

**THE IMPACT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS
IN SELECTED EXEMPLARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

A Record of Study

by

DAVID PAUL HOOK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2006

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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May 2006

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Teacher Leadership on School Effectiveness in Selected Exemplary
Secondary Schools. (May 2006)

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This qualitative study used naturalistic inquiry methodology to study the impact that teacher leadership has on school effectiveness. Two suburban high schools were chosen for this study. Both of these schools had been rated as exemplary in 2002 by the Texas Education Agency. Interviews, observations, and surveys were used to obtain data. Through these, seven categories emerged that were used to create a written description of teacher leadership on the campuses. Teacher leadership in the past, teacher leadership roles, teacher leadership enablers, teacher leadership restraints, products of teacher leadership, teacher leadership in the present, and the role of the principal emerged when the data were analyzed.

The findings indicated that when teacher leadership played a role on these campuses there was an expectation by school administrators that teachers would be leaders. Principals on both campuses had a vision of student success. Communication between school administrators and teacher leaders was strong. Overall, the role of the principal had a powerful impact on teacher leadership and consequently school

effectiveness. Teacher leadership being fostered and supported was in large part due to the efforts of the principal.

Recommendations for practice suggest that a) district level personnel need to work from a definition of school leadership that includes teachers when they hire campus principals, b) principals must take intentional steps to actively encourage teacher leadership, c) principals must clearly understand the amount of effort collaborative leadership demands of them, d) principals should seek out evidence that teacher leadership is impacting the school, and e) principals should consider what resources need to be allocated to foster and sustain teacher leadership on campus.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in our schools is a complex issue. Donaldson (2001) states that his “30 years as a public educator have been rife with claims that schools, in general, have not been led well” (p. ix). Fullan (2001) further states “at a time when leadership for schools has never been so critical, there is also a growing shortage of people who are willing to take on that responsibility” (p. viii). As increased student performance on standardized tests is expected, the demand on school leadership increases. A constant battle to fill staff positions, retain quality teachers, lower drop out rates, and make the school a safe place for all combine to add to the pressure on school leaders. In fact, Little (2000) states that “it is increasingly implausible that we could improve the performance of schools, attract and retain talented teachers, or make sensible demands upon administrators without promoting leadership in teaching by teachers” (p. 390).

It has become apparent that one person cannot be called upon to successfully provide the leadership needed in a school. The principal alone cannot be expected to single handedly address every issue of leadership facing a campus. It takes the staff members stepping into leadership roles to fulfill all of the demands of school leadership. Barth (1990) states that “if the principal tries to do all of it, much of it will be left undone by anyone” (p. 128). Teacher leadership is moving to the forefront in response to

This record of study follows the style of *Qualitative Inquiry*.

the growing need for increased school leadership. School reforms are inviting teachers to participate in the restructuring of schools (Urbanski & Nickolaou, 1997).

Shared leadership looks different from the conventional school leadership model that shows the principal alone at the top. Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) and Urbanski and Nickolaou (1997) agree that one part of effective teacher leadership is a change in the relationship between teacher leaders and their principals. This need not, in truth must not, be viewed by principals as a loss of power, but instead as an opportunity to extend or leverage their power (Barth, 2001).

Teachers demonstrate leadership in a variety of ways. In many cases, the definition and performance of teacher leadership may be influenced and understood within the organizational structure (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Some teacher leadership roles are formal while others can be considered informal. Some roles are a permanent fixture on campus while others are temporary in nature. O'Hair and Reitzug (1997) observed that teacher leaders engage teachers, students, and community in public problem solving. The list of potential roles for teacher leaders can be a long one.

Communication skills and positive relationships with fellow teachers were noted as part of the characteristics of teacher leaders (Brownlee, 1979). Each district and even each campus may present different opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles. This makes it difficult to describe all aspects of teacher leadership in a single statement. This variation of opportunities makes it difficult to create a single all encompassing definition of teacher leadership.

The connection between teacher leadership and school effectiveness is difficult to define. Schools and districts use a wide variety of measures to indicate effectiveness and student progress. Beginning with Ronald Edmond's statement in the 1970's that "all children can learn", attempts to resolutely define an effective school continue. The list of possible measures of school effectiveness is numerous as Jansen (1995) indicates, following the 1979 work of Edmonds, that researchers produced lists of characteristics of effective schools that had from 10 to 29 different items on the lists. While much research into teacher leadership has taken place, the link between teacher leadership and student performance has yet to be firmly established.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that much research has been reported on the need for teacher leadership, the impact that teacher leadership has on school effectiveness is still unclear. After a quantitative review of student achievement rates and teacher leadership, Burr (2003) states that in spite of state requirements that teachers participate in school leadership, the impact on student achievement is still in question. While it is clear that one of the goals of teacher leadership is an increase in student performance, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) and Donaldson (2001) acknowledge that the direct link between teacher leadership and school effectiveness in regard to student scores is difficult to establish.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the role that teacher leadership plays in school effectiveness. Principals and other school leaders need to know how and where teacher leadership impacts student success so they can direct financial and personnel resources toward those areas as they seek to improve schools. Insight gained from this report should be used to help district and campus administrators better understand how campus leadership that includes teachers impacts school effectiveness.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. What leadership roles do teachers in the two schools in the study play in producing school effectiveness?
2. What evidence shows that teacher leadership is impacting school effectiveness?

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2005), it is a system of accountability that pulls together a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and school district in Texas every year. The information used in the system includes passing rate by grade, by subject, and by all grades tested on the state administered TAKS test. This test replaced the TAAS test in the 2002-03 school year. AEIS also includes state developed

alternative assessment performance, student success initiative, attendance rate for the full year, dropout rate (by year), graduation and dropout rate (4-year longitudinal), percent of high school students completing an advanced placement course, percent of graduates completing the Recommended High School Program, AP and IB examination results, TAAS/TASP equivalency rate, and SAT and ACT examination – participation and results. Performance on each of these indicators is shown disaggregated by ethnicity, sex, special education, low income status, and limited English proficient status. The reports also include extensive information on school and district staff, finances, programs, and demographics.

2. Teacher Leadership. Teacher leadership is defined and will exist when teachers are recognized by other teachers as excellent in the classroom, influence the lives of adults as well as students, play a central role in promoting change which improves the quality of education, promote and exercise good communication skills, and perform or take on leadership roles outside of the classroom.

Assumptions

1. In the real world, events and phenomena cannot be extricated from the context in which they are embedded, and understanding involves the interrelationships among all of the many parts of the whole.

2. The naturalistic inquiry mode used in this study is based on unfolding realities resulting in a design that unfolds over time and is never complete until the inquiry is arbitrarily terminated as time resources, and other logistical considerations dictate. It is

in this type of study that the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life are examined (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997).

3. Validity is assured through personalized, intimate understanding of phenomena stressing first hand observations to achieve factual, reliable, and confirmable data.

4. Transferability to other settings is a direct function of the similarity between two contexts. It is determined by the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts.

Limitations

Generalizations are suspect, at best, and knowledge from this study relates best only to this context. Transferability of findings to other settings should be made only with due consideration of their appropriateness for the receiving contexts.

Significance of the Study

A direct link between teachers in leadership positions and school effectiveness has not been clearly established. Teachers must take a more active role in school leadership and restructuring (Wasley, 1992). This study looked at schools that were rated as exemplary by the TEA in 2002 in the attempt to discover and describe any impact that teacher leadership had on the effectiveness of the school. The results of this study provide insight on the impact that teacher leadership has on effectiveness in the classroom. The results should also inform school administrators of how to allocate resources in order to foster and sustain teacher leadership and student performance.

Overview

This record of study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction to the study. Chapter II provides a review of teacher leadership literature. Chapter III discusses the naturalistic inquiry methodology used in the study. School selection, data collection, and data analysis are discussed. Chapter IV presents the written descriptions of teacher leadership found on both campuses. These descriptions are followed by a summary section that compares the findings on both campuses. Chapter V consists of the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and future research. In order to protect confidentiality pseudonyms are used in this study.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Leading a school is a daunting task. Donaldson (2001) stated that his “30 years as a public educator have been rife with claims that schools, in general, have not been well led.” Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) offer that “neither superintendents nor principals can carry out the leadership role by themselves.” Witcher (2001) asks the question “How can leadership be practiced within the schools?” She responds to her own question by stating, “The definition also must expand to address leadership by all members of the school...”

The involvement of teachers in the leadership of the school has been given many names. Participatory, shared, collaborative, and distributed have all been used to describe a style of school governance that includes teachers in the decision making process. The need for expanded leadership in schools is growing more critical as the pressure to increase student performance on standardized tests increases. As the need to improve the effectiveness of schools increases, it becomes more certain that one person, namely the principal, cannot meet all of the leadership demands. The call for higher levels of student achievement alone requires that leadership be extended to persons other than the administrators on a campus. School accountability is only one reason leadership must include teachers.

Little (2000) states that “it is increasingly implausible what we could improve the performance of schools, attract and retain talented teachers, or make sensible demands

upon administrators without promoting leadership in teaching by teachers” (p. 390). Barth (1990) states that “if the principal tries to do all of it, much of it will be left undone by anyone” (p. 128). “Successful leaders develop and count on contributions from many others in their organizations” (Leithwood et al. 2004). In this time of demand for increased student performance, Urbanski and Nickolaou (1997) offer that if reform is expected to succeed, teachers must assume a role in leadership. They go on to suggest that strengthened teacher leadership is protection from educational fads and implausible reform proposals. The work of educating students and that of improving the effectiveness of schools demands that leadership come from many different places in the schoolhouse. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995), in their review of professional development schools, offer that a new type of teacher leadership is coming from these schools that is not formalized by title and assigned roles. This description could fit into many schools as teachers see needs and rise to meet those needs with or without being selected by the principal, or having a title given to their leadership position.

The connection between teacher leadership and school effectiveness is difficult to define. In consideration of school organization, Leithwood et al. (2004) state that effective schools “support and sustain the performance of administrators and teachers, as well as students.” When viewed in the light of student achievement, teacher leadership and the impact it plays is difficult to measure. From Ronald Edmond’s statement in the 1970’s that “all children can learn”, attempts to resolutely define an effective school continue. While it may be difficult to prove, the link between teacher leadership and

school effectiveness is something that is intuitively known by many in the teaching profession. While the Texas legislature mandates that teachers participate in school leadership, the impact on student achievement is still in question (Burr, 2003).

In an effort to pursue a greater understanding of the role of teacher leadership in school effectiveness, this paper focuses on two questions:

1. What leadership roles do teachers in the two schools in the study play in producing school effectiveness?

2. What evidence shows that teacher leadership is impacting school effectiveness?

To provide background for addressing these questions, this chapter will examine several aspects of teacher leadership. A definition of teacher leadership based on the literature will be followed by a look at teacher leadership roles, the benefits of teacher leadership, factors that support teacher leadership, factors that inhibit teacher leadership, and the products of teacher leadership.

A Definition of Teacher Leadership

In consideration of the concept of school leadership, Leithwood et al. (2004) posit that “leadership is a highly complex concept. Like health, law, beauty, excellence and countless other complex concepts, efforts to define leadership too narrowly are more likely to trivialize than clarify its meaning” (p. 20). The research on teacher leadership is beginning to shed some light on the practices and work of teacher leaders. One problem is that each district and even each campus may witness different opportunities for

teacher leadership to emerge. Even the role of department head, possibly the most common teacher leadership position, has no common and widely recognized description (Little, 1995). This makes it difficult to describe all aspects of teacher leadership in a concise statement. This variation of opportunities makes an all encompassing definition elusive. Commenting on a definition of teacher leadership, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) state that “even now we are a long way from a common understanding of teacher leadership” (p. 4).

In her 1992 study of three teacher leaders, Wasley noted that developing a definition of teacher leadership was difficult. She also notes that “everyone in the educational community had a different interpretation of the teacher leader’s role, the purpose, and how the time should be spent” (p. 138). Smylie and Denny (1990) note that the definition and performance of teacher leadership may be influenced and understood within the organizational structure. Through observation we know what teacher leaders do in most cases, but with the large variations in duties performed, titles, levels of responsibility, and acceptance by school administration, the best definition is more than likely one based on broad classifications of behaviors.

Camacho, Evans, Hobson, Hook, Slaton, and Willey (2002) in citing Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner, (2000) state that “teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice; and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement” (p. 5). This definition is based on the behaviors of teachers who assume leadership roles and seems to encompass many of the activities involved

with leading a school. It is difficult to separate the roles that teacher leaders fill from a definition of teacher leadership.

A central purpose of teacher leadership is to improve the teaching profession and assist in school reform (Smylie & Denny, 1990). In a case study by Suranna and Moss (1999), one participant is quoted as saying, “A teacher leader is one who can take his or her qualities, and share them with other teachers for the good of students.” Paulu and Winters (1998) concluded:

- most teachers have a conventional definition of teacher leadership that focuses the role;
- leadership roles can be assigned;
- leadership roles are often administrative;
- teacher leadership activities include directing, coordinating, and commanding;
- most literature on teacher leadership is about leadership on the school level;
- teacher leaders are often also leaders in the community; and
- democratic and constructivist teacher leadership focuses on acts rather than on roles.

Communication skills and positive relationships with fellow teachers were noted as part of the characteristics of teacher leaders (Brownlee, 1979). Lieberman and Miller (2004) reviewed the work of Miles, Saxl, and Lieberman and noted that teacher leaders in the study quickly discovered that building collegial relationships was a complicated process. Barth (2001) noted that teacher leaders influence the adults around them, while

Andrew (1974) shows that teacher leaders play a role in improving the quality of education.

Fullan (1999) viewed teacher leaders as moral change agents. Odell (1997) concluded that teacher leadership is an exercise of significant and responsible influence. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) describe their definition as an “evolving work in progress” and then offer that “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice” (2001, p. 5).

“The teacher leader is... a master teacher and curriculum leader, devoting talents to stimulating planning and implementation of curricular change” (Andrew, 1974, p. 5). He continues to define teacher leadership by saying that it “is not meant to refer to administrative or bureaucratic leadership; rather a central role for teachers is promoting change which improves the quality of education” (p. 7). For this paper, teacher leadership is defined and will exist when teachers are recognized by other teachers as excellent in the classroom, influence the lives of adults as well as students, play a central role in promoting change which improves the quality of education, promote and exercise good communication skills, and perform or take on leadership roles outside of the classroom.

Teacher Leadership Roles

Teachers fill a wide range of roles in terms of school leadership. Witcher (2001) indicates that teachers are working in leadership when they influence instructional

methods, choose textbooks, and decide how to evaluate students. Wilson (1993)

provided the following “sketch” of teacher leaders based on responses from teachers:

- they are hard working and highly involved with curricular and instructional innovation;
- their creativity is demonstrated by their power to motivate students from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities;
- they are gregarious and make themselves available to other teachers as a resource or an advocate; and
- they energetically sponsor extra curricular activities for young people (p. 24).

Barth (2001) shares that one study he considered suggested ten areas in which teacher leadership was essential. The list included textbook selection, curriculum, standards for student behavior, student tracking, staff development, promotion and retention policies, budgets, teacher evaluations, selecting new staff, and selecting new administrators. Smylie (1992) indicates that teacher leadership roles include mentor teacher, lead teacher, work on school improvement teams, teacher led principal advisory councils, and developing and implementing new curriculum and instructional programs.

Giba (1998) suggested from her own work as a principal that teacher collaboration, working as a vertical team representative, and providing input into hiring and scheduling decisions all were areas in which teachers could be empowered in leadership roles. Teacher leadership will appear in different ways on different campuses. Each school will have various leadership roles that will need to be filled. Some will be standing roles such as department head or team leader. Some roles may be temporary,

and others will be less defined and less formal such as the creation of a writing lab based on student scores on written examinations.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) state that “we believe that all teachers can select appropriate leadership roles for themselves, given their own experience, confidence level, skill, and knowledge” (p. 11). They go on to cite a Hewitt-Gervais survey in which teachers identified 167 different teacher leadership roles. A follow up study produced 182 leadership roles. They suggest that teacher leadership roles may be:

- focused on the classroom, the school, the school district, the state or national level;
- closely related to a specific discipline or defined as generalist;
- as an individual contributor or may require the teacher leader to be involved in group or team interactions;
- highly formalized or simply a one time contribution; or
- chosen by election of peers, by appointment through administrators, or by self election.

O’Hair and Reitzug (1997) observed that teacher leaders engage teachers, students, and community in public problem solving. Suranna and Moss (1999) stated that a major role of the teacher leaders is taking a stand, going against the grain, standing up for what you believe in, and challenging convention. Smylie (1995) noted that “the most visible opportunities for teacher leadership have come from now familiar forms of work redesign, career ladder, lead, master, and mentor teacher roles, and participatory decision making” (p. 3). He continues and adds innovations in curriculum and

instruction, teacher pre service and in service education, and the development of new school structures and professional communities. Odell (1997) has suggested that roles for teacher leaders have traditionally been formal and assigned, such as department chairs.

Camacho et al. cited Ryan's (1999) conclusion that the role of teacher leader is to improve fellow teachers' teaching skills, to influence staff, to accept change, and to share expertise. They go on to cite Fullan's (1999) work with principals who were involved in developing teacher leaders. When the principals were asked, "In what ways do teachers act as leaders?" the principals identified sharing in decision making and collaborative planning, especially of curriculum adaptation and implementation. In a review of the work in professional development schools, Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) noted that "teachers lead problem solving endeavors within and beyond school boundaries and participate in research within and beyond their classroom walls" (p. 90). They go on to say that these teacher leaders reflect on practice and transform as well as generate knowledge.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in their Legislative Recommendations for High School Reform (2005), indicate that teacher leaders must play a role in schools by stating "...wherein leadership throughout the institution (including team and teacher leaders) refocuses its work on what will successfully support every student in their high school experience" (p. 11). Along the lines of school success or reforms, Dozier (2002) suggests that unless teachers are

involved in addressing the challenges facing schools today, any changes will be misguided or short lived.

The interactions and relationships among school leaders and other school personnel provide important implications for defining leadership roles in schools. As referenced above, Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) suggest that these new relationships are complex and complicated. Odell (1997) identified two problems with formal teacher leadership roles. First, the roles are often undefined and second, teacher leadership often leads to resentment by other teachers.

In a quantitative study, Leithwood and Jantzi (1998) found that teachers identified three types of leadership roles: department head, committee member, and individual teacher leadership. The researchers found that individual teacher leadership had the greatest impact in elementary schools and that department heads had greatest impact in secondary schools.

Teacher leaders today work in an educational setting in which responsibilities change often. Student and program needs cannot always be predicted so as to have a teacher leader already in place to address the needs. If standardized test scores drop in the area of writing, a writing lab may be implemented by a teacher. If no such need is present, a lab may not exist, and that teacher leadership role would then not exist. The roles of teacher leaders seem, in many cases, to evolve out of what teachers and administrators see on their campus, as well as out of their own personal teaching experiences. This flexibility mixed with any formal teacher leadership roles creates a large number of opportunities for teacher leadership roles to emerge. As many

researchers have noted, the effort to improve the quality of the educational programming of a school encourages, if not demands, that teacher leadership play a large part.

Benefits of Teacher Leadership

Locating and reporting on definitive results of teacher leadership in terms of school effectiveness and student achievement has proven difficult. While many make statements about the benefits of teacher leadership, true benefits of the work are difficult to prove. Barth (1999) states that “when teachers lead, principals extend their own capacity. I think of teacher leadership as the act of having a positive influence on the school as well as within the classroom. Schools badly need the leadership of teachers” (p. 17). In another article, Barth (2001) stated that what the teacher does outside the classroom in terms of leadership enhances what takes place inside the classroom. He suggests that the lives of teachers are enriched and energized and that they help shape their schools as well as their destiny. Donaldson (2001) suggests that any results from school leadership lack uniformity and are likely found in the interactions between students and staff, making them difficult to detect.

Supovitz (2000) suggests that if teachers are leading, principals will have more time for their work as instructional leaders on their campuses. Neuman and Simmons (2000) offer that when both authority and responsibility are shared with teachers, that “real improvements take root and survive, and students’ opportunities to achieve at high levels are increased” (p. 10). Buckner and McDowelle (2000) suggest that teachers are uniquely suited to address school reform issues due to daily contact with students, teachers, and the instructional program of the school. Urbanski and Nickolaou (1997)

suggest that during the growth of teacher leadership in the 1980's, a common bottom line purpose for teachers to enter into school leadership was to increase student learning.

Childs-Bowen et al. (2000) offer that the success in schools occurs when school leaders, both administrators and teachers, work together for school change. Ovando (1994) indicates that when teachers engage in the decision making process that this increases teacher empowerment and advances professionalism. Ovando goes on to quote Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth in regard to the contributions teachers can make to the school decision making process when they write that “teachers have important information, that participation advances professionalism, that when teachers share in decision making, they become committed to the decision and they feel a sense of ownership”. Witcher (2001) offers that teachers possess a unique interest in school improvement issues. Since teachers are on the front lines everyday, they have a unique perspective on school issues and improvement. A benefit of teachers in leadership roles is the perspective from which they view change and reform. It is to the benefit of school administration to seek out the input of classroom teachers in regard to school improvement issues. The view from the classroom is very different from the view from an administrator's office.

Barth (2001) suggests that the students, school, teachers, and the principal all benefit when teacher leadership is in place. With the highly diverse offerings on most secondary campuses, this makes sense. Students benefit when teachers are fully informed and work to make reforms and improvements take hold. The school benefits as effectiveness increases as teachers feel like they are a part of the decision making

process on campus. Hart (1995) suggests that as teachers increase in power and voice, the school begins to benefit from an underutilized resource. As school and teacher effectiveness increases, students are better able to increase their achievement. The teachers benefit as they feel empowered and valued in the educational process. The principal benefits from being able to spend time on issues beyond the managerial demands of the job.

Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest that it is important for teachers to participate in decision making in at least four perspectives. Teachers involved in decisions help gain teacher compliance with decisions and build loyalty. Second, participation enhances teachers' organizational roles as professional decision makers. Third, teachers involved in school decisions have enhanced job satisfaction, morale, and self efficacy and avoid the feelings of powerlessness and alienation. Finally, including teachers in decision making better uses the "intellectual capacities distributed throughout the organization" (p. 53). These researchers also suggest that time spent by teachers working on major school improvement initiatives may add to the professionalism of the role.

Factors That Support Teacher Leadership

One of the most promising parts of teacher leadership is that it is so multifaceted. As described above, one reason a solid and complete definition or description of teacher leadership is elusive is because it can be so many different things on a campus. Hart (1995) suggests the loosely coupled structure of schools creates many ways for teachers to exercise influence in schools.

In their study on professional development schools (PDS), Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) state that these schools enable teacher leadership and can work toward creating future teachers who naturally assume leadership as part of their work in schools. The support found in these schools for teacher leadership finds strength as the commonly found hierarchical system of school leadership is challenged. The expectation in these schools is that teachers will exert influence and leadership in their schools. In the PDS model of restructuring schools, “professional leadership [develops] intrinsically in connection with systemic organizational change within a school” (p. 103). Teachers know best, by their immediate contact with students, what is needed and what stands a good chance of working. These researchers feel that PDS’s provide the support that teachers need to step into leadership.

Another way to support teacher leadership is the direct involvement of teachers, as well as other school stakeholders, in the leadership work of creating the mission, purpose, and culture of a school as cited by Neuman and Simmons (2000). Rather than assigning roles to people, they call for a blurring of leadership roles. Schools that incorporate school governance that includes teachers acknowledge that leadership is “no longer seen as a function of age, position, or job title” (p. 10).

A change in the climate and culture of schools is needed to support teacher leadership. It is necessary to change from the traditional top down style of school leadership and decision making to one that supports collaborative leadership. Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (2000) noted that experienced teacher leaders named school climate and the style of the administrator as critical components of the school culture. Little (2000)

offered that the greatest challenge to teacher leadership is preparing the school and the teaching profession to begin thinking about the necessary paradigm shift regarding authority in schools. She further suggests that foundational changes to thoughts about the occupation of teaching will then take place. School culture is one of the determining factors when using teacher leadership (Childs- Bowen et al. 2000).

Harris and Drake (1997) recommend that in order to create a school culture that will sustain teacher leadership, administrators must clearly define goals and allow time for the staff to make sense of ongoing problems. Allowing time for the culture or climate of a school to change is an important step toward increasing teacher leadership. These researchers also suggest that a culture must be created in which control is not found in the principal, but rather the principal supports teachers and creates opportunities for them to develop and grow.

Any attempt to look at what would support teacher leadership on a school campus must take into account the role of the principal. Leithwood et al. (2004) comment that intervention by a powerful leader is present when troubled schools are turned around. While superintendents and principals are probably the most influential sources, they offer that educational leadership comes from a variety of sources. Among a list of ways principals can be successful in today's school accountability systems, the researchers suggest that principals must "empower others to make significant decisions" (p. 27).

Barth (2004) suggests that the principal can create or stop almost everything that takes place on a school campus. This would include teacher leadership on any given

campus. In her review of research on teacher leadership, Conley (1991) states the first dimension of participation in teacher leadership is principals delegating specific decisions to teachers. This blends with Hart's (1995) statement that as teachers increase their influence on a campus, the principal must learn to be a collaborative and sharing leader.

Without the principal's support, encouragement, and acceptance of teacher leadership on the campus, there is little hope that it will impact the school. Barth (2001) makes this point clear when he states that teachers may "exercise leadership independently, but few can successfully undertake a school improvement initiative without support from the school principal" (p. 447). Barth continues as he describes the principal as the "culture builder". He suggests that principals should expect teachers to lead, relinquish power (authority) to teacher leaders, trust teachers with power, empower teachers to participate in decision making, include teachers based on their passions, protect teachers by showing support, recognize the efforts of teacher leaders, share the responsibility for failure, and give teachers credit for successes.

Little (2000) suggests that "a school culture is conducive to leadership by teachers when teachers are in one another's classrooms for purposes of seeing, learning from, commenting on, and planning for one another's work with students" (p. 399). Principals support teacher leadership by creating and sustaining a culture that includes these things. In looking at school restructuring efforts at 24 schools, King, Louis, Marks, and Peterson (1996) found that the role of the principal was crucial in developing teacher leadership. Encouraging commitment to the school mission, nurturing teacher decision

making, creating time for teachers to lead, encouraging experimentation, and protecting teachers from outside pressure were all identified as ways the principal can support teacher leadership.

Camacho et al. (2002) cited Leithwood and Menzies (1998) study of 77 studies that found that to develop teacher leadership it is necessary to:

- provide training for teachers;
- encourage intense collaboration with colleagues;
- provide opportunities for teachers to participate in state and national networks;
- articulate the effects of teacher leadership on students;
- clarify teacher roles and tasks;
- encourage participation that focuses on student learning;
- support teacher leadership with appropriate funding; and
- place limits on individual teachers' involvement to prevent overwork and stress.

Principals can create support for teacher leadership by reviewing the structure of school leadership on campus. Odell (1997) suggests that if schools were more professionalized and better organized, that leaders would naturally evolve. Moller (1999) suggests that if teachers are to assume leadership roles, they need to better understand the benefits of teacher leadership. If teachers see paths to leadership and clearly see the positive impact of being on those paths, there is a greater possibility that teacher leadership will exist on campus.

Parker and Leithwood (2000) studied five schools with varying degrees of teacher leadership present and identified characteristics in the schools that led to high levels of teacher leadership. The principals had good communication skills, enthusiasm, and staff appreciation combined with an ability to build consensus and collaboration. Donaldson (2001) suggests that relationships, commitment to mutual purpose, and common action are three “streams” that flow together to create and expand leadership in schools. He argues that the relationship stream is the most powerful and it makes a common purpose and common action possible.

Factors That Inhibit Teacher Leadership

Beyond the commonly known and reported fact that most people resist any attempt to change, some specific barriers to teacher leadership do exist. While citing Bondy, Harris and Drake (1997) acknowledge that one barrier is the lack of a clear definition of teacher leadership. Odell (1997) acknowledged the lack of a clearly defined role by stating that it is often undefined in schools. If teachers have difficulty grasping a clear definition or role for teacher leadership, they have a greater chance of not seeing themselves as leaders, and thus they may not step out and lead. Until definitions and roles for teacher leaders are better understood and shared, positively impacting student achievement by sustaining teacher leadership will be problematic.

As described above, the culture of schools needs to change to sustain teacher participation in leadership. In a school where the principal is a strong advocate of teacher leadership, it can have a great impact on school effectiveness. If the principal is the only

one strongly supporting teacher leadership and this principal leaves before the culture changes, the negative side of the culture impacts teacher leadership. If the culture has not been changed to expect and accept teacher leadership, the school stands a good chance of losing ground in terms of teacher leadership impacting the school. Hinde (2003) suggests that if changes are to be effected on a campus, a culture of change must be established.

LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) argue that teacher leaders lack skills to resolve the conflicts that arise between administrators and other teachers. Leadership skills are typically not included in pre service training. This training would help teacher leaders handle the inevitable conflicts that arise. Conflict can arise from teachers resenting teacher leaders. This resentment can stem from several places, but one prominent place seems to be that teacher leaders break the norm of the egalitarian nature of schools.

Mitchell (1997) indicated that cultural norms of individualism represent a barrier to teacher leadership. Donaldson (2001) also suggests that this is the case when school leaders rarely have time to meet when it is not forced upon them. He also suggests that an inhibitive factor of teacher leadership is the individualistic way teachers typically work. Donaldson calls this the planetary culture of schools and goes on to liken teachers to a system of planets. Each planet follows its own orbit. If this is projected further, just the same way planets do not cross orbits with each other, teachers, in a school culture that supports individualistic work, will not come in contact with each other. Teacher leadership requires that teachers break out of their orbits in order to form relationships with each other.

When teachers step into leadership roles, they sometimes are viewed negatively by their peers. Smylie and Denny (1990) suggest that teachers may be one of the biggest barriers to teacher leadership. They suggested that any attempt to restructure schools may be rejected by the very ones it is intended to help. The norm of individualism needs to be addressed if teacher leadership is to increase its impact on schools. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) discuss rejection by peers and administrators as a negative aspect of teachers in leadership roles. Donaldson (2001), Barth (2004), and Lieberman and Miller (2004) all mention relationships that must be addressed and changed in many cases between teacher leaders and other teachers, as well as between teacher leaders and school administrators. The years old version of school hierarchy is not applicable if a model of teacher leadership is adopted. Challenging those long held beliefs by many in education is proving to be difficult work for aspiring teacher leaders and principals who support them.

Wynne (2001) suggests that several other barriers exist including too little time, rigid school schedules, unrelated instructional tasks, lack of support from peers and administrators, and an overemphasis on standardized test scores. Time is mentioned often as a restraint to teacher leadership. Wynne (2001), Ryan (1999), LeBlanc and Sheldon (1997), and Blegen and Kennedy (2000) all suggest that the lack of time inhibits teacher leadership. Additional meetings, looking into innovations or improvements, seeking input from peers, visiting other schools, and keeping up with current trends are all involved in leadership. All of these involve time and all of them keep teachers from fulfilling commitments to their own classrooms.

While time is problematic in many cases, Ovando (1994) found that teachers in leadership roles indicated that increased job satisfaction and increased insight into teaching practices compensated for time stresses. In a meta-analysis of barriers to teacher leadership, Leithwood and Menzies (1998) found that excessive time demands was cited more than any other barrier. In addition, the literature showed that a lack of personal and collegial reflection (Moller, 1999), teachers thinking that teacher leadership is simply the latest temporary wave of reform, (Mooney, 1994), and a lack of professional identity (Mitchell, 1997) were all listed as barriers to teacher leadership.

The Products of Teacher Leadership

The literature does not have much research that directly connects teacher leadership to school improvement or effectiveness. While it makes sense intuitively that teachers participating in leadership would improve the school and thus improve school effectiveness, it is difficult to directly trace the link. In their review of literature in regard to how school leadership influences student learning, Leithwood et al. (2004) state that “the major shortcoming in much of this research, however, is that it does not identify leadership practices that are successful in improving conditions in the school classroom suggested by this research, nor does it help unpack the skills” (p. 11). They later state that a “considerable amount of research concerning leadership effects on students has tried to measure direct effects; rarely does this form of research find any effects at all” (p. 13). However, as one part of effective school leadership practices, they do offer that teachers participating in decision making can potentially impact student

learning. Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) suggest that not enough is known about the dynamics of how teacher leadership impacts schools, even though research seems to be optimistic about the connection.

Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) offer that teacher leadership is connected to teacher learning and that this learning is likely to improve school responses to student needs. In a description of the study, these researchers then state that the case studies they reviewed “did not assemble evidence that teachers’ engagement in new roles yields greater learning for students” (p. 89). In her description of bureaucratic and professional perspectives of teachers in leadership, Conley (1991) indicates that both models “exclude direct consideration of students and parents, yet both assume that participation is good for the school” (p. 230).

In spite of the fact that research is not illuminating a direct link between teacher leadership and school effectiveness or student achievement, several other benefits of teacher leadership are touted. Barth (2001) suggests that teachers move from being tenants at the school to “owners and investors in the school” (p. 449). He also suggests they become professionals. Childs-Bowen et al. (2000) suggest that significant and continuous improvement happens when leadership includes teachers. Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) offer that as teacher leaders become knowledge producers and shapers that they powerfully use knowledge beyond their classrooms.

In her description of teachers demonstrating leadership in teacher coaching roles, Guiney (2001) offers that student scores on standardized tests are higher at many of the schools that have used teacher leaders in this way. Lieberman and Miller (2004) offer

that when teachers lead, they impact the entire school community. They also suggest that teacher leadership can “make schools work for everyone in them...” (p. 90). Crowther et al. (2002) suggest that in schools where reforms are in place, teachers are essential leaders.

Summary

If schools are to be led well, the size of the task facing school leaders is too great for any one individual to handle. The idea of leadership must be expanded to include teachers. The myriad of tasks and roles fulfilled by teacher leaders make a single, all encompassing definition of teacher leadership elusive. It is in fact this multifaceted aspect of teacher leadership that makes it so necessary in schools.

Among the events and environs that encourage and support teacher leadership on a school campus, the role of the principal is powerful. It makes intuitive sense that a system as complex as a school would benefit richly from a continual focus on including teachers in school leadership and decision making. The principal will be the one to decide if teachers will be included in school leadership. Barth (2001, 2004), Leithwood et al. (2004), Conley (1991), King et al. (1996), all cite the important role the principal plays in supporting teacher leadership.

Teachers touch the school at the very core of its existence – in the classroom. They more than any other member of the education community know what is needed, what will work, and how best to implement any reform. While a direct link between teacher leadership and student achievement is difficult to trace or prove, the list of

possible benefits and products of teacher leadership make it worth any and all efforts to create and sustain the inclusion of teachers in school leadership.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research into teacher leadership has used both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In the latter I see an opportunity to study teacher leadership from within the school setting. Through my own experiences in education, both as a teacher and as an administrator, qualitative research techniques appeared to me to be a good match for studying teacher leadership. Due to my desire to be on campus conducting research, I chose naturalistic inquiry as my methodology. The procedures used are those described by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993). A question posed early in their book struck a positive note with me when they ask, “What’s happening here?” (p. 10). I wanted my research project to answer that question in terms of teacher leadership. Being on a campus to answer that question is necessary.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) also influenced the gathering and reporting of my research as they describe the process of portraiture as a research methodology. They indicate that the resulting narrative “...attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history.” (p. 11). Choosing schools in which to conduct my research was the first step.

Selecting the Schools

The naturalistic practice of purposive sampling was used to select schools for my research. According to Erlandson et al. (1993) purposive sampling seeks to “maximize the range of specific information” that can be obtained from and about that context. (p.

33). I was looking for schools that would more than likely provide me with a sufficient amount of quality data from which to write my report.

I limited my search for schools to high school campuses that had been rated in 2002 by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as exemplary based on the student scores on the standardized Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. I chose only high schools due to the fact that all of my personal experience in both teaching and administration has been in secondary schools. I chose exemplary schools because I wanted to see what, if any, impact teacher leadership played in the ratings. The final criteria used for selection was that the schools needed to be located in the Region IV Educational Service Center in Houston, Texas. This criterion was used due to my need for schools that were in close proximity to me. In terms of time that I would be able to spend on the campuses and the need for in depth study, I chose to conduct research on two campuses.

My search of the TEA website produced several schools from which to choose. Based on proximity, I chose two suburban school districts in Region IV. After consulting with my committee chairman, two different districts were chosen. My next step was to interview a district level administrator to see if they could confirm the presence of teacher leadership at any of the exemplary campuses in the district. In Carr City Independent School District (ISD), I met with the superintendent of schools. In Danton ISD, I met with an assistant superintendent, who was also the former principal of the high school I used for my study. My committee chairman knew this assistant superintendent.

At the recommendation of the superintendent, Franklin High School was chosen in Carr City ISD. She provided me with the names and phone numbers of the former and current principal, and she informed me of the process by which I could gain approval to conduct research at Franklin. The school is a large suburban high school that serves approximately 2,100 students. The building opened in the fall of 1992. The teaching staff of 150 works with a student population that is 51.9% White, 29% African American, 9.6% Hispanic, 9.3% Asian, and .2% Native American.

The teaching staff at Franklin is 82% White, 11% African American, 4% Hispanic, and 2.6% Asian. Sixty-three percent of the teachers is female, and 29% have more than twenty years of teaching experience. Fifty-four percent of the staff has 11 or more years of total teaching experience. The school is located in a fast growing section of the county.

In Danton ISD, the principal (the one with which my committee chairman was familiar) of one of the exemplary schools had accepted a central office position. I contacted him directly and secured a meeting date to introduce my study and to seek his input as to whether his former school would be a good choice for my research. After listening to my plan to study teacher leadership, he agreed that Jackson High School would be a good choice. He then informed me of the procedures for me to gain district approval to conduct research on the campus. Jackson is a large suburban high school serving approximately 3,100 students. 190 teachers serve a student population that is 76.1% White, 10.4% Asian, 8.8% Hispanic, 4.5% African American, and .2% Native American. Like Franklin, Jackson is situated in a fast growing part of the county.

The teaching staff at Jackson is 92% White, 2% African American, 4% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. Seventy percent of the staff is female. Sixteen percent of the staff members have more than 20 years of total teaching experience. Forty-two percent of the staff has more than 11 or more years of teaching experience. My purposive sampling was complete and the schools I had chosen were confirmed by district personnel as having good potential to provide rich data in regard to teacher leadership.

Data Collection

After selecting the schools, my plan was to meet with the former and current principals of the two campuses, to confirm that teacher leadership played a role on the campus, and then to begin to gather names of teachers to be interviewed. I also planned to observe as many leadership meetings as I could to gather information on the interactions in those meetings.

Danton ISD central office personnel felt that I was asking for too much time by suggesting a 45-minute interview with each teacher who was recommended to me by the principal. In response, I developed a survey instrument that sought to give teachers a chance to indicate their level of involvement in several areas of school leadership (See Appendix A). The final page of this instrument offered teachers the opportunity to indicate their willingness to participate in a follow up interview via phone, electronic mail (email), or personal interview. I used this instrument on both campuses. My use of this survey instrument was simply to procure names of teachers who would be willing to participate in interviews with me. I did not intend to put the responses through any type

of analysis other than to check for any frequency patterns that appeared in terms of the categories. In reviewing and reporting on my data, the instrument itself played a small role.

My first contact with Carr City ISD was in August, 2004 when I met with the superintendent. I met with Susan Hale, the former principal two times with our first meeting being held in December. We had several conversations via email. I conducted a combined total of five personal interviews with Franklin administrators. I attended five leadership team meetings on the campus. Nine teachers participated with me in interviews via email. These nine teachers averaged 9.5 years on the Franklin campus and all had been on the campus when Susan Hale was the principal. These nine teachers were department leaders who responded after I contacted each of them personally by email. Since the initial surveys were anonymous, I do not know if any of these teachers were among the completed surveys I received.

My first contact with Danton ISD was in September 2004 when I met with Chris Long an assistant superintendent. Chris was also the former principal at Jackson. I met with Chris two times. I attended five leadership meetings on the campus. I conducted a total of four personal interviews with Jackson administrators. Eight teachers participated with me in interviews via email. These eight teachers averaged five years of service on the campus during the six years the building has been open. Each respondent was a department head who had responded after I contacted each of them personally by email. As with Franklin, because the initial survey was anonymous, I do not know if these teachers were among those who completed the survey.

In regard to both campuses, the possibility of selection bias among the teachers was a concern since all respondents were on the campuses throughout the transition period described in this study. But I believe that the richness of knowledge provided by these campus leaders who had a broader perspective of the entire period of the study's focus had great positive benefit. Due to the amount of time on the campus, they each had a wealth of knowledge about campus leadership that emerged in their responses. Their comments and insights provided details from which I could begin the construction my descriptions of teacher leadership on each campus.

On both campuses I was invited to attend a department leader meeting so that I could introduce myself and my study. Printed surveys were made available to the teachers at Franklin. The principal emailed the teaching staff and encouraged them to participate by filling out the survey and turning completed surveys in to the main office. She also mentioned the survey in her weekly meeting with department heads. The principal at Jackson emailed the survey to her teachers with a note of introduction and also encouraged her staff to participate by filling out the survey and bringing it to the office. Her teacher leaders were also asked to participate. After talking with both principals, both campuses were given three weeks to complete the surveys.

In an attempt to help me understand the social context of the workings among school leaders (Erlandson et al., 1993), observations were used to collect data. I asked and was granted permission by the current principals to attend department leader meetings on both campuses. I collected all material that was handed out during these

meetings and I took notes. My notes covered the interactions between attendees, the presenters to the group, and comments made by those in attendance.

Finally, I used interviews to collect data. My interviews began with central office personnel as described above. I then interviewed the former principal of each campus. I began with the former principals because they were in place when the schools were rated as exemplary by the TEA. At Franklin, the former principal had been gone for three years. The superintendent suggested that I talk at length with the former principal as well as the current principal. At Jackson, the former principal had left at the beginning of the 2004/2005 school year. In response to my request for research, I was instructed to work with the former principal since the new principal had only been on campus one semester. I did clarify with the assistant superintendent that I would need to interview the current principal in order to gain access to the campus and to confirm my findings toward the end of my time on the campus. He agreed that this would be fine.

After interviewing the former principals, I interviewed the current principals on both campuses. In light of the need to build a relationship with the subjects on each campus, I began with the principals. As described by Erlandson et al. (1993) and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), the relationship between the researcher and all of those participating in the research is something to which the researcher must pay close attention. As the key gatekeeper of the campus, my relationship with the principal had to be developed before I would be granted access to the campus and the staff. Even with approval from central administration, I learned that the principal, while allowing me to be on the campus, could easily restrict my access to staff members.

All initial interviews with the current and former principals were conducted in person and were held in the offices of each administrator. Subsequent questions were asked via email, phone, or follow up interviews. Almost all interviews were tape recorded, and I took notes during each. I did not record my initial interviews with the principals as I was just introducing myself and my research. I was not seeking much information and did not consider a tape recorder as a bridge to building relationships with the principals. During my initial introductory interview with each of the former principals, a formal interview was scheduled and subsequently took place.

Teachers were offered three choices in terms of interviews. They could be interviewed by phone, by email, or in a face to face interview. Every teacher who responded chose the option of email. I sent them each follow up questions (See Appendix B). In some cases, mostly based on my need for clarification, I emailed more questions to teacher respondents. This process of clarification took place during formal interviews as well as during email interviews. This was my first use of what Erlandson et al. (1993) call member checks. In the interview stage, for example, the researcher summarizes the data gathered during the interview and then allows the respondent to immediately correct any misunderstandings. During formal interviews, I would ask clarifying questions or ask if I had the facts correct. I did the same with email responses. I made an assumption with one teacher from Jackson in regard to a comment about the “inner circle” of teachers. When I shared my understanding of this term, the teacher confirmed that my understanding was correct. This process ensured that my construction

of the facts was very close to her construction of those same facts. Member checks are used to help establish the credibility of the research.

I received nine completed surveys from Franklin teachers, and ten completed surveys from Jackson teachers. Due to the small number of respondents to the survey, I asked the current principal on each campus for the names and email addresses of each department leader. I also asked the former principals to provide me with any names of teachers they felt should be interviewed. Some of these teachers had moved to other schools, and I had no contact information. In order to better understand the reason for the low return on the surveys, I added two questions to my original list of interview questions. Directly pursuing the department leaders, and those named by the principals, proved to be fruitful in terms of gathering data on the history of teacher leadership on the campuses as well as current conditions of teacher leadership. Each department leader received the follow up questions that were sent to survey respondents.

Correspondence to the teachers and principals included information that promised anonymity for both the schools and any individuals who participated. Respondents were given the option to not participate in any way with the study, to refuse to answer any questions during an interview, and to refuse to have any interview taped.

Analyzing the Data

When using a naturalistic inquiry methodology, the collection of data and the analysis of that data happen at the same time. From the moment the researcher steps onto the campus, collection and analysis both begin. Erlandson et al. (1993) indicate that the

“collection and analysis of the data obtained go hand in hand as theories and themes emerge during the study” (p. 111). I found this to be true on both campuses. I found I was answering my questions (analysis) as I observed (collection) on the campuses.

As described above, the surveys were used almost exclusively for the purpose of meeting the requirement of the school district to reduce the amount of time a teacher would have to spend participating in the study. The survey could be completed in a matter of minutes. The survey also offered teachers a chance to indicate their willingness to participate in some form of interview. Even with only ten Jackson and nine Franklin teachers responding I did find that the surveys offered glimpses into the thinking of some of the respondents. Some of the information gleaned from these few surveys is mentioned in chapter IV. The data gathered on the surveys indicated that teachers spend most of their time in the area of curriculum.

The sources of the richest data were my observation notes and the interviews (both personal and electronic). As I reviewed these, I began to notice emergent themes. Citing Glaser and Strauss, Erlandson et al. (1993) describe this process as the constant comparative method. As I noted broad categories emerging from the data, I grouped like items together. The names of the categories were refined and adjusted as new pieces of data were added. Going through this process led to my establishing six categories into which my data was filed. After coding all of the data from the surveys, interviews, and observations, I noticed that another category had to be added. The role of the principal became the seventh category that emerged from the data. The final categories were as follows:

- teacher leadership in the past;
- teacher leadership roles;
- teacher leadership enablers;
- teacher leadership restraints;
- the products of teacher leadership;
- teacher leadership in the present; and
- the role of the principal.

Difficulties Collecting the Data

I know that I am not unique in the fact that I had some obstacles that slowed down my research. A lack of time on the part of the respondents appeared many times. It took several weeks to secure a slot on the calendar of Dr. Evans at Carr City ISD. When the day finally arrived, I was provided with less than thirty minutes to meet with her due to her busy schedule. The one factor that made this short time profitable was that Dr. Evans knew about the schools and the principals in the district and could quickly tell me where teacher leadership was playing a role.

When I first met with Cheryl, the current principal at Franklin, we were scheduled to meet immediately after school. Twenty minutes after our scheduled meeting time Cheryl opened her office door to tell me that she would be with me in just a few moments. Ten minutes later she came out and told me that she could give me ten minutes because she had another meeting to attend due to a crisis that had occurred on campus. Being a school administrator myself, I understood what a day like that can do to

a principal's schedule. Those few moments represented the only time I would be able to sit and meet with Cheryl. Our only contact after this was through a few brief phone calls and several short email messages. Time is something Cheryl could not or would not give to me.

In June as I was analyzing my data and creating my written description of teacher leadership at Franklin, I emailed a few questions to Cheryl. She replied within the day with short answers that revealed very little information. I then tried to schedule a meeting with Cheryl to confirm some of my theories about what was happening on her campus. She did not return my phone calls nor did she respond to my first email request for the meeting. When she did respond, she told me that she did not have time to meet with me as she had been named to a central office position. She suggested that I call one of her associate principals. I was not able to have Cheryl's input on my final written description of teacher leadership on the Franklin campus.

As mentioned above, a lack of time on the part of teacher participants was the reason cited for Danton ISD to reject my initial request for research approval. I was a little confused by that due to the fact that teachers had the option from the beginning to refuse to participate if they felt they were too busy. The survey did nothing to reduce the time teachers would spend participating with me in this research. If a teacher completed the survey and continued to participate in interviews, the survey added to the amount of time spent by the teachers.

Time also became a factor in that my initial request for research approval in both districts took almost a month to be returned to me. The rejection from Danton required a

change in my methodology when I added the survey. That change required approval from my committee members and a revision to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. My committee approved the change quickly, but the IRB took almost a month for approval to be granted.

At one point it took Barbara, the principal at Jackson, almost three weeks to reply to several phone and email messages requesting time to meet with her. When she did reply, I had to wait another week for a scheduled meeting that had to be conducted via the phone because she did not have time to meet personally. All of my questions were answered, she granted permission for me to attend leadership meetings, and she asked if I needed anything else in regard to my research. Our meeting over the phone went well.

Many teachers on both campuses would not respond to follow up questions without at least two and many time three requests and reminders from me. The most frequent reason given for the slow response was that of time. The teachers were just too busy to respond. In spite of what I thought to be a cordial, polite, accommodating, and professional relationship with both campus principals, my position as an outsider had a powerful impact on my being able to gather data. Even with the principals encouraging their teachers to participate, teachers were slow to respond. One teacher reminded me that my survey and my questions were just not important to many teachers. It proved difficult to know how to overcome the problem of asking busy people to add another project to their already full plates.

Methodological Trustworthiness

In a naturalistic study, the researcher must take steps to ensure that the research is conducted and reported in a manner that reflects sound methodology. The trustworthiness of the research was established through the use of techniques that provide credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Combined in a naturalistic inquiry research project, these qualities help demonstrate truth value with the study, provide a basis for applying the results of the research, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency and neutrality of the research (Erlandson et al., 1993). The following descriptions will be based on the work of Erlandson et al. (1993).

Credibility

Credibility is achieved when the constructed realities of the researcher are compatible with those of the respondents. This is accomplished when the report that is generated from the research “rings true” for the respondents. I sent my completed written descriptions of teacher leadership to several respondents and asked them for clarification of details. I also specifically asked them if the report “rang true” with events. Some details such as who acted in a leadership role were clarified, but the respondents all reported back that the reports from both schools accurately reflected teacher leadership on the campuses.

In my study, credibility was also enhanced by using prolonged engagement as I spent enough time on the campuses to challenge my own biases and any distortions due

to my presence on campus or in meetings. In order to provide depth as well as to help me identify emerging themes, I used the strategy of persistent observation. Being on campus and observing interactions I was better able to develop my interpretations of events. Triangulation was used to enhance credibility as I sought to compare what I heard in meetings and interviews with what I could see happening on campus. I also sought out individuals who seemed to share a different vision of what was happening than what I heard from administrators.

I used a colleague of mine as a peer debriefer. She knew of my research work but did not participate in gathering the data. She read my written descriptions and asked me questions and offered comments as to what she felt after reading my report. Her comments helped me to know if I was conveying in words what I was observing and hearing on the campuses. I also used one of my professors in this capacity when the report was complete. Finally, member checks were employed as a means to ensure that my data and my interpretations were accurate. This was accomplished during interviews as I sought clarification (during both personal and electronic interviews). As described above, member checks also involved my sending my written descriptions to respondents from each campus and asking for their response in terms of facts and interpretations.

Transferability

Transferability from one context to another can only occur when the two settings have shared characteristics. In my naturalistic study, I used purposive sampling to ensure that the data I gathered would provide the richest detail possible. I also used thick

description to describe the contexts in sufficient detail to allow a judgment to be made about transferability. The combination of purposive sampling and thick description allow readers to know if the findings from this report can be transferred to other contexts.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability provide for another researcher to attempt to replicate similar results in a similar context. These two qualities of trustworthiness provide enough detail for this to be done as well as allowing the outside researcher to trace any fact or assertion found in the report back to its source in the data. These final two qualities that provide trustworthiness are enhanced by creating an audit trail.

The audit trail allows an external reviewer the ability to see the processes that were used in the study as well as the ability to track the source or sources of judgments made in the study. Documents such as meeting agendas, interview notes, data reduction products and processes, and a reflexive journal are all included in the audit trail. While the journal is listed as supporting the dependability and confirmability of the study, it is helpful throughout the study. The journal is a diary type tool used throughout the research process in which the researcher records information about the steps, procedures, and progress of the study. In my case, the journal began to sound like I was talking to myself about the research. I included comments about struggles, successes, ideas, meeting dates and times, and copies of what I sent to some of the respondents. The writing style of my journal was informal. I made entries after meetings and interviews, as well when I was processing through the data I had collected.

Summary

The naturalistic inquiry methodology allowed me, the human instrument, to gather data from a variety of sources while at the same time watching human interaction on the campuses. This methodology also allowed me to pursue emergent themes as they appeared, as well as allowing me to develop theories and assertions as the collection of data took place. The final report, after being checked by several respondents, accurately reflects the past and current impact of teacher leadership on the campuses.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Teacher Leadership at Franklin High School

One of the campuses I studied was Franklin High School. Franklin is a large suburban high school with approximately 2,100 students. The drive to the campus goes through a fast growing part of the county that has several new strip center shopping malls and restaurants open to serve the growing community. Large master planned communities are under construction in the area. The main road through the area has in recent years been expanded from two lanes to six lanes to accommodate the sharp increase in traffic. It is a very busy highway through town. It is off of this highway that I turn as I drive to the campus.

The busy highway gives way to a very nice four lane road that winds through a wooded area. It takes about two minutes on this quiet road to reach the school. The sound of the traffic from the highway is barely audible as I step out of my car. A pasture across the street from the front entrance of the school is home to several grazing cows. The quiet street, the wooded property that leads to the building, and the gentle pasture with cows all stand in stark contrast to the busy highway that I left just moments ago.

The building looks like a typical high school property. The building is a large two story structure made of brick and block. A circle drive allows for students to be dropped off at the front entrance. A huge parking lot sits between the building and the on site athletic facilities. Tennis courts sit near the softball and baseball fields on the

property. The visitor parking spaces are all full, so I park in the teacher/student parking lot. As I walk on the wide sidewalk to the front entrance, large letters on the front of the building announce awards that have been earned by the school including a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence award as well as a Texas Pathfinder Collaborative School award.

I was on the campus at various times during the day throughout the semester, but each time I was warmly greeted by office workers and teachers who walked past me. The first afternoon I was on campus, students were talking on the pay phone or on their cell phones as they waited for rides to take them home after school. Just inside the front doors a brightly colored banner proudly announced the 2002 exemplary rating the school had received from the TEA. A group of girls was asked to quiet down as their laughing and talking had increased in volume. They quietly obliged and moved outside to continue their storytelling. The front office area was closed off by lowering the garage door type of gate that is typical in many schools. I could see video cameras silently keeping watch over the lobby area as well as the hallways. This campus felt like every other high school campus I have visited. It was a comfortable feeling.

Franklin High School has had three principals. Susan Hale, the second principal, was the principal when the school moved from a rating of low performing to a rating of exemplary. After starting in 1998 and serving as the principal for four years, Susan accepted a central office position in the school district. Cheryl Latt was named as the new principal in 2002. In June of 2005, after three years at Franklin, Cheryl accepted a central office position with the school district.

Teacher Leadership in the Past

In my initial interview with Dr. Ruth Evans, the Superintendent of Schools at Rock City ISD, she mentioned that the school had gone from low performing to exemplary under Susan's leadership. She suggested that I use Franklin as my chosen site to study teacher leadership. The Superintendent indicated that the staff worked very hard to move away from the stigma of being a low performing school. She indicated that it was then that teacher leadership emerged on the campus.

Susan Hale was hired as the principal at Franklin in the spring of 1998. She was replacing the principal who had opened the building. She was allowed a transition period starting in May of that year. The principal at the time helped her with this transition. Susan was not told that the 1998 state rating of the school was low performing. This rating came as a result of the drop out rate. The transition period allowed Susan to hit the ground running.

Susan indicated to me that she made some poor choices in regard to teacher leaders during the first year (1998/1999). She did not know who to choose since she did not know anyone on campus. Due to her inexperience with the staff, she kept the teacher leadership team in place from the previous year. She acknowledged that this, in some cases, was the wrong choice. Things did not go well in terms of "getting things done." Things began to change during the first year however. The school was rated as recognized during the 1999/2000 school year. Over the next school year a lot of work was accomplished and the school held on to its recognized status.

When she arrived, the Campus Based Leadership Team (CBLT) was handling items such as teachers not issuing hall passes to students who needed to use the restroom, tardy problems on campus, and parking issues. If Franklin was going to make the changes needed to improve the rating from TEA, Susan knew that this was not what the CBLT needed to be handling.

As she set up for her second year as principal, Susan knew who to ask for help. She knew who would step up and help her lead the building. During her second year, she made better choices in terms of whom she would place in leadership roles. While she left the department heads the same, she moved new people into other leadership roles. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) math coordinator and the drop out coordinator were two of the programs that received new leadership. Susan had three teachers willing to buy into her plan of action to raise the school's rating. That was all she needed to start working. Her ambitious plan involved not just moving up in the ratings but moving all the way to the top.

Susan found that the low performing rating from TEA was a motivational factor for the staff. This motivation found a good match with the plans that Susan laid out, and the teacher leaders moved into line with those plans. Teacher leaders stepped up and began to take charge of several areas that needed attention. The drop out rate, English and Math TAAS scores, TAAS tutorials, and CBLT efforts were just a few of the areas overseen by teachers.

A teacher was in charge of the program introduced to reduce the drop out rate. In the 1998 Campus Accountability Data Tables from TEA, the reasons for the low

performance rating were the 1996-97 total school attendance rate (93.8%) and the dropout rate for Hispanic students (6.4%). The school attendance rate had to move to at least 94% and the rate for the Hispanic subgroup had to drop below 6%.

The teacher who was overseeing the reduction in the dropout rate developed an alert system to make school personnel aware of absences. A credit recovery system was also developed to assist the students in making up credits so they could move toward a diploma. The programs required a large amount of close monitoring by the teachers involved. These teachers worked closely with the principal to report progress and to allow the principal to closely watch the attendance figures during the school year. A special ninth grade program was developed to prevent students from dropping out of school. Two teachers developed and implemented this program.

English and Math scores were targeted as needing attention. Teachers were in charge of tutorial programs designed to raise the scores in these areas. Susan provided substitute teachers to cover classes while teachers met and planned during the school year. A teacher led the meetings and the planning during the meetings.

Part of the program involved tenth grade teachers integrating eighth grade material in their class warm up exercises to help the students fill in gaps in their knowledge. Mini assessments were used to check for understanding and progress. Students who did not have mastery of the eighth grade material were identified and tutorials were offered. Teachers created the assessments, evaluated progress, and reported back to the principal as to the success of the programs. Susan would then visit with teachers who were not making progress based on the data provided to her.

The ninth grade teachers used old TAAS tests as measures of student progress. Teachers were each provided with ten students who were not performing well. Letters were sent home to parents of students who were selected for TAAS support. A teacher oversaw the instruction, testing, and retesting of the students. The teachers also responded to parents as to the progress the students were making.

The CBLT developed the campus strategic plan with a teacher in charge of the team. Teachers also oversaw each individual goal in the areas of technology, instruction, and parent involvement. These teachers would report to the CBLT as to progress in each area. During the first two years, Susan wrote the plan and the teachers carried it out. Susan noted many times during the second year that there would be a role reversal from her being in charge to a teacher or a group of teachers taking over some segment of the CBLT. After this time, teachers began to write the plan and work to reach the goals. After the first year on campus, Susan had changed the role of the CBLT. It no longer handled hall passes and tardy issues. The CBLT had been redirected to study and solve instructional deficiencies on campus. During her second year as the principal, very few people ran for a position on the CBLT. Susan noted that “as soon as they found out we were going to work on instructional needs, a lot of people got off of the CBLT.”

During Susan’s third year as principal (2000/2001), more than 20 people ran for a position on the CBLT. The people running had come to understand that those who served on this leadership team “had power to effect things instructionally” on the campus. The campus scores on standardized tests had gone up and the dropout rate had gone down. The campus was beginning to see positive results. Susan was not done

reaching for higher goals and stretching the staff farther. After talking to the teacher leaders, she decided to apply as a Blue Ribbon School.

The Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence program assists the school community in identifying key academic and instructional weaknesses of their school and elicits positive motivation needed for the school community (Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, 2005). The Blue Ribbon program goals of school improvement fit well with what Susan wanted to accomplish at Franklin. Her idea was to use the programs that were already being implemented on campus to apply for Blue Ribbon status. In my interview with Dr. Evans, she noted that the process of applying for Blue Ribbon status started a crusade of sorts at Franklin that allowed the staff to move farther away from the low performing status. While Susan completed the large writing portion of the Blue Ribbon application process, teachers were conducting research and gathering information to be included in the application. The school received recognition as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence for the 2001/2002 school year. That same school year was the first year that the school was rated as exemplary by the TEA.

While the CBLT was the main advisory and work group for the effort, the entire staff at Franklin was built into a team during the move from low performing to exemplary status. Teachers were motivated by a feeling of family among the staff members. The administration "...along with some really capable faculty members..." led to the high achievement of the campus (Responses to questions via email interview).

Another teacher wrote that "strong teachers, hard work, good strategies, and (a) dedicated administration led to the exemplary ratings the school received." An eleven-

year veteran of the school wrote that there were many experienced teachers on the campus during the effort to move to an exemplary status. These teachers “took leadership roles...to implement programs to reach students...” The focus of the school at that time was “helping students learn and grow.”

One reason given for the success of the 2002 ratings was that class size in lower level courses was kept small to lower discipline problems. Teachers were more able to spend time with individual students. This type of class has since been absorbed into the general student population.

Teacher Leadership Roles

The questionnaires and the interview responses from teachers provided several specific roles that teacher leaders filled. Among this list, several were repeated by different teachers. They are:

- create/direct a special program (dropout reduction program, tutorials, conducting research for the Blue Ribbon application, etc.);
- campus based leadership team (CBLT);
- coaching (academic and athletic);
- service on various campus committees;
- department head;
- team/subject leader;
- encourager/supporter of other teachers (especially younger teachers); and
- mentor or model.

In my initial interview with Susan, she stated that teachers acting in leadership roles helped her to be better able to run the building. She indicated that any principal would be spread too thin if she tried to run everything without the help provided by teachers as they fill leadership roles. One teacher also noted that “the administration cannot effectively organize the staff without sub groups...the teacher leaders guide the smaller groups”.

Teacher Leadership Enablers

Teachers noted that an encouraging leader inspires teacher leadership on campus. The principal has much to do with creating and sustaining an atmosphere or culture that supports and encourages teacher leadership. The superintendent indicated that teacher leadership emerged at Franklin under the leadership of Susan. A current teacher indicated that Cheryl, the current principal, “is receptive to staff concerns.” A principal who encourages teacher leadership seeks out ways to involve teachers, and listens to them as the process moves forward.

The principal also needs to be an effective communicator. Dr. Evans stated that the principal “somehow has to make them (teachers) believe it is possible and that they play a part.” A teacher indicated that the principal must convince teachers to “get on the band wagon” to complete the needed requirements for the school. When the principal can effectively communicate the possibilities to the staff, more teachers are apt to help lead the school.

Building the teachers into a team was noted as a skill that Susan demonstrated. As noted above, Susan was mentioned as the one who built the staff into a team to address the problems that led to the low performing rating. Currently, within each academic team or discipline, teachers noted that there are leaders who encourage, motivate, and model. Teachers indicated that being built into a team had the feeling of being like a family as teacher leadership was growing on campus.

As with any successful school improvement effort, hard work is a requirement. Teacher leaders must be willing to do more than what is required of a teacher who is not in a leadership role. Teaching done well is hard work in and of itself. But those teachers in leadership roles outside of the classroom accept a greater workload and a higher level of responsibility. There is limited extra pay for being a teacher leader other than a small stipend in some cases and possibly an extra conference period. The pay does not cover the amount of extra work, and the extra conference period is given in order for the teacher leader to accomplish more on campus. In response to a question about why Franklin was able to achieve the exemplary rating in 2002, one teacher wrote, “The last principal led us to it and teachers...did much more than was required.” Another teacher response to this question was, “Strong teachers, hard work, good strategies...dedicated administration.” Shirely Card, the Associate Principal, said during an interview that “teacher leadership is more than just teaching a lesson. Teacher leaders do the extra things.” Susan summed up her description of the workload with “we did a lot.”

Another teacher leadership enabler is that of teachers seeing success. After the teachers could begin to see positive impact from the new programs and after the staff

members saw the stigma of the low performing rating disappear, they were highly motivated to serve in leadership roles. Those running for positions on the CBLT in 2001/2002 showed that positive results can prompt teachers to step into leadership roles. Susan's comment about why more than twenty people ran for positions on the CBLT during her third year was informative when she said, "They (teachers) had power and could affect things instructionally."

When the school has good strategies and goals laid out, teachers are more willing to step into leadership roles. While the vision for these goals may come from the principal and a small handful of dedicated teacher leaders, the remainder of the teacher leaders seem more willing to step into leadership when clear direction is presented. One teacher writes that "areas that might have prevented us from getting exemplary status were identified and solutions were developed." When this happened on the campus, teachers stepped in and began to take leadership roles.

Another factor in teachers feeling enabled to take on leadership roles was the existence of strong teachers already in leadership. Teachers who can be looked up to and provide role models draw other teachers into leadership. These teachers are strong in the classroom and represent what younger teachers want to become. By modeling leadership, these strong teachers prompt others to take on leadership tasks and roles.

Another part of being a strong teacher is the aspect of a good and positive attitude. Teacher leaders must be able to "roll with the punches and keep moving forward..." The work to move up from low performing was not easy. The effort was enormous and it was not without its doubters. But, as Susan indicated, she only had three

teachers initially buy into her plan for Franklin, and that was all she needed to start the work.

Teacher Leadership Restraints

Of all of the items listed in questionnaires or in responses to interview questions, concern about time was mentioned most often. Other items noted as restraints to teacher leadership were resentment by other teachers, teachers not feeling valued, discouragement, the loss of experienced teachers, and teachers thinking that leadership is someone else's job.

Time, or lack of it, was mentioned by several teachers as they considered restraints to working in a leadership role. One teacher wrote that there was not enough time to teach well and lead well. In an interview with Susan, she indicated that while building leadership capacity in teachers was very rewarding, it was also time consuming as she mentored motivated teachers who wanted to be more effective. While raising the school out of the low performing rating she would provide substitute teachers so that her teacher leaders could have time to plan and work during the day.

Cheryl Latt, the current principal of Franklin, mentioned several times that the school has lost more than 30 teaching positions since the exemplary rating of 2002. The diminished teaching staff still works with approximately the same number of students. In regard to this reduction in staff, a teacher mentioned that many staff members were teaching six out of seven classes a day. When the school reached exemplary status many teachers were teaching only five courses a day.

Tutorials for the state mandated test take up a lot of extra time for the teaching staff. One teacher lamented that the students are “way over tested” and a heavy sigh was noted in one of the department head meetings when Cheryl asked how Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tutorials were going. In the meeting one teacher said she was glad that they were almost over so she could have her afternoons back.

Teacher leadership, or even the desire to move into leadership, is stymied by teachers not feeling valued when they offer input in regard to school issues. In responding to a question about what she would like to change about her leadership role in curriculum issues, one teacher replied, that she would like to see “what we suggest... actually implemented.” On the same question, another teacher replied that “greater input is needed from regular classroom teachers.”

Thinking that school leadership is someone else’s job hinders teachers from acting in a leadership role. When asked in the interview process concerning teacher leadership about how to increase teacher participation, one teacher suggested that the reason more teachers did not respond was that they felt that “teacher leader referred only to department heads.” When asked about his participation in disciplinary policies and procedures on campus, one teacher replied that discipline is an administrative responsibility. However, another teacher suggested that “the school cannot run effectively with teachers walking into their classroom and closing their doors and not participating in decision making and problem solving in the school.”

Whether the loss comes from transfers, retirements, or from a reduction in teaching positions mandated by central administration, losing experienced teachers is painful. When those teachers are in leadership capacities, the loss is magnified. As noted, Cheryl mentioned the reduction in staff size. Also, one teacher commented that “key teachers who opened the building retired at the end of last year...new department heads in three departments...many teachers are just overwhelmed this year.” This teacher also mentioned the loss of teachers in previous years. When asked about teacher leadership and the impact it has on school effectiveness, one teacher wrote, “When we lose teacher leaders, we have to either replace them with new leaders, or suffer the consequences!”

While feeling undervalued can result in feelings of discouragement, several teachers mentioned other factors that led to some level of discouragement among teachers and teacher leaders. Salary was mentioned by one teacher leader when she asked, “Why work so hard for so little reward?” Another comment reflected discouragement when the teacher wrote that the “constant challenge [is] to do more with less.” In response to a question about how to increase teacher participation in this research, one teacher wrote that adequate compensation and being held in higher esteem as a professional were primary needs that teachers had to have met. The implication here is that these needs are not currently being met and are hindering teacher participation in anything extra.

Products of Teacher Leadership

Several aspects of leadership on the campus can be thought of as products of teacher leadership. The move from low performing to exemplary is one of the largest products of teacher leadership at Franklin. As Susan stated in an interview, “You can’t do it by yourself, you have to have teacher leaders.” Athletic accomplishments, the development and oversight of important school committees, and being named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence are all products of teacher leadership. But beyond the committees and program development there are less visible but still important products of teacher leadership on the campus.

In an interview, Susan suggested that the feelings of ownership and empowerment that teacher leaders feel help to create more ideas through the synergy that exists. More problems are solved, and more decisions are made that will work for the school. She also suggested that “people just get excited when they see progress, and strong connections between people are built in this process.”

Other products of teacher leadership shared by teachers include:

- teacher leaders are more aware of school wide issues;
- there is an increased likelihood that new programs and changes will be successful;
- an increase in effective communication between teacher leaders and others on staff;
- individual departments in the school are strengthened; and
- school effectiveness is improved.

Teacher Leadership in the Present

While she was accepting of my presence and my work on the Franklin campus, Cheryl seemed to live out her first words to me concerning teacher leadership. “Teacher leadership is outdated and does not play into what is happening in school today.” This comment was made during our first phone conversation while I was introducing myself and my study. As a rookie researcher, I was caught off guard by this. As I observed leadership meetings and dialogued with several staff members over the next several months, I noticed her actions often followed this thinking, but I also noticed some instances in which teacher leadership was supported and desired by Cheryl.

When I told her that Dr. Evans had recommended Franklin due to the earlier work of Susan Hale, Cheryl was very quick to inform me that she had almost 30 less staff members, one less dean of instruction, and the same number of students that Susan had to work with on campus. Her tone led me to believe that she did not think that Franklin was a good choice for my study on teacher leadership.

Department head meetings are held every Tuesday during first period. Cheryl introduced most of the topics during department head meetings. She would make comments about each item on the agenda or discuss the details of the topic at hand. I noticed very little discussion from the department heads. Some clarifying or procedural questions were asked, but there was limited dialogue that could be considered as an exchange of professional ideas. The meetings were, for all intents and purposes, used for Cheryl to pass on information. This information was then to be passed on the teaching staff by the department heads in their individual department meetings. In a response to a

question about how teacher leaders are involved in decision making and total management on campus, Cheryl responded that “department leaders meet weekly and virtually run their departments.” While this could be considered normal procedure for department heads to follow, I could not discern how they were involved in decision making from her response or from my observations.

There was one particular meeting in April in which I picked up on some teacher leadership work that Cheryl not only initiated but participated with and supported. The topic was the number of students in Special Education programs on campus and the requirements of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) guidelines. While the topic was introduced and discussed by Cheryl in the meeting, she gave hints that the meetings and decisions of the committee were teacher led. She made the statement that the decisions made to reduce the number of students in Special Education programs was a “shared decision developed as she met with teachers.”

In the meeting a department head asked a procedural question about how the new plan was going to be implemented on campus. Cheryl thought for a moment and mentioned that the question raised a topic that should have been covered in the committee meetings, but it had not. When asked for a decision in response to the question, Cheryl responded by saying, “I will not answer without talking to the teachers on the committee.” She could easily have made a command decision on her own or with the teacher leaders in the room, but she chose to honor the work and ideas of the committee of teachers she had been working with on this problem. This example supports Cheryl’s response to my question about how teacher leadership positively

affects the mission, work, values, and goals of the school. Her response was that teacher leadership positively affects those things by allowing teacher “buy in” when it comes to making decisions. It occurred to me that she did value the leadership of these teachers and wanted to honor their thoughts and decisions in regard to this situation. This is contrary to the initial comments Cheryl made to me about teacher leadership.

When asked about areas in which she would like to see an increased presence of teacher leadership, Cheryl listed technology usage, instructional planning and strategies, and student management. Going through my data I could find no comments from Cheryl or any teachers that would indicate there was any need or desire for increased teacher leadership in these areas. Some technology issues came up during a department head meeting, but Cheryl made no comments about needing more teacher influence with implementation or increased usage. I could find no references to teachers being asked to be involved in instructional issues, but instead I found comments on the questionnaires that indicated teachers would be happier if they would be allowed to be involved at a higher level.

The area of student management was a common topic on the agendas for more than one meeting. Each time Cheryl would introduce the topic, either she or one of her assistant principals would talk about the issue(s) at hand. There was very little comment back from the department heads, and no call for teachers to participate in any leadership capacity to help generate ideas used to solve a problem. Again it felt like the meeting time devoted to student management or discipline was simply being used as a time for

the school administration to tell the teacher leaders what was going on so they could go back and tell the other teachers in their respective departments.

Another comment made by Cheryl indicated to me that she could see the benefits of increased teacher leadership when she responded that “instruction and student management would both improve” as teacher leaders participated in these areas. Thus she indicated to me twice that these were important areas on campus that needed teacher leadership in order to improve, but I could gather no evidence that she has made that known to her teacher leaders.

During a meeting of the CBLT Cheryl again showed that her initial comments to me about teacher leadership may not have been totally accurate. Teachers led many parts of the meeting. During these sections, Cheryl provided details and let other staff members respond to questions. In this particular meeting, the discussion concerning the LRE program was on the agenda. In this meeting, teachers led the discussion and answered questions from the CBLT members. A counselor on the committee also helped clarify some procedural issues. Cheryl’s only input was to say that she and the administrative team would do everything they could to help with the new plan. She also said that this information was “hot off the press” and she wanted the CBLT to know right away because “you are the CBLT.” This was a different role for Cheryl when compared to her role in the department head meeting that discussed this same issue.

A discussion about the upcoming CBLT elections began. Not many people had expressed interest in running for the CBLT. A teacher commented that “not many people know what we do.” Another commented that “not many people want to do this extra

work.” Both comments prompted chuckles and head nods from those in the room. A discussion ensued in which some of the members said they knew of some teachers who would be good members of the CBLT and that they would talk to them about the position. I noted that two members of the CBLT were department heads as well.

During another meeting, Cheryl offered praise to several teachers for their hard work. She thanked the teachers for their efforts during the TAKS tutorials and acknowledged the many afternoons spent working with the students. Cheryl expressed appreciation for the extra effort. She also publicly thanked the technology specialist for her work with a district mandated report. The appreciation was also extended to a teacher who had sent out a building wide email asking for teacher input in regard to student awards to be given out at the end of the year. “I would like to thank Richard for the charming email about student awards...it was a cute email.” Her emphasis on the word charming and her slight smile expressed her gratitude and caused a chuckle to move through the group. This was the most positive reinforcement, thanks, or general encouragement I noticed during the meetings I attended.

When asked if teachers ever filled temporary leadership roles, Cheryl only mentioned internships for mid management and for counseling. The Special Education committee was in my mind when I asked her this question, but she did not mention this group in her response. I also was reminded of a meeting in which the campus technology specialist thanked several teachers for helping her gather data from staff members about their department web sites. Cheryl had shared a district mandate concerning this report requiring teachers to take the lead in doing the work and gathering the data, but Cheryl

likewise did not consider this in her response to my question about temporary teacher leadership roles.

In response to a question about teacher leadership on campus, teacher comments were offered in light of what took place in the past. One teacher looked back to the first principal of the building to begin describing teacher leadership in the present. The first principal was described as very “old school” in his leadership style and created a culture in which teachers played no role in leadership decisions at Franklin. He then went on to describe the very inclusive style of Susan Hale as she extensively relied on teacher leaders to move the school toward her goals. Cheryl is described as being somewhere in between the two principals who preceded her. While relying on some teachers to operate in a leadership capacity, she often sets policy on her own or with the help of her administrative team. This description closely matched what I detected on campus.

Another teacher indicated that the campus enjoyed a “clearer sense of expectations and priorities” under Susan Hale. This teacher was hesitant to lay all of the reason for change on the fact that a new principal (Cheryl) was in place. “When Susan came, we had just been rated as low performing which created an understandable emphasis on the state ratings.” He continues, “When Cheryl came we were already exemplary and were gearing up for all the changes that came with the TAKS.”

One final comment from a teacher indicated that she knew there was a campus leadership team (referring to the CBLT). She questioned how much leadership those teachers were showing because she could not name one person who served on this leadership team. Her response seemed to imply that there is a lack of visible teacher

leadership currently on the campus. This is another change to be noted when comparing past teacher leadership to current levels due to the fact that the CBLT was the main source of teacher leadership under Susan.

During the final department head meeting, Cheryl was working on her Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) as an assistant principal gave the teachers information concerning the collection of textbooks. While she was listening, the meeting obviously did not have her full attention. When it was time to talk about staffing issues, Cheryl began talking about the high number of coaching vacancies she needed to fill. She noted that she had many coaching slots empty but only three teaching positions open. I noticed a sharp tone in her comments as she said, "This is not hard math folks." She asked the department heads to bear with her and understand the problem she faces, but she promised that she would not hire someone who could not teach simply because that person could coach. Cheryl at no time asked for teacher input or suggestions, and no one offered any comments. While she verbally said she would listen to any comments, her tone indicated to me that she did not want any comments. I would not have said anything had I been a staff member.

In regard to an upcoming staff meeting, Cheryl said, "There will be no sign in sheet for teachers. I want you to be there, but I will not be checking names." The meeting was in regard to grading issues, and it was noted that this meeting was for classroom teachers. Later when a question about the staff meeting was brought up, Cheryl replied, "It is not my staff meeting" as she shrugged her shoulders. This question had interrupted Cheryl as she had gone back to working on her PDA. The Instructional

Technology Specialist and a teacher made presentations to the group as Cheryl returned to her PDA.

In the final meeting of the CBLT and in the final department head meeting, teacher leaders were recognized who were not returning to the campus. In both instances, Cheryl simply acknowledged that these teachers were leaving, how long they had worked on the campus, and that she appreciated their service in regard to the leadership capacity they held. Almost as quickly as the topic was brought up, it was closed. Cheryl verbally thanked both for their work and wished them luck in their positions. In both meetings, these goodbyes were held near the close of the meeting.

Role of the Principal

During my interview with Dr. Evans, it did not take long for the role of the principal to come into our conversation. When I was reviewing the list of exemplary schools, Dr. Evans waved off every one of them until we came to Franklin. She noted that “under the leadership of Susan Hale the school went from low performing to exemplary. Teachers have to believe in what the principal wants in order to make things happen...the principal somehow has to make them believe it is possible and they play a part.” Dr. Evans went on to say that the teachers must trust the principal enough to see the goal and then agree to accomplish that goal. She finished by telling me that “even with the right tools in hand, without the loyalty of the teachers reaching the goal will not happen.”

If the school is to be effective, providing overall leadership for the school is a foundational requirement for the principal. Franklin High School did not move from low performing to exemplary just because Susan Hale took the reigns. In her description of the monumental effort the task required, she stated, “We did a lot.” Writing about this time in the life of the school a teacher wrote, “It was not always easy.” A feeling of family was created by Susan that “...tied the entire school into great success and accomplishments.” It would seem that Susan did indeed create an atmosphere of trust and loyalty among the staff members as mentioned by Dr. Evans.

In our interviews, Susan mentioned that she wanted to provide her teachers with ownership and empowerment. Doing this would demand more leadership on her part as she sought to “enable teachers to lead.” This would require that she would oversee them as leaders and not just teachers. She reflected that the results of this effort produced benefits in procedural matters on campus: “We were better able to run the building because the principal is spread too thin without this help.” Ownership and empowerment also helped to build the leadership capacity of the teachers. This was done as the teacher leaders were more closely connected to solutions and ideas that were implemented on campus. When they were empowered to develop the solutions, they “then want to see them work. People get excited when they see progress.” Finally, along the lines of creating ownership and empowering teachers, Susan noted when the teacher leadership team was working together that they created a synergy that allowed them to develop more solutions to problems and make more decisions about what would work on the campus.

In spite of the great achievements and the ugly duckling turned into a swan story line, Susan had times of disagreement with members of her leadership group. There were times that she and the department heads disagreed over policies and direction. There were times that her ideas were changed after meeting with the CBLT. In her entire first year on campus things did not go well in terms of accomplishing goals and moving forward because she, due to her being new to the campus, “chose poorly” when she chose leaders of special improvement efforts. These times did not alter her vision or stop the pursuit of the goals that were established for the campus. This steadfastness of vision is a powerful part of the role of the principal. As one teacher put it, “It required tough choices regarding resources and staff. Had we been trying to be all things to all people, we may not have devoted the resources necessary to make these programs go.”

Understanding the need for teacher leadership and what roles these important people will play on campus is a crucial role of the principal. In our first interview, Susan simply stated that, as the principal, “you can’t do it all by yourself. You have to have teacher leaders.” Susan knew that the drop out and attendance rates as well as the scores for some of the student subgroups had to be aggressively addressed in order to improve the school rating. While these things were addressed and showed almost immediate results, Susan described them as band aid actions. What were needed were preventative measures. These measures included, among other things, a special ninth grade program. All of the improvements demanded a lot of teacher leadership. The principal knowing from the beginning that teacher leaders would play a role in school effectiveness or accomplishments was a key to the success experienced at Franklin. It was also critical

for Susan to see new and existing programs that needed teacher leadership and to identify teacher leaders for those programs. During her second year, Susan indicated that she knew better whom to choose as teacher leaders and that was when things really began to move forward. This thought was echoed by a teacher when he mentioned that Franklin became an efficient and well tuned machine after Susan knew who her leaders were.

Having a vision or a plan to follow is another important role for the principal. While the staff was ready to move away from the stigma of being named low performing, it was the vision of the principal that took them to being exemplary. It was certainly her vision that led the school to achieve the Blue Ribbon status in 2002 as she was the one who presented this idea to her teacher leaders. She told them she felt they should apply for the Blue ribbon program based on the amount of work they had already accomplished in achieving the exemplary rating.

The desire of the teachers to leave the low rating needed to be connected to a principal who could see and then articulate a plan. This is what Dr. Evans alluded to when she described what Franklin had achieved under Susan's leadership. Susan could see where they were going, allowed others to see her vision, laid out a plan, and then steadfastly worked toward achieving the goal. To her benefit, the staff was highly motivated to improve. Hard decisions were made, distractions and conflict were overcome, and a lot of work was accomplished as Susan, the leadership team, and the teachers all moved toward the same goal of improvement. One teacher wrote that the clear focus came mostly from Susan. He also wrote that "what Susan did was make our

state rating a priority rather than having more general goals and hoping the state rating would take care of itself.” Another wrote that “a principal who establishes strong leadership and puts positive, clear expectations on teachers is the best help for developing teacher leadership.”

Another role of the principal indicated by teacher responses is that of a listener. Teachers, whether in leadership roles or not, are looking to be heard on issues important to the school. Teacher responses to my original questionnaire indicate that Franklin teachers want to be heard most in regard to curriculum policies and procedures. They want to see that what they suggest is actually implemented. They want to see greater input from regular classroom teachers being sought out and used. One teacher indicated satisfaction when her involvement helped the overall school development. A principal who listens to the concerns and ideas of the staff can make great gains in creating and sustaining teacher leadership on campus. As teachers are empowered, and as they can see that they are helping to make a difference, they want to take on a larger leadership role. As the principal listens and acts with teachers in regard to school decisions, the teachers “buy into” the decisions as Cheryl indicated in her response regarding how teacher leadership positively impacts the school.

By my observation, the principal plays the role of a protector as well. In Susan’s case, this was demonstrated by her dedication to protecting the vision she and the leadership shared. Nothing was allowed to slow the teachers down as they worked toward the goal. In Cheryl’s case, she acted out this role when she questioned how much time would be required for teachers to fill out my survey or participate in my interview

process. She told me in a phone conversation that her teachers had “no time to do this.” During that same conversation, Cheryl shared with me that she was concerned that many negative comments would be offered in regard to my questions about discipline. While this did not happen, she was acting as a protector for her assistant principal as well as for Franklin. I do not think she wanted a negative light to be cast on the school. While her objections were a temporary setback for me, upon reflection I could sense her desire was to protect her teachers and her school. I can see myself in same light with my school.

Finally, I could see that at Franklin the principal plays the role of an encourager in regard to teacher leadership. In one way for Susan this took the form of mentoring new teacher leaders as she noticed them through her interactions with staff members. Susan described this process as very time consuming but rewarding as she encouraged these new leaders to step into leadership roles. Cheryl demonstrated encouragement during a staff meeting toward the end of the year. She praised and thanked her department heads for the work they had accomplished with after school tutorials, a technology project, and ended the comments by telling the entire group, “I appreciate all that you are doing on campus.”

I also noted that Cheryl encouraged her teacher leaders in regard to a student mentoring program that many of them were involved with. Cheryl, along with many teachers at Franklin, had each agreed to act as a mentor for students who had not been successful on the TAKS test. Cheryl reported on the progress of her six students and then thanked everyone who had participated in the program as it had produced many positive results. By seeing the principal participating in the program, I could see the

positive impact it had on teacher participation. Not all of Cheryl's results were positive, but the fact that she participated and then shared the good and the bad with her teacher leaders provided encouragement for those in the room. After Cheryl finished her comments, several teachers briefly shared success stories of their own.

The role of the principal in regard to teacher leadership is vital. This role will be multifaceted and different for each campus. Whether it is overall leadership, individual mentoring, privately listening to a teacher, or encouraging the entire leadership team, the principal is a key player. The pivotal role of the principal can make teacher leadership a powerful part of the leadership landscape on a campus.

Franklin Conclusion

Franklin High School has ridden a rollercoaster in terms of teacher leadership and effectiveness since it was opened. Under the first principal, the teachers had very little impact on leadership decisions on the campus. The rollercoaster was just pulling away from the loading area and starting toward the big hill. When this principal left to pursue non educational goals, Susan stepped in to take over. Susan told me that she found out the school was low performing after she had accepted the position. She was very surprised. It seems the rollercoaster had just reached the toughest part of the hill. What happened to teacher leadership over the next four years could be likened to the downhill run of the rollercoaster. Under the leadership of Cheryl, it appears that the downhill run ended and the rollercoaster, if not headed up the next hill, at best has lost its momentum.

From the very beginning of my work with the school, Cheryl told me that she felt that teacher leadership did not impact schools much. She was short with me on the phone, cut our first interview down to seven minutes, and usually responded with very little detail to my email messages. At the end of my work on the campus, I wanted to meet with Cheryl to confirm some of my thoughts and to ask her a few questions about teacher leadership on the campus. After she did initially agree to meet with me, she backed out stating that she simply did not have any time to talk with me. At that point she referred me to her associate principal. In spite of these thoughts and actions on Cheryl's part, I still found a glimmer or remnant of teacher leadership on the campus.

Based on Cheryl's answers to my questions about teacher leadership at Franklin, I would not say that it was dead by any means. Cheryl indicated several areas that she would like to see teacher leadership increase. As noted above though, I could find no evidence that teachers were being asked to lead in these areas. It seems that Cheryl wants teacher leadership, but she does little to pursue it. Teacher leadership is not used to the extent that it was in the past. Teacher leadership was not used on the campus to its fullest potential under Cheryl's leadership. Several staff members seem to indicate a willingness to help lead if opportunities were made available. This incongruence between what Cheryl says she would like to see and what is actually happening on campus in terms of teacher leadership seems to stem from her lack of asking teachers to help lead the school. Cheryl and the teachers who are willing to lead cannot seem to come together as they did under Susan. A difference in personalities seems to be one part of this problem.

The difference between the leadership styles of the two principals is noticeable and contributes to the decline I have noticed in teacher leadership since Susan left. From my interviews and from teacher accounts, Susan has a warm and friendly way about her. She is accepting and engages in conversation easily. Teachers mentioned a family feeling on campus when she was principal. They also mention a sharp focus on school issues, and they felt motivated to work hard; she provided clear expectations for teachers. After speaking with Susan and corresponding with her via email it was easy to see that she was focused. Driven may be a better word to describe what I saw in her. Driven also better describes what it took to lead the school during her tenure. Even though she had a highly motivated staff, her leadership pulled everything together. Her acknowledged need for teacher leaders from the beginning was noticed by staff and they stepped up to work with her.

Talking with Cheryl took on a more serious or businesslike feel. I always felt rushed when I talked with her on the phone or in person. Our first meeting was scheduled to last about thirty minutes. Twenty minutes after I was supposed to have my appointment with her, she stuck her head out of her office door and told me that she had not forgotten me and that she would be with me in a minute. Ten minutes later she came out and told me that she had another meeting in ten minutes, but she could talk to me in between the two meetings. She mentioned something about being in between crises. She moved about her office for the first few minutes of our meeting moving things around. During the brief time we were together, I never felt I had her full attention. In describing

his work with Cheryl, one teacher leader noted that he “never felt comfortable bringing anything of importance to her.”

Cheryl’s email responses were very short. She used a few words to respond to questions about teacher leadership and relayed no personal feelings or thoughts about the topic. After communicating with her on several occasions, I began to surmise that one reason teacher leadership is not as functional on campus as before is that she is somewhat intimidating to approach. It is not that Cheryl does not want teacher leadership on her campus. I think her responses to me and her work with the Special Education program are evidence that she does place some value on teacher leadership. Cheryl does not overtly support or encourage a broad range of teacher leadership roles on campus. She has allowed teacher leadership to live or die on campus on its own. I could not gain any overall sense that she actively sought to remove teacher leadership totally from the campus. It went away due to lack of opportunity.

I think Cheryl would welcome teacher leadership if it would spring up. Considering the committee that looked into changes in the Special Education department, it appeared that Cheryl highly valued the input from the teachers on that committee. She demonstrated this to me by her unwillingness to make any decisions in regard to the new program without consulting them first. I heard about this program in a CBLT meeting and in a meeting of the department heads. In the CBLT meeting, the teachers made the entire presentation and responded to questions. In the department head meeting Cheryl presented the information based totally on teacher input from the

committee members. She valued the process that involved teacher leaders and honored the decisions made by that group.

In my interview with Pamela Card, the associate principal, she indicated that teacher leadership on the campus was strong as evidenced by the fact that everything the administrative team decided to do was passed down to the department heads for input. Pamela stated that “there are not many decisions made without teacher input.” She stated that “anything we want to do is brought to the department leaders.” She also said that the department heads were asked what they thought about decisions made by the administrative team. “OK, this is what we are going to do, what do you all feel...is this going to fly, is it not going to fly?” I did not witness any exchange of this nature in the department head meetings I attended. I sense that there is a disconnect between what Pamela thinks is happening and what is really taking place in terms of leadership. Pamela was in attendance in one department head meeting that I attended, but she was only in the room for the first ten minutes.

Cheryl invited me to one of the meetings of her administrative team. When I asked what this group did in the meetings in regard to teacher leadership, Cheryl responded that “they discuss school issues and we then decide what goes on the agenda for the department head meetings.” At that moment I had a sense that the teacher leaders were nothing more than conduits through which the policies and decisions from school administration were passed on to the rest of the staff. My attendance in several department head meetings confirmed this feeling. In regard to teacher leadership, I

simply think that Cheryl does not pay much attention to it or to the potential impact teacher leaders could have on the campus.

The diminished sense of expectations and priorities under Cheryl's leadership seems to have diminished the opportunities for teachers to emerge as leaders on campus. Since Cheryl has been principal, the rating for the school has dropped from exemplary to recognized and now down to academically acceptable. While I don't see any data that indicates the school will drop to low performing soon, Franklin is only one rating step away from where it was in 1998. It is recognized that there are many factors that come into play when considering the effectiveness of a school. I cannot help but notice the distinct drop in the level of teacher leadership and a diminished sense of empowerment on the part of the teachers on the campus as I notice the drop in the school rating.

While I cannot lay the full blame on one person, everything that impacts a school connects back to the leadership of the principal. To Cheryl's defense, one teacher wrote that when Susan came to the school the teachers were ready to move away from the poor rating. They were motivated to improve. When Cheryl came, they were already exemplary, had been named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, and were riding high on those accomplishments. I took his point to be that Cheryl joined the staff when everything was going great and the staff had much less motivation to improve. But in the last sentence of his response, this teacher noted that many teachers had mentioned that the school did seem to have a clearer sense of expectation and priorities under Susan's leadership. That clearer sense seems to have been exactly what the school needed. The loss of that clear sense combined with the leadership style of Cheryl seems to have

contributed to diminished teacher leadership, to lowered student scores, and finally to lowered ratings for the school.

In May, during the last meeting of the department heads, Cheryl went through some preliminary TAKS reports with the teachers. She also mentioned the number of disciplinary problems in the ninth grade during the past year. She commented that “we cannot keep doing what we are doing in Science and Math. We need to regroup.” This thought was echoed during my interview with Pamela Card. Pamela told me that Cheryl had directed her to go back to a strong focus on the ninth grade class. This involved reworking the master schedule to reduce the student/teacher ratio in the freshman classes to a maximum of 1:25. There have been up to thirty in a class in recent years. This information was in response to my question about what would need to improve in terms of teacher leadership for Franklin to move back toward an exemplary rating. She mentioned that they were trying to move back to some of the thinking that had been used to move the school from low performing to exemplary.

While she seems to have an unclear picture of how teacher leadership is implemented in regard to the department heads, Pamela did seem to be aware of informal ways in which teachers demonstrated leadership. Cheryl did not mention any informal teacher leadership roles. Pamela mentioned teachers offering to help with graduation, supervision at assemblies, and assisting with hall sweeps. Pamela commented the many teachers just came up to her and asked, “How can I help you?” Continuing her comments about these teacher efforts she also commented that “teacher leadership stands out when it happens.” One problem Pamela did acknowledge in regard

to the lowered ratings at Franklin is that of a district decision to realign the tracking system used to mainstream some Special Education students. This has resulted in an increase in overall class size as well as an increase in disciplinary problems. It seems to have prompted the effort to reexamine the ninth grade part of the master schedule.

The comments by Cheryl and by Pamela lead me to believe that the school administration is looking to make improvements. Both of these school leaders acknowledged to me that teacher leadership would have to play a part in any improvement that might be realized on campus. What I sense as lacking is the connection between the administration and the teachers. An improved connection that would allow and encourage communication about leadership opportunities could have the potential of allowing teacher leadership to increase on campus. If the administration would take steps to improve this connection, I think they would find teachers eager to fill the role. Maybe the new principal can move the teacher leadership rollercoaster up the next hill and Franklin can again enjoy the benefits and success it saw in 2002.

Teacher Leadership at Jackson High School

The second campus I studied was Jackson High School. Jackson is also a large suburban campus. Approximately 3,100 students attend the school. Like Franklin, Jackson is surrounded by growth. A relatively new highway runs on the eastern property line of this sprawling facility. The impressive campus and all of the well groomed athletic facilities are easily seen from the highway. The building is stunning in appearance with immaculate grounds surrounding the beautiful brick building. The

building is massive and resembles a shopping center at first glance. New home construction was a common sight during my drive to the school.

The parking lot runs the length of the building, and was almost full when I arrived for my first visit to the campus. I sat in traffic that was backed up on to the exit ramp of the highway. The cars, driven mostly by students, moved quickly through the series of lights that led up to the main driveway. An electronic sign by the street was flashing information about games and meetings that were taking place in the coming days. I had to park on the farthest row from the main entrance to the building because all of the parking spaces marked for visitors were taken. Large letters on the building help visitors locate the natatorium and gymnasium facilities. The main entrance to the building was located in the middle of the building. Golf carts painted in school colors sat just inside the front doors. The size of the building dictated the use of these carts to expedite round trips from the front office to the farthest destinations on campus. The inlaid patterns in the terrazzo floors made the inside of the building as attractive as the outside. I have been on very few campuses as beautiful as this one. I wondered if the students who attended this campus understood or appreciated the beauty of their campus.

Teacher Leadership in the Past

My interview with Chris Long was held at Starbucks coffee shop. This location was requested by Chris as it was on his way home and he liked to frequent this Starbucks often after work. I arrived early and found the coffee shop packed with people. No tables were available inside, and just a couple were abandoned outdoors. I sat down to secure a

spot for our interview. It was a beautiful day in February, and the afternoon sun was shining on the front of the shop to keep us warm.

As I waited for Chris to arrive, I overheard some of the conversations around me. They were about education and school and students. The people surrounding my small table were teachers talking about school issues, curriculum, drill team routines, and parents. When Chris arrived, we entered the shop to buy some coffee, and people began to greet him. Many of the people in the shop knew him personally. He commented to me, "I used to work with her." He pointed out another person and said, "She was one of my teachers...and so were a couple of those over there." The barista at the counter asked if Chris wanted "the usual", and he nodded his head. His being here was a common event at this Starbucks.

We moved outside to the table I had saved. I turned on my tape recorder and began to ask questions about how Jackson was started. The building was about 75% complete when Chris was named principal. The job had been offered to someone else, but things did not work out. Chris was brought on in January of 1999. The building opened in August of the same year. An athletic coordinator was hired in April, an associate principal in May, a financial assistant and a curriculum and instruction principal came on in mid June. As is common practice, the school opened with freshman and sophomore students. Almost 50% of the initial teaching staff was made up of coaches.

No staff members were inherited or brought over from another campus. Chris described the staffing process by saying that "all hiring was done completely from

scratch.” He shared that he had a vision that Jackson would be the best high school in America. He was looking to create a public school that would develop students not only academically but also in terms of character, care, and leadership skills. As Chris put it, he wanted to “develop the total kid.” He needed staff members who would model those things for the students. Staff members were hired who fit the matrix developed by Chris that would provide him with a staff that could achieve these goals. When asked how teacher leadership played a role in achieving the goals, Chris stated, “With my style of leadership, it had to play a huge role.”

The hiring philosophy used by Chris was to “hire well, train the teachers, set parameters, and then step out of their way” as they went about the business of teaching and leading. All department chairs knew going into the position that authoritarian leadership was not going to be the normal practice on campus. They were told that they were not to act like the boss but instead they were to be coaches and mentors to the teachers in their departments. They were expected to build relationships with those teachers. Chris stated that teacher leadership requires a spirit of cooperation and that those in leadership positions had to be willing to model the character, care, and leadership that the students needed to see.

The spirit of cooperation was necessary as he worked with department chairs and as they subsequently worked with team leaders for each subject area. These team leaders took on leadership roles in subject areas (Geometry or English I for example) without pay and without a title. Chris noted there was no need for pay or title as teachers saw a need and stepped in to fill the leadership need they saw. Teacher leadership began to

grow and expand because of a combination of the culture of the school and who the teacher leaders were as individuals. Some roles were defined, but others were undefined or teacher defined. The culture of the school created a place where there was no fear of failure for teachers. If an effort failed, teachers could expect to hear that “it didn’t work out, but we appreciated the fact that you cared enough to try something.” In one example, individual teacher effort accounted for the creation of a writing lab after the teacher saw a need to improve the writing skills of the students. She was not asked to do this. She set it up after seeing the need.

When asked specifically what role teacher leadership played in the school’s effort to develop the total student, Chris responded with three examples: modeling, looking to the needs of all students, and communication. He shared examples of how these three components of teacher leadership blended together at Jackson.

Teachers were expected to model the type of relationships Jackson wanted to build in the classroom. They were expected to demonstrate care, respect, and empathy toward their students and toward other teachers so that the students would see and imitate this pattern. An acronym was created to help show what was involved. FUTURE (using the first letters of each element) was developed as a way to describe what the school was working toward, and it served as a guide for many decisions and actions.

Focus on Education (an eye toward academics);

User Friendly (everyone knew how everything worked);

Teamwork (everyone working together to create synergy);

Uniqueness (teams are made up of unique individuals);

Relationships (the key to making things work well); and

Environment (the climate and culture throughout the school and classrooms).

At this point, Chris reminded me that every student makes a choice whether to learn or not. The thinking behind modeling is that building relationships through modeling would move more students to choose to learn.

Looking to the needs of all students took the form of a question: “Is there something for everyone in the school?” There was an effort to create a place where the school and the staff were both “kid focused.” This effort evolved into the staff working toward creation of a school where they would want their own children to attend. Chris moved this same challenge down to each classroom when he asked staff members to make their classrooms a place they would want their own children to be taught.

Teachers stepped up to create and sponsor clubs and organizations that students wanted and needed. Chris commented that “they did great things for kids on this campus. These teachers went the extra mile again and again to meet the needs of students on campus.” Chris added, “Speaking of teacher leadership, when the school had immediate success academically and in athletics, people then wanted to be a part of that environment of leadership.” He described the building as being designed with fine arts at one end of the building, athletics at the other end, and academics in the middle. Chris excitedly shared that the goal was “excellence from one end of the building to the other.”

Communication was vital. Teachers at Jackson were not afraid to lead by communicating with each other and with school administration. Chris’s open door policy supported communication and was based on his experiences as a teacher trying to speak

to an administrator. Chris reflected, “I only had a half hour lunch or a 45 minute off period. If the administrator always had his door shut, I was too busy to come back.” Based on that, teachers could come in and talk to him any time he was in the office. If a student came to speak with him while he was in a meeting, his office staff was given instructions to interrupt the meeting. Chris said this was done because “they (students) are why we are here.” His openness and willingness to be available helped develop a culture in which teachers would be open to students in terms of leadership by and through communication.

Teachers were expected to be leaders from the beginning. Chris tried to provide leadership training and skills, but more importantly he gave them the opportunity and the freedom to lead. This freedom came as teachers were willing and able to accept it. As he grew to know them better and as they demonstrated ability, teachers were given wider parameters for their leadership. Some teachers had to be reined in, worked with, and then allowed to try leadership again. There was a feeling within the school culture that no one was more important than anyone else. Everyone just played a different role.

Teacher Leadership Roles

Between interviews and email responses from staff members, many common roles were mentioned. Beyond the department chairs and team leaders, work with attendance, vertical and horizontal curriculum teams, clubs and organizations, and the campus advisory council were all mentioned. When asked about teacher leadership roles, Richard Larson, the associate principal, mentioned that teacher leaders serve on

his Teacher Information Committee (TIC) to provide him with “input as well as a pulse on the school.”

Representing the school on various district committees was mentioned as well as membership on community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the local Rotary Club. Representation on state organizations was offered as another example of a teacher leadership role. In light of the above comments about teachers leading through communication, one teacher indicated that teachers lead by relaying information to other teachers.

As descriptors used in response to the question of what teacher leaders do that makes them teacher leaders, several responses were offered. The role of teacher leader shows them leading in the area of serving others as well as volunteering when needed. Teacher leaders take initiative and are described as planners, creators, disciplinarians, listeners, and advocates. They are thought to be goal setters and work with the school administration to create the environment and the policies that support the goals of the school as a whole.

Teacher Leadership Enablers

Respondents included many comments indicating what happens on the Jackson campus that enables teacher leadership to work. The comments seem to lend themselves to the idea that the school culture supports teacher leadership. Along those lines, a positive and encouraging attitude toward teacher leaders from the school administration was listed several times. The administration welcomes ideas and suggestions from

teachers. There is a part of the school culture that says that any teacher who wants to participate in leadership can do so.

An “attitude of excitement and enthusiasm” was mentioned in one response and was witnessed at almost every department chair meeting I attended. The meetings were always preceded by the teachers excitedly talking and sharing. This time was used to discuss some school issues, but it was also used to talk about personal and family events. The level of excitement and enthusiasm was always high in the meetings.

Administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and students all working as a team is evident on the campus from respondent comments. The ability and willingness of teachers to work with others comes from teachers being made to feel ownership in what happens at school. It also is boosted by having administrators who are in touch with what is happening in the classrooms on campus. One teacher commented that the teachers are “allowed to participate with the creation of educational goals.” This would support the idea offered by Chris that he steps out of the way after a teacher takes a leadership role.

Another teacher leadership enabler would be the expectation from administration that all teachers are to be leaders. Chris hired the teachers to fill the formal leadership roles of department chair, but he also expected other teachers to be leaders. They were told that they were daily to be leaders in their own classrooms as they modeled for the students what character, care, and leadership looked like. Knowing that this was an expectation enabled and even moved teachers to lead. Chris saw himself as one trying to

“reduce interference” so that there would be an increase in the performance of teacher leadership.

While hiring staff, Chris looked for people who would fit well with the goal to be the best high school in America and staff members who would seek to develop the whole student as described above. As the teacher leaders demonstrated success and ability, Chris and the administrative team allowed for expanded roles for teacher leadership on campus.

Excellent training, good social skills, a willingness to volunteer, and the ability to communicate well all were mentioned as components of individual teachers who are teacher leaders. The respondents indicated that these things exist on the campus and bolster teacher leadership. Together with teacher leadership enablers found in individual teachers, the spirit of cooperation and the open door policy mentioned by Chris also play a role in developing teachers who are successful leaders.

Teacher Leadership Restraints

As with most campuses, during a review of leadership, some problems are exposed. Jackson is no exception to this. While the items offered from teachers are not new, they can have a negative impact on teacher leadership as a whole and on teachers wanting to be teacher leaders.

A teacher who sponsored a large club on campus commented that “you have no idea how much time goes into paperwork to meet the needs of club members.” Another teacher indicated that there was a need for input from teachers on discipline issues, but

there was not sufficient time for her to do so. One teacher commented that she did not have time to correctly implement her curriculum, would like to work to correct this, but did not have time to work on policies and procedures to make the needed changes. The lack of time to be a teacher and a teacher leader came up several times on the questionnaires and during interview responses.

In spite of the efforts to create and support opportunities for teachers to lead, some still feel they are ignored. One respondent writes, “Teachers have little input in regard to the curriculum...the specialists do most of this.” Others wrote that teacher input on staff development was not taken or valued much. One teacher wrote, “Too many policies and procedures lead to a nightmare of energy and effort exhausting even the most diligent and energetic.”

After indicating that Barbara Cole, the current principal, actively supports teacher leaders, a teacher wrote, “Not having good administrative leadership and support creates teachers who are not as motivated, less enthusiastic, and are disinterested.” It goes without saying that if teachers are not motivated or enthusiastic, there will be a loss in interest to be a teacher leader. One final item that could be counted as a restraint to teacher leadership that was noted from Barbara was that of tension.

When asked if she noticed any tension between teachers who were not in leadership and those who were, she said that it did exist. She is made aware of it when teachers come to her to complain about the job the department chair or team leader is doing. The examples she gave were procedural events such as ordering supplies, but they were still points of contention simply because one person was in leadership and one was

not. While these items were resolved when the principal directed the teacher to speak directly to the department chair, she mentioned that when those teachers who have complained about something later take on a leadership role, they often come back to her and say something to the effect of “I never knew how much that person did in this role.”

Products of Teacher Leadership

The products of teacher leadership listed below are derived from those things I observed during meetings as well as from the comments I received from staff members. Whenever I asked about the role that teacher leadership played in some aspect of success or effectiveness, the answers were definite but nebulous making it difficult to trace a direct line from teacher leadership to school effectiveness. I could sense that the teachers felt it was an important part of effectiveness, but I received no specific examples linking teacher leadership directly to effectiveness. When asked about the impact the teacher leadership has on school effectiveness, one respondent wrote, “Teachers are the cogs in the wheel. They make everything turn.” Another wrote, “Teacher leadership is developed through one’s attitude of being excited...” A third response was “teacher leaders are closer to the teachers and understand the needs and problems the teachers are going through.” While there are several products of teacher leadership listed below, school effectiveness seems to be linked only by the intuitive knowledge that staff members and I have concerning the link.

An expanded leadership role is a product of teacher leadership that grew out of the ability of the teachers to demonstrate positive results on the campus. As they proved

their abilities to Chris, he indicated that he would expand the parameters of their leadership. This leadership grew in stages as the school expanded, so the parameters were expanded slowly and as needed. Chris explains that on a continuum that includes dependent leaders, interdependent leaders, and independent leaders, he had many at the interdependent level and above when the school opened. The school culture that expected teachers to be leaders saw many teachers who were interdependent move into being independent leaders. This expanded teacher leadership on the campus.

Chris indicated in our interview that the immediate success at Jackson caused outstanding teachers to be drawn to the school. He indicated that several teachers came over after hearing about the leadership at Jackson in an effort to “escape oppressive department chairs at other schools.” A product of solid teacher leadership was the impact it had on drawing high quality teachers to the campus. As these teachers were added to the staff, the capacity of teacher leadership grew and had greater impact on the culture of the school and on the students. In response to the question about what teacher leaders do that makes them teacher leaders, one teacher wrote that “positive people inspire others.” Another teacher answered that “...they get involved and they seek new ways to motivate, excite, and enhance their students.”

A teacher wrote that “teacher leaders are better able to see the big picture.” Another wrote, “I believe that teachers who are allowed to participate and create plans for meeting educational goals have a clearer understanding of the expectations they must meet...it is easier to meet a goal that you clearly see at the beginning of the process.” Informed teachers seem to want to work hard to reach the goals they were partly

responsible for establishing. Another teacher indicated that “when teachers feel ownership in the school and what happens...they want to excel.”

One final product that is noticed by the principal has already been discussed as a restraint to teacher leadership and that is the problem of tension among teachers. As described above, Barbara has noticed that from time to time there is some tension between teachers and their department chairs. While operational in nature, it is a product of someone being in leadership that is created simply because one person is in a leadership role and can be the target for blame and finger pointing.

An increasing role in campus leadership, being considered as a key to success, drawing excellent teachers to the campus, creating a feeling of ownership and thus providing motivation to excel all seem to come together to maintain the part of the school culture that expects and encourages teachers to be leaders on the campus of Jackson High School. If the culture is nurtured and respected, an increase in the products of teacher leadership is likely to take place as well. The evidence seems to indicate that this is what is happening on campus.

Teacher Leadership in the Present

Chris served as principal of Jackson High School for five years before accepting a position in the district’s central office. Barbara Cole came as an experienced secondary principal from another school within the district. In an interview with Barbara, her responses to my questions provided me with information to indicate that teacher leadership is still a priority on the campus. Not only is teacher leadership still present on

campus, Barbara is continuing the administrative expectation that teachers will be leaders. In describing part of her being interviewed for the job at Jackson, Barbara said, “It was stated when this campus was opened that teacher leadership was to be a big part of the campus, and it is alive and well on campus.”

Offered as evidence of this, Barbara mentioned the upcoming summer workshops designed to train teachers to come back and train other teachers on the campus in a district wide endeavor to help students who are not earning passing scores in their classrooms. Barbara describes teacher leaders as “the only ones who can address the needed changes.” She noted that the school demographics are changing. An increase in lower socioeconomic students has created some subpopulations that now are impacting the standardized test scores for the campus. Barbara sees teacher leaders as the key to making these students successful and therefore moving the school back to an exemplary status, as it had been two years earlier.

Along the lines of preparing teacher leaders, Barbara stated that she “looks to give guidance and support to teacher leaders. We need to give them the tools and opportunities to increase their leadership skills.” The district wide intervention program is one of those opportunities. Another was described as she spoke of the recent process of selecting a new department chair for the math department.

The process involved teachers expressing interest in filling the leadership position. A committee consisting of Barbara, some assistant principals, and teachers from the department took each applicant through an interview process. Working together, the group named the new department chair. Barbara said this was better than

her naming someone to the position without the teachers having some input into who would lead their department. Participation in this process helps build teacher leadership by providing a chance to participate in decision making as well as providing a chance for teachers to buy into the decision they helped to make.

Another way Barbara is trying to keep teachers involved in the leadership of the school is her anticipated introduction of a teacher survey. The survey will be distributed at the end of each six-week grading period. It will ask teachers to indicate any problems they perceive, and it will ask for their possible solutions to those problems. Barbara sees this as an “informal way of letting them know that we do want their input and leadership and we are asking them how to solve some of the problems.”

The idea introduced by Chris of teachers stepping up into leadership roles that are not named or rewarded with pay still plays out on campus. Barbara mentioned that a computer teacher saw a need for mentoring and leadership in the department. The computer department does not have a designated chairperson due to the small size of the department. This teacher stepped up to meet those needs on her own. Barbara called this a “self assumed leadership role.” This is consistent with what Chris indicated was happening on campus when he was the principal.

The vision of success or effectiveness is shared by Richard Larson, the associate principal, when he responded to a question about the school’s current rating by saying, “We will be exemplary again, and teacher leadership plays a big role.” The administrative team is relying heavily on the leadership work of teachers as they identify students who need assistance, and then move the students into a position to receive that

assistance. Barbara indicated that “teacher leadership will have to increase as the demographics have changed on campus.” Richard indicates that the main reason the school is recognized and no longer exemplary is due to the state raising the standards on the new standardized test. The exemplary rating came under the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. This was replaced in 2002/03 by the tougher Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test. Richard indicated that student scores have increased in every area of the test except for English/ELA. Richard made a powerful statement about teacher leadership when asked about the role it would play in the school achieving an exemplary status again. He stated, “...without the leadership and input of teachers, we will never achieve greatness.” He has been on the campus since it opened and was highly praised by Chris for his administrative skills and leadership. The attitude of both Barbara and Richard indicates a strong desire to maintain a high level of teacher leadership on campus with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of the school.

When asked about the leadership style of her teacher leaders, particularly the department chairs, Barbara indicated immediately that it was very much a collaborative style among the group. While she did admit that some are a bit more authoritarian than others, she said they all seek input from their teachers and make decisions with the group. This is in line with what Chris indicated he established early on with the teacher leaders and is confirmed again by comments from Richard when he was asked the same question.

One example of collaboration between teachers became evident to me during one of the weekly department chair meetings in May. Before the meeting began, I overheard

a conversation between the head football coach and the Science department chair. The head coach needed to hire a new assistant coach and that position was linked to an opening in the Science department. The coach said he had found someone to interview and wanted to know if the Science department head could be part of the interview. “Of course” she responded. But the coach added a statement that showed a collaborative spirit among these leaders when he said, “I want to hire a good coach, but I want you to have a great teacher in your department...I think this guy might be able to be both. Let’s see when we can both meet him.” When I mentioned this conversation to Barbara, I asked if this was common for the staff. She replied, “Yes, they do work together very well with that.”

Barbara commented that the teachers are willing to work the extra hours required to be a teacher and a leader on campus. She mentioned that many teachers ask what they can do to help during tough times of the school year such as graduation and summer hiring. Many volunteer to help with graduation details as well as volunteering to come up during their summer break to help interview prospective teachers. This is consistent with what the teacher leaders did when Chris was principal. He mentioned that the teachers would go the extra mile again and again.

When interviewed, Chris indicated that he was looking for teachers who had passion for something bigger than themselves. Part of his hiring matrix included being able to articulate this passion. When asked if her teacher leaders demonstrated passion, Barbara smiled and said, “Oh yes! I can hear it when they talk about school.” I mentioned that I could sense the passion in the meetings I attended and asked if every

meeting was as spirited as those. She confirmed that what I observed was commonplace during the meetings all year. It appears that what Chris was looking for in those he hired is still a part of the leadership team at Jackson.

On several occasions during our interview, Barbara referred to what teachers do in the classroom as demonstrations of teacher leadership. Not only does she see classroom teachers as the only ones who can address the needed changes at Jackson, but also mentioned their desire and ability to work with parents as an example of their leadership. She indicated that the teachers, department chairs, and sponsors of organizations have told her that if a parent calls with a concern or a complaint, the teachers want to handle and resolve the issue themselves. She stated that “we [administrators] rely on the teachers to work with the parents and the teachers want us to rely on them...not to circumvent them.”

The classroom leadership of teachers was also mentioned in relationship to the intervention programs that require teachers to watch student progress and then identify those students who need assistance. The process involves observing students, looking over grade reports, contacting the students and parents, referring the students to the program, and monitoring their progress. Barbara says that “putting this program in place increases teacher leadership skills.”

Teacher leadership is alive and well as Barbara indicated during our interview. What Chris saw as a need based on his style of leadership is still being encouraged and supported by Barbara. The department chair meetings are lively and accomplish much work through a highly interactive dialogue. While Barbara introduced many topics on

the agendas, she would sit back and let the department chairs discuss and decide what needed to be done. On multiple occasions Barbara would introduce a topic and immediately ask for ideas or solutions from the teachers. A discussion would ensue and multiple ideas were discussed. One year after Chris's leaving, teacher leadership continues to be a strong component of overall school leadership at Jackson High School.

Jackson Conclusion

Teacher leadership at Jackson has been handed off from Chris to Barbara. In the same way a baton is passed between runners during a track meet, Barbara has taken the baton of teacher leadership and continued running the race. When Barbara commented that teacher leadership was brought to her attention during her interview for the position of principal, I remembered Chris's comments about his expectation that teachers would be leaders on campus. Those participating in the interview process to replace Chris were looking for a new principal who would continue expecting and supporting teacher leadership on campus.

In an effort to create and then maintain a school culture that supports teacher leadership, there has been an acknowledgement of the importance of teacher leadership from the administrative team. Chris started it, but Barbara and Richard have continued along the same lines. Comments from all three have indicated that teacher leaders have played a large role in the effectiveness and success that Jackson has enjoyed. The efforts of the current administration to create and support opportunities for teacher leadership fall nicely into line with what the teachers have seen from the beginning. From Chris's

efforts to let teacher leaders lead by preparing them and then staying out of their way to Barbara's support of a computer teacher's efforts to lead and improve the department without the title of department chair, teachers on the campus can feel supported in their efforts to help lead the campus.

Both principals recognized teacher leadership in and out of the classroom. Barbara acknowledged that it would be the classroom work of teachers that would move Jackson back toward an exemplary rating and Chris mentioned athletic success. When talking about a new referral program for students who need to improve their scores on the state standardized test, Barbara said teachers were "the ones who know" which students need assistance. She acknowledged that the success of the program as well as the success of the students depended on teacher leaders working with the students. I noticed congruence between Barbara and Richard in their shared expectation that Jackson would be rated exemplary again and that teacher leaders would make it happen.

The department chair meetings were lively and exciting. From the words of a song, I had good vibrations when I was in attendance. I observed a group of teacher leaders interacting with each other and with the school administration to help move Jackson forward. Comments, suggestion, ideas, and solutions were readily exchanged during the meetings. The department chairs were seeking improvement in every department. When the fine arts chair mentioned that she had heard some complaints about the noise level of her choir, not only was the situation handled by the group, but she also was offered praise for a past choir event that had taken place.

The interactions among the teacher leadership were professional as well as social. Before and after each department chair meeting I could overhear personal conversations about family events, vacations, and home purchases. I could sense that these teachers enjoyed being together. Chris indicated that he wanted his teachers to model care, respect, and empathy to the students. In one of the meetings, a teacher asked if there was any way to honor a custodian for going “above and beyond the call of duty” in his care of a parent who was visiting the campus. She went on to explain the length to which this custodian went to assist this parent. Barbara mentioned a recent appreciation luncheon that had been held to honor the custodians as she too praised the custodial staff for their efforts on campus. What caught my attention was the fact that this teacher noticed the effort of the custodian, knew him by name, and brought the event to the attention of the leadership team. I also thought it was a good example of what Chris had hoped would develop among the teachers.

My study was readily accepted by Chris and Barbara. Chris was eager to talk about Jackson with me. Barbara was immediately willing to allow me access to the campus. I was warmly greeted each time I was on campus. Teachers, office personnel, and administrators all smiled and acknowledged me when I visited. I observed parents as they were greeted and directed to whomever they needed to meet with. Students who came into the office were treated in the same way. I could sense a warmth on campus even from my position as one who had no connection to the school other than my research.

In regard to the TEA ratings, some could say that the high ratings for the first several years at Jackson were due to the type of students who attended. Chris mentioned that the students overall had a lot of what he called “cultural capital” since many were coming from relatively affluent families. But the drop from exemplary to recognized might be an indication that cultural capital and affluence may not be enough to guarantee the highest ratings. The new state test is more difficult than the old one and has produced lowered ratings across the state. Although both Chris and Barbara mentioned that some subpopulations among the students are growing, Richard mentioned that the lowered ratings were mainly due to the English section of the new test. Barbara indicated that the needs of the subpopulations were being identified and programs are being implemented to assist these students.

There are some indications that the changes in student population and the drop in the state rating may be changing “business as usual” at Jackson. Chris came to Jackson with no experience as a high school principal and what one teacher called “limited teaching experience.” Actually, Chris taught at the high school level for eleven years prior to his work in administration. He hired many teachers out of the Jr. High ranks as well as teachers who had children enrolled at Jackson. Chris’s enthusiasm and personality combined well with the student demographics and teaching staff to create a warm and rich atmosphere and culture that produced high marks for the school. Chris said, “We would have had to have done something to mess them up” in regard to test scores and student success. Things have changed since the school opened.

Barbara was described by one teacher as being an “extremely effective principal due to the fact that she had so much classroom experience.” Her teaching experience as well as her experience as a secondary school principal prior to Jackson will likely serve the school well as it faces new academic challenges. In regard to challenges, one teacher commented that there is an increasing “division” between some of the “inner circle” and those teachers who are seeking a more rigorous curriculum. The inner circle is described by this teacher as consisting of “Jr. High teachers or alternative certification teachers” hired by Chris. When this past school year ended, two of these teachers left to return to teaching at the Jr. High level because of “too much pressure.” This pressure was from those teachers who were seeking a more rigorous curriculum.

It was stated that “our drop in TAKS recognition comes as no surprise to many.” Barbara is also described as being open to teacher input in regard to strategies and programs aimed at improving the effectiveness of the school. I observed this in the department chair meetings and heard it from Barbara during an interview. As Barbara moves into her second year as principal, one teacher commented that she believes “more teachers will buy into the programs Barbara is seeking to implement.” These programs are the ones Barbara is implementing to help raise the test scores for the campus.

The comments from Richard and Barbara indicate that both of them are focused on increasing the effectiveness of the school. Both have indicated that they believe there is a definite link between this increased effectiveness and teacher leadership. While there are many people who might be tempted to say that Jackson has so much success because of the type of students in attendance, I know that the school has a staff of teachers who

would like to think that they play an important role in student success. In regard to school effectiveness and improvement, I saw too much deliberate effort from past and present administrative staff and too much determination in the department chair meetings to think that Jackson is successful simply due to the student population.

I have little doubt that Jackson High School will be rated as exemplary again. The determination, focus, and planning that I observed and heard about convince me that the leadership team of the school, including teachers and administrators, will make it happen. In the last department chair meeting, Barbara thanked the teacher leaders for making her feel so welcome during her first year. She expressed thanks to the teachers by saying, “You all did a wonderful job this year, you contributed to the success of the school. It takes everybody to make it all happen: cooks, janitors, teachers, and principals.” She finished by saying, “Chris is gone, and we are still great. I’ll leave, and you will still be great. Change is OK.” The teachers in the room were nodding their heads in agreement. I was nodding my head as well.

Summary of the Two Schools

There are some common themes found in these schools in regard to teacher leadership. I found that administrators at both schools have or did have a high level of expectation in regard to teacher leaders. The administrators in both of these schools acknowledged that teacher leadership would be a key component of any level of effectiveness as related to student success. Franklin High School and Jackson High School are like other schools in that they need teacher leadership if they want to be

effective. Teachers and administrators in both of these schools acknowledge that teacher leadership is important to student success. Franklin started out with very limited teacher leadership under the principal who opened the school. When he left, the school was rated as low performing. Susan took over and raised teacher leaders to a position from which they could help her impact student success. The results speak for themselves. Since Susan left, teacher leadership has floundered. With a current rating of academically acceptable, Franklin is just one step above where it was when Susan took over.

Jackson started out with an expectation that teachers on campus would be leaders. Teacher leaders were instructed on leadership style, and they were told what they needed to model for the students in an effort to become the “best high school in America.” Jackson saw immediate success in terms of academic scores of the students. When Chris left the school, Barbara was informed that teacher leadership was a vital component of that success. She has continued the pattern of expecting teachers to be leaders, supporting those teachers in leadership positions, and she is seeking more ways to involve teachers in the leadership of the school. This will be a vital part of the Jackson strategy to return to an exemplary rating.

Another common theme was that the role teacher leadership would play in the school was driven by a vision of student success in both schools. When Susan came to Franklin, she struggled during the first year with trying to find the direction for the school and with trying to find teacher leaders. She looked forward to a vision she could see concerning student success. She shared that vision with those who would listen and then together they moved the school forward. When she left, it seems that looking

forward was no longer a priority. In my interview at Franklin with Pamela Card, the associate principal, she told me that they were looking back to see what had been successful in the past when the school was exemplary. I thought it was interesting that under Cheryl's direction the school leaders were looking back to the past. It felt to me during the interview that the school leaders could not see any success ahead of them. I think they were so wrapped up in the loss of teaching positions over the last few years that they were convinced that the best they could do was tread water in terms of student success. Many times when I mentioned teacher leadership and the past exemplary rating to Cheryl, she would remind me that she had almost thirty fewer teachers with the same number of students when compared to what Susan had as principal.

Looking back on my time in both schools showed me that from the beginning, Cheryl did not consider teacher leadership as an important aspect of total school leadership. She was reflecting what I heard from Dr. Evans in my interview with her when she told me that I would be better off studying variations in test scores from campus to campus rather than looking at teacher leadership. Neither she nor Cheryl was hesitant to tell me that they thought little of teacher leadership research. I could see this being lived out on the Franklin campus.

While various people in both schools acknowledge the need for teacher leadership, Franklin has seen little effort to keep teacher leadership active. When Susan left, it seems that the drive to maintain strong teacher leadership left with her. The stigma of a low rating was gone and the school was riding high on past success. But the wind that seemed to be filling their sails soon died down, and the leadership team found

itself floundering. This is not what the teachers or administrators wanted. It just happened. It happened slowly. As Susan indicated in an interview, it took a lot of effort to maintain teacher leadership on the campus. Since she left, there seems to have been little effort to encourage or maintain teacher leadership.

At Jackson I noticed a very different attitude toward teacher leadership and the role it played in the vision of success for the school. When I met with Chris, he was excited about someone asking about teacher leadership at Jackson. When I submitted my request to conduct research in the district, I was told that the assistant superintendent was pleased that I wanted to look at this aspect of the school. The vision that Chris had for Jackson to be the “best high school in America” was going to be supported by strong teacher leadership. He knew it from the beginning, acknowledged the same with teachers as they were interviewed, and formed a leadership team that shared his vision. That vision was passed on to Barbara when she became principal. Combined with passing along the vision, the expectation that teachers would be leaders was also handed to Barbara when she took over.

Both schools demonstrated a theme of communication on campus. When Franklin was exemplary, a pattern of strong communication had been established between Susan and the teacher leaders on campus. In leadership meetings at both schools, many of the same issues were addressed. Both schools dealt with student discipline, the loss of teaching positions mandated by the district, parking, student tutorial programs, and test scores to name a few. The difference I noticed was the way these issues were addressed in the meetings. At Franklin, the department leadership

seemed to be little more than a communication conduit through which decisions made by the administrative team were passed on to the rest of the teaching staff. I witnessed little discussion during the meetings about how best to address any of the concerns that were being brought up.

Pamela indicated to me that Franklin teacher leaders were involved in many decisions on campus. I did not observe this in the meetings. In one of my last communications with Cheryl, she indicated that she would like to see more teacher leadership at Franklin. I did not observe her seeking after or asking for teachers to step up into leadership roles. The one exception to this I noticed was the committee that looked into changes in the Special Education program at Franklin. I could see that Cheryl had engaged teacher leadership and allowed those teachers to help inform school policy in this area.

Chris and Barbara both told me that teacher leadership was vital and expected in order to make Jackson successful and effective with students. I observed the high value Barbara placed on teacher leadership when I attended the leadership meetings. At Jackson the teacher leaders were regularly asked for their input. In most cases the discussions involved the teacher leaders interacting with the administration to offer solutions and ideas. Barbara had administrator meetings prior to department chair meetings just like Cheryl did at Franklin. Decisions and ideas were developed during these meetings on both campuses. A difference was that Barbara seemed to talk with the teacher leadership about these decisions. Cheryl seemed to talk to the teacher leadership. The difference in communication was noticeable.

Both schools have seen a drop in their state ratings. Jackson has dropped from a rating of exemplary to a rating of recognized. When I asked about moving back to an exemplary rating, I could sense that the administrators and the teachers know they will be exemplary again. Barbara, her associate principal Richard, and some teachers mentioned directly or alluded to the fact that Jackson will be exemplary again. Barbara and Richard readily state that it will be because of strong teacher leadership that this will happen. When asked about moving back to an exemplary rating for Franklin, no administrator or teacher made comments about future success or improvement. I have no statement from anyone at Franklin that says “we will be exemplary again.”

The role of the principal in regard to teacher leadership had a great impact on both campuses. When Susan took over at Franklin, teacher leadership was not playing much of a role in school effectiveness. She changed the role that teacher leadership played on the campus. She also raised the expectations for teacher leaders on the campus. Her goal was student improvement. Her method was to use teacher leadership to accomplish that improvement. In my interview with Dr. Evans, the superintendent, she told me that teacher leadership emerged under Susan’s leadership. Not only did it emerge, but it came to life and began to impact the entire school.

Susan started out by allowing those who had been in leadership to stay in leadership. The results did not move the school toward her goal. After spending a year on campus, she knew who her teacher leaders were. After finding only three teachers who could see her vision and buy into the plan, she began to move. As the role of teacher leadership changed, as people were empowered to effect change, and as Susan

supported and encouraged the changes, the school began to see improvement. When the teachers began to see how they were impacting school effectiveness, more wanted to share in a leadership role. Susan continued to engage her teacher leaders through relationships that would encourage the teachers. Susan could also see who else among the staff could step into leadership. While she acknowledged that this process of growing teacher leadership was “a lot of work for me”, Susan knew that the cost to her would pay out in terms of increased student achievement.

Areas of academic weakness were identified and programs were developed to strengthen those areas. Teacher leaders were involved in every step of improvement including identification of weaknesses, development of the programs, and the implementation and evaluation of the programs. Susan received regular reports as to student progress. Her involvement meant that teachers were held accountable for the success of the programs that they had helped develop. Planning and looking forward were activities that Susan handled in the beginning. When the CBLT was fully functioning, these activities were handed off to them. As teachers saw improvement, more wanted to have a hand in the success they could see around them.

Susan took stock of what she had at Franklin. She developed and shared a vision. She empowered those who were willing to work toward the vision. Monitoring and overseeing the improvement became her role as she encouraged teachers to accept leadership roles that were meaningful. The school began to see improvement in terms of effectiveness in the classrooms and in terms of student scores on standardized tests.

Cheryl started at Franklin while the school and staff were still experiencing the mountaintop experience of moving from a rating of low performing to one of exemplary. As Susan noted, the energy level required from the principal to maintain that level of performance is high. It is not clear why Cheryl did not expend the needed energy to maintain teacher leadership. In not directly addressing teacher leadership, and by not continuing the process needed to maintain teacher leadership, Cheryl allowed it to slowly erode away in terms of its impact on effectiveness.

Cheryl acknowledged her desire for an increase in teacher leadership. But she did little to create, or recreate, the atmosphere in which teacher leadership had once thrived on the campus. The ad hoc committee of teachers and staff members that looked into Special Education reform reflected a good use of teacher leadership. Cheryl honored the decisions from this group, praised the amount of work they had accomplished, and appeared to be pleased with the projected results for the coming year. It appeared that the potential for teacher leadership to again impact school effectiveness was present. That potential was overlooked as Cheryl seems to have chosen to have most of the burden of leadership decisions fall on the administrative team.

When Cheryl became principal, teacher leadership was not discouraged. It was simply that teacher leadership was not encouraged. In either case the end result is the same. Teacher leadership had lost its ability to powerfully impact student achievement as it had in the past. The student scores have dropped considerably since the days of the exemplary rating. At the end of this year, a move to look at improvement strategies was begun.

Like Susan at Franklin, Chris began his work at Jackson High School with a vision that he shared with teachers. He empowered willing teacher leaders to act on that vision. His work at Jackson began with high expectations for teachers to be leaders both in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, teacher leaders were expected to model character, care, and leadership for the students. Out of the classroom, department chairs were expected to be collaborative leaders who acted in mentoring roles for other teachers.

In the early days of the school, teachers identified needs on campus and then helped to create and develop programs to meet those needs. As teacher leaders worked, Chris would watch over them and monitor progress. New teacher leaders were identified and empowered as needed. Existing teacher leaders enjoyed more latitude in regard to leadership responsibilities. Other leaders were reined in and redirected as their performance dictated. Chris worked to prepare the leaders and then “get out of their way.”

Barbara has continued in this same fashion. From comments in the final leadership meeting, there has been little change in the culture of the school in terms of teachers being encouraged to step into leadership roles. Barbara, like Chris, identifies and then equips teacher leaders. The vision of becoming the best high school in America was passed to Barbara when she became the principal. The power, importance, and impact of teacher leadership on the campus were also handed down to her when she began. She has continued with the same desire and effort to encourage and maintain teacher leadership that the school has enjoyed since it opened.

Student scores have dropped a little since the school opened. The drop has prompted quick action. Barbara has begun to look at new programs aimed at improving student success on campus. Teachers have been asked for input in regard to programs and implementation strategies that will help meet the academic needs of identified students. In the effort to move back to an exemplary rating, Barbara and her associate principal Richard acknowledge that teacher leadership is the key to increased effectiveness and higher student scores. The entire leadership team understands this. “Change is OK” may have just been a statement made by Barbara at the final department meeting, but I think it accurately reflects a shared vision on the Jackson campus.

Finally, both schools are poised for change. Franklin has seen its share of change in regard to teacher leadership over the years. The stagnation and decline in teacher leadership since Susan left has moved this school almost back to where it was before she used teacher leadership to begin the transformation into an exemplary campus. The next change for Franklin is on the horizon as a new principal takes over for the 2005/2006 school year. There is a possibility that a new principal will breathe life back into the teacher leaders on the campus. The history of teacher leadership on the campus and the glimmers of teacher leadership that I observed could combine with a new vision from a new principal to spark the teacher leaders and the school to march toward exemplary status again.

The change at Jackson is more certain to take place. Barbara has already begun to implement programs and seek teacher input in regard to addressing the academic needs of students. The needed shift to a more challenging curriculum has begun. Teacher input

will be sought through the use of a regular survey given to teachers. These efforts combined with the strong desire to be exemplary again all will come together to create the momentum needed to move toward improvement. The teacher leadership team is already in place and functioning very well. There is a strong expectation from the administration as well as from the teachers themselves that classroom teachers will play a large role in the work of improving school effectiveness. An exemplary rating will not elude them for long.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Procedures

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What leadership roles do teachers in the two schools in the study play in producing school effectiveness?
2. What evidence shows that teacher leadership is impacting school effectiveness?

As described earlier, naturalistic inquiry guided the steps in this research. Selecting the schools, collecting the data, analyzing the data, and providing for the trustworthiness of the report were all impacted by the naturalistic practice of using the researcher as the main data gathering tool.

Two large suburban high schools were chosen for this research. Purposive sampling was used to select schools that would be able to provide data that was rich in detail. Recommendations from my committee chairman, from district level personnel, and from campus principals were used to determine if teacher leadership was seen to have an impact on school effectiveness. When these sources agreed that teacher leadership did play a part on the two campuses, the schools were chosen for my research.

Data collection was achieved by the use of a survey instrument that was added to the original methodology in an attempt to meet a district request to reduce the time teachers would have to spend while participating in the research. The collection of data

also included personal and email interviews that were conducted. Field notes were taken during the personal interviews, and several of these were tape recorded. Observations made during teacher leader meetings were also used in the collection of data. Notes were taken during the meetings, and any materials handed out during the meetings were collected.

The survey instrument was distributed on both campuses by the principal with a letter of introduction requesting that teachers fill them out and turn completed surveys into the office. Interviews with district level personnel, current and former principals, and teachers on both campuses provided rich details about the past and current impact of teacher leadership on each campus. Following a low return of the surveys, I directly contacted the department leaders and any other teachers recommended by the current and former principals. This provided the most data for the study.

The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method by noting broad categories into which the data began to fall. As more data was analyzed, some categories were added; other categories were refined by changing the headings. The data was coded and placed into the seven categories that eventually emerged. The final categories were as follows:

- teacher leadership in the past;
- teacher leadership roles;
- teacher leadership enablers;
- teacher leadership restraints;
- the products of teacher leadership;

- teacher leadership in the present; and
- the role of the principal.

These categories were then used to help inform the construction of the realities found on each campus.

The major difficulty encountered during the data collection phase was that of a lack of time on the part of the respondents. From the first attempts to gain an interview with a busy superintendent to my frequent encouragement to teachers to respond to my questions, I found that a lack of time hindered the collection of data. The school personnel, administrators as well as teachers, had little time to give. The fact that a stranger, an outsider, was asking for time impacted many teachers. After some persistence on my part however, the teachers and administrators did reveal a great deal of detail and rich data that would allow me to create a report. That report, according to those respondents who graciously read it for accuracy, reported that it did accurately reflect what took place on those campuses. Changes to details and facts were included in the report per their recommendations.

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by using techniques that provide credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four qualities help demonstrate the truth value of the study and provide a basis for applying the results of the research to other similar contexts. They also allow for external judgments to be made in regard to the consistency and neutrality of the research. Being on campus enough to challenge any biases I may have had and using member checks to review my written descriptions for accuracy and clarity helped to enhance credibility.

Purposive sampling allowed for a thick description that created in the reader a chance to feel and understand the context being described. This allows an outside researcher an opportunity to know if the research findings could be transferred to another school context. Allowing for facts to be traced back to a source in the data, and including descriptions of processes and procedures used help to establish dependability and confirmability. The audit trail created for these purposes also includes a reflexive journal that was kept during the study. The journal is a personal diary of sorts kept to record a variety of information throughout the research project. Entries could include decisions, questions, struggles, and insights that emerged during the study.

Summary of Findings

There were many similarities found between the campuses. These similarities are revealed when the comparison of the campuses used the years that Susan was the principal at Franklin. Using this comparison, principals on both campuses expected teachers to be leaders. At Franklin, Susan had to find teachers willing to be leaders. She struggled to replace a pattern of leadership that was hierarchical in nature and had produced a low rating for the school. Through her first year on campus, Susan identified teachers who would be willing and able to help her lead the campus. The improvements slowly followed.

At Jackson, Chris had the opportunity to hire staff for a new building. Included in his interview process was his expectation that the teachers he would hire would be leaders on campus. From the beginning of the school, teachers knew that they were

expected to demonstrate leadership on campus. This expectation was handed down to Barbara when she took over the campus at the beginning of the 2004/2005 school year.

The principals on both campuses had a vision of success. At Franklin, Susan could see the school moving away from the low performing rating that she inherited. She could envision the school moving up to an exemplary rating. She shared that vision with the teachers who would listen and the work began in earnest. Chris began the vision of Jackson becoming the best high school in America, and Barbara has continued pursuing this. She continues to not only pursue this but to make sure that those around her continue to pursue it as well. Her associate principal, Richard, shares the belief that the school will continue on its quest for high student success.

Communication between school administration and teacher leaders was strong on both campuses. Susan and Chris both involved teachers in decision making and in the process of identifying needs on the campus. Teachers were asked for input and ideas. Relationships were built, more leaders were identified, and progress was made. Teachers were made to feel that they were impacting the effectiveness of the school. Positive results could be seen, and all involved could share in the knowledge that they each played an important part in those results.

The role of the principal had a powerful impact on teacher leadership and consequently on school effectiveness. As mentioned above, the principals expected teachers to be leaders, and they had a vision of student success. But, in a review of the role played by the principal, several other areas must be mentioned. Of great importance is the fact that the principals acknowledged the need for teacher leadership. Susan

indicated that she could not do the work alone, and Chris stated that his leadership style dictated that teacher leadership would play an important role from the beginning. Both of these principals knew it would take leadership efforts from many people to make the schools successful. Barbara shares the same sentiment about teacher leadership.

These principals also monitored the teacher leaders, encouraged current and new teacher leaders as they worked, and built relationships with teachers on campus. These principals empowered teacher leaders. Without these things, the teacher leaders would have been limited in their ability to impact the school and student achievement. The support for teacher leadership demonstrated by the principals cleared the path on both campuses for teacher leaders to have a meaningful and visible role on campus.

Under Susan, teacher leadership at Franklin flourished. Since Susan has been gone, however, teacher leadership has not enjoyed the same role on campus. Under Cheryl, there was no discernable expectation that teachers would be leaders. Her belief that teacher leadership played little role on a campus was demonstrated in her actions. Unlike Susan, Chris, or Barbara, Cheryl shared no vision of student success when we talked. She often reminded me of the smaller staff she had to work with than when Susan was principal. The drop in student scores at Franklin was attributed to this fact. No comment from any staff member at Franklin indicated that they felt the school rating would be improved. Cheryl seemed to let teacher leadership die on the vine and with it any vision for improvement. It was not that she directly discouraged teacher leadership; it was more that she did nothing to directly encourage teachers to participate in school leadership.

Finally, in regard to my findings, both schools seem poised for change.

Stagnation at Franklin in terms of teacher leadership is present much like it was when Susan took over. Student scores are down, and the relationship between the principal and the teachers seems to be weak. But a new principal was named for the 2005/2006 school year. While there is always some level of apprehension when a new principal is named, there is also the possibility of an improved role for teacher leadership on the campus. With that improved role comes the possibility of improved student achievement.

At Jackson, change is more a probability than a possibility. While many factors play into school effectiveness, it is the stated goal of the current administration, as well as some teacher leaders, to improve student achievement and to move back to an exemplary rating. It would seem that a return to an exemplary rating is on the horizon for Jackson.

Conclusions

This examination of the two schools leads to some conclusions that reflect the study's findings and are supported by the literature on teacher leadership. These conclusions, though, should be considered as very tentative and suggest working hypotheses that may be used to provide direction for future studies on teacher leadership. A discussion of these hypotheses follows.

1. Principal succession is a key factor in determining the subsequent fate of teacher leadership or any other component of the school culture. This is somewhat of a paradox with respect to teacher leadership since it suggests that teacher leadership rather

than being teacher inspired actually comes from the principal. This statement, however, is an oversimplification of what takes place. Because of the status of his position, the principal can intentionally or unintentionally prevent meaningful teacher leadership. The principal can likewise intentionally allow for meaningful teacher leadership and create opportunities for it. It is, however, the teachers that must take leadership. The principal's role is that of an enabler.

Barth (2004) commented that the principal can create or stop almost everything on a campus. At Jackson, I observed the power of two principals who wanted teacher leadership to play a large role on the campus. At Franklin, Susan demonstrated that a principal can come onto a campus and create a school in which teacher leadership is a powerful force. I also saw that when Susan left, teacher leadership all but vanished.

2. Enabling and maintaining teacher leadership takes constant attention and a lot of work on the part of the principal. In one of my interviews with Susan, she told me that teacher leadership impacted school effectiveness but that it demanded considerable time and effort from her. Instead of overseeing only instructional issues with her teachers, she also had to oversee the leadership work of the teachers. She had to build the leadership capacity of each teacher leader. She started this by laying out a vision of success for the teachers to see. Susan also accomplished this by building relationships, by working with the teachers on their leadership skills, and by expecting and inspecting results of teacher leadership efforts. She created in the teachers what Glickman (2003) describes as collective action, agreed upon purpose, and belief in attainment. In short, Susan created a culture that encouraged and sustained teacher leadership on campus.

Susan had created a school culture that embraced collaborative leadership and shunned the cultural norms of individualism that Mitchell (1997) indicated were a barrier to teacher leadership. Teachers at Franklin worked together to identify areas of need. They then worked together to create solutions to those problems. Susan allowed time for teachers to see and understand her goals for the school. Harris and Drake (1997) see this as imperative if a school is to have increased teacher leadership. Susan's entire first year on campus was spent developing and sharing her vision of success. When she had a few teachers willing to buy into her goals, the work began.

Chris did much of the same work at Jackson. He began with high expectations for teacher leaders. He shared a vision of success with his teachers. That vision was for Jackson to become the best high school in America. That vision is still in the minds of some teachers. Chris monitored teacher leaders, provided training as needed, empowered teachers, and built relationships with his staff. When Barbara became the principal, she continued the work.

In the selection of a new department head, Barbara indicated that it would have been easy for her to just appoint someone to the position. Instead, she involved a team of people that included teachers. This team conducted interviews, met several times, and together voted on the new leader. Barbara also shared an account of her work to resolve conflict between teachers and teacher leaders. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), Donaldson (2001), Barth (2004), and Lieberman and Miller (2004) all discuss the idea that relationships must be addressed and changed in regard to teacher leadership. The

individualistic and egalitarian norms found in many schools work against efforts to establish and maintain teacher leadership on a school campus.

The work of the principal to foster teacher leadership is ongoing. Principals must insure that teachers are competent in the classroom and have a good reputation and credibility among their peers (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000). The principals must change the traditional school culture from a top down model that supports teacher isolationism to one that will support collaborative leadership (Ash & Persall, 2000; Bishop, Tinley, & Berman, 1997; Harris & Drake, 1997; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 2000). Finally, Little (2000) suggests that a paradigm shift must take place regarding school authority. The principal will be the one working to make this happen.

3. Effective teacher leadership in a school clearly makes a difference in the various conversations that take place about school problems and challenges. Because they were teacher leaders, teachers on the two campuses were engaged in conversations about the challenges of meeting student needs. They were also involved in conversations about solutions to those challenges. When these teachers knew they were involved in leadership, their view of the school expanded. While they were still concerned with what took place in their own classrooms, these leaders were now concerned about the entire campus. These new conversations came about only when teacher leadership was, as Barbara put it, “alive and well.”

Lieberman et al. (2000) suggest that collaboration does not come naturally in a school. One of the respondents in their study indicated that as a teacher leader, she now looked at the whole system. A broader scope of leadership participation was observed at

Jackson when two teacher leaders were engaged in a conversation about interviewing and hiring a new staff member. A campus without teacher leaders has the administration hiring all new staff members. The conversation I overheard would have not taken place had these two teachers not been on a campus that supported teacher leadership.

As Barth (2001) suggested, the lives of teachers are energized by the fact that they have helped shape their schools. Conversations about school wide issues can change the way teachers teach in the classroom. Donaldson (2001) offers that the real benefits of teacher leadership are more than likely found in the interactions between students and staff. It would seem that these new conversations among teachers in leadership roles could impact school effectiveness and student achievement. Both Franklin and Jackson seem to have demonstrated this.

4. It is hard to draw tight cause and effect relationships between teacher leadership and student performance based on this study and the available literature. But there appears to be a clear link between teacher leadership and teachers' enthusiasm for student improvement and confidence in their own efforts to bring it about. As indicated by Leithwood et al. (2004) the direct link between teacher leadership and student performance is difficult to track. Much of the research suggests that there are positive benefits to teacher leadership, but the multifaceted nature of student achievement makes teacher leadership just one of many factors. A definite cause and effect relationship from teacher leadership to student achievement has not been reported.

Do scores improve because of an increase in the number of classroom contact hours a student has with math concepts, or do scores increase because a teacher leader

set up a new after school tutorial program? Maybe “yes” can be the answer to both of these questions. The teacher increasing contact hours in her classes could be informed of this need because she is a teacher leader. The need for a tutorial program created an opening for a teacher to step into a leadership role. While a direct link between teacher leadership and student achievement may be difficult to trace, teacher leadership has certainly played a role in both of these hypothetical improvement efforts.

Responses to interview questions with administrators and teachers demonstrated enthusiasm. “We will be exemplary again” was the response from one Jackson respondent. One Franklin teacher shares that under Susan’s leadership he experienced the best four years he has had in education. In a short conversation with this teacher after a department head meeting, I could sense his enthusiasm as he answered some questions about teacher leadership under Susan.

Susan and Chris both indicated that when positive results were achieved, more teachers wanted to become part of the leadership team. More teachers wanted to be part of the programming that impacted student learning. At Franklin, the push was to move far away from the low rating the school had received. Early on at Jackson the push was to maintain the high rating that had been earned. Now the Jackson goal is to regain the highest rating. There is much enthusiasm on the part of the school staff to achieve this goal. Teacher leadership on the Jackson campus is acknowledged as the only way this will happen.

The current lack of enthusiasm that I sensed on the Franklin campus coincides with a definite drop in the level of teacher leadership. The drop in student scores, the

loss of several teaching positions, a new state test, and a lack of effort by Cheryl to continue to maintain teacher leadership all seem to have combined to diminish the role that teacher leadership played on campus. As teachers were removed from decision making roles, there appears to have been a drop in their enthusiasm.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are drawn from the conclusions arrived at by this research. They include steps that could be taken to enhance teacher leadership and quite possibly, student achievement.

1. District level personnel need to work from a definition of campus leadership that includes teacher leadership when hiring campus principals. Both campuses in this study had principals who knew how to build and use teacher leadership to the benefit of students and staff. Both of these principals moved on to district level administrative positions after a few years on campus. The hiring process for Jackson included a discussion about the importance of teacher leadership on campus. A result of this is that teacher leadership is still a strong force in regard to campus leadership at Jackson. There is no evidence that the hiring process to replace Susan at Franklin included any discussion about teacher leadership. A principal came in who did not value teacher leadership. While many factors play into school effectiveness and student achievement, the swift decline of teacher leadership on campus parallels the decline in student performance. District level attention to teacher leadership could have proven helpful in

securing a replacement principal who would have continued supporting teacher leadership.

2. Principals must intentionally take steps to actively encourage and support teacher leadership. A culture that expects teachers to be leaders and then supports those teachers in those leadership roles is more likely to exist past the tenure of the principal who helped establish that culture. To build this culture the principal must expect teachers to be leaders. The principal must look to create opportunities for teachers to lead. The teachers have to feel that their input is valued and that they impact decisions made on the campus. As observed on the Franklin campus, creation of such a culture is no guarantee that teacher leadership will thrive after the principal leaves.

Principals must encourage teachers to take part in problem identification, problem solving, and decision making on campus. Teachers must be allowed the opportunity to expand their conversations to include school wide or even system wide issues. Teachers must be given the chance to expand their vision of the school beyond that of their classroom in order to become an effective part of the campus leadership team.

3. Principals must clearly understand the amount of effort that collaborative campus leadership will demand of them. Simply naming someone to the position of department head or allowing a teacher to create a new program in response to a need is not enough to create effective teacher leadership on a campus. The principal intent on creating and sustaining teacher leadership must seek out ways to support those sharing the leadership responsibilities. The principal must also constantly seek out new teacher

leaders who can contribute to campus leadership when called upon. If teacher leadership is to have a positive impact on the campus, the principal must monitor teacher leaders, student scores, school climate, or any area impacted by this expanded leadership role for teachers. Teacher leaders will need frequent encouragement and direction from the principal in order to maintain the high workload demanded of teachers in leadership roles.

4. Principals should seek out evidence that teacher leadership is impacting the school. Principals who are working to foster and support teacher leadership should be able to find evidence for impact in the level of teacher enthusiasm as these teacher leaders see the products of their efforts. Teacher confidence in their ability to increase student performance will be contagious on campus. As teacher leadership increases, more teachers will be willing to step into both formal and informal leadership roles. While the direct link to student performance is not confirmed, principals should be able to see a positive impact on student achievement when teacher leadership is functioning effectively. As Barth (1999) has suggested, the capacity of the principal to impact the school is expanded when teachers lead. The changes on campus may take some time to reveal themselves, but principals who are working to create and support teacher leadership will eventually see a positive impact on campus.

5. Principals should consider the allocation of financial and personnel resources that would help foster and sustain teacher leadership. As the ones who typically have the final say in where resources are expended on campus, principals who are seeking to enhance teacher leadership must consider the costs of expanding leadership to include

teachers. Costs may come in the form of hiring substitute teachers so that teacher leaders can meet regularly or in the form of additional staff. Providing resources for teacher leaders to attend training and professional development must be considered in the budget process. Providing the resource of time for teacher leaders to work in their leadership role is a resource that principals must address.

Recommendations for Further Study

First, how a principal creates a lasting school culture that fosters and sustains teacher leadership is still not clear. The fact that this is a necessary step is clear from the literature and supported by the research at Franklin and Jackson. However, the question remains: how do principals build this culture? In conjunction with the principal, what role do other campus administrators play in creating a lasting culture that supports teacher leadership? The strong statements regarding teacher leadership by Richard, the associate principal at Jackson, indicate that he played a large part in sustaining the culture of the school after Chris left.

Second, further research should be done to help better describe the link between teacher leadership and school effectiveness. While the two schools in this study seem to show both the positive impact of effective teacher leadership as well as the negative impact of diminished teacher leadership, the link is tentative at best. Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest that in regard to what students learn at school, school leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction. There are many factors that play into student achievement as a measure of school effectiveness. The link between student

performance and teacher leadership makes intuitive sense. This sense seems to have been at least strengthened by the comparison of student performance at Franklin High School under the direction of Susan and then under the direction of Cheryl.

Finally, further research should be conducted into the professional development needs of principals who are working to foster and support teacher leadership. This research could have an impact on professional development and principal certification programs.

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APPENDIX A
TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher Involvement Questionnaire

The purpose of this brief questionnaire is to determine how you as a teacher at Jackson High School perceive your involvement in the development of various school policies and procedures. For each of the areas of involvement (curriculum, staff development, student activities, discipline, community relations, and student achievement) please indicate:

1. The nature of your engagement in the area
2. The level of your involvement
3. The level of your satisfaction with this involvement

Curriculum

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to curriculum? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you spend in these curriculum related activities.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to curriculum? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

Staff Development

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to staff development? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you spend in these staff development related activities.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to staff development? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

Student Activities

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to student activities (i.e. clubs, NHS, Student Council, athletics, extra-curricular programs)? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you are involved in student activities related work.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to student activities? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

Discipline

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to discipline? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you spend in these discipline related activities.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to discipline? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

Community Relations

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to community relations? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you spend in these community relations related activities.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to community relations? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

Student Achievement

1. How are you engaged in the development of various school policies and procedures related to student achievement? (Check all that apply.)

- Provide information to help teachers and administrators establish policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team member to develop policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team leader to develop policies and procedures.
- Provide written materials to support policies and procedures.
- Encourage other teachers to support policies and procedures.

2. Approximately how much time per week do you spend in these activities? (Circle the number of hours that is closest to the average number of hours per week that you spend in these student achievement related activities.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the development of policies and procedures related to student achievement? What would you like to change about your involvement in this area?

What else would you like to say about your involvement in the development and implementation of policies and procedures at Jackson High School?

Would you be willing to participate in a follow up conversation regarding your involvement in the development and implementation of policies and procedures at Jackson High School? If so, please give your name, check the preferred mode of participation (telephone, e-mail, or in person interview), and provide the necessary information to facilitate it.

Name _____

Mode of Participation

_____ Telephone

Phone number (including area code) _____

Preferred time of day for a call _____

_____ E-mail address _____

_____ Interview (Please provide a telephone number or e-mail address so that we can set up a time.)

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. If you have indicated that you would be willing to discuss your involvement, you will be contacted soon.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Impact of Teacher Leadership on School Effectiveness in Selected Exemplary Secondary Schools.

Interview questions:

1. What position do you hold on campus?
2. How long have you worked on this campus?
3. Why do you think that this school has been able to achieve an exemplary rating from TEA? (Based on 2002 TEA ratings)
4. What leadership roles do teachers fill on this campus?
5. Do you consider yourself a teacher leader?
6. What do teacher leaders on this campus do that makes them a teacher leader?
7. Can you name some teacher leaders on the campus?
8. How do you think teacher leadership promotes school effectiveness (i.e. the exemplary rating from TEA)?
9. What do you feel would happen to the school's rating if teacher leadership were to decline on campus?
10. Nine JHS teachers turned in completed questionnaires. Why do you think so few teachers participated?
11. Can you offer any suggestions to encourage more teachers to complete the questionnaire?

Please add any additional thoughts or comments.

Thank you for responding to these questions. Your input is greatly appreciated. You can email your responses back to me or you can print them and mail them to me at:

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2002-Present	Principal Fort Bend Baptist Academy High School Sugar Land, TX
1997-2002	Assistant Principal Hastings High School Alief ISD Alief, TX
1995-1997	Assistant Principal Alief Learning Center Alief, ISD Alief, TX
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