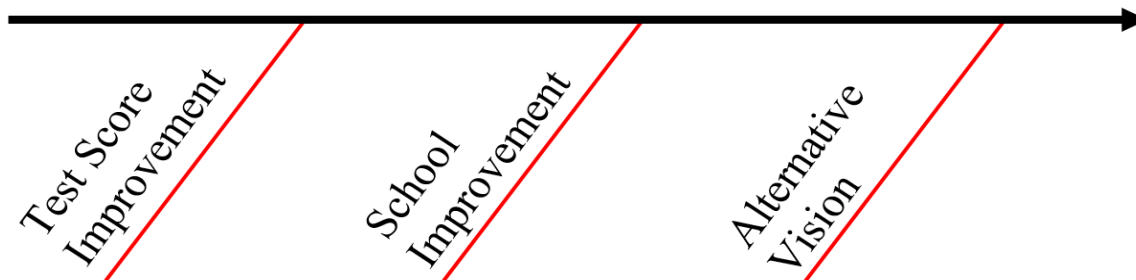
Figure 4. TIL Tangible Outcomes Continuum.

The TIL Intangible Outcomes (Figure 5) is the final continua that I will discuss. I believe that this continuum is most associated with emotional intelligence. Though difficult to quantify, data analyzed from this study qualifies the positive impact on schools when teachers develop as instructional leaders. Hope, courage, and resistance are identifiable markers that establish a foundation designed to build student and teacher efficacy in schools. There is increased belief that schools are spaces where TILs can make a difference in the lives of all students. The courage to persevere, question structures and resist practices that are counterproductive to increased student achievement emerge in schools where teachers develop as instructional leaders (see Figure 5).
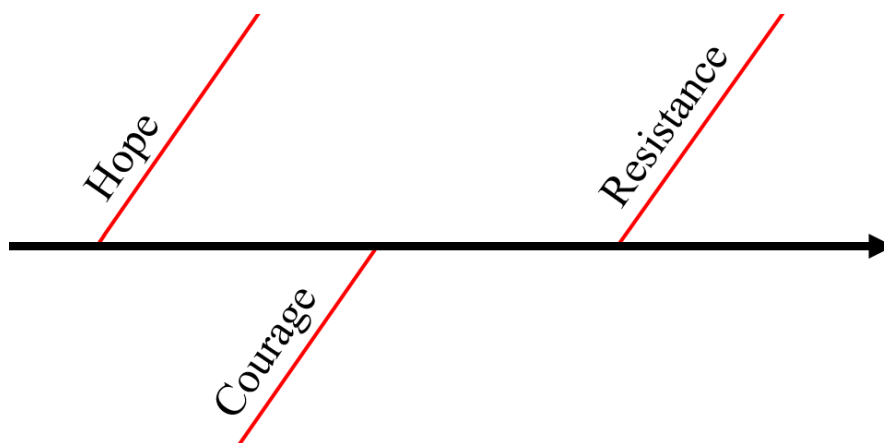

Figure 5. TIL Intangible Outcomes Continuum.

Conclusion

The condition and inconsistent progress of the nation's schools over the past 30 years prompted me to engage in research that explored ways in which schools could use their resources—especially human resources—to induce continuous improvement. Comprehensive school reports—such as *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), and *A Nation Accountable* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)—collectively investigated the declining state of America's education system, then provided a list of things "to do." Traditional scholarship illuminated the school administrator as the person most responsible for "fixing" the problem with schools. However, my study proposed a dual approach to improving schools through the collaborative efforts of school administrators and teacher instructional leaders. In this innovative paradigm, school administrators are no longer the "lone rangers" for accountability in schools as the responsibility is shared among both school administrators and teacher instructional leaders.

The TILs who participated in this study, contributed data that illuminated varying ideas including three broad categories emerging from the study: pedagogy, professionalism, and emotional intelligence. Each teacher participant contributed countless insights to the research study from their perspective of how they engaged in their practice as teacher instructional leaders. Their descriptions of teacher instructional leaders ranged from that of a strong leader and humble follower to one who was a collaborator and mentor. Although each teacher participant viewed themselves at varying points along the TIL continuum, they collectively contributed to the dimension of how

teachers practiced as TILs by expanding the descriptions to include depth beyond mere instructional characteristics (see Tables 3, 7, and 8).

Teachers find themselves at varying points along the TIL continuum. With or without the support of the school administration and camaraderie of colleagues, some teachers were self-motivated and promoted their own TIL development. Although other teachers were reluctant to recognize their practice as an instructional leader, other teachers sought out opportunities to develop. Regardless of where teachers landed on the continuum, the collaborative work in which they engaged with their school leaders positively influenced overall school improvement.

Schools cannot do the work of sustainable improvement alone (Vollmer, 2010). All stakeholders must engage in the arduous work of continuous school improvement. Teachers and school administrators possess the ability to influence sustainable school improvement. If schools are going to experience positive impacts over time, teachers and school administrators must commit to TIL development. Bee's account illuminating the impact of transitioning from a teacher to a teacher instructional leader follows below.

> When we develop as teacher instructional leaders we become better teachers. It's the difference between being a leader versus being a worker. If you're just being a worker you show up, do your job, and go home. Teacher instructional leaders provide innovation in their job and help their company get better. I am a person who will speak up. Developing teacher instructional leaders can change the school culture. If you have a culture of not sharing you can introduce a culture of sharing and one teacher at a time the culture will change. When teachers are developed as instructional leaders they work together in teams. This leads to bonding going from one group to another. It becomes infectious, causing other groups to want to volunteer to do things. Positive changes occur in the school culture which impacts school improvement.

Recommendation for Policy Makers

Policy makers are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing policy and governing schools. These decisions must be made in collaboration with other stakeholders—especially those who are responsible for operating and managing schools. Although the general public is invited to school board meetings, I am not sure whether the general public understands how schools work and why it is essential for everyone to be involved. Policy makers must be an active component of the school community. Doing so exposes them to real-time issues occurring in schools. Policy makers must expose and eliminate the barriers within bureaucratic structures that impede real school reform. There is a great need to reconsider alternatives to the current education structure and philosophy. Examples of the alternatives include but are not limited to new charter schools and/or alternative methods of delivering education (Brock and Goodman, 2013).

Recommendation for Higher Education and School Districts

School districts and universities are centers for inquiry and rich spaces for action research. School districts have the responsibility of implementing processes, programs, and practices that will support administrators and teachers as they develop as instructional leaders. One example of a program that the school district where the study was conducted has implemented is a teacher academy. The goal of the teacher academy is to differentiate instruction for educators as they develop into more effective practitioners. The professional development provided by the academy is not only for teachers, but also provides learning opportunities for administrators. The focal point of the academy is to provide guidance and support as educators implement their professional development

plans to become more effective instructional leaders. This is one way in which school districts support in-service practitioners in their individual professional development pursuits as instructional leaders.

Universities are responsible for training pre-service educators. Universities and other institutions of higher learning can implement educational leadership and teacher instructional leadership components in university degree programs. When collaborating with school districts, universities can provide opportunities for their pre-service teacher instructional leaders to gain experience inside the schools.

Recommendations for Administrators

Administrators are the appointed instructional leaders of schools. Based on this study, it is recommended that administrators transfer their power as instructional leaders to teachers and trust them to use that power appropriately. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the administrators to help cultivate and develop teachers as instructional leaders. This is not limited to the delegation of administrative tasks that have been previously classified in scholarly literature as leadership opportunities—department chairpersons and the like. In contrast, these tasks include understanding what it means to develop teachers as instructional leaders based upon the *now* seven criteria for how teachers practice as instructional leaders and the numerous examples illuminated in the study from data collected from the research participants. When these practices are implemented they must be executed in authentic ways not merely to fulfill the requirements of an evaluation rubric.

With time being a major challenge for administrators, it will be essential for them to enlist the assistance of their support staff—curriculum coaches and the like—to assist in the process of developing teachers as instructional leaders. Finally, administrators must effectively distribute leadership in ways that promote TIL development and implement processes to provide immediate and meaningful feedback to teachers as they journey through this process.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers spend more time with students than any other professional in the school. Therefore, it is essential that teachers become continual students of their craft—becoming more effective practitioners. Developing as teacher instructional leaders is part of this developmental process. A focus on how to become a more effective instructional leader has the potential to improve teaching and learning in the classroom and improve collegiality among teachers. In the discussion about how to improve America's schools, one important but often overlooked avenue is to strengthen collegial collaboration and instructional leadership among teachers (Evans, 2012) with an emphasis on defining and disseminating best practices in teaching and on promoting growth for educators.

Teachers are called as individuals to be continuous learners about their craft and to work together to maximize their collective impact on student learning (Hattie, 2012). It is necessary that they cultivate their own development and transcend barriers that inhibit authentic collaboration among colleagues. Teachers must engage in their profession, staying abreast of trends in education.

A Personal Reflection

Having "Dr." in front of my name—going from Jessalyn Woods to Dr. Jessalyn Woods—does not cause me to be a different person. However, the completion of this journey brings with it a greater responsibility of service to which I am no stranger. I once thought leadership was about being in front and leading from above. As my journey has taken me along many bending and winding roads, I have discovered that leading is not always walking out front—it is working and serving from behind and underneath (Maxwell, 2006). In fact, I believe that one of the most fruitful places from which to lead is from within an organization without a concern for who gets the credit. Even though I believe there is great service behind the scenes, I am more aware of the fact that the policy changes needed to promote sustainable school improvement occurs among leadership.

I have faith that this journey is not about an ending, but about a flourishing new beginning. Wherever this new journey takes me, I know that I will be a servant leader situated on a road in close proximity of teachers—those who have been entrusted with one of the highest forms of stewardship within the earth realm—the complex task of cultivating the gifts and talents hidden within students. I will serve in a place that provides the utmost opportunity for me to serve the greatest number of teachers and students.

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
> I [Dr. Jessalyn Woods] took the one less traveled by,
> And that has made all the difference. (Robert Frost)

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

I.   *Demographic Information:*

Note: The questions in this section are asked of all participants.

1. What is your current role/ job in education?

2. Describe duties associated with your current role/job?

3. How long have you served in education?

4. How long have you served in this school district?

5. How long have you served in this school?

II.   *Educational Background:*

Note: The questions in this section are asked of all participants.

1. What influenced you to become an educator (associate superintendent, principal, program manager, curriculum coordinator, teacher etc.?)

2. Where did you receive your education?

3. Was it in a traditional school of education? If not, describe your experience.

4. What advanced degrees and/or certifications do you hold?

III.   *Teacher Interview Protocol*

Note: The questions in this section are asked of teacher participants.

1. As a teacher, what is your most important part of your job in your school?

2. How do you prepare yourself to fulfill the most important aspects of your work?

3. How much time, if any, might you spend planning your teaching lessons?

4. In your own words, what is an instructional leader?

5. In what ways, if any, do you believe teachers work as instructional leaders?

6. Consider for a moment your own professional practice. Would you consider yourself an instructional leader? Why? Why not?

7. I am going to read six (6) descriptions of a TIL. As you hear them, tell me whether or not the characteristic describes you. If the characteristic describes you, give a specific example.

    ● You create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning.   (y) _____   (n) _____

    ● You work hard to ensure that the instruction you facilitate is centered on what each student needs.   (y) _____   (n) _____

    ● You use a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful.   (y) _____   (n) _____

    ● You take the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning.   (y) _____   (n) _____

    ● You take the lead in communicating to your administration and support team the type of professional development you need to improve your teaching practice.   (y) _____   (n) _____
    ● You willingly share your ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others.   (y) _____   (n) _____

8. What other characteristic/criteria, if any, of a teacher instructional leader might you add to the list you just heard (give participant a copy of the document to review)

9. What, if any, are the positive aspects of working as a teacher who is an instructional leader within a school?

10. What, if any, are the challenges that teachers who are instructional leaders face within their school?

11. In what way, if any, does your work as a TIL impact you personally (family life balance)?

12. How do you prepare yourself daily to engage in the work of teaching and learning (routines)?

13. Describe your level of satisfaction with the work you do as a teacher instructional leader. Give specific examples.

14. In what ways, if any, does the school principal promote your development as an instructional leader?

15. In what way, if any, might you want your administrator to promote your development as a TIL (What do you wish they'd do more of)?

16. In what ways, if any, does the work of TIL impact teacher efficacy (the belief that teachers can make a difference in the lives of their students and colleagues)?

17. What, if any, might be the benefits of a teacher developing as an instructional leader?

18. What, if any, might be the disadvantages of a teacher developing as an instructional leader?

19. In what way, if any, could the work of TILs impact overall school improvement?

20. What words of advice, if any, might you offer teachers who are not yet practicing as TILs (What type of call to action might you give)?

IV.   **School Administrator Interview Protocol**

Note: The questions in this section are asked of principals and/or assistant principals.

1. In your own words, describe distributed leadership.

2. How might distributed leadership impact the overall leadership capacity of the school?

3. Within a school, which roles/jobs, if any would you consider formal/informal teacher leader roles/jobs?

4. In what ways, if any, does the administration distribute leadership among teachers?

5. What type of leadership opportunities, if any, does the administration make available for teachers in the school?

6. In what way, if any, could schools benefit from the work of teachers who are instructional leaders?

7. (Think back for a moment to your description of an instructional leader.) In what ways, if any, does the administration consistently prepare teachers as instructional leaders?

8. (Follow-up) In what way, if any, could a TIL in the classroom complement your work as the instructional leader of the entire school?

9. In what ways, if any, do you think teachers promote their own development as instructional leaders?

10. What, if any, might be the benefits of developing TILs? Give a specific example.

11. What, if any, might be the disadvantages of developing TILs?

12. In what way, if any, could the work of TILs impact overall school improvement?

NOTE: I am going to read six (6) descriptions of a TIL. As you hear them, tell me whether the characteristic describe the teacher participant who serves your school. If the characteristic describes them, give a supporting example of how you have seen the participant demonstrate the criteria.

- They create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable engaging in their own learning.   (y) _____   (n) _____

- They work hard to ensure that the instruction they facilitate is centered on what each student needs.   (y) _____   (n) _____

- They use a variety of research based teaching strategies and professional methods to help students become successful. (y) _____   (n) _____

- They take the initiative to secure outside resources to help with student learning. (y) _____   (n) _____

- They take the lead in communicating to administration and their support team the type of professional development they need to improve their teaching practice. (y) _____   (n) _____

- They willingly share their ideas for improving student learning by collaborating with others.   (y) _____   (n) _____

13. Think for a moment about the characteristics/criteria that I read for each teacher participant above. What other characteristics/criteria, if any, might you add to the list?

14. What instructional practices, if any, do you wish teachers did more of? (Give an example).

15. What advice, if any, might you give a teacher who wants to develop as a TIL (call to action)?

16. What advice, if any, might you give a fellow administrator who wants to explore developing their teachers as TILs?

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Observation Guide

Purpose: The principal investigator will observe the teacher participant working as a teacher instructional leader (TIL) within their natural setting and will observe the following:

- Tasks that fit the description of teacher instructional leaders (TIL);

- Sharing of instructional practices with colleagues;

- Barriers that appear to hinder the teacher from engaging in instructional leadership-type work.