THE PERSPECTIVES OF A PRINCIPAL AND EMERGENT TEACHER LEADERS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A SHARED GOVERNANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

DANA YON PHILLIPS

(Under the Direction of Joseph Blase)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership in a successful shared governance school in which emergent teacher leadership thrived. Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework of the study, and the methodology was grounded theory. Face-to-face interviews were the primary data source. Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the data and to generate theory grounded in the data.

Instructional leadership was found to be a collaborative practice involving the principal and emergent teacher leaders. Instructional leaders used four co-determined instructional leadership strategies: (a) sharing instructional decision making, (b) communicating for instructional purposes, (c) focusing on improvement, and (d) focusing on instruction. Their use of these strategies positively influenced relationships built on mutual trust and respect, a partnering relationship, the learning community, and challenges. Furthermore, use of the instructional leadership strategies and the outcomes of their use positively affected classroom
instruction—teaching practice, leadership capacity, ownership, job satisfaction and stability, and student engagement and achievement.

Six theoretical ideas are discussed: When collaborative instructional leadership is practiced, (a) norms of collaboration and collegiality develop, and teachers emerge to lead; (b) individual member’s interests and goals align with the co-determined group’s interests and goals, and work efforts stay “on task” and utilize the individual’s strengths to accomplish and serve the common purpose; (c) more effective strategies are developed and more effective instructional leadership is delivered; (d) relationships built on trust and respect are strengthened, partnering relationships are established, and a positive learning environment is created; (e) instructional leaders experience an increased sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes; and (f) classroom instruction is positively impacted.

Implications for future research are discussed. Implications for practitioners, as well as for higher education, are presented.

INDEX WORDS: Collaborative instructional leadership, Emergent teacher leadership, Informal teacher leadership, Collaboration, Learning community, Empowerment, Reciprocated empowerment
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DANA YON PHILLIPS

Major Professor: Joseph Blase
Committee: Jo Blase
Sally Zepeda

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

During the second wave of the effective schools movement, when emphasis of reform turned to school-based restructuring, three concepts, *instructional leadership*, *teacher leadership*, and *shared governance*, emerged to become central themes in reform efforts (Smylie & Denny, 1990). New awareness of the benefits of a multi-dimensional approach to leadership, brought to light by business (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987) and introduced to education in research reports (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; National Governors’ Association, 1986), resulted in a broadening of the concept of school leadership.

Restructuring, which recognized the role of teachers in problem solving and change, became the vehicle through which reform was to be accomplished in second wave efforts to achieve school effectiveness (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Instruction and instructional leadership remained central in reform efforts, but first wave initiatives to reform through standardization and tightened control of teachers (Cooper & Conley, 1991; Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wasley, 1991) were relaxed in favor of decentralization and to allow for increased teacher voice and participation in school governance (Smylie & Denny, 1990). As a result, conceptualization of instructional leadership expanded, teacher leadership emerged, and new forms of participatory governance were initiated.

The dissertation study discussed in this chapter examined the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership in a Georgia elementary school. The chapter begins with a brief introduction and is followed by a review of relevant literature.
The third section is a statement of the problem. The fourth section is a description of the study and includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, the assumptions made by the researcher, and the definitions of important terms. The fifth and sixth sections describe site and sample selection procedures, respectively. The seventh section describes the research design and is followed by sections describing the significance of and strengths and limitations of the study. The final section provides an overview of the remaining chapters in this dissertation.

**Literature Review**

*Historical Background of Organizational and Instructional Leadership*

First wave reform efforts emphasized instructional leadership, focusing on control and prescription, as the means to school effectiveness (Murphy, 1990). However, attacked by critics of top-down approaches to reform (Carnegie Forum, 1986; National Governors’ Association, 1986), this approach was replaced by a more comprehensive structural emphasis (Smylie & Hart, 1999). For a number of reasons, the majority of these early second wave reform efforts based on structural changes proved insufficient, as well (Murphy & Beck, 1995; Sarason, 1990).

Based on research suggesting that changing instructional practice at its roots (the beliefs, habits, skills, and knowledge of teachers) is key to lasting reform (Fullan, 1995; Richardson, 1990), more recent reform initiatives have emphasized various avenues to improvement in teaching (Smylie & Hart, 1999). Sarason (1990), a proponent of this approach, emphasized the need for conditions conducive to teacher learning: “It is virtually impossible to create and sustain conditions for productive learning for students when they do not exist for teachers” (p. 145). Similarly, Elmore, Peterson, and McCarthey (1996) contended that improvement in teaching and student learning occurs as a result of making changes *within* structures rather than
the structural changes themselves. These internal changes include, among other things, efforts to professionalize teaching and to include teachers in school leadership.

Thus, a new mindset emanated from second wave reform efforts. This mindset was based on the assumptions that better decisions could be made at the site by those closest to delivery, that the reflective thinking and professional knowledge of teacher practitioners would enhance decisions, and that shared decisions would encourage ownership and commitment (Hess, 1991; Sarason, 1990). This mindset was inextricably linked to decentralization, site-based management, and other forms of shared governance that emphasize teacher empowerment.

Shared governance has been described as both an organizational structure and a valued philosophy (Little, 1982, Rosenholtz, 1989). Blase and Blase (2001) described it as a governance form that has teacher empowerment, sharing of power, or participative decision-making at its core. Glickman (1993) suggested that focus on curriculum and curriculum-related tasks and a three-part framework for school renewal consisting of a charter, a critical study process, and a covenant are the two essential elements of shared governance.

In fact, Blase and Blase (2001) linked empowerment and principal success, asserting that “democratic empowerment through shared governance—including involvement of staff, parents, and students—lies at the heart of successful principals’ practice” (p. 3, emphasis in the original). They pointed out that empowerment of teachers reaches beyond decision sharing and provides the conditions under which teachers improve their individual and communal performances. This “power with” orientation (Kreisberg, 1992b) of the principal requires recognition of “teachers as knowledgeable professionals,” their involvement “outside their own classrooms,” and “participatory policy making and administration” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 13, emphasis in the original).
Reitzug (1994) developed a taxonomy of three types of empowering behavior: support, facilitation, and possibility. Consistent with Reitzug’s (1994) findings, Blase and Blase (2001) identified a number of specific behaviors and strategies practiced by successful principals to support and facilitate empowerment of teachers. Asserting that “principal leadership is the most important factor that contributes to teachers’ empowerment” (p.14), Blase and Blase elaborated further on the role of the principal in enabling and facilitating teacher leadership, stating that “in collegial, collaborative environments principals consistently concentrate on enabling others to examine and redesign schools for improved learning, and teachers learn to share power and work as a team” (p. 41). Such environments of shared leadership and shared learning, Blase and Blase suggested, are the basis of a community of learners, one “in which leaders become teachers and teachers become leaders” (p. 145, emphasis in the original). Barth (1988) argued that “without shared leadership it is not possible for a professional culture to exist. Professionalism and shared leadership are one and the same” (p. 147).

This reform mindset of shared leadership recognizes the need for sharing instructional responsibility and for valuing the respective roles of the principal and teacher leaders in instructional improvement. In the next two subsections, literature on emergent teacher leader instructional leadership and principal instructional leadership, the foci of the study, are reviewed.

**Emergent Teacher Leader Instructional Leadership**

Teacher leadership, spawned from recommendations in *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century* (Carnegie Forum, 1986) and in the report of the Holmes Group (1986), began primarily with efforts to professionalize the teaching field with senior and specialized positions that provided advancement opportunities for teacher leaders and made use of their talents and expertise to train other teachers. More recently, educational scholars have identified
and examined the broader, more informally emerging type of teacher leadership that occurs naturally and without official sanctioning (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Howey, 1988; Lambert et al., 1995). Extant research on teacher leadership refers to this form of teacher leadership as informal or emergent.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) captured the essence of emergent teacher leadership and teacher leaders: “Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, influence others toward improved educational practice, and identify with and contribute to a community of leaders” (p. 6). Arguing for the potential of this group, Katzenmeyer and Moller stated, “We can no longer ignore the leadership capability of teachers, the largest group of school employees and those closest to the students. Empowered teachers bring an enormous resource for continuously improving schools” (p. 2).

Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) examined emergent teacher leadership in seven professional development schools (PDSs) and found that those collaborations between restructuring schools and universities simultaneously promoted teacher leadership and inculcated teacher leadership into teacher leaders’ views of the teaching profession. They also found that expertise and experience became the basis for the emergence of leadership.

Heller and Firestone (1995) examined the institutionalization stage of the Social Problem Solving (SPS) change initiative in eight elementary schools, seeking to verify that changing leadership functions, as opposed to changing who performs them, is what matters in the change process. Their findings indicated that the contribution of the teachers was greater than that of the principal and that the change process involved many people in different roles performing the change functions. Thus, their findings confirmed that functions, not specific persons, are what matter in the institutionalization of change.
Miller (1992) conducted a study of teacher leadership in a restructuring school that had placed five teacher leaders in management and leadership positions in the school. Miller found that, rather than the formal teacher leaders, the classroom teachers led most of the change efforts and filled needs in the change process by initiating new teaching structures such as teacher partnerships and multi-grade classes. Miller found that teacher expertise, teacher interest, and school needs were factors in the emergence of teacher leadership, as was district commitment to expanded leadership, participatory leadership, and opportunities for collaboration.

Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) conducted integrated studies of teachers’ perceptions of teacher leadership in an elementary, middle, and high school. Because teacher leadership in the middle school was found to be informal or emergent and voluntary, results from this portion of the study were found to be more relevant to this study. Stone et al. found that the teacher leaders (a) considered themselves to be catalysts to other teachers’ learning and facilitators for other teachers, (b) were willing to “step up” when the need arose, and (c) included shared decision-making, collaboration, and school improvements as desired outcomes of their assuming these positions. Findings indicated that participation in decision-making was a motivating factor in teachers filling leadership positions and that teacher leadership improved professional practice in a number of ways, including collaboration with colleagues, school improvement, and personal and professional growth. Stone et al. (1997) also reported that teacher leaders felt that their leadership improved their relationships with other teacher leaders, classroom teachers, and administrative staff. They concluded that teacher leadership in a shared decision-making setting is the basis of collective leadership; in fact, they argued that “school improvements will succeed or fail to the degree that teachers are engaged as partners in the process” (p. 60).
In a qualitative study of teachers’ perspectives of emergent teacher leadership in an elementary school involved in the Accelerated Schools reform model, Sabatini (2002) examined the experiences of teachers with emergent teacher leaders and the meaning of those experiences, finding that teachers actively initiated relationships with colleagues and positively responded when teacher leaders offered support. Sabatini found that teachers in her study experienced a variety of outcomes from their interactions and relationships with emergent teacher leaders, including improved instruction, increased sense of responsibility, increased leadership capacity, increased staff stability, and improved staff morale. Furthermore, she found that such outcomes positively affected and benefited students. Sabatini (2002) also found that teacher empowerment was essential to relationships and interactions between teachers and emergent teacher leaders; the Accelerated School model provided support for teacher empowerment, allowing teachers to direct their own professional development, to participate in shared decision-making, and to take on informal leadership roles.

Although there were some identified issues and challenges to emergent teacher leadership that surfaced during the study, Sabatini’s (2002) findings suggested that emergent teacher leaders face fewer obstacles than teacher leaders holding formal positions, primarily because the other teachers can control their relationships and interactions with the emergent teacher leaders. She concluded that these findings imply, when viewed in connection with benefits to students, that “researchers should focus their work on emergent forms of teacher leadership” (p. 207).

Principal Instructional Leadership

For decades, instructional leadership was narrowly conceptualized and practiced. Taken for granted was the view of the principal as the instructional leader (Smith & Andrews, 1989) at
the pinnacle of a top-down organizational structure. This view put the responsibility for teaching and learning in the hands of the principal (McEwan, 1998).

The most common literature, beginning with the early school effectiveness research of Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979), discussed principal behaviors and strategies. This research identified, among other things, strong leadership, high expectations, and frequent monitoring by the principal as factors in school effectiveness. The focus of much of the subsequent literature was on what principals do as instructional leaders. That research often resulted in the identification of specific instructionally-related behaviors of principals that were commonly held to be important to teaching and learning success (Andrews & Soder, 1987). Ironically, research has often suggested a failure of many principals to practice these identified instructional leadership behaviors on a routine basis (Fullan, 1982; McEwan, 1998; Smith & Andrews, 1989).

Among the specific principal behaviors identified in early research were commitment to a vision and mission (Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Krug, 1992; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Rutherford, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989), communication of the vision and mission (Krug, 1992; Smith & Andrews, 1989), high expectations (Krug, 1993; Persell & Cookson, 1982), and monitoring student progress (Krug, 1993; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Rutherford, 1985). Sheppard (1996) synthesized findings of extant studies on instructional leadership and reported a positive relationship between effective instructional leadership behaviors of principals and teacher commitment, professional involvement, and innovativeness. He also noted that the most influential instructional behavior of principals at the elementary and high school levels is promoting teachers’ professional development.
In addition to identification of effective principal instructional behaviors, the instructional leadership literature focused on supervision as a vehicle for “helping teachers discover and construct professional knowledge and skills” (Pajak, 1993, p. 318). In work that demonstrated the commonality of principal instructional behaviors and supervision behaviors, Pajak (1989) and a group of University of Georgia doctoral students conducted research to identify and rank practitioners’ views of the components of supervision. Similarly, Glickman (1985) identified five broad supervisory tasks that impact instructional improvement: direct assistance, staff development, curriculum development, action research, and group development. Blase and Blase (1998), arguing that “spoken language has a powerful impact on teachers’ instructional behavior, and facilitative, supportive actions by principals as instructional leaders have powerful effects on classroom instruction” (p. 5), linked three themes of instructional leadership to the practice of supervision and conferencing: talking, growing, and reflecting. Suggesting that effective instructional leadership and supervision integrate many elements of reflection- and growth-related activities into a holistic approach promoting professional dialogue, Blase and Blase (1999) concluded, “Our results provide empirical data that illustrate what Glickman (1985) and Pajak (1989) have defined as effective instructional leadership” (p. 369).

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the link between instructional leadership and achievement. Empirical research by Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) revealed a correlation between strong instructional leadership and school effectiveness (p. 39). Marzano (2000) reviewed and synthesized extant research on school effects from the last four decades. He concluded that

Three categories of variables have identifiable and somewhat stable influences on student achievement. Specifically, a case can be made that the percentage of variance accounted for by the three categories of variables are as follows: (a) student background: 80.00%; (b) school level: 6.66%; and (c) teacher level: 13.34%. (p. 77)
Marzano noted that these estimates are conservative, however, due to the fact that all variance that could not be attributed to classroom level or school level factors was attributed to student background characteristics.

From a 1996 review of empirical literature on the relationship of the role of the principal and school effectiveness, Hallinger and Heck (1996) learned that “principal leadership can make a difference in student learning” (p. 37) and that “principal leadership that makes a difference is aimed toward influencing internal school processes that are directly linked to student learning” (p. 38). They concluded that their discovery of indirect effects of principal leadership on school achievement verifies that “achieving results through others is the essence of leadership” (p. 39).

Marzano (2000) synthesized research on the impact of schooling on student achievement and, from his findings, developed models for staff development, evaluation, and achieving data-driven school improvement results. His work included the research of Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), which synthesized empirical and theoretical findings on variables affecting school learning. They organized 228 identified variables influencing student learning into 30 categories and six “theoretical constructs.” Using average $T$ score values to rank the top five variables, they found classroom management to be most important variable influencing student learning, student use of metacognitive strategies to be second, and student use of cognitive strategies to be third; home environment and parental support ranked fourth in importance, and student-teacher social interactions was the least important of the top five variables (Marzano, 2000, p. 30).

From a review of 135 studies related to the nature, causes, and consequences of principals’ behaviors and practices, Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1990) concluded that more research is needed on the principal’s impact on “(a) a more comprehensive array of student
outcomes; (b) characteristics of teachers’ practices generated from theories of teacher development; and (c) the culture of the school” (pp. 22-23). After examining six categories of leadership, including instructional leadership, that have dominated educational leadership during the twentieth century, Leithwood and Duke (1999) concurred, concluding that “there is much to be learned from further development of existing concepts” (p. 67).

Blase and Blase (1998), who have written extensively about principal instructional leadership, reached a similar conclusion: “Although there exists an emerging knowledge base about the behaviors and potential of instructional leadership, the extant literature provides few clues on how principals and teachers together can achieve shared vision and commitment—a foundation necessary for school improvement” (p. 12). While their research has provided missing clues, they concluded that “we have not yet achieved a full understanding of the myriad related issues” (p. 167). Accordingly, the present study has sought to add to the understanding of some of the issues related to principal instructional leadership and its impact on classroom instruction.

Statement of the Problem

The overarching purpose of school reform is improved teaching and learning; instructional leadership is central to this purpose. Second wave reform thinking gave rise to a hopeful outlook based on shared governance and teacher leadership as vehicles for school improvement. Yet despite the centrality of instructional leadership to reform and the promising possibilities of emergent teacher leaders as instructional leaders, little or no empirical research has been conducted to investigate simultaneously the instructional leadership of the principal and of emergent teacher leaders and the simultaneous impact of the two forms of instructional leadership on classroom instruction.
In fact, literature on teacher leadership has narrowly focused on formal leadership roles, on the goals of formal teacher leadership, and on the outcomes of formal teacher leadership. Emergent or informal teacher leadership has only recently been recognized and addressed in literature; thus, there is a dearth of empirical research on it. Furthermore, while Sabatini (2002) and others (Corallo, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Miller, 1992; Stone et al., 1997) have conducted empirical studies related to emergent teacher leadership, there remains a gap in our understanding of how principals and teacher leaders achieve commitment to a shared vision of school improvement, how they simultaneously carry out their respective roles as instructional leaders, and how the two different forms of instructional leadership impact classroom instruction. Referring to this gap, Heck and Hallinger (1999) have asserted that “an important blank spot concerns in-depth description of how principals and other school leaders create and sustain the in-school factors that foster successful schooling” (p. 141, emphasis in the original).

There is a growing body of literature and research on instructional leadership, but due to the long-standing view of the principal as the instructional leader, its scope is somewhat narrow. Heck and Hallinger (1999) illuminated the problem of over-reliance on this view and acknowledge a blind spot created by it that obfuscates the larger view: “Preoccupation with documenting if principals make a difference has subtly reinforced the assumption that school leadership is synonymous with the principal” (p. 141, emphasis in the original). Their conclusion that “the acknowledgment of blind spots in the field means that at best we have developed an incomplete and distorted view of the role of school leaders in school improvement” (p.143) vividly argues for the need to continue study of instructional leadership in settings that promote sharing that leadership.
Social relations within schools are key elements in creating and sustaining conditions for productive learning for teachers. For instance, it is known that teachers learn from other teachers (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1985a; Smylie, 1989) and rely on other teachers for information, feedback, and support (Carter, 1990). Additionally, the working relationship between teachers and principals is crucial to promoting student learning (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rosenholtz, 1989) and in supporting professional development and change (Blase & Blase, 1998; Goldring & Rallis, 1993).

Despite the available literature on social relations in schools, however, “there is little empirical evidence concerning the particular characteristics and qualities of relations among teachers and between teachers and principals that are most conducive to teacher learning and change” (Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 425). So far as teacher learning and concomitant change in instructional practice are the foundations of improved classroom instruction, a better understanding of relations promoting them is critical. In fact, understanding the characteristics and qualities of relations and interactions that promote teacher learning and change is central to effective reform and restructuring. The present study has sought to provide a more complete view of the role of instructional leaders in school improvement by investigating their instructional leadership, the relationships and interactions between their respective instructional roles, and the impact of their individual and collective instructional leadership on classroom instruction.

Description of the Study

*Purpose of the Study and Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was threefold: to explore the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership (respectively), to investigate how the two forms
of leadership relate to each other, and to investigate how each form of instructional leadership affects classroom instruction. This study was conducted in a Georgia elementary school that is a member of the League of Professional Schools, a network of schools dedicated to “democratizing” education through shared governance. The goal of League schools is improved teaching and learning, which is promoted through teacher empowerment, teacher involvement in instructional and curricular decisions, teacher collaboration, and on-going inquiry into practice.

The questions that guided the study were open-ended, which is typical of grounded theory research:

1. What is the principal’s perspective of her instructional leadership?
2. What are the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership?
3. How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership relate to and interact with each other?
4. How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership impact classroom instruction?

Assumptions

Assumptions made by the researcher for purposes of this study included the following:

1. Participants chosen to participate in the study had been instructional leaders and would share their own perspectives on instructional leadership.
2. The participants had engaged in interactions in the school setting, had formed relationships, and had created meanings as a result of ongoing interaction.
3. Instructional leadership directly or indirectly impacts classroom instruction.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, terms are defined as indicated below:

Emergent teacher leader: teacher who informally leads, emerging as needs of the school and needs of others are identified and receding as those needs are met.
Formal teacher leaders: teachers who fill assigned leadership positions, which often remove them from the classroom, either part-time or full-time.

Instructional leadership: all instructionally-related leadership functions and activities focused on teaching and learning and on the improvement of instruction.

Site Selection

The site for the study was selected because it provided an opportunity for purposeful sampling, described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) as a sampling process that includes participants because “they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 65). Consequently, based on literature suggesting that emergent teacher leadership is enabled and facilitated in shared governance settings (Blase & Blase, 1997; Blase & Blase, 2001; Blase, Blase, Anderson, & Dungan, 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996), this study was conducted in a shared governance school.

The following specific criteria were used for initial identification of the school selected for the study:

1. The school is a shared governance elementary school and a member of the League of Professional Schools.

2. The school is considered a successful school in accordance with the State of Georgia 2001-2002 Report Card rating system, which is based on 2001-2002 GCRCT test results. The 2001-2002 results are being used due to limited availability of 2002-2003 results.

3. The school’s location is within 25 miles of the researcher’s home to make it a feasible site, in terms of proximity.

4. The school is a “high implementing” shared governance school. This identification as a “high implementing” League school is considered important because of research conducted in 1999 by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), which found “evidence that academic performance was higher in schools where the League approach was well implemented” (p. 86).
Sample Selection

In accordance with grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), participants were selected, using theoretical sampling, for their ability to provide theoretical insights into the topic under consideration. The initial participants consisted of the principal and at least one emergent teacher leader for each grade, who was nominated by the principal of the school on the basis of the principal’s perception of the teacher’s demonstrated teacher leadership and instructional leadership, in accordance with the previously noted definitions of emergent teacher leader and instructional leadership. The principal was chosen as a participant by virtue of her position and because of her responsibility for principal instructional leadership in the school.

Consistent with theoretical sampling procedures, the total sample was not specified ahead of data collection. Rather, as data were collected and analyzed and insights were gained, subsequent sampling became more focused, and additional participants were selected to participate in the study, based on their assumed contribution to working hypotheses and evolving theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Additional participants were chosen using snowballing (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), the technique of getting new participants through referrals by previous participants.

Research Design and Methods

The focus of this qualitative study was instructional leadership and its impact on classroom instruction in a shared governance elementary school. The theoretical perspective informing the study is symbolic interactionism, defined by Blumer (1969) as “activity in which humans interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of meaning yielded by interpretation” (pp. 65-66). Grounded theory methods, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), guided the research process through data collection, data coding, and data analysis. Data collection
procedures included interviews and document collection. Additionally, a researcher journal was maintained to record researcher notes, memos, and reflections.

**Interviews**

In-depth interviews were used to generate data about participants’ interpretations of their social worlds. Initial interviews were relatively unstructured, allowing participants to share their perspectives; however, as data were analyzed and categories emerged, follow-up interviews of a more structured nature were conducted to fill out categories. All interviews were audio taped for transcription purposes, with participant agreement. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality of participant data was assured. Findings were shared with participants to assure accuracy of the researcher’s portrayals.

**Documents**

Personal and official documents were also used as sources of data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), personal documents, such as personal notes and calendars, and official documents, including meeting agendas and minutes, school handbooks, mission statement, newsletters, and other school- or district-produced documents, may be collected and analyzed.

**Researcher Journal**

A researcher journal was kept by the researcher for the recording of field notes, memos, and reflections. Data and memos recorded in the journal were also coded.

**Significance of the Study**

Much has been written about the instructional leadership of principals. However, very little has been written about the instructional leadership of emergent teacher leaders, and even less has been written about collaborative instructional leadership or instructional leadership in a shared governance school. Because of the limited research available on emergent teacher
leadership and on collaborative instructional leadership, the results of this study have theoretical, practical, and methodological significance.

*Theoretical Significance*

The results of this study significantly contribute to the knowledge base in emergent teacher leadership, particularly in the instructional leadership of emergent teacher leaders. Because of its in-depth focus on the perspectives of emergent teacher leaders on their instructional leadership, the findings from this study have theoretical significance. While these findings provide theoretical support for existing literature that argues for more forms of teacher leadership, this study also illuminates findings not previously discussed in great detail in the literature. Additionally, these findings suggest that emergent teacher leaders are a viable and effective source of instructional leadership and have the potential to enhance and impact classroom instruction.

*Practical Significance*

The results of this study have significance for teachers, school administrators, and university faculty. The study illuminates new leadership roles for teachers, as well as new ways in which administrators and teachers can work collaboratively toward school improvement. It further illuminates one school’s highly effective collaborative instructional leadership strategies and structure, providing practitioners with an opportunity to compare their own situations for transferability of the findings.

The study has significance at the university level, as well. As educational leadership and teacher education programs are restructured, the results of this study may be used to demonstrate the feasibility and promise of training programs that seek to promote a broader, more collaborative approach to leadership.
Methodological Significance

This study has methodological significance, as well as practical and theoretical significance. Limited emergent teacher leadership research is available, and most has used case study methodology. Even less literature is available that specifically addresses the instructional leadership of emergent teacher leaders. This study used grounded theory to investigate a principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership and to generate theoretical ideas related to their collaborative instructional leadership. Other researchers similarly interested can gain insight from the methodological procedures used in this study.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study is its representativeness. Specifically, this site is not representative of the majority of other elementary schools in the state because of its membership in the League of Professional Schools. To minimize this limitation, a detailed, in-depth, and holistic view of instructional leadership by a principal and twelve emergent teacher leaders was generated from the data collected.

Overview of Chapters

The remaining chapters in this dissertation include the following: Chapter 2, a review of the literature; Chapter 3, the methodology; Chapter 4, the findings; and Chapter 5, the summary, discussion, and implications.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of organizational leadership research and its educational implications; a brief historical overview of instructional leadership; an overview of the literature related to shared governance; a thorough review of the literature related to teacher leadership, primarily emergent teacher leadership; and a thorough review of the literature related to principal instructional leadership.
Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. It includes an overview of
symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework of the study; an explanation of site and
sample selection procedures; a description of the research setting; an overview of the data
collection procedures; a thorough discussion of grounded theory methodology; and a discussion
of techniques used to enhance credibility.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. It begins with a description of each
participant, highlighting her school experience and capturing pertinent thoughts on her own
instructional leadership role. The chapter presents the common themes and categories that
emerged from the data and uses the participants’ words to support the findings.

Chapter 5, the final chapter, summarizes and discusses the most significant findings of
this study in light of extant research and literature. It connects the three major themes and
explains their relationship to the central category, collaborative instructional leadership. It
presents the theoretical ideas that have emerged from and that can be supported by the data. The
chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for further research and of the
significance of the findings.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Instructional leadership guides teaching and learning and is the fulcrum on which schooling outcomes turn. This literature review sets the context for understanding principals’ and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership in settings where the responsibility for instructional leadership is shared.

The first section of Chapter 2 is a brief overview of organizational leadership research and its educational implications. The second section provides a brief historical overview of instructional leadership from the first wave, through the second wave, and to its current stage in the reform movement. The third section is a brief review of literature related to shared governance as an organizational structure and philosophy supporting shared leadership. The fourth section focuses on the body of literature related to teacher leadership, primarily emergent teacher leadership, and reviews available literature on the teacher leader in a shared governance setting. The fifth section of Chapter 2 reviews the body of literature on principal instructional leadership and on leadership in shared governance settings.

Organizational Leadership

Traditionally, schools have been organized in accordance with a hierarchical structure, have operated according to formal rules, regulations, and policies, and have followed strict lines of authority, with power bestowed on those at the top. From this bureaucratic-rational and structural-functional perspective, the predominant perspective of schools during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, schools were viewed as “closed systems whose purpose was to maintain equilibrium as they
strove to accomplish set goals or purposes” (Heck & Hallinger, 1999, p. 144). In accordance with this perspective, the role of the principal as school leader was to manage the maintenance of the school’s equilibrium. As times have changed, however, this organizational structure has outlived its ability to meet school needs, and the emphasis of the principal’s role has shifted from manager to leader.

Illuminating the fact that changes in our societal structures have outstripped changes within the educational structure, Schlechty (2001) has written that when the rate of change outside an organization is greater than the rate of change inside, the continuing existence of that organization is threatened. American society, the external environment for U.S. schools, has been experiencing dramatic shifts in structure over the past half century. (p. 1)

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) elaborated on the same point: “Today we face the frustrating task of making massive changes in America’s schools while working within an educational system that was never designed for today” (p. 1).

Despite recognition of the problems noted by Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) and Schlechty (2001), including the need to emphasize leadership over management, Heck and Hallinger (1999) claimed that “variants of structural-functionalism continue to maintain a strong grip on the field of educational administration” (p. 145). Bennis (1997) clarified the difference between leaders and managers, illuminating the significance of the distinction: “More than anything, the difference between a leader and a manager rests on the status quo: Managers are willing to live with it, and leaders are not” (p. 17).

Summarizing the pivotal role of organizational leadership in times of change, Bennis and Nanus (1985) have asserted that “the main stem-winder, in all cases, is the leadership. The new leader . . . is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who
may convert leaders into agents of change” (pp. 2-3). Kouzes and Posner (1987) captured the same idea:

The domain of leaders is the future. The leader’s unique legacy is the creation of valued institutions that survive over time. . . . The most significant contribution leaders make is not to today’s bottom-line but to the long-term development of people and institutions who prosper and grow. (p. xxi)

Bennis and Nanus (1985), elaborating on the role of leadership in organizational change and development, have suggested that

effective leadership can move organizations from current to future states, create visions of potential opportunities for organizations, instill within employees commitment to change and instill new cultures and strategies in organizations that mobilize and focus energy and resources. (pp. 17-18)

In sum, those who have studied organizational leadership agree: effective leadership is essential to the success of an organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

The findings from research conducted by Bennis and Nanus (1985) and by Kouzes and Posner (1987) on corporate leadership behaviors and strategies are also consistent with educational research findings on successful leadership behaviors and characteristics (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 2001; Blase et al., 1995; Blase & Kirby, 1992). The consistency of findings between corporate and educational settings suggests that good leadership is good leadership, regardless of its setting, and that school leaders might benefit from the study of organizational leadership trends in the business world, which tend to forerun schools in organizational change and effectiveness.

In fact, in 1994, the National Center for Educational Leadership conducted a forum with scholars and practitioners from outside the field of education to discuss what education might learn from business, military, and public administration leadership. Bolman and Deal (1994) summarized the conclusions of that group: leadership must be redefined in more human, moral,
and spiritual terms; leadership programs must be redesigned; schools must be restructured to allow them to escape past practices and patterns and to allow them to discover new practices that lead them where they want to go. In other words, the outdated educational system to which America has clung must be brought current to meet the educational reform demands of today.

Historical Overview of Educational Reform

Education in America has been under the deluge of a major reform storm for over three decades. Beginning with reports in the 1960s of the declining technological superiority of America over Russia in the space program and with international reports of American inferiority in math and science, winds of discontent with education began to swirl. When the winds were further fueled by the threat of decreasing global competitiveness, government and business concerns called for investigation. A series of studies, conducted by leading educational researchers of that period, uncovered a number of problems with and inadequacies in educational leadership, organizational structure, standards, and accountability (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984). When those unhappy results combined with declining U. S. world marketplace position, concern intensified and set in motion the reform movements that persist today (Murphy, 1991).

In fact, those studies resulted in sweeping indictments: teachers and schools were failing children; children were not prepared for productive lives in society. The Coleman Report stated,

Taking all of these results together, one implication stands above all: that schools bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 325)

When Jencks et al. (1972) produced similar findings, particularly that schools do little to lessen the gap between rich and poor, between more and less able students, and that student achievement is primarily a function of student background, a feeling of hopelessness emerged.
With these findings and the fears emanating from them, the storm unleashed its fury and the dark cloud of reform settled on and stalled over educators and education.

The effective schools movement was the first reform movement to respond, making its appearance on the stage of educational reform to prove school effectiveness and, thereby, to disprove the findings of Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). Effective schools research was different from earlier research; it sought out and examined the educational practices in superior schools to identify “knowledge and skills needed to articulate an instructional vision, secure widespread engagement in that vision, and promote successful fulfillment” (Lemahieu, Roy, & Foss, 1997, p. 582).

Ronald Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979), through their studies of effective inner city schools, inspired the reform movement that came to be known as the “effective schools movement.” Their research, which identified positive characteristics allegedly associated with student achievement in schools found to be effective, indicated that the principal’s strong instructional leadership was essential to school effectiveness. Among Edmonds’ findings were other instructional dimensions credited to the principal and linked to effectiveness: high expectations, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, an emphasis on acquisition of basic skills, and methods for frequent monitoring of student and teacher progress.

Effective schools research provided hope that schools across the nation could, by following prescriptive remedies, become effective (Hallinger, Murphy, Weil, Mesa, & Mitman, 1983). The reform initiatives that followed clearly targeted perceived teacher failures, tightening top-down control and mandating standardization in response (Cooper & Conley, 1991; Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Smylie & Denny, 1990).
Early findings of effective schools research were criticized, however, for several reasons: research was limited primarily to urban elementary schools, yet findings were generalized and prescriptive; leadership was too narrow in definition; and contextual influences were often ignored (National Governors’ Association, 1986; Carnegie Forum, 1986). This fault-finding, combined with criticism of the top-down reform model, resulted in more extensive research and in additional findings that shifted reform thinking away from regulatory solutions to more comprehensive restructuring.

Two 1986 reports wielded significant influence on “second wave” reform efforts, *Time For Results* (National Governors’ Association, 1986) and *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum, 1986). *Time For Results* criticized the standards-based approach to reform and called for restructuring that would place authority and responsibility for decisions on school districts and schools themselves. Their recommendation was for additional power, as well as for increased accountability, at the local level. Based on second wave research findings, these recommendations addressed additional school effectiveness characteristics that had been identified: parental involvement, teacher collaboration and collegiality, professional development, and site-based management (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001).

Recommendations that surfaced in *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum, 1986) called for shared governance and for decentralization of authority in schools and specifically recommended that teachers be provided “a greater voice in the decisions that affect the school” (p. 24). The emphasis was on professional environments for teachers. Likewise, *Tomorrow’s Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986) supported increased professionalism for teachers through the establishment of career ladders and through professional development opportunities.
The effective schools movement had a profound effect on educational reform. In the first wave, the emphasis was on the principal as instructional leader within the traditional top-down organizational structure. In the second wave, however, the emphasis shifted to participative leadership, bringing together three concepts in school leadership: instructional leadership, teacher leadership, and shared governance.

Shared Governance: Organizational Structure and Philosophy for Shared Leadership

**Historical Context of Shared Governance**

It has long been held that the principal plays a critical role in school effectiveness and school improvement, and research findings have supported this belief (Sheppard, 1996; Smith & Andrews, 1989). However, Daft and Lengel (1998) suggest that, in times of rapid change, “current beliefs are based on circumstances that no longer exist, yet these beliefs control our view of the world” (p. 79). They argue that, to survive and thrive in a climate of change, we must look beyond those out-dated beliefs to ideas outside the paradigm in which we have existed.

Participative leadership, a form of leadership stemming from second wave report recommendations, represented new paradigm thinking on school leadership. It was based on a belief in the ability of teachers to enhance school improvement through their involvement in decision-making and school governance (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Schlechty, 1990). Teachers, in accordance with this paradigm, were viewed as part of the solution, rather than as part of the problem.

**The Case for Shared Governance**

Shared governance connotes certain concepts or theories that are inseparable: democratic-facilitative leadership, teacher empowerment, and teacher leadership (Blase & Blase,
In fact, Blase and Blase (2001) described *shared governance* as a governance form that has teacher empowerment, sharing of power, and participative decision-making at its core. Successful principals, their findings suggest, use facilitative power to create collegial, collaborative environments in which “principals consistently concentrate on enabling others to examine and redesign schools for improved learning, and teachers learn to share power and work as a team” (p. 41). Their findings are consistent with those of Maeroff (1988), who studied teacher empowerment extensively, and of Lambert (1998) and Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996), who studied the results of teacher empowerment, specifically teacher leadership. Rogus (1988) found, as have numerous other researchers, that an effective school ethos is characterized by empowerment, collegiality, collaboration, and sense of community (a’Campo, 1993; Barth, 1990; Blase & Blase, 2001; Little, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rosenholtz, 1985a).

Several assumptions underlie the concept of sharing leadership. First, because teachers are closest to instruction and bear the responsibility for implementation of the curriculum, they should be involved in important decisions directly related to instruction and curriculum (Duke, 1996). This assumption is supported by findings indicating that teachers often determine levels of implementation (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988) and that teachers with ownership in decisions are more likely to support those decisions (Blase & Blase, 1997; Hess, 1991).

Second is the assumption that involving teachers in decision-making results in better decisions (Blase & Blase, 1997). This assumption is based on the idea that those closest to the decision are in the best position to make informed decisions (Hess, 1991) and on the premise that teachers are reflective practitioners who bring practical experience and professional training and knowledge to decision-making (Blase & Blase, 1997).
In a study of eight democratic principals conducted by Blase et al. (1995) in schools affiliated with the League of Professional Schools, the researchers found a range of positive outcomes believed by the principals to be the result of their schools’ shared governance:

Teacher-related outcomes included improvements in classroom and schoolwide efficacy, influence in formal decision-making (advisory and decisional), expression/voice, communication, problem solving, experimentation/innovation, risk taking (instructional, noninstructional), professional growth, leadership, morale, motivation, commitment to shared governance, sense of community (“we-ness,” family/team feeling), assertiveness (vis-à-vis school boards), and team development. (p. 141)

The Blase et al. (1995) study is of significance to the present one because it was conducted in League schools and its findings indicate positive teacher-related outcomes of shared governance.

Blase and Blase (2001) summarized the purpose of the League of Professional Schools:

“The league’s purpose is to establish representative, democratic decision-making structures to promote teacher collaboration and involvement in schoolwide instructional and curricular decisions; the goal is improved teaching and learning” (p. 19). In a study of teacher empowerment, also conducted in League schools, Blase and Blase (2001) found positive effects of empowering strategies used by successful principals. Among the teacher effects identified in that study were increased self-esteem, satisfaction, and motivation.

**Barriers to Shared Governance and Its Limited Success**

Although restructuring efforts based on shared governance were optimistic about improving school effectiveness, research on shared decision-making effects has not, in general, been favorable (Drury, 1999; Murphy & Beck, 1995; Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Blase and Blase (1997) have suggested that the reason there is limited empirical evidence that shared decision-making has improved student outcomes is, in part, “related to the fact that shared decision-making models in practice have often not matched the theoretical models” (p. 11). More specifically, Drury (1999) identified several factors
associated with the lack of success: resistance from central players, limited authority over critical components, lack of resources necessary to ensure success, failure of school administrators to relinquish power, and failure to maintain a focus on student achievement.

Blase et al. (1995) illuminated another issue contributing to restructuring problems. They pointed out that most school principal research has been conducted in traditional schools and that effective leaders in these settings are typically described as authoritarian and control-oriented: “Such a perspective on leadership is, in many respects, inconsistent with school-restructuring programs that attempt to dismantle bureaucratic structures and implement democratic structures and processes to empower teachers and others” (pp. 2-3).

*Shared Governance and Reform*

Lambert (1998) argued that either the principal builds capacity for a professional community or supports continuation of dysfunctional leadership, which she described as “codependency” (p. 25). She contended that the traditional relationship between principal and teachers has been a dependency relationship in which teachers’ expectations have been subservient to the lead of the principal. Furthermore, she insisted that codependency aptly described the “entangled, traditional relationship in schools that have kept educators from growing. Without broad-based leadership, the ability of a school to grow and become better for children is limited” (p. 93).

The dysfunctional nature of traditional school leadership has been discussed by others as well. For instance, Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, and Bauer (1990) described teachers’ decision-making authority and responsibility, particularly in the organizational domain, as “decision deprivation.” Conley (1991) argued that the compliance orientation of teachers to
principals must be replaced with increased teacher authority and responsibility for schoolwide strategic and operational decision-making.

Reform has been hacking away at the stubborn and persistent organizational structure of schools for some time, the resilience of which has proved a formidable foe. Judith Warren Little (1988) warned of the consequences of its resilience: “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. 78). Though organizational shift from the traditional hierarchical structure has started, realization of the shift is not yet readily visible in most schools. Schlechty (2001) explained that “schools are change prone, but they are also change inept” (p. 39). Fullan (1993) described the problem as insurmountable, “the juxtaposition of a continuous change theme with a continuous conservative system” (p. 3), and argued that a new mindset for change must be adopted. Schlechty argued, as did Fullan, that if a change is to be sustained, there must be a leader or leadership group acting as change agent and a system or group of systems that support change.

Converting the veritable gold mine in human capital that rests untapped in teachers is central to finding reform answers and to making the necessary changes. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) have asserted that

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

Katzenmeyer and Moller also noted that strength in numbers adds to the potential that teacher leaders have to impact change significantly. Lambert (1998) suggested that building leadership capacity is the key to school improvement and listed five premises on which that capacity rests: (a) Leadership is not trait theory, (b) leadership and leader are not the same, (c) leadership is
about learning, (d) everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader, (d) leading is a shared endeavor, and (e) leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority (p. 89). Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that effective work habits of adults in communities that stress capacity building tie directly to student achievement: “Schools with strong professional communities were better able to offer authentic pedagogy and were more effective in promoting student achievement” (p. 3).

Reform literature, then, seems to agree: it is time for education to open the doors of leadership wider and to look beyond the limits of traditional leadership in order that the goals of school reform can be achieved. Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) summarized the crisis facing schools in this way: “Even a cursory reading of the educational literature leads to the conclusion that the way the teaching profession is currently viewed is ill founded and out-of-date—in a word, wrong” (p. 3). Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) reached the same conclusion earlier. Arguing for the necessity of a holistic view of instructional leadership, they wrote, “We can no longer ignore the leadership capability of teachers, the largest group of school employees and those closest to the students. Empowered teachers bring an enormous resource for continuously improving schools” (p. 2). The traditional leadership of yesterday’s school is no longer sufficient to carry out the demands of today’s reform.

Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is neither novel nor new. Teachers have always had the formal lead in their classrooms and have informally led outside their classrooms. But, for over a decade now, teachers’ associations and others studying school reform, particularly the second wave of reform, have called for new organizational structures and increased teacher involvement as leaders, in order that teaching might become accepted as a profession and that educational

The response to the original “call” for restructuring was promotion of formal teacher leadership structures and the formal “appoint and anoint” positions referred to by Smylie (1995). In a twist of irony, these formal structures for teacher leadership, while opening the doors to greater teacher professionalization, have preserved hierarchical structures that second wave reform sought to replace. Furthermore, these “appoint and anoint” positions have tended to benefit the teacher leader and school more than the classroom teacher (Smylie, 1995).

For instance, benefits of teacher leadership were illuminated in a dissertation study conducted by Barker (1998). In this study of teacher leader experiences on a California School Leadership Team, Barker found that teacher leaders reported personal benefits, including an enhanced sense of empowerment, increased confidence in their own leadership capabilities, and increased understanding of leadership. Barker also discovered benefits to the school: increased commitment to the school, students, and other teachers; increased commitment to change and reform efforts; and heightened relationships with team members.

Glickman (1991) supported the call for teacher leadership, taking the broader view that teachers should be recognized as instructional leaders. In fact, he maintained that “the principal of a successful school is not the instructional leader but the coordinator of teachers as instructional leaders” (p. 7). In a more recent review of emergent views of teacher leadership, Hart (1995) identified five purposes or goals of teacher leadership, consistent with Glickman’s view, that serve as rationales for teacher work redesign and authority redesign in schools:

1. To exhibit an ideological commitment to a more democratic work system and a communitarian ethos for schools;
2. To capitalize on teachers’ expertise as a resource for school development and improvement and provide formal structures for giving voice to teachers to this end;

3. To recruit, retain, and reward the best possible corps of teachers by providing valued career growth opportunities;

4. To promote curriculum and instructional innovation by empowering teachers who will develop and implement these innovations; and

5. To develop a more professional model of schools and improve the overall achievement of teachers. (p. 21)

Teacher leadership is both an outcome of previous reform and an avenue to future reform. Accomplishment of the goals set forth by Hart (1995) is dependent on recognizing and utilizing the personal and professional characteristics of teachers, on providing professional growth or readiness opportunities for leadership, and on providing teachers with leadership opportunities.

Lieberman (1995) has made a compelling argument that professional development of teachers must be transformed if reform is to be effective. She has pointed out, as has Sarason (1990), that by clinging to out-dated staff development models, schools defy their own understandings of learning. Such failures hobble the cause of school improvement and leave teachers who are moved into leadership positions to their own devices: their personal and professional characteristics and resources.

*Characteristics of Teacher Leaders*

Purkey and Smith (1983) described teacher leaders as individuals who believe in the shared goals of the school community and who are committed to collective achievement of those goals. Based on a four year study of teacher leaders, Crowther et al. (2002) developed a framework of specific characteristics of teacher leaders: they (a) convey conviction about a better world, (b) strive for authenticity, (c) facilitate communities of learning, (d) confront barriers, (e) translate ideas into action, and (e) nurture a culture of success (pp. 4-5). These
characteristics are consistent with those identified in studies of principals’ leadership characteristics (Blase & Blase, 1997; Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 2001; Glickman, 1993; Maeroff, 1988), as well as in studies of leadership in the corporate world (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

Certain teacher qualities are prerequisites to teacher leadership success. For instance, Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) found that teacher leaders must first be professionally competent as teachers, must be personally and professionally reputable and credible, and must be approachable; these personal qualities are factors in whether a teacher becomes an accepted leader and is able to influence others.

Wilson (1993) studied high school teachers to examine their perceptions of teacher leaders. Her findings suggest that teacher leaders are seen by their peers as hard-working, involved, creative, gregarious, and energetic individuals. They are described as resources to, supporters of, and advocates for other teachers. Furthermore, they are described as role models for and motivators of students. Ironically, Wilson found that the qualities for which teacher leaders were admired were also sources of tension between them, their colleagues, and school administrators at times. For instance, risk-taking was often a source of conflict with principals committed to maintenance of order, and traits such as initiative-taking and commitment created stress with colleagues.

Attempting to capitalize on these identified characteristics of teacher leaders, a number of formal teacher leadership roles have been created. In the next section, formal teacher leadership roles and functions and the obstacles they create are examined.
Formal Teacher Leadership

Formal teacher leadership positions tend to be exclusive in nature, based on the limited number of such positions available. Among the most frequently identified formal teacher leader-labeled roles are team leader, department chair, grade level coordinator, instructional leader, school advisory council member, and formal committee member. Other formal teacher leader functions include mentoring other teachers, providing staff development training for other teachers, and developing curriculum. These roles and functions provide a formal structure for teacher voice (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990), yet they generate myriad attendant problems and concomitant criticisms.

Hart (1995) examined three specific teacher leadership structures or designs that have been implemented to improve schools over the past fifteen years: mentor teacher plans, teacher career ladders, and shared governance or site-based management. She concluded that the value of these and other teacher leadership roles lies in the fact that they provide career opportunities for teachers and vehicles for school improvement, increased student achievement, and school goal accomplishment. She also noted that traditional views of school leadership are challenged by teacher leadership, accounting, in part, for obstacles that have stood in its way.

Formal Teacher Leadership through Career Ladders

One formal approach to teacher leadership is the career-ladder plan, which was propounded by both the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Forum (1986). In general, such plans aim to address the fact that teaching has tended to be a dead-end career. According to such plans, teachers are offered possible options or upward steps in an individual career, according them titles and senior positions based on demonstrated knowledge, skill, and commitment. The goal behind these plans is keeping outstanding teachers in the classroom while offering salary
increases and professional fulfillment (Mertens & Yarger, 1988). The plans generally provide professional fulfillment through professional growth and career development. Mentoring, curriculum development, and grade level team leadership are among the most common of the career-ladder positions.

Career-ladder plans have had their problems and have been coolly received for several reasons (Hart, 1995; Smylie, 1997). Because career-ladder positions are limited, they foster competition among teachers for the few positions available. Definition of criteria for movement up the ladder is difficult to articulate, likening it to merit pay plans. Furthermore, career-ladder options often take good teachers out of the classroom (Hart, 1995; Pellicer & Anderson, 1995; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wasley, 1991). Mertens and Yarger (1988) have studied the problems associated with career-ladder options and have challenged the cost-benefit of such plans:

In short, career ladders ignore several realities operating against the emergence of professional teacher leadership. The concept of the career ladder, in the final analysis, is vacuous. The lack of substance is a natural but nonetheless sorry result of well-intended policymakers focusing too narrowly on the problem of elevating the social status of teachers. Whatever the process by which it developed, the belief that career ladders will increase the professional stature of teachers and provide them a natural platform for leading their colleagues and being more fully involved in policy setting should be challenged. (p. 33)

*Formal Teacher Leadership through Mentor Teacher Plans*

Mentor teachers are typically teachers who have been identified as master teachers, whose expertise in the craft of teaching can be utilized to share knowledge and skills, thereby positively influencing the development and improving the performance of other teachers while providing professional support to them. Mentoring, as described by Sullivan and Glanz (2000), is “a process that facilitates instructional improvement wherein an experienced educator agrees to provide assistance, support, and recommendations to another staff member or faculty member” (p. 217). They note that the long-term goal of mentoring is the evolutionary
development of professionals who are self-directed and autonomous and that the model is
dependent on a collaborative relationship in which “reflective listening and promotion of
reflective practice are integral parts” (p. 217).

Pursuant to Hart’s (1995) stated purposes or goals of teacher leadership, mentor teachers
use their professional expertise to enhance their own earning potential and to influence new
professionals. According to Hart, “A mentor program aims to provide both intrinsic and
extrinsic rewards to top teachers who have chosen to commit themselves to a teaching career” (p.
13). The anticipated result of mentor plans is improved student learning and achievement. In
their recent research, however, Wang and Odell (2002) found that there is evidence to suggest
that the majority of mentoring programs succeed at providing emotional and technical support to
new teachers but fail to train them to teach in accordance with standards-based reform.

In a study based on the hypothesis that better prepared, more knowledgeable mentors will
have a positive impact on protégés’ classroom practice, Evertson and Smithey (2000) compared
the impact of mentor training on protégé outcomes. The comparison groups consisted of
protégés assisted by mentors involved in a formal mentoring program and of protégés assisted by
experienced teachers who had had no formal mentoring training. Evertson and Smithey found
that protégés of trained mentors were more effective at implementing and maintaining workable
classroom routines, at managing classroom instruction, at gaining student cooperation, and at
keeping students on task. Further, protégés in the treatment group encountered fewer discipline
issues, and their students had greater initial schoolwork success. Evertson and Smithey
concluded from their findings that mentor training leads to greater mentor success, “if success is
defined as supporting protégés’ success” (p. 302, emphasis in the original), and that the mentor’s
knowledge and skills enable early assistance and support to protégés, thereby impacting
protégés’ teaching practices early in the year. Their findings indicated, however, that “the presence of a mentor alone is not enough; the mentor’s knowledge and skills of how to mentor are also crucial” (p. 303).

A number of specific questions have been raised and problems have been associated with mentor plans (Hart, 1995; Little, 1990, Smylie, 1997), including lack of available time to work with new teachers during the school day, particularly in situations where the mentor and teacher are not located at the same physical site. Mentors are often pulled between their competing responsibilities to their own students and to their protégés. Negotiation of mutually workable time for interaction is difficult. Further, mentor positions are limited, and there is a tendency in schools to “share the wealth” by limiting the length of time a mentor can serve in order to accommodate other mentor teachers. Thus, while this formal teacher leader position makes sense for the school, the mentor, and the protégé, it is not without its problems.

In their comprehensive review of literature on mentored learning, Wang and Odell (2002) found that the assumptions underlying prevailing practice in mentoring programs are often focused on emotional and technical support to the protégé, rather than on standards, and that they may not be providing the support needed by protégés to learn to teach. In fact, Wang and Odell found that the assumptions of novices and mentors about knowledge, learning, and teaching are more closely aligned with those of prevailing practice, suggesting that mentoring programs may be perpetuating practices inconsistent with the constructivist approach of recommended practice. They suggested that assumptions underlying mentoring programs should be examined and that mentoring programs should be reconceptualized to match standards-based reform. They also argued that policymakers must find effective ways to induce developers of mentoring programs to align their training programs with standards-based teaching approaches.
Formal Teacher Leadership through Shared Governance

Hart (1995) also illuminated teacher leadership approaches derived from policies relating to concepts of increased authority for teachers through governance and decision-making changes. These policy approaches exist under different labels, including shared governance, site-based management, and participative decision-making. Regardless of the label, however, these governance approaches share the conviction that teachers are professionals with the expertise, experience, and knowledge to make appropriate decisions in schools (Blase & Blase, 2001). They are also committed to the ideas that those closest to the site are capable of the best decisions for the site and that sharing in those decisions increases their commitment to and ownership in the decisions (Blase & Blase, 2001; Hess, 1991; Malen & Ogawa, 1988).

Shared governance structures are believed to lead to school improvement and increased student learning, while promoting teacher professionalism and fostering a more professional work environment. A 1999 independent review of the effectiveness of 24 schoolwide reform approaches in improving student achievement, conducted by the AIR, rated the League of Professional Schools and found “evidence that academic performance was higher in schools where the League approach was well implemented” (p. 86). This finding suggests that assessment of the success or failure of restructuring efforts is a complex matter that involves, among other things, the degree to which the change has been implemented. This research is important, in terms of this study, because it was conducted in a League school where the League approach is “well implemented” and where formal and emergent teacher leadership are supported.

Despite benefits to teachers and the school improvement potential, shared governance structures have been criticized for several reasons (Hart, 1995; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Smylie,
1997). For instance, these forms of governance have raised questions of legality, specifically questions regarding who will be held responsible for shared decisions that go awry. They have also been criticized as being open to manipulation by the principal or as supporting the development of a new oligarchy (Malen & Ogawa, 1988). Additionally, these forms of shared decision-making require considerable time commitments from teacher leaders, who often get hung up on trivial matters or become involved in time-consuming conflicts (Hart, 1995; Smylie, 1997). Teacher membership on school councils, another formal teacher leadership position, has been largely unsuccessful as an opportunity for teacher leaders to use their voice to influence classroom and schoolwide practices positively, largely due to matters of power and politics (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Malen & Ogawa, 1988). In the next section, the literature on informal, or emergent, teacher leadership is examined.

Emergent Teacher Leadership

Emergent teacher leadership, while not clearly defined in the literature, refers to a less formal type of leadership naturally demonstrated by teachers, rather than conferred upon them. Informal teacher leaders are usually those individuals who are recognized as leaders by other teachers, in that they are highly respected and regarded both personally and professionally (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990).

Teacher leadership, as conceived by Forster (1997), is defined as a professional commitment to and a process in which people work together to promote change and improved practice that enables the achievement of shared educational goals. Forster’s definition aligns more closely with informal than with formal teacher leadership and is consistent with the concepts of shared decision-making and shared governance. Forster argued that teachers, as the
implementers of change, should be involved in leading the change process: planning, choosing, and directing such efforts.

Crowther et al. (2002) described the role of teacher leadership in this way:

Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. And it contributes to long-term, enhanced quality of community life. (p. 10)

Their description aligns with the broader definition of teacher leadership associated with the emergent form. Likewise, Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) described teacher leaders in the following way: “Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, influence others toward improved educational practice, and identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders” (p. 6). Their view of emergent teacher leadership emphasizes the fluidity and flexibility of informal leadership, which they captured when they referred to teacher leadership as “a continuum of roles from which teachers can select, given their experience, confidence level, skills, and knowledge” (p. 23).

According to research by Whitaker and Valentine (1993) on participative management practices used by principals, effective principals identify informal teacher leaders within their schools and regularly go to those teachers for decision-making input, a finding confirmed by other researchers, as well (Blase & Blase, 2001). Whitaker and Valentine also found that principals included in their study relied on the teacher leaders in their schools to publicize and rally support for new ideas and programs. Conversely, they found that ineffective school principals not only did not invite teacher participation but were also unable to identify teacher leaders within their schools.

Howey (1988) indicated that the call for teacher leadership is based on the need for highly capable leaders who “reside where the problems primarily are – in schools – and who can
address these in a continuing, collective manner” (p. 29). Such an image of leadership, which Howey referred to as a career lattice, relies on a dynamic and flexible interchange of roles and responsibilities based on teachers’ expertise and interests. The horizontal structure and flexibility of emergent teacher leadership, its inclusive and voluntary nature, and its collaborative approach set emergent teacher leadership apart. These characteristics, in fact, cause teachers to accept its existence more readily than that of formal teacher leadership and allow it opportunities to infiltrate areas of instructional leadership that have been traditionally reserved for the principal.

Opportunities for Emergent Teacher Leaders

Instructional leadership has been described by Blase and Blase (1998) as a combination of curriculum development, professional development, and supervision (p. 11). While instructional leadership has conventionally been held to be the responsibility of the principal, instructional leadership by emergent teacher leaders includes the same broad instructionally-related areas and is carried out in practice by emergent teacher leaders in varying degrees of formality that range from collegial exchanges in the hall to more formalized teacher-teaching-teacher roles, such as mentor and peer coach.

In the area of curriculum, teacher leaders are often involved in decision-making regarding curriculum planning and other issues that directly impact classroom practice. Duke (1994) addressed teacher involvement in decision-making about curriculum planning and development, noting the relationship between their involvement and their ownership of accountability: “The likelihood that teachers will embrace collective accountability for student learning is directly related to the extent to which teachers influence the formation of policies related to curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and other professional aspects of schooling” (p. 26). 43
Likewise, in the area of staff development, emergent teacher leaders working in school cultures that embrace collaboration are both recipients of the expertise of others and sharers of their own expertise (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Miller, 1992; Sabatini, 2002; Stone et al., 1997). Additionally, in collaborative cultures, emergent teacher leaders often play a large role in the self-direction of their own professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). These approaches to professional development are consistent with constructivist learning theory, which maintains that individuals construct their knowledge through social interaction and which serves as the basis of the constructivist model of teacher leadership proposed by Lambert et al. (1995).

The efficacy of these approaches to professional development can be seen in their fit to the findings of Zemke and Zemke (1995) on adult learning: (a) Adults tend to prefer self-direction; (b) adults’ experiences are rich resources for learning, and they tend to learn more effectively through experiential techniques such as discussion and problem solving; (c) adults are able to discern their own learning needs from real-life events; and (d) adults prefer to learn a skill or acquire knowledge that can be used practically and immediately (p. 32). When professional development with these adult learning characteristics is combined with a community that fosters interactions, the construction of common meanings about teaching and learning is facilitated, which Lambert et al. (1995) suggest is the function of leadership.

The use of these general professional development approaches can also be carried into more formalized teacher-teaching-teacher supervision approaches. For instance, Sullivan and Glanz (2000) reviewed several alternative approaches to supervision that offer professional development opportunities for emergent teacher leaders, including peer coaching, portfolios for differentiated supervision, and action research. While these and other similar approaches do
provide practical opportunities for emergent leadership, empirical research on their impact on classroom instruction and student learning is limited.

**Peer Coaching**

Sullivan and Glanz (2000) described peer coaching as an “umbrella term for the many different configurations of teachers-helping-teachers that have emerged primarily since the 1980’s” (p. 221) and defined it as “teachers helping teachers reflect on and improve teaching practices and/or implement particular teaching skills needed to implement knowledge gained through faculty or curriculum development” (p. 221). In fact, the value of peer coaching, as conceived and practiced by Showers and Joyce (1996), is the learning that emanates from joint planning, materials development, teaching observations, and reflection on student outcomes, rather than from advice and feedback. They argued for the multiple benefits of this model of staff development:

The formation of peer coaching teams produces greater faculty cohesion and focus and, in turn, facilitates more skillful shared decision-making. A skillful staff development program results in a self-perpetuating process for change, as well as new knowledge and skills for teachers and increased learning for students. (p. 16)

The teacher-helping-teacher model recommended by Showers and Joyce is based on reflective and collaborative work between peers and results in a continual growth process.

**Portfolio**

Grant and Huebner (1998) provided an overview of portfolios as a vehicle for “powerful learning” (p. 33), which they described as active, relevant, and self-regulated; rooted in inquiry; and based on dialogue, discourse, and reflection. Sullivan and Glanz (2000) stated that a portfolio “not only documents the development of innovative and effective practices, it is a central vehicle for the growth of the teacher through self-reflection, analysis, and sharing with colleagues through discussion and writing” (p. 223). In a study that used the portfolio model
developed at Stanford as part of the cohort-based, graduate teacher education program, Grant and Huebner (1998) followed three participants three years after their completion of the portfolio project. They found that, in fact, three years later inquiry and talk as a part of practice were fully integrated habits of mind for their three participants. Furthermore, they found that the three participants routinely used their portfolio questions in their planning and assessment.

In a two-year case study, Zepeda (2002) investigated “how the portfolio was linked to the process of supervision and what the principal did to maintain the momentum for ongoing shifts in practices” (p. 95). Her findings indicated that the use of portfolios resulted in a number of positive outcomes for those participating in the study. Reflection by teachers was enhanced by the selection of artifacts and by their mentors’ feedback. Teachers’ perspectives of instructional programs at different grade levels were enhanced by their across-grade level discussions, particularly when they were paired with mentors across grade levels. The principal also reported that conferences became more teacher-centered and teacher-led for teachers with portfolios. Moreover, Zepeda found that the use of portfolios ignited interest and participation in other forms of self-directed professional development, including action research and videotaped observations.

**Action Research**

Sullivan and Glanz (2000) defined action research as “an ongoing process of reflection that involves four basic cyclical steps: (1) selecting a focus, (2) collecting data, (3) analyzing and interpreting data, and (4) taking action” (p. 231). They described it as an alternative approach to supervision that can be undertaken at the classroom level or at the schoolwide level. Arguing that teachers can be “key players” in school effectiveness and improvement through the adoption of action research, Carter (1998) propounded action research as “a means of enabling teachers to
derive meaning from current research from within their own context, in a way which informs and explores their practice” (p. 275).

In a study on the use of action research in a four-year restructuring initiative of the primary program in British Columbia, Grimmett (1996) examined 25 research groups, with more than 300 voluntary participants, that were charged with the responsibility of developing a research plan, collecting and analyzing data, and writing a research report based on their interpretation of the findings. The heuristic framework for meetings included reflective writing, conversations, development of research questions, collaborative work, and consulting/work sessions.

Grimmett’s (1996) interpretation of the data indicated that teacher action research is a striving for authenticity involving five different struggles:

- to engage in professional discourse; to provide support, stability, and challenge to one another as professional colleagues; to become critical, learning teachers; to honor the learning process in schools; and to grow professionally and develop their practical grasp of the new program. (p. 64)

He concluded from his research that supervision reframed around action research will result in a culture of inquiry, in a morally-driven quest for authenticity, and in a conceptualization of supervision as “a series of interrelated tasks designed to transform the experience of supervision into one that sustains a rich conversation about pedagogical possibilities by engaging teachers in classroom action research and observation” (p. 65).

Studies of Emergent Teacher Leadership

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) have asserted that “teacher leadership is an idea whose time has come” (p. 3). In fact, in light of its educational conception in second wave research, it might more accurately be said to be overdue. As a result of the slowness of its evolution and development, particularly of the emergent form of teacher leadership, there is a dearth of
literature. Most extant studies explore formal teacher leadership, examining roles, outcomes, and obstacles. There is little direct empirical research on emergent teacher leaders as instructional leaders or on the impact of their instructional leadership on classroom instruction. Likewise, there is limited peripheral research on instructional leadership by emergent teachers in shared governance settings.

In a study of emergent teacher leadership, Darling-Hammond et al. (1995), examining data from seven case studies, found that PDS’s enable and promote teacher leadership of those working in the schools and serve to build future teacher leaders who view leadership as an integral part of the profession of teaching. Darling-Hammond et al. defined these schools as “collaborations between schools and universities that have been created to support the learning of prospective and experienced teachers while simultaneously restructuring schools and schools of education” (p.87). Differing from the traditional, formal add-on leadership positions frequently attained at the conclusion of a teaching career, the PDS conception of leadership is one of teacher leadership from the start of the teacher’s career. It is one that recognizes expertise and leadership as assets and resources of the learning community and that “collaborative leadership” builds organizational structures by capitalizing on the talents and commitments of all.

Data from their case studies further allowed the authors to make three major claims regarding teacher leadership in PDSs: teacher leadership and teacher learning are inextricably connected; teacher leadership can be embedded in functions and roles rather than in titled positions within formal hierarchies, leading to a view of leadership as a normal role in the teaching profession; and promotion of teacher leadership and learning is likely to have a positive impact on the school’s capacity to meet student needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Based
on teachers’ views regarding increased effectiveness of their instructional practice, the authors suggest that the school’s capacity to meet student needs had increased. Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) did not, however, assemble evidence of greater student learning as a result of teachers’ expanded roles.

In a study of eight schools involved in a change initiative, Heller and Firestone (1995) examined leadership for change, challenging the fundamental assumption about leadership “that it is the work of one person who in some sense is responsible for the change process” (p. 66). While the study is limited by its focus on institutionalization of change and by its examination of only one innovation, it illuminated the benefit of concentrating on analyses of functions necessary in the change process, as opposed to concentration on key roles.

In their study of the institutionalization of the Social Problem Solving (SPS) program in eight elementary schools, Heller and Firestone (1995) sought to verify their premise that it is the change leadership functions, not who performs them, that matter in the change process. Institutionalization, as examined in their study, is described as the third of three stages of the change process: adoption or initiation, implementation, and institutionalization or continuation (Fullan, 1991). In their study of the institutionalization stage of the SPS initiative, Heller and Firestone investigated six leadership functions identified previously by Firestone (1989) and Firestone and Corbett (1988) as critical to change (providing and selling a vision; obtaining resources; providing encouragement and recognition; adapting standard operating procedures; monitoring the improvement effort; and handling disturbances) and who performed them. Informants who worked in various roles were interviewed for their perspectives on their own contributions and on others’ contributions, thus allowing triangulation across roles.
The findings in schools where the change was fully institutionalized suggested that the contribution of the role of teachers was greater and the role of high-status administrators less than what past research suggested (Arends, 1982). In fact, teacher leadership, both formal and informal, was found to be a contributing factor in the change institutionalization examined in this study, supporting the researchers’ original premise that it is the performance of the change functions, not who performs them, that matters. The researchers found that many people serving in different roles performed the change functions and that the change functions themselves are often redundant. Interestingly, their findings indicated that there was not one critical leader in charge of the change process and, thus, that the principal did not meet the often used hero metaphor, which suggests that one role fulfills the majority of the change functions. In fact, they found that he was not the key to the change process. Rather, the metaphor that most closely approximated the findings in this study was the team metaphor, which suggests that functions do not have to be performed by one person or one role. Unlike a team, however, whose performance is coordinated, the people in this study, despite operating from different roles, often performed the same functions redundantly with minimal coordination.

One practical implication of their study relates to the contribution teachers make to change leadership. Heller and Firestone (1995) found that teachers were change agents or change leaders, engaging actively and mutually in change functions such as teaching and supporting others, even without formal positions. Functioning as they did in the study, teachers emerged as leaders who accomplished the functions redundantly and jointly and who made important contributions to the change process. These findings are consistent with those of Little (1982) and Rosenholtz (1989) and support the argument for structures that promote the emergence of teacher leadership.
Miller (1992) conducted a three-year case study of teacher leadership in a restructuring school that had placed five teacher leaders in management and leadership positions in the school. Using interviews, focus groups, documents, and field notes, Miller found that, rather than the formal teacher leaders, classroom teachers led most of the change efforts. Based on teacher expertise and interest and school needs, these teacher leaders emerged to help in the change process. Miller found that one-half of the teaching staff initiated change in teaching arrangements, including forming team teaching groups, regrouping special needs children with non-special education students, and creating multi-grade classrooms. Miller found that patterns of interaction (inquiry, dialogue, reflection, intervention, and action) characterized their teacher leader roles and that such interaction led to emergent teacher leadership becoming a positive aspect of the school’s culture.

Miller (1992) concluded that emergent teacher leadership in the school was supported by district commitment, participatory leadership, opportunities for collaboration, and expertise and interests of teachers. The superintendent strongly supported restructuring and professionalism of teachers. The principal was a strong leader who shared her vision and encouraged dialogue and reflection on teaching practice. As a result, teachers developed into reflective practitioners, engaging in collegial and collaborative efforts with other teachers.

Stone et al. (1997) conducted case studies of teachers’ perceptions of teacher leadership in an elementary school, middle school, and high school. The purpose of the study was to compare and contrast characteristics of teacher leadership, motivations for assuming leadership, support and constraints of teacher leadership, and effects of teacher leadership on school improvement and professional practices.
Teacher leadership in the middle school was informal or emergent and voluntary; thus, its findings are segregated from the others and are reviewed herein. Researchers found that the teacher leaders considered themselves to be catalysts to other teachers’ learning and facilitators for other teachers. In fact, the participating teachers identified support of other teachers as a primary goal of teacher leadership and indicated that they were willing to “step up” when the need arose. Middle school teacher leaders indicated that they spent time on professional activities, such as collegial activities, collaborative sharing, staff development, mentoring, and coaching and indicated that intrinsic satisfaction and personal benefits, such as increased expertise, sense of accomplishment, and increased influence, were reasons for their accepting leadership roles. These teachers included shared decision-making, collaboration, and school improvements as desired outcomes of their assuming these positions and indicated that participation in decision-making was a motivational factor in their assuming leadership positions, which they also linked to their desire to improve the school environment for students. Time and support were identified by teacher leaders as both positive and negative factors, and they also identified climate, politics, and compensation as constraining factors. Further, they indicated that teacher leadership improves professional practice in a number of ways, including, in part, collaboration with colleagues, school improvement, and personal and professional growth. Finally, teacher leaders indicated that their leadership improved their relationships with other teacher leaders, teachers, and administration. Stone et al. (1997) concluded that teacher leadership in a shared decision-making setting is the basis of collective leadership. In fact, the researchers argued that “school improvements will succeed or fail to the degree that teachers are engaged as partners in the process” (p. 60).
In a qualitative study conducted at a Georgia elementary school engaged in two school reform initiatives, the Accelerated Schools Project and Literacy Collaborative, Sabatini (2002) examined teachers’ perspectives of emergent teacher leadership, specifically the experiences of teachers with emergent teacher leaders and the meaning of those experiences. She discovered that “in an environment in which emergent teacher leadership thrives, teachers form relationships and interact with emergent teacher leaders. Forming close relationships is an important foundation for interactions to take place” (p. 196). She found that teachers actively initiated relationships with colleagues and positively responded when teacher leaders offered support. Based on their relationships, teachers and emergent teacher leaders interacted in a variety of meaningful ways that focused on instructional improvement and impacted the classroom and the whole school. For instance, Sabatini found that teachers and emergent teacher leaders engaged in such activities as “sharing, questioning, observing, shadowing, coaching, discussing, reflecting, modeling, and giving feedback” (p. 198). She also found interactions that related to whole school improvement, including “inquiry, problem solving, and shared decision-making” (p. 198).

In addition to their emphasis on relationships and interactions, teachers in the Sabatini (2002) study also identified a variety of outcomes from their experiences with emergent teacher leadership. Teachers felt that their instruction improved and their sense of responsibility increased and that, thereby, students benefited, as well. The teachers in the Sabatini study also identified increased leadership capacity, increased stability, and improved morale as outcomes of their experiences with emergent teacher leaders.

From her study of teachers’ perspectives of emergent teacher leadership, Sabatini (2002) concluded that
1. When teachers are empowered to direct their own learning, they seek out emergent teacher leader peers to improve their instruction.

2. When teachers interact with emergent teacher leaders, they focus on instructional improvement and school improvement.

3. When teachers are empowered to collaborate with emergent teacher leaders, they experience a sense of collective ownership.

4. When teachers interact with emergent teacher leaders, leadership capacity increases.

5. When teachers are empowered to lead, they feel trusted, valued, and validated. (p. 201-205)

She noted that teacher empowerment, both in and outside the classroom, is essential to teacher relationships and interactions with emergent teacher leaders. She found that the Accelerated School model provided support for teacher empowerment, allowing teachers to direct their own professional development, to participate in shared decision-making, and to take on informal leadership roles.

While there were some issues with teacher leadership that surfaced during the study and were viewed as challenges to emergent teacher leadership, including the voting process and the additional demand of leadership roles, Sabatini’s (2002) findings suggest that emergent teacher leaders face fewer obstacles than teacher leaders holding formal positions, primarily because of the empowerment of teachers to control their relationships and interactions with emergent teacher leaders. The overall implication of these findings, combined with the benefits to students, she suggests, is that “researchers should focus their work on emergent forms of teacher leadership” (p. 207).

In a qualitative study that used a multicase, cross-case method of data analysis, Corallo (1995) sought to identify influences on the development of informal teacher leaders. Participants in the case studies were identified by their peers as having a mastery of teaching and
collaboration skills, being willing to take risks, and being involved in continual professional growth. Corallo’s findings indicated that the development of emergent teacher leadership is influenced by the following factors: (a) family background; (b) success in early leadership endeavors; (c) relationship with mentor teachers who are informal teacher leaders; (d) professional development and growth activities; and (e) administrative support of a culture in which teacher leadership can flourish.

*Teacher-Level Effects on Student Achievement*

Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) conducted a comprehensive study across three grade levels (grades 3-5) and five subject areas (reading, language arts, math, social studies, and science) to examine teacher effects on student achievement. Their findings consistently indicated the significant effects of teachers. In fact, no other factor had the level of consistency in findings of the teacher effects:

The results of this study will document that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. In addition, the results show wide variation in effectiveness among teachers. The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor. *Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels regardless of the levels of heterogeneity in their classes.* If the teacher is ineffective, students under that teacher’s tutelage will achieve inadequate progress academically, regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement. (p. 63, emphasis in the original)

Their findings suggested that improving teacher effectiveness is the key to improving quality of education for students of all levels of ability.

*Obstacles to Teacher Leadership*

Problems with and criticisms of formal teacher leadership generally emanate from the limited labeled leadership positions available, which create unintended competition between teachers for these career advancement and higher pay opportunities. The hierarchical nature of
the formal role presents another barrier to their success. Further, formal teacher leaders are often teachers who have held leadership roles for some time or who have seniority and may have tendencies toward status quo preservation. The work of Susan Rosenholtz (1985b) suggests that it is fallacious to think that the competition generated by formal teacher leadership positions will be effective in improving the quality of teaching.

Conversely, teacher leadership offers great potential to the profession, to teachers, to students, and to schools; but simultaneously it carries great risk. Little (1988) summed up the potentials, positive and negative, of teacher leadership:

The *gain* in teacher leadership derives from teachers’ classroom orientation, from their wealth of practical knowledge, and from their sheer numbers. The *strain* in teacher leadership derives from the inherited traditions of an egalitarian profession, from the persistent belief that teaching is just a matter of style and from the pervasive privacy and isolation of teaching. To talk in terms of teacher leadership is to introduce status differences based on knowledge, skill, and initiative in a profession that has made no provision for them. (p. 98, emphasis in the original)

Traditionally, teacher work has been isolated and independent, and little time or opportunity has existed for collegial interaction (Goodlad, 1983; Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Rothberg, 1986; Tye & Tye, 1984). In addition to the organizational and structural obstructions to interaction, teachers’ professional relationships with other teachers have been limited by norms of autonomy, equality, and privacy fostered by teachers themselves (Goodlad, 1983; Little, 1990).

In a study of teachers’ interactions with teacher leaders concerning classroom instruction, Smylie (1992) examined the opportunities for interaction to take place, the social context of the school, and the psychological orientations of teachers related to working and interacting with other teachers. Findings from his study suggested that, while opportunity is necessary, it is not reason enough for interaction to take place. Furthermore, the social context of teachers’ schools was found to be a negligible influence on teacher-teacher leader interaction. Smylie also found
that interaction tended to be guided by norms, beliefs, and values teachers brought to the relationship and that where conflicts existed between beliefs and the social context, interaction was less likely to occur.

Wilson (1993) found that school culture, professional norms, and self-imposed limits often served as obstacles to full teacher leadership. She also found a negative effect resulting from conferment of a leader label; being labeled a leader set the teacher leader apart and diminished the teacher leader’s ability to affect change. Forster (1997), who has argued that teachers should be leaders in the change process, contended, however, that the patriarchal, top-down nature of schools and teacher autonomy stand as obstacles to teacher leadership. In fact, she suggested that in an implicit, long-standing transaction teachers have traded schoolwide decision-making for classroom autonomy.

**Summary**

The literature indicates that teacher leadership has had mixed results. Formal teacher leadership, characterized by formal titles and “appoint and anoint” positions, has not produced expected results. Emergent teacher leadership is too new, in terms of official recognition of its existence and of empirical research, to “call” its value in reform. What is clear is that, regardless of the leadership approach, the pathway to teacher leadership is obscured by obstacles that are characterized by a reluctance to embrace the new and a failure to let go of past leadership images. However, despite the obstacle-cluttered pathway, “Teachers who lead leave their mark on teaching. By their presence and their performance, they change how other teachers think about, plan for, and conduct their work” (Little, 1988, p. 84).

Findings of research by Hallinger and Heck (1996), specifically that the effects of leadership on school achievement are indirect, provide insight into the promise of teacher
leadership. They noted that “achieving results through others is the essence of leadership” (p. 39). Research into work conditions and teacher motivation and commitment suggests that results are more directly achieved through teachers and that teacher motivation and commitment are more likely to occur in cultures that value collaborative work and support teacher involvement and decision-making (a’Campo, 1993; Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989). Indeed, research supports emergent teacher leadership as a viable avenue to school change and improvement but simultaneously warns of obstacles and hurdles in its pathway.

Principal Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a term that has not been condensed to a universally accepted definition, despite the fact that it has been a highly researched area of school leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) noted that instructional leadership “typically focuses on the behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students” (p. 47, emphasis in the original). Blase and Blase (1999), clarifying the breadth of instructional leadership, wrote that “instructional leadership is often defined as a blend of several tasks, such as supervision of classroom instruction, staff development, and curriculum development” (p. 350). Sheppard (1996) distinguished a “narrow” view of instructional leadership from a “broad” view of it. Viewed from the “narrow” perspective, instructional leadership is defined as “those actions that are directly related to teaching and learning—observable behaviors such as classroom supervision”; from the “broad” view, it “entails all leadership activities that affect student learning” (p. 326). Krug (1992), viewing effective school leadership from a constructivist perspective, asserted that the effective instructional leader is “one who strategically applies knowledge to solve contextually specific problems and to achieve the purposes of schooling through others” (p. 434).
Regardless of the definition, instructional leadership has been commonly viewed as the domain of the principal, and principals have traditionally carried the authority and responsibility for it. Two major bodies of research have differed in their views of how principals contribute to the instructional work in their schools. On the one hand, organizational research emphasizing “loose coupling” has suggested that schools, as loosely coupled organizations, afford principals limited means to influence teachers’ work (Weick, 1976, 1982). On the other hand, effective schools research suggests that principals can contribute to instruction in several ways (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979).

Firestone and Wilson (1985) have argued that contradictions between these two bodies of research can be bridged by attending to the linkage mechanisms, the mechanisms that link and coordinate individual activities to each other within schools, and that principals can use such linkages to influence instruction, though their ability to control such linkages is limited. They suggested that bureaucratic and cultural linkages affect instruction independently and interactively and that principals must make use of multiple weak linkages through numerous teacher interactions if they are to influence instruction.

The traditional view has been that principals have an impact on schools. Until the 1980s, however, when accountability became central to reform efforts, little research had been done to back up that commonly held view. Beginning in the 1980s, a newfound urgency for research into two areas, whether and how principals make a difference (Glasman & Heck, 1992), surfaced. Educational researchers began to explore various aspects of principal leadership. Personal attributes, leadership styles, and behaviors of principals were examined in an effort to provide empirical answers.
Lezotte (1992) argued that the strong instructional leadership characteristic of effective schools does not connote tyrannical leadership but, rather, is synonymous with strength to lead others through commitment to a shared vision. He suggested that strong instructional leaders lead others, who follow because they share in the dream, to a common ground. He argued, “Just as world-class orchestras of virtuoso musicians require world-class conductors, schools with fine teachers require the principal’s instructional leadership” (p. 15).

In fact, Leithwood et al. (1990) reviewed 135 empirical studies conducted between 1974 and 1988 related to principals’ practices. Specifically, their purpose was to identify promising avenues for future research. They used a framework that identified variables and relationships that are central to an understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of principals’ practices. They concluded that more research is needed on the principal’s impact on student outcomes, on teachers’ practices generated from theories of teacher development, and on school culture.

*Instructional Leadership Behaviors*

Recurring consistently in extant research on effective principals’ instructional leadership behaviors are broad themes or categories of principals’ behaviors and specific functions relating to those themes. However, as Blase and Blase (1998) pointed out, identification of the specific actions taken to accomplish the functions has been limited: “Until recently little knowledge of what behaviors comprise good instructional leadership has been available in the literature” (p. 11, emphasis in the original).

Educational experts have agreed that commitment to a vision and mission, including development of academic goals consistent with that vision, are essential instructional leadership behaviors (Krug, 1992, 1993; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Rutherford, 1985; Smith & Andrews,
Firestone and Wilson (1985) emphasized the role of the principal as instructional leader in terms of the school’s mission and vision: “The principal’s task and challenge is to develop a clear vision of the purposes of the school that gives primacy to instruction and to carry it through consistently during those countless interactions” (p. 22). Using cultural linkages, the principal communicates and “sells” a vision, thus establishing a culture through teachers; simultaneously he uses bureaucratic linkages to pull teachers to the vision and to limit their opportunities to divert from it.

Clear communication of the school’s mission has also been identified in the research as an effective instructional leader’s behavior (Krug, 1992, 1993; Lezotte, 1992; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In fact, Weick (1982) explicated the absolute necessity of communication of mission:

In a loosely coupled system, leadership is diffuse rather than concentrated. . . . Given this lack of focus, the administrator needs to stimulate these initiatives to move in a common direction. This is most likely to happen when the administrator articulates a direction with eloquence, persistence, and detail. (p. 675)

These findings are consistent with the research of others who have studied organizational leadership. Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggested that the leader’s clear image and his manner of sharing it are critical to the organization’s forward movement: “The essential thing in organizational leadership is that the leader’s style pulls rather than pushes people on” (p. 80, emphasis in the original). Kouzes and Posner (1987) agreed, saying, “Leaders get others to buy into their dreams by showing how all will be served by a common purpose” (p. 10). In fact, the “others” Kouzes and Posner spoke of must not only buy into but must also take ownership and possession of the dream.

Creating a climate of high expectations and of effective instruction (Krug, 1993; Persell & Cookson, 1982) and monitoring or evaluating student progress (Krug, 1993; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Rutherford, 1985) have also consistently appeared in effective instructional
leadership literature. In fact, these behaviors were among those noted by Edmonds (1979) in effective schools research. Rutherford’s findings (1985) suggested that effective instructional leaders intervene in supportive or corrective manners when necessary. These findings are consistent with others’ findings related to the supervising of teaching (Blase & Blase, 1998; Glickman et al., 2001; Krug, 1993).

Visibility is consistently linked to instructional leadership and cited in behavior literature. Smith and Andrews (1989), for instance, identified visible presence as an effective instructional behavior, while Blase and Blase (1998) found that high principal visibility resulted in enhancement of teacher morale, self-esteem, sense of security, and, consequently, motivation. Weick (1982) suggested that high administrative visibility is a necessity in loosely coupled organizations, “both to remind people of central vision and to assist them in applying these visions to their own activities” (p. 676).

Another frequently identified instructional leadership behavior is providing resources necessary to ensure effective instruction (Persell & Cookson, 1982; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In fact, Poplin (1992) has suggested that, as teachers grow into instructional leadership roles, principals will be called on more to be locators of supplies and resources and organizers of professional development opportunities. Persell and Cookson (1982) identified several other behaviors that are consistent with effective instructional leadership: functioning as a facilitator of instruction, being a forceful and dynamic leader, consulting effectively with others, creating order and discipline, and using time well. Krug (1993) also noted that managing curriculum and instruction are instructional leadership behaviors associated with effectiveness.

Studies of leadership from the corporate world provide findings consistent with those in educational leadership. From their study of sixty successful corporate leaders and thirty
successful public leaders, Bennis and Nanus (1985) found that all ninety leaders possessed four areas of competency. They developed a vision and focused attention to that vision. They created meaning for their message through communication. They established and stayed the course of trust. Finally, they had positive self-regard, recognized their strengths and weaknesses, and actively deployed their efforts to the strengthening of their weaknesses, as well as to improvement of their strengths.

Similarly, in a study of middle and senior managers in both the public and private sectors, Kouzes and Posner (1987) found that leaders at their best practiced and encouraged others to practice five strategies and ten behaviors of leadership:

1. Challenge the process: search for opportunities; experiment and take risks;
2. Inspire a shared vision: envision the future; enlist others;
3. Enable others to act: foster collaboration; strengthen others;
4. Model the way: set the example; plan small wins;
5. Encourage the heart: recognize individual contribution; and celebrate accomplishments. (p. 8)

These strategies and behaviors have been found in educational research, as well (Blase & Blase, 1998; Glickman et al., 2001; Krug, 1993; Pajak, 1989; Persell & Cookson, 1982).

*Instructional Leadership as Supervision*

In a study of the practice of supervision, in which practitioners ranked supervision tasks in order of importance, Pajak (1989) and a team of doctoral researchers from the University of Georgia established a list of twelve tasks associated with supervision. Communication was ranked first in order of importance and was followed, in rank order, by tasks related to staff development, instructional program improvement, collaborative work on planning and change, and motivation and organization focused on the shared vision. Tasks related to observation,
curriculum, problem solving and decision-making, and support to teachers were ranked, respectively, in the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth ranks of importance. Personal development and community relations were ranked tenth and eleventh, and, interestingly, the task ranked as least important was program evaluation and research. Glickman et al. (2001) identified five tasks of supervision, a component of instructional leadership, that have the potential to affect teacher development and, thereby, student outcomes: direct assistance, group development, professional development, curriculum development, and action research. They asserted that “the unification of individual teacher needs with organizational goals in ‘a cause beyond oneself’ has been demonstrated to promote powerful instruction and improved student learning” (p. 12).

Thus, what is clear from the tasks and functions identified by Pajak (1989) and Glickman (1985) is that instructional leadership has as its focus the organization’s practical purpose of affecting the growth of students, primarily through teachers. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) have argued that the leadership capacity of teachers, “the largest group of school employees and those closest to the students” (p. 2), can be and should no longer be ignored as a resource in school change.

Studies of Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors

Spawned by effective schools research, which suggested that strong leadership was key in school effectiveness (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979), research into principals’ instructional management behaviors (Bossert et al., 1982) began in earnest in the 1980s. Researchers sought to understand the effects of administrative behaviors on school-level processes and improvement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood, 1994). In his research on effective schools, Edmonds (1979) identified five school-level correlates to student achievement. In addition to strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student achievement, and frequent monitoring of student progress, he also found
that an orderly atmosphere and an emphasis on basic skill acquisition are conducive to learning and to school effectiveness. Despite the passage of time, these correlates continue to show up in literature relating to both effective principal behaviors and effective principal instructional leadership.

Krug (1992) developed a five-factor taxonomy of instructional leadership dimensions to examine what instructional leaders do: (a) defining mission; (b) managing curriculum and instruction; (c) supervising teaching; (d) monitoring student progress; and (e) promoting instructional climate. He concluded that effective instructional leadership is not a matter of adherence to specific characteristics but, rather, is characterized by a belief system that emphasizes what is possible. Krug stated that good instructional leaders find ways to incorporate the five identified dimensions of instructional embedded leadership into their everyday activities and interactions as they meet the needs of students and teachers.

In his 1996 study and synthesis of extant research on instructional leadership behaviors, Sheppard identified ten principal behaviors linked to teachers’ professional development and performance: (a) framing school goals, (b) communicating school goals, (c) supervising and evaluating instruction, (d) coordinating the curriculum, (e) monitoring student progress, (f) protecting instructional time, (g) maintaining high visibility, (h) providing incentives for teachers, (i) promoting professional development, and (j) providing incentives for learning (p. 327). In contrast with others whose findings had suggested that routine instructional leadership behaviors can have negative effects on teachers, including decreasing creativity and innovation and increasing docility, Sheppard (1996) found that there is a strong correlation between effective principal behaviors and teacher commitment, professional involvement, and innovation. Of particular interest is his finding that promotion of teachers’ professional development was the
most influential instructional leadership behavior at the elementary and high school levels. Additionally, maintaining high visibility was identified as a strong influential principal behavior at the elementary school level, while framing school goals was identified at the high school level.

In more recent research, Blase and Blase (1998) investigated teachers’ perspectives on principals’ instructionally oriented behaviors and interactions and their impact on a range of dimensions of classroom instruction. They concluded that even those principals who engaged in the use of positive instructional strategies and exemplified positive attitudes and goals often achieved only partial success in establishing and maintaining reflective teaching and growth orientations. Regarding the role of collegiality and its tie to instructional supervision, Blase and Blase (1998) wrote, “Clearly, there is a compelling need for practicing and aspiring administrators and supervisors to search for ways to encourage collegiality and to significantly improve instructional supervision in today’s changing schools” (p. 4, emphasis in the original).

Clark and Clark (1996) summarized the findings of a meeting of professors and school administrators, sponsored by the Danforth Foundation and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, which convened to discuss leadership preparation and leadership’s role in restructuring. They concluded from the study of six reform initiatives, including The League of Professional Schools, that there are three broad leadership processes central to all: (a) defining and sustaining educational purpose, (b) developing and nurturing community, and (c) fostering personal and organizational growth (p. 18).

Caine and Caine (2000), through group process research, identified qualities that they believe form the foundation for the development of good leaders. The qualities, identified below, have also been recognized in the work of other educational leadership researchers (Blase...
and business leadership researchers (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987):  

1. A shift from seeking to be in control to letting go of control and building a community of relationships that tends to be self-organizing;  

2. A shift from primarily planning for future contingencies to reflecting on the conditions that enhance or prevent desirable futures from emerging;  

3. A shift from looking at subjects and actions as independent to having broader cognitive horizons through which it becomes easier to see the many different ways in which things are connected; and  

4. A shift from relying on the power of the system to feeling empowered and seeking to empower others. (p. 8)  

They further concluded that creating effective learning communities is tantamount to creating conditions in which people can flourish.

Principal Instructional Leadership and Effects  

A number of studies have been conducted to examine the effects of the principal on instruction. These studies, based on the assumption that principals engage in specific instructional behaviors, have sought to link instructional behaviors to school-level outcomes. Hallinger and Heck (1996) reviewed 40 studies, conducted during the period 1980-1995 to examine the principal’s role in school effectiveness, and categorized those studies into three approaches: direct effects, mediated effects, and reciprocal effects.

The primary focus of their project was the conceptual underpinnings of the studies under review; however, they also considered methodological and substantive findings. Selection of studies was based on three criteria: (a) studies that explicitly examined the effects of a principal’s leadership beliefs and behavior; (b) studies that included an explicit measure of school performance, usually student achievement, as a dependent variable; and (c) international studies.
that examined principal effects. Hallinger and Heck then classified the studies as models based on how principal effects were viewed.

Studies of direct effects, according to Hallinger and Heck (1996), typically utilized bivariate models and proposed that principal’s effects on school outcomes are direct, occurring in the absence of intervening variables. Direct effects studies, which occurred primarily before 1987, did not produce any consistent patterns of findings and did little to further a practical or theoretical understanding of processes through which the principal affects outcomes. They noted that more recent studies have tended away from direct-effects models to more complex models. Hallinger and Heck concluded that “although it is theoretically possible that principals do exert some direct effect on students’ learning, the linkage between principal leadership and student learning (as measured by school outcomes) is inextricably tied to the actions of others in the school” (p. 24).

Bossert et al. (1982) conducted a review of literature related to the principal’s role as instructional leader and, based on that review, developed a framework for examining instructional leadership, specifically the relationship between leadership and organization. Their framework demonstrated their view that climate and instructional organization, two basic features of the social organization of a school, are affected by a principal’s instructional management behavior. They concluded that the role of the principal in instructional management is complex, requiring consideration of those fundamental factors affecting instructional management: the instructional organization of the school, school climate, management behaviors of the principal, and the context of principal management.

In a two-year study of the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement in 33 elementary schools, Andrews and Soder (1987) found that schools with
principals identified by staff as strong leaders had higher student gains, based on normal
equivalent gain scores in total reading and total mathematics, than schools with average or weak
leaders. The researchers used a questionnaire, which measured 18 strategic principal-teacher
interactions in four broad areas of principal characteristics (principal as resource provider;
principal as instructional resource; principal as communicator; and principal as visible presence)
to determine the principals’ leadership classifications (strong leader, average leader, weak
leader). Gains in normal curve equivalent scores in total reading and total mathematics on the
California Achievement Test from year-end 1982 baseline scores to year-end 1984 scores were
used as the measure of improved academic performance. With leader group as the independent
variable and total reading and total mathematics average gain scores as the dependent variable,
they found that normal equivalent gain scores were significantly higher in both total reading and
total mathematics in schools with strong leaders than in schools with average or weak leaders.
Differences in scores were even more significant when ethnicity and free-lunch status were
considered. However, when socioeconomic status and ethnicity were introduced, all significant
relationships between leadership, math, and reading outcomes disappeared for high-SES schools
and for predominantly White schools, while those relationships remained for low-SES schools
and predominantly minority schools. Thus, while their findings suggested that strong
instructional leadership plays a crucial role in student academic performance, particularly for low
study and its findings, argued that “the more complete conclusion is that socioeconomic status
and ethnicity specify the effects of leadership on school outcomes” (p. 23).

Heck et al. (1990) conducted a study, using a theoretical causal model, to examine the
relationship between selected principal instructional behaviors and school student achievement.
The theoretical model they used posited that the way in which the principal governs internal and external political environments directly affects his or her implementation of instructional leadership behaviors within the work structure, including school climate and school instructional organization, both of which affect student achievement. The study sample included all California public elementary schools that had achieved above or below their “comparison band” test scores in third and sixth grade reading and math and all California high schools that had achieved above or below their “comparison band” in reading, math, and language for three consecutive years, as measured by the California Assessment Program (CAP) testing instrument. A questionnaire was designed to measure the relative frequency of implementation of 34 instructional leadership behaviors of principals believed to impact student achievement, and the final sample tested included 168 teachers and 30 principals in 30 schools.

The results of the analyses indicated that the theoretical model fit the data and linked school climate and school instructional organization, both considered domains of the principal, to student achievement. Furthermore, the results identified specific factors that can be manipulated by the principal at the school level to affect achievement and discovered the relative effect of those factors on student achievement. Thus, the findings in this study demonstrated that principals can have, through the frequency and effectiveness of their instructional leadership behaviors, direct effects on the achievement levels of their schools.

In a related study, Heck and Marcoulides (1993) focused on identifying parameters of instructional leadership in secondary schools and determining whether the parameters of instructional behavior are the same or different for secondary and elementary schools. The study sample utilized CAP and included 85 California public elementary schools that had achieved above or below their “comparison band” test scores in reading and math and 33 high schools that
had achieved above or below their “comparison band” in reading, math, and language for three consecutive years, as measured by the CAP testing instrument. A questionnaire, designed to measure 22 strategic behavioral interactions between principal and teachers in terms of three instructional leadership domains, was administered to the principal and to six teachers in each school.

Heck and Marcoulides (1993) found that teacher and principal perceptions of how the principal governs are strongly linked to perceptions of how the principal is perceived to organize the schools’ program and to build a productive school climate. Perceptions of the principal’s efforts to build school climate were linked to the instructional organization of the school, as well. The researchers concluded that at both levels principals can achieve similar positive results by manipulating a series of variables at the school level. They also concluded that the manner in which principals at both levels function in each of the three identified domains is an important predictor of academic achievement and that the principal must be considered a “school effects” variable that directly influences school achievement.

In a 1993 study of the high school principal as instructional leader, Niece sought to identify and categorize instructional leadership descriptors, to identify sources of instructional leadership influence on developing instructional leaders, and to identify current sources of instructional leadership guidance and advice. Five categories of effective secondary instructional leadership were identified and ranked, in accordance with Flanagan’s (1954) functional description techniques, by 15 national instructional leadership authorities, who were chosen based on their research and publication on instructional leadership. The five categories were then used for comparison purposes in this study and included “possessing a substantial knowledge base in curriculum, instruction, and evaluation; providing vision and direction for the
school; promoting positive teaching and learning environments; establishing patterns of effective communication and motivation; and maintaining high expectations for self, staff, and students” (Niece, 1993, p. 15). A 70 percent correlation was found to exist between the authorities’ descriptors and those proposed by the principals. Additionally, eight new descriptor dimensions were identified by the principals.

For the second phase of the research, principals were selected based on whether their schools had been identified and nationally awarded as effective schools. The underlying assumption was that effective schools have effective instructional leaders. Through an interview process, principals were asked to identify past and present sources of influence on their instructional leadership and, specifically, to nominate one individual they each viewed as an exemplary secondary instructional leader. In the third phase of the study, the nominated principals were interviewed to obtain their input regarding past and present sources of instructional leadership influence. The researchers found that other administrators, because of their practical experience, were the primary source of influence on emerging instructional leaders.

Two other themes emerged from Niece’s 1993 study: that effective instructional leaders are people-oriented and interactional and that instructional leaders maintain a supportive network with other principals. These themes were consistent with the findings related to principals’ sources of advice and information: they consult and get advice from other secondary principals, other administrative assistants and teachers within the school, and personnel at the central office. While Niece’s study focused on secondary instructional leaders, his study and findings are important because he identified a recurring theme of people-orientation and interaction in the principals he studied.
Hallinger and Heck (1996) suggested that “the principal’s role is best conceived as part of a web of environmental, personal, and in-school relationships that combine to influence organization outcomes” (p. 6). They concluded from their review of studies that the principal can make a difference in student learning, primarily by positively influencing internal school processes such as school policies, norms, and teacher practices. They also contended that leadership effects on outcomes appear to be indirect. Accordingly, Hallinger and Heck proposed that the next generation of principal-effects studies should utilize the reciprocal-effects model, in which the principal’s role is conceptualized as an interactive, adaptive process.

In an in-depth qualitative study of characteristics of school principals’ influence that impact teachers’ classroom instruction, Blase and Blase (1998) collected and analyzed data from more than 800 teachers in public elementary, middle, and high schools in the U.S. The study was based on two broad premises: (a) spoken language has a powerful impact on teachers’ instructional behavior; and (b) facilitative, supportive actions by principals as instructional leaders have powerful effects on classroom instruction (p. 5). Their findings, from teachers’ perspectives, verify the importance of the instructional conference as a reflection and discourse promoting activity. They found that good principals view and use conferences as opportunities to make suggestions, give feedback, model, ask questions, and solicit advice and opinions from teachers.

Role of the Principal in Teacher Leader Development

The role of the principal in development of teacher leaders is critical. First, the principal must believe in and support shared leadership. The principal must identify, develop, and support on-going growth of teacher leaders, while building a culture in which teacher leadership can survive. In their study of teacher empowerment, Blase and Blase (2001) found that
teacher empowerment, shared governance, or participative decision-making—governance forms that have teacher decision-making at their core—require, at minimum, educational leaders who consider their school’s readiness, their personal philosophy, and their leadership behavior. (p. 6)

The principal’s mental commitment to the empowerment of teachers is the critical first step in developing teacher leaders. Essential to that first step are the principal’s belief in the expertise and potential of teachers and his or her belief in the value of a “power with” (Kreisberg, 1992b), rather than a “power over” (Kreisberg, 1992a), style. These beliefs set the stage that allows teachers to exercise their “craft with quiet confidence and to help shape the way the job is done” (Maeroff, 1988, p. 475).

Blase and Blase (2001) contended that the empowerment of teachers reaches beyond decision sharing: it requires recognition of “teachers as knowledgeable professionals”; it requires their involvement “outside their own classrooms”; and it requires “participatory policy making and administration” (p. 13, emphasis in the original). These conditions, they suggested, allow teachers to improve their individual and communal performances: “Democratic empowerment through shared governance—including involvement of staff, parents, and students—lies at the heart of successful principals’ practice” (p. 3, emphasis in the original).

Identifying, developing, and supporting on-going growth of teacher leaders is a primary principal responsibility. Ash and Persall (2000) developed the Formative Leadership Theory, which is based on the belief that educators should enhance student and adult learning within the school, that there are numerous leadership opportunities and leaders within every school, and that the principal should be the leader of leaders. They asserted the importance of the role of the principal as “chief learning officer” (p. 15) in the ever-changing environment of school. They also suggested that the importance of this new role is defined by its emphasis on openness to what is not known and on its recognition that its complexity necessitates collaborative staff
work. Concurring with research findings of numerous others, they concluded that the role of collaboration is critical to a school culture that promotes leading and learning (a’Campo, 1993; Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 2001; Glatthorn, 1987; Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Lieberman, 1986; Lieberman, 1995; Wildman & Niles, 1987), as is the role of collegial dialogue (a’Campo, 1993; Blase & Blase, 1998; Joyce & Calhoun, 1995; Little, 1982).

In a definitive study on teacher empowerment, Blase and Blase (2001) examined the behaviors of principals who have successfully empowered teachers. Their findings, discussed in detail in Empowering Teachers, Second Edition: What Successful Principals Do, indicate that certain behaviors are essential to teacher empowerment: (a) trust teachers and build teachers’ trust, (b) create instruction-oriented structures that promote improved learning, (c) provide support and resources that facilitate teacher and school improvement, (d) maintain focus on vision of teaching and learning, (e) encourage autonomy and innovation, (f) model personal and professional behaviors consistent with shared governance, (g) encourage risk taking, (h) value and reward good work, (i) encourage on-going problem-solving processes, and (j) value and protect facilitative-democratic leadership. The Blase and Blase (2001) study of teacher empowerment is closely related to this study because all schools participating in their study were members of the League and because it explored teachers’ perspectives of what their principals do to empower them and the impact of that empowerment.

The Formative Leadership Theory developed by Ash and Persall (2000) is based on the premise that there are many leaders, potential leaders, and leadership possibilities within the school and that it is the job of the school leader to provide the professional development opportunities that allow them to develop. The principles of formative leadership identified by Ash and Persall can be traced to the work of other empowerment researchers and proponents.
1. Team learning, productive thinking, and collaborative problem solving should replace control mechanisms, top-down decision-making, and enforcement of conformity;

2. Teachers should be viewed as leaders and school principals as leaders of leaders;

3. Trust should drive our working relationships;

4. Leaders should move from demanding conformity and compliance to encouraging and supporting innovation and creativity;

5. Leaders should focus on people and processes rather than on paperwork and administrative minutiae;

6. Leaders should be customer-focused and servant-based;

7. Leaders should create networks that foster two-way communication rather than channels that direct the flow of information in only one direction;

8. Formative leadership requires proximity, visibility, and being close to the customer;

9. Formative leadership should empower the people within the school to do the work and protect them from unwarranted outside interference; and

10. Formative leadership requires the ability to operate in an environment of uncertainty, constantly learning how to exploit system wide change, rather than maintaining the status quo. (Ash & Persall, 2000, pp. 16-17)

Formative leadership seeks to enhance not only adult learning but also student learning and, thereby, to build teacher leadership capacity.

Role of the Principal in Culture Building for Teacher Leadership

Teacher leaders exist in all schools, though quite often lost to cultures of silence, isolation, and obscurity. To emerge and to survive, teacher leadership is dependent on a principal to facilitate it and on a professional community to support its long-term survival. The principal, as teacher-leader developer, must provide conditions and resources for enhancement of
what already exists. As community builder, he or she must design a culture and climate to promote the growth and development essential to improved teaching and learning.

In an in-depth study of shared governance, Blase and Blase (1997) found that principals practicing shared governance successfully have certain characteristics in common, exhibit certain behaviors, and utilize certain strategies: (a) have facilitative-democratic leadership beliefs and perspectives, (b) implement shared governance in a variety of ways, (c) back off so that others can step up, (d) make the structural changes necessary to accommodate shared governance, (e) involve parents and students, (f) promote common goals and vision, (g) focus on instruction and promote schoolwide learning, (h) communicate, (i) are accessible and open, and (j) use feedback and learn from it (Blase & Blase, 1997). Their study is of particular interest to the researcher of this study because it was conducted in shared governance schools affiliated with the League of Professional Schools and because it was a study of exemplary principals’ perspectives on shared governance.

Researchers exploring culture and its effects on professional learning communities have found that they share certain common cultural characteristics: shared leadership; shared values and vision; valuation of collective learning; supportive conditions; collegiality; and collaboration practice (a’Campo, 1993; Barth, 1990; Blase & Blase, 1997; Blase & Blase, 2001; Little, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rogus, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). Professional learning communities thrive on sharing and collectiveness; they appear to represent the norms and beliefs of the organizations. Pajak (1993) iterated the importance of culture and climate, suggesting that “establishing an environment where teachers and supervisors are continually learning and helping one another to learn may be the primary task of supervision today” (p. 320).
Sergiovanni (1997) clarified the nature of communities and the importance of their cultures:

Communities are organized around relationships and ideas. They create social structures that bring people together into oneness and bind them to a set of shared values and ideas. Communities are defined by their centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of “we” from “I.” (pp. 270-271)

Barth (1990) described a “community of learners” and a “community of leaders” (p. 9, emphasis in the original). His vision was of “a place where students and adults alike are engaged as active learners in matters of special importance to them and where everyone is thereby encouraging everyone else’s learning” and of a place “where students, teachers, parents, and administrators share the opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions that affect all the occupants of the schoolhouse” (p. 9). Blase and Blase (2001) linked shared leadership and shared learning to the concept of a learning community, describing the learning community as one “in which leaders become teachers and teachers become leaders” (p. 145, emphasis in the original). In such communities, where power is downplayed and where learning is “up-played,” teachers become the best they can be individually and work in sync and in harmony “for a cause beyond oneself” (Glickman et al., 2001, p. 50). Zepeda (1999) described the benefits of collectiveness and connectedness in community, stating that “a community of learners creates synergy, a synchronized energy where the power of the group is more profound than that of any one individual” (p. 58).

Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) sought to analyze types of professional community that occur in restructuring schools and the organizational factors that facilitate their development. Their findings suggest that schoolwide professional community varies considerably between schools and may be more difficult to develop in high school settings than in elementary and middle school settings. They found that, where professional community had been established,
higher levels of collective responsibility for student learning appeared to exist. Additionally, they found that working conditions which led to job satisfaction and professional community were associated with greater responsibility for student learning. In later research on teacher empowerment and organizational learning, Marks and Louis (1999) found that “it is the teachers’ involvement in midlevel decisions that affect the core technologies of teaching and learning that is most associated with increased capacities for learning on the part of the school” (p. 732).

Sweetland and Hoy (2000) examined the relationship between school climate and teacher empowerment and the relationship between teacher empowerment and school effectiveness in a quantitative study of 86 middle schools located in New Jersey. While the schools included in the study were not drawn from a random sample, geographically diverse urban, suburban, and rural schools from all socioeconomic levels were represented. Two survey instruments were used: The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire, Revised Middle, which measures aspects of the openness of middle school climate, and the Organizational Health Inventory, Revised Middle, which explores the status of the health of middle school climate. They were administered to a large number of teachers, of which 2,741 responded to the survey questionnaire. Results of New Jersey’s Eighth Grade Early Warning Test, which measures student achievement in mathematics and reading, were aggregated at the school level to measure student achievement. The SES of each school was measured by utilizing the state district factor groups’ index as computed by the State of New Jersey.

The researchers concluded that their data suggest that organizational effectiveness and student performance can be enhanced by empowering teachers in classroom and instructional decisions. The results of the study support the theoretical assumptions that undergird it. First, teacher empowerment is effective when it is aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism rather than bureaucratic
control. Second, teacher empowerment is effective when it is authentic; that is, when teachers have power and use it to make important classroom and instructional decisions. Third, the decision to treat teacher empowerment as a dimensional rather than a global concept was rewarded; the hypothesis was supported. (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, p. 725)

The researchers cautioned that their study is limited in that it only examined one domain of teacher empowerment: classroom and instructional decisions. However, though teacher empowerment in managerial decision-making was not included in their study, the researchers wrote,

We suspect thatempowering teachers in managerial decisions is much less effective [than empowering teachers in classroom and instructional decision-making]; in fact, it may impede student achievement by distracting teachers from their core responsibilities: teaching and learning. Although there is some evidence that involvement in managerial decision-making burdens workers (Sirianni, 1987), its impact on student achievement in schools remains untested. (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, p. 725)

Citing Short and Rinehart (1992), Sweetland and Hoy (2000) identified the need for further study of the measure of other teacher empowerment domains. They concluded “that collective teacher efficacy may be the mechanism through which authentic teacher empowerment influences student performance” (p. 726), though they were not able to assert that finding based on this particular study.

Duke and Gansneder (1990) performed a quantitative study of teacher perceptions of actual and desired levels of involvement in school decision-making and of school leadership, utilizing data compiled by Kappa Delta Pi in their Good Schools Project during 1984. Although the original study of 100 schools collected and analyzed data from principals, teachers, and students, the replication study examined only the data collected from the more than 3,000 teachers surveyed in the original study. The researchers’ foci for their study were the questions related to teachers’ interest and involvement in decision-making. The survey questionnaire for teachers asked them to indicate how often they were involved and how often they should be
involved in 10 types of decisions (5 classroom and instructional; 5 managerial). Response choices for those questions were “always,” “often,” “seldom,” and “never.” From other questions included in the original survey, the researchers identified 12 descriptors (collectively referred to as “teacher orientation to school leadership”) that seemed to identify how teachers perceived their principal. Using factor analyses, the researchers developed scales for actual and desired involvement in technical (classroom and instructional) and managerial decisions, technical decision-making deprivation, and managerial decision-making deprivation, to measure teachers’ perceptions of empowerment. The researchers also developed a scale to measure “teacher orientation to school leadership.” Scores were compiled for each of these scales for elementary, middle school, and high school teachers.

Duke and Gansneder (1990) found that elementary teachers had an equal or higher likelihood of always being involved in decisions in their own classrooms than high school teachers but were less likely always to be involved in general instructional decisions and in administrative decisions than high school teachers. However, very few teachers at any level are always involved in administrative decisions. In general, a majority of all teachers expressed no discrepancy between their actual and desired involvement; however, the percentage of teachers whose level of actual involvement matched desired involvement went down as the decisions became more managerial. The only type of decision in which a simple majority of teachers indicated they should be more involved was in selecting their school administrators.

The decision deprivation scores revealed that the less often teachers were involved in decision-making, either technical or managerial, the higher their decision-making deprivation score. The researchers reported that analyses of deprivation scores “suggest, first, that there are probably minimal levels of involvement below which teachers will feel powerless and, second,
that there needs to be a match between teachers’ desire for involvement and the degree to which they are actually involved” (Duke & Gansneder, 1990, p. 155). The findings indicated that the smaller the discrepancy between teachers’ actual and desired involvement in school decision-making, the more favorable the teacher’s view is of school leadership. The key to teacher support may be a better matching of opportunities for individual involvement in decision-making with individual interest in involvement, as opposed to general empowerment of all teachers in decision-making. The researchers concluded, “Further research is needed to determine, first, the characteristics of teachers seeking relatively high and low levels of involvement and, secondly, the stability of teacher preference over time” (p. 157).

Role of the Principal in Teacher Commitment

Sheppard (1996) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between instructional leadership and teachers’ commitment to the school and their colleagues, to professional involvement, and to innovation and school improvement. Data were collected from 624 questionnaires administered to teachers in randomly selected elementary and high schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Based on his findings, Sheppard concluded that instructional leadership behaviors were positively related to teacher commitment, to professional involvement, and to innovation. After determining the positive relationship, Sheppard developed best-fitting models to explain variance in the three characteristics. Variables considered in the commitment model included communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation, visibility, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for learning. For both high school and elementary school, promoting professional development appeared to be most important.
In the professional involvement model for elementary schools, which included coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, providing incentives for teachers, and promoting professional development, the most important variable appeared to be promoting professional development. For high schools, framing goals, visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and promoting professional development were included as variables, and promoting professional development appeared to be the most important variable. In the innovativeness model for elementary schools, framing school goals, coordinating the curriculum, protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, and promoting professional development were the variables, and promoting professional development appeared to be the most significant. At the high school level, the variables were framing school goals, communicating school goals, and promoting professional development. Framing goals appeared to be the primary instructional leadership behavior. Research results from Sheppard’s study suggest that, because contextual variables influence behavior that is appropriate, instructional leadership should not be viewed as a discrete set of behaviors to be performed. Furthermore, because only three to five behaviors were found to account for variance of one characteristic, the practical implication is that principals can effectively concentrate on fewer behaviors according to the context.

Krug (1992) examined the relationship between five instructional leadership behaviors and teacher satisfaction and commitment, finding that the principal’s belief in the value of these five behaviors positively related to teacher commitment and satisfaction. Additionally, he found that the principal’s and teachers’ perceptions of these emphasized behaviors correlated highly with high levels of student commitment.
Blase (1991) studied micropolitics in the school setting, specifically as it relates to principal influence on teachers. In *The Politics of Life in Schools: Power, Conflict, and Cooperation*, Blase defined *micropolitics* as

> The use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organization. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. (p. 11)

In 1993, Blase used data collected in an earlier qualitative study to examine teachers’ perceptions of political strategies utilized by open and effective principals. The study included data from a two-page questionnaire answered by 836 teachers, who were to describe and discuss one open/effective principal strategy on each of the two pages. Using principles of comparative analysis, Blase identified, from the 1,323 examples of strategies discussed by the teachers, eight major strategies used by principals to influence teachers. Each strategy also included specific practices or actions to implement those strategies.

Blase (1993) developed the concept of *normative-instrumental leadership* to describe an open/effective principal leadership that is consistent with a political orientation based on the process of exchange and in which teacher control is central. The term derives from the use by principals of normative strategies, which are consistent with the professional norms and values of the teachers, and from the “instrumental” nature of their use in affecting teacher compliance. Blase (1993) identified a control orientation and an empowerment orientation with normative-instrumental leadership and categorized data according to these two orientations. Control oriented strategies were those that elicited teacher compliance with unilaterally determined goals, while empowerment strategies were those that promoted teacher involvement in formal and informal decision-making. Rewards, communication of expectations, support, formal authority, modeling, visibility, and suggestion were the major control-oriented strategies identified. Minor
control-oriented strategies included contrived requests for advice, coercion, and authoritarianism. Involvement in decision-making was the one major strategy associated with the empowerment orientation.

In the control orientation, Blase (1993) found that open and effective principals primarily influenced teachers through the process of exchange, using symbolic (normative) exchanges such as praise or support. In the empowerment orientation, teachers and principals jointly determined goals and means to achieve them, or teachers individually or collectively were given authority and responsibility for decision-making. Blase concluded that the ability of open and effective principals to influence teachers is related to the principal’s use of normative strategies to achieve normative goals. Summarizing his findings, Blase stated that

effective principals articulate their visions, set their goals, explain their expectations, and, in large part, determine the means to achieve such ends. Simply stated, teachers are normatively influenced “to buy into the principal’s agenda.” (p. 158, emphasis in the original)

Though the aim of such principals, he found, was to gain compliance with “their” goals, the strategies they used to achieve “buy-in” produced positive affective impacts, cognitive impacts, and behavioral impacts.

In a related study, Blase and Roberts (1994) focused on the affective, cognitive, and behavioral impacts of the four major positive influence strategies (rewards, formal authority, support, communication of expectations) and the three minor negative influence strategies (contrived request for advice, coercion, and authoritarianism) identified with the control orientation of open and effective principals. Other positive strategies associated with the control orientation were visibility, modeling, and suggestion. Involvement in decision-making, which consisted of decision-making and authentic request for advice, was identified with the empowerment orientation of normative-instrumental leadership. Major affective impacts of
normative-instrumental leadership were satisfaction, motivation, self-esteem, security, and inclusion.

Formal authority was the only influence strategy to which teachers reacted with negative feelings. Major cognitive impacts of this type of leadership were awareness and reflection. However, surprisingly, only involvement in decision-making, suggestion, and visibility appeared to have high impacts on the reflection process of teachers. Formal authority was seldom associated with positive cognitive responses, and contrived request for advice, coercion, and authoritarianism were not identified with positive impacts. Behavioral impact data produced one general theme, compliance, and a second broader theme, work involvement. The data suggested that teachers traded compliance for implicit or explicit rewards or benefits and, occasionally, for avoidance of punishment or sanctions.

Work-involvement data collected by Blase and Roberts (1994) indicated that there were three areas of impact, student and classroom impacts, professional impacts, and negative impacts, and that teacher work involvement varied in relation to principal influence. Strong impacts on students and classrooms were related to the use of six influence strategies. Suggestion, support, and rewards were perceived by teachers to result in increased classroom innovation and creativity. Visibility and rewards were perceived as relating to increases in instructional planning, while visibility and communication of expectations were viewed as increasing instructional time on task in classrooms. Visibility also related strongly to an increase in monitoring student learning and curriculum follow-through. Furthermore, teachers viewed student-related support and communication of expectations as strengthening their abilities to handle student discipline problems. A few teachers identified advice-intervention support as promoting their crisis-intervention skills, and visibility was related to increases in teacher
authoritarianism in a few instances. Suggestion was the only influence strategy that was perceived to expand teachers’ discretion in the classroom, however slightly.

Principals’ influence strategies were found to have a significant impact on professional aspects of teachers’ behavior, specifically on relationships with principals and professional growth. Rewards, suggestions, modeling, support, involvement in decision-making, visibility, and communication of expectations, listed in order of teacher perception of impact, had high respective influences on teachers. Formal authority was perceived as having a lesser impact on relationships with principals and professional authority but was seen as enhancing relationships with parents.

Expression, compliance with procedures for decision-making, follow-through, compromise, and support for decisions were all found to be impacts of involvement in decision-making, yet no impacts on the classroom were discussed. Contrived request for advice, coercion, and authoritarianism received negative behavioral responses or passive resistance from teachers. In general, all positive influence strategies resulted in positive affective impacts, especially increases in teacher satisfaction, while formal authority was not linked to positive affective impacts, except on teacher satisfaction, where the impact was minimal. Three positive strategies were identified with strong cognitive impacts, particularly to increases in teacher reflection, and several were directly linked to behavioral impacts, particularly to relationships with principals and to teachers’ professional growth (e.g., increased work time and greater consideration of students). Formal authority did not have major cognitive or behavioral impacts.

Blase and Roberts (1994) further categorized the three types of perceived impacts into the instructional-social domain, which accounted for about 69% of the frequency impact data, and into the noninstructional domain, which accounted for only 31% of the frequency impact data.
This analysis indicated that major affective impacts (satisfaction, motivation, esteem, and security) and cognitive impacts (awareness and reflection) are linked to the instructional-social domain, as are behavioral impacts (consideration for students, creativity/innovation, time on task, instructional planning, monitoring of student outcomes, curriculum follow-through, and student discipline).

Emerging from their data analyses was the concept of normative-instrumental involvement, which was based on their finding that teachers’ increased work involvement in the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions resulted from the principals’ use of positive influence strategies and goals. Though a form of compliance, normative-instrumental involvement is considered normative because of its grounding in congruence between teachers’ moral-value dispositions and principals’ use of goals and strategies consistent with those dispositions. It is also considered instrumental because of its design to meet principals’ goals, particularly goals related to the social/instructional domain of work with students. Thus, because normative-instrumental involvement was deliberate, contingent on exchanges, and consistent with teachers’ inherent interest in achieving the principals’ goals, teachers viewed it positively, despite its compliance-based nature. It was not, however, perceived by teachers as facilitating high levels of empowerment and developing leadership qualities. Thus, Blase and Roberts (1994) concluded that

on the whole, it appears that normative-instrumental involvement is “good subordination” and followership rather than the type of professionalism and empowerment to which many prominent educators aspire (e.g., Schlechty, 1990). Plainly, normative-instrumental involvement is consistent with the hierarchical structure of school organization. (p. 89)

In their study, effective principals were generally compliance-oriented. Despite the fact that positive normative–instrumental leadership strategies resulted in increased involvement, the fact
remains that it is a form of control, and it rarely resulted in significant levels of teacher decision-making involvement. Furthermore, only three of the strategies—visibility, suggestion, and involvement in decision-making—were perceived as increasing teacher reflection and as increasing teacher authority, efficacy, collegial interaction, and openness, which were found by Conley (1991) to enhance teachers’ capacity for leadership in restructured schools.

Blase and Roberts (1994) found their study data to be consistent with Etzioni’s (1975) hypothesis that normative (symbolic) power by superordinates is associated with moral/value involvement. The value of teachers’ moral involvement has been examined and found to be important in meeting educational and social goals with students (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989). Other researchers have found, as well, that normative forms of power may result in positive outcomes for teachers, including collaboration, loyalty, satisfaction, professional conduct, and commitment (Blase, 1987).

Blase and Blase (1999) conducted a qualitative study to examine teachers’ perspectives on principals’ everyday instructional leadership characteristics and the impact of those characteristics. Their data were drawn from an open-ended questionnaire designed to elicit teachers’ identification and description of characteristics of principals that enhanced and adversely affected their instruction. The questionnaire was administered to more than 800 teachers from the southeastern, midwestern, and northwestern United States. Though the study examined both positive and negative influences on classroom instruction, only the findings associated with effective instructional leadership are herein reviewed. Specifically, from the two major themes and related strategies that emerged from the data, talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth, Blase and Blase developed the (RG) model of effective instructional leadership. They found that the effectiveness of the instructional
leadership strategies associated with these two themes were related to teacher choice/discretion, to nonthreatening interaction, and to authentic interest of the principal.

According to the Blase and Blase (1999) findings, talk that promoted reflection was the cornerstone of effective instructional leadership. They found that “principals used five primary talking strategies to promote reflection: (a) making suggestions, (b) giving feedback, (c) modeling, (d) using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, and (e) giving praise” (p. 359). They learned that these strategies had a strong impact on teaching behaviors, as well as positive effects on teacher motivation, satisfaction, self-esteem, efficacy, sense of security, and feelings of support.

The second major theme of the RG model, promoting professional growth, focused on teaching methods and collegial interaction about teaching and learning. In fact, teachers identified six teacher development strategies used by effective instructional leaders: (a) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning; (b) supporting collaboration efforts among educators; (c) developing coaching relations among educators; (d) encouraging and supporting redesign of programs; (e) applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and (f) implementing action research to inform instructional decision-making (p. 363). Their findings regarding the importance of promoting professional growth are consistent with the earlier work of Sheppard (1996): Teachers place a high value on professional development. The Blase and Blase RG model further ties to the findings of Rosenholtz (1985a) and Little (1982) regarding the facilitation of teacher learning through collaboration with other teachers.

Blase and Blase (1999) sought to examine direct effects on teachers and classroom instruction by examining teachers’ perspectives of effective instructional leadership. In fact,
their findings support a holistic approach to dialogue in schools as a means to improving teaching and learning: “Our data suggest that principals who are effective instructional leaders use a broad-based approach; they integrate reflection and growth to build a school culture of individual and shared critical examination for improvement” (p. 370).

Principal Instructional Leadership and Reform Initiatives

Datnow and Castellano (2001) conducted a qualitative study of the understanding that principals and facilitators had of their roles as leaders of reform, how they interacted with each other and with teachers in the process of implementing the reform, how each redefined their roles as conflicts, tensions, and ambiguities arose, and how they attempted to reconcile power differentials and leadership styles as they implemented a Success For All (SFA) reform model within their schools. The researchers gathered data from six elementary schools (three in California and three in the southeast) that had implemented SFA reform. Data sources included focus group sessions and interviews with principals, facilitators, and teachers. In four of the schools adopting SFA, the impetus came from the district, while the principals in the other two schools were the instigators of the reform. In all six of the schools, the reform was strongly supported by the principals. The facilitators in all six schools were invited by the principal to take the position of facilitator, which had the status and pay of other teachers.

Datnow and Castellano (2001) discovered that the SFA reform model tends to perpetuate the chasm between administrators and teachers because it does not provide for restructuring the traditional roles of principals and teachers nor for creating shared leadership. Furthermore, it puts principals and facilitators in a monitoring and an evaluative role, basically leaving teachers in a compliance role as the reform is implemented. However, the researchers also found that the reform model pushes principals to concentrate on the processes of teaching and learning, thereby
enhancing credibility of the principal as instructional leader, demonstrating support of reform, and improving the relationship between teachers and administration. Datnow and Castellano asserted that their findings deepen knowledge of leadership in school improvement by illuminating the issues that arise for principals and teacher leaders when schools implement externally developed reform models.

**Principal Instructional Leadership and Student Achievement**

In a highly respected and often cited study, Wang et al. (1993) conducted an extensive review of the existing body of literature on variables influencing learning. Using content analyses, expert ratings, and results from meta-analyses, they quantified the importance and consistency of 228 variables identified in the literature as influencing learning. The variables were organized into six categories and were referred to by Wang et al. as the six “theoretical constructs”: (a) student characteristics; (b) classroom practices; (c) home and community education context; (d) design and delivery of curriculum and instruction; (e) school demographics, culture, climate, policies and practices; and (f) state and district governance and organizations (p. 270). The top five variables, ranked in descending order of importance to school learning, as defined by the T-score values, were (a) classroom management, (b) student use of metacognitive strategies, (c) student use of cognitive strategies, (d) home environment and parental support, and (e) student and teacher social interaction (p. 272). Conversely, the five variables with the weakest relationship to school learning, as defined by T-score values, were (a) program demographics, (b) school demographics, (c) state and district policies, (d) school policy and organization, (e) district demographics (p. 273). Thus, Wang et al. (1993) concluded that variables that were closest to students, labeled *proximal* variables, have greater impact on school learning than do *distal* variables, which are somewhat removed from the students.
Walberg (1984) expanded his previously articulated “productivity model” of factors influencing school learning into three broad categories: (a) student aptitude, (b) instruction, and (c) environment. Ability or prior achievement, development (as indexed by age or stage of maturation), and motivation or self-concept (as described by personality tests or the student’s willingness to persevere intensively on learning tasks) were identified as factors within the student aptitude category. The amount of time students are engaged and the quality of instruction were found to be factors in the instruction category. The factors in the environment category were the home, classroom social groups, peer groups outside of school, and use of out-of-school time.

Scheerens and Bosker (1997) conducted a quantitative review of research literature, including qualitative reviews, international analyses, and research syntheses, on factors influencing student achievement. They identified nine factors that affect student achievement: (a) cooperation, (b) school climate, (c) monitoring, (d) content coverage, (e) homework, (f) time, (g) parental involvement, (h) pressure to achieve, and (i) leadership. Scheerens and Bosker defined school leadership as strong administrative leadership aimed at the goal of academic achievement. They identified well articulated leadership roles, provision of information by the school leader, and facilitation of group decision-making by the school leader as factors associated with effective leadership.

In his monograph entitled “A New Era of School Reform: Going Where the Research Takes Us,” Marzano (2000) synthesized extant literature about effective schools and effective teaching, specifically about the impact of school on students’ academic achievement. His conclusions have strong implications for instructional leaders because they imply that student achievement can be strongly affected by school practices that rest in the hands of the principal:
1. Provide teachers with a well-articulated curriculum that specifically addresses the content on the assessments that are used to judge the academic achievement of students and ensure that the articulated curriculum is actually taught;

2. Optimize teachers’ use of instructional time;

3. Establish specific achievement goals for students and carefully monitor the extent to which those goals are being met;

4. Communicate a clear message to all concerned that high academic achievement is the primary goal of the school;

5. Involve parents in the processes of setting and enforcing policies;

6. Maintain an orderly environment for all concerned;

7. Maintain a cooperative environment for all concerned; and

8. Involve staff in key decisions and establish clear lines of communication and leadership roles. (p. 93)

Marzano suggested that use of the most effective instructional strategies, use of the most effective managerial techniques, and effective design of classroom curriculum are areas to which teachers must give attention. Furthermore, Marzano proposed that student background characteristics might also be altered by providing parents with additional academic support information, resources, and techniques and by providing additional interventions aimed at increasing understanding of a general academic knowledge base.

Heck (2000) conducted a study of an approach to statewide school comparison based on value-added effects of elementary schools’ educational environments on school achievement and school improvement. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate a comparison approach “focused on making preliminary adjustments for within-school student composition factors” (p. 538), to explore how the quality of the school’s educational conditions affects achievement outcomes, and to explore the stability of the variables in providing an explanation of student improvement over time.
In this study, Heck examined a value-added approach to school comparison, an approach based on multilevel modeling, which acknowledges multilevel features in the school organization. The collective impact of the following indicators was examined: (a) principal leadership, (b) high expectations for student achievement, (c) an emphasis on academics, (d) frequent monitoring of student progress, (e) positive school climate, and (f) positive relationships between the school and parent community (p. 522). Results demonstrated that schools with stronger educational environments have higher patterns of achievement and that such schools have principal leadership that is rated as more supportive and more directed toward school improvement and instructional excellence. Those schools with stronger educational environments also had stronger expectations for students; their teachers received higher ratings for producing classroom environments conducive to academics; the perception of parents, teachers, and students in those schools was that the relationship between home and school is more positive; and school climate was viewed in more positive terms in those schools. Additionally, in answer to his second research question, Heck found that there was greater-than-expected improvement in student learning over time in schools with stronger school environments. Heck’s study “demonstrates the relationship between the school’s educational environment and its achievement and improvement” (p. 540).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) performed a replication study on the relative effects of principal and teacher leadership on student engagement with school in a large district in Central Canada. The researchers collected data from 1,818 teachers from 94 elementary schools and 6490 students attending elementary schools within this district. Teachers responded to a survey instrument that contained 228 items separated into five sets of school conditions, two sets of classroom conditions, one set of principal leadership factors, and one set of teacher leadership
factors. All sets contained multiple items, except the teacher leadership factors, which contained only two items. The student survey instrument contained 61 items separated into three categories: student perception of their family’s educational culture, student identification with their school, and student participation in school activities. Each category contained multiple items.

The responses to the teacher and the student surveys were aggregated to the school level and were quantified by a variety of techniques. Teacher anonymity was protected in this survey, and, as a result, student and teacher data could not be linked; as a result, this study could not measure variations across classrooms within schools. But the researchers did conclude that “principal leadership had weak but significant effects on (student) engagement in both studies” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 428). Even so, principal leadership had greater total effects on student identification than did teacher leadership. They also found that both “principal and teacher leadership had significant influences on school conditions but not classroom conditions” (p. 428). The researchers further stated that “results of this and our earlier study indicate that only principal leadership explains a statistically significant proportion of variation in student identification. Neither principal nor teacher leadership explains a significant proportion of the variation in student participation” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 429). While the researchers suggested that teacher leadership is likely to have little effect on reforms to increase student engagement with schools, they do acknowledge that few large-scale quantitative studies have been conducted to measure the effects of teacher leadership. They also recommended that such studies be undertaken.
Murphy (1995) identified three common themes that emerged from a meeting of 80 professors, school administrators, and representatives of six nationally-based school improvement programs, including the League of Professional Schools, who met to address leadership preparation for school improvement: (a) defining and sustaining educational purpose, (b) developing and nurturing community, and (c) fostering personal and organizational growth (p. 2). Associated with the educational purpose theme, Murphy found that emphasizing mission and sharing vision are important leadership characteristics. He noted that effective leaders in these school improvement programs developed and sustained a sense of community by sharing governance, by breaking down traditional power hierarchies, and by encouraging openness of communication. He also found consistent emphasis by these leaders and programs on lifelong learning and learning community.

Using a multidimensional approach, Somech (2002) conducted a quantitative study of the participative management concept in schools, simultaneously examining, from the perspectives of school principals, five dimensions of participative management (decision domain, degree of participation, structure, rationale, and participation target). Data were collected from 99 elementary school principals in the northern region of Israel by means of a survey questionnaire that contained 35 response items spread across the five dimensions. Questions in the survey instrument were developed through interviews with principals and refined in discussions with small focus groups of principals. Each item had five response choices with verbal anchors for each choice (1 = very seldom, 5 = very often) or (1 = not important, 5 = very important), as appropriate.
Somech (2002) found that principals were quite willing to use participative approaches to decision-making, albeit they primarily involved teachers by sharing problems, getting the teachers’ suggestions, and then making decisions on their own. Principals’ seniority indicated that more experienced principals were more inclined to consult with teachers but were not more inclined to engage in fully democratic participation. Principals preferred to include teachers based on teacher motivation rather than on teacher expertise. Teachers were included more in decisions regarding teaching and learning than in managerial decisions. Somech’s (2002) findings also suggested that conceptualization and operationalization of participative management should be examined in themselves, before examining their antecedents and consequences, due to the complexity of the five dependent, yet distinct, dimensions of participative management. The researcher concluded that further research is needed not only to correlate principals’ perceptions and attitudes pertaining to participation to teachers’ views but also to measure school effectiveness against the five dimensions of participative management.

*Principal Instructional Leadership and Empowerment*

Leithwood (1992) argued that transformational leadership, a broader conception of leadership under which instructional leadership is subsumed, held the greater promise for restructuring initiatives in the 90s. Its promise, he suggested, lay in its shift to facilitative forms of power manifested *through* other people, rather than *over* them. He maintained, as did Sarason (1990), that such a shift provides incentive for improvement and increases productivity. Reporting on the results of three studies, Leithwood identified three consistent goals of transformational leaders: (a) helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; (b) fostering teacher development; and (c) helping them solve problems together more effectively (pp. 9-10).
Sarason (1990) argued that power relationships in schools are largely responsible for the failure of educational reform, which he described as predictable. Arguing for changes in power structure, including site-based management, increased parent and teacher participation in decision-making, and increased opportunity for teacher leadership, Sarason stated that “when a process makes people feel that they have voice in matters that affect them, they will have greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens to the enterprise” (p. 61). Findings from studies of school climate have suggested that there is an important correlation between school climate and student learning (Walberg, 1979). In fact, Krug (1992) found that satisfaction and commitment of teachers and students correlate to quality of leadership. Summarizing findings of a study that sought to examine leadership behavior, school climate, and student learning, Krug stated, “The data suggest that in the early school years, as much as 25% of the variance in student achievement can be attributed to effective school leadership and the learning climate that school leaders shape and nurture” (pp. 440-441).

*Instructional Leadership and Transformational Leadership*

Leithwood, Tomlinson, and Genge (1996) conducted a review of 34 empirical and formal case studies related to transformational leadership in elementary and high schools. From 21 studies, they identified three dimensions of transformational leadership that provide substantial evidence of positive effects: charisma/inspiration/vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. They also identified four additional dimensions that provided limited evidence of a promising nature: contingent reward, high performance expectations, goal consensus, and modeling. Additionally, two other dimensions, culture building and structuring, have been identified with school-based research on transformational leadership, though there was limited evidence of their positive effects in the 21 studies examined. Evaluating the internal and external
validity of the conception of transformational leadership as a “two factor” theory in eight studies, Leithwood et al. (1996) discovered that there was only modest evidence of its internal and external validity. Furthermore, they concluded that, while 20 studies of transformational school leadership suggested positive effects, the evidence was dispersed across 11 different outcomes and subject to same-source bias.

Assessing resultant knowledge claims related to transformational leadership, Leithwood et al. (1996) judged to be evident the claim that four of them produced positive effects in school contexts: charisma / inspiration / vision, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and contingent reward. They also found the claim that management-by-exception is unproductive in school contexts to be evident and the claim that the other five dimensions are productive to be epistemically in the clear (i.e., there are better reasons to accept than to reject the claim). Likewise, they found the claim that described behaviors associated with the dimension constituted a sufficient description of what is entailed in practice to be epistemically in the clear.

In assessing the status of knowledge claims about the effects of transformational school leadership, Leithwood et al. (1996) found claims for the internal and external validity of a two-factor conception of transformational leadership to be beyond a reasonable doubt when contingent reward is reconceptualized as a transformational dimension. In their assessment of claims regarding the contribution of transformational leadership to 13 different sets of outcomes, they found the claim that it contributes to organizational improvement and effectiveness, teachers’ perceptions of student outcomes, organizational climate and culture, leader effectiveness, and satisfaction with the leader to be beyond a reasonable doubt. The researchers judged the claims about the effects of transformational leaders on the remaining outcomes to be epistemically in the clear. In view of their overall findings, Leithwood et al. concluded that the
evidence provides a strong argument for further research on transformational perspectives of leadership.

Obstacles to Principal Instructional Leadership

Early research on teachers’ perceptions of principal instructional leadership consistently showed that teachers do not consider principals to be instructional leaders (Wolcott, 1973). Early research similarly found that principals frequently did not perform instructional leadership functions (Lortie, 1975). And, even when they did, teachers often did not change their teaching behaviors (Rosenholtz, 1985a); in fact, Rosenholtz found that teachers were more likely to change their teaching as a result of the collaborative sharing of ideas with other teachers. Based on these findings, Gersten, Carnine, and Green (1982) suggested that

on the whole, it makes more sense to consider a team approach in which critical support functions are carried out by those most able to perform them—not only the principal, but supervisors, teachers, curriculum specialists, and other available personnel. (p. 48)

Organizational research points to “loose coupling” in schools as a factor limiting principal influence on teachers, as well as other teachers’ influence on teachers (Weick, 1976; Weick, 1982). Teachers have been reluctant to provide unsolicited advice to each other, and isolation has prevented their being able to do so (Goodlad, 1983; Goodlad & Klein, 1970). Furthermore, teachers are protective of their professionalism, autonomy, and flexibility (Hart, 1995; Little, 1990). More specifically, Hallinger and Murphy (1987) identified four organizational impediments to strong principal instructional leadership: (a) knowledge of curriculum and instruction, (b) professional norms, (c) district expectations, and (d) role diversity. Starratt (1997) concurred with these broad findings and added that principals, even those who make supervision a priority, are faced with time constraints and with distractions from more serious and immediate problems, from their own lack of subject knowledge, and from
concerns about allowing closeness to teachers. However, while research supports the fact that principals can significantly impact instruction through the practice of effective supervision (Blase & Blase, 1998), research also clearly evinces that supervision does not frequently occur in schools (Starratt, 1997). Furthermore, research has not produced clear evidence that greater time attendance to instructional leadership will result in higher academic performance (Deal, 1987; Lee, 1987).

**Negative Effects of Principal Instructional Leadership**

As is often the case regarding principal instructional leadership research, the findings of educational researchers are contradictory, and consensus is elusive. Educational researchers have also described negative results of instructional leadership behaviors by principals. For instance, Burlingame (1987) argued against instructional leadership as conceptualized in effective school research, asserting that such leadership results in docile followers who merely accept the rationality of the principal. Poplin (1992) argued that instructional leadership’s focus on student growth worked to the detriment of teachers by failing to focus on the need for teacher growth. Barth (1986) cautioned that principal instructional leadership can limit creativity and innovativeness, and Sergiovanni (1992) contended that it can stifle the very professionalism being sought. These cautions and contentions were refuted, however, by the findings of Sheppard (1996), which positively related instructional leadership and teacher commitment, professional involvement, and innovativeness.

**Instructional Leadership and Leader Preparation Programs**

A number of researchers have concluded that reform is doomed to failure as a result, in part, of inadequacies in educational leadership programs. For instance, Lezotte (1992) argued that the emphasis of such programs still tends to be management, when, in fact, the emphasis
should be on transformational aspects of leadership. More recently, Clark and Clark (1996) criticized the failure of educational leadership programs to assist in developing leadership skills and characteristics associated with change. Citing Murphy (1995) and concurring with Lezotte (1992), Clark and Clark suggested the need for a new direction in leader preparation, toward transformational leadership, and argued that concepts of transformational leadership are more consistent with the emphases of effective school change and reform.

González, Glasman, and Glasman (2002) argued that, based on the assumption that the preparation of school principals has an impact on student achievement in schools, proposed outcome-based leadership standards should be used in school leadership training programs. In fact, they recommended the incorporation of more conceptual work that relates leadership to student achievement, suggesting that there is not enough emphasis on the latter. The authors examined the Bolman and Deal (1991) and Leithwood and Duke (1999) educational leadership frameworks for their emphasis on student achievement and found only minimal reference to it. They countered with information about 60 theoretical and research studies that relate leadership to student achievement, providing data on the existence of an effect of administrative practices on achievement and suggesting that these studies should be used in educational leadership training. Furthermore, González et al. made a case for emphasis on student achievement via culture, organizational management, and collaboration standards. In a comparison of total curriculum taught, related to culture, organizational management, and collaboration, the authors found that culture and collaboration are less emphasized and organizational management more emphasized than research would suggest necessary.

Reitzug (1997) analyzed ten supervision textbooks, from the period 1985-1995, used in educational leadership preparation programs to examine their conceptions of supervision. He
found that only three books portrayed supervision as collaborative and empowering. His analysis “yielded images that primarily portrayed the principal as expert and superior, the teacher as deficient and voiceless, teaching as fixed technology, and supervision as a discrete intervention” (p. 326). Reitzug described the traditional perspective of the textbooks he examined as “morally questionable and practically limiting” (p. 337).

Summary

Leadership in schools has been slow to adapt to changing times. Instructional leadership has moved slowly, even reluctantly, from first wave thinking with its emphasis on strong instructional leadership in the hands of the principal, to second wave thinking aimed at more participatory forms of leadership, empowerment of teachers, and sharing of authority and responsibility for instruction.

Summary

This review of literature clearly indicates that the role of the principal as instructional leader is critical, but it simultaneously indicates that, under the cloud of reform accountability, instructional leadership in the schools of today extends beyond one person. Viewed as a shared responsibility, instructional leadership is conceptualized more holistically and comprehensively as a schoolwide effort. In this conceptualization, the better of first wave and second wave theories and findings converge to support a learning community concept.

The present study has expanded the knowledge base on instructional leadership in a shared governance setting. Because little research is available on emergent teacher leadership, this study adds to the limited body of literature on this form of leadership, while illuminating the role of shared governance in promoting emergent teacher leadership. It has also provided in-depth knowledge of the emergent teacher leader’s role in instructional leadership, an area which
has only been peripherally examined. Not only yielding new information through its findings but also identifying theoretical ideas that explain the relationships between the two forms of instructional leadership, this study has provided useful data regarding the impacts of the two forms of instructional leadership on classroom instruction; thus, it has practical, as well as theoretical, value.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate a principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership in a shared governance elementary school. Specifically, it sought to explore the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership, respectively, to investigate how their practices of instructional leadership interacted and related, and how their practices of instructional leadership impacted classroom instruction.

This chapter on the methodology of the study includes five sections. The first section presents an overview of symbolic interactionism, the theoretical perspective from which the study was designed and through which interpretations of findings were guided. The second section describes the site and sample selection process. It includes a rich description of the school, Parker Elementary School (pseudonym), to provide the reader with a context for comparison. The third section discusses the data collection procedures, specifically interviews, field notes, and document collection procedures. The fourth section presents an in-depth discussion of grounded theory methodology and of the stages and components of constant comparative analysis. The final section overviews the credibility criteria used for the study.

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is the theoretical framework for this qualitative study of instructional leadership. Blumer (1969) described symbolic interactionism as an empirical social science perspective that “sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people”
(p. 4) and “sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 5).

Background of Symbolic Interactionism

The roots of symbolic interactionism lie primarily in the groundwork of George Herbert Mead (1934), specifically in his philosophy of pragmatism and in his belief that humans should be studied through their thoughts and actions. While other scholars contributed to this perspective, including such notables as John Dewey, W. I. Thomas, and William James, it was Mead’s (1934) identification of two forms of interaction in human society, specifically “the conversation of gestures” and “the use of significant symbols,” that led to Blumer’s (1969) own coining of the term symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) used this term to label his “relatively distinctive approach to the study of human group life and human conduct” (p. 1). His approach focused on social interactions and the way in which humans “interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of the meaning yielded by the interpretation” (pp. 65-66).

Framework of Symbolic Interactionism

The foundation on which Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism rests is comprised of the following three premises:

Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. . . . The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. . . . These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (p. 2)

Explicating the first premise, Blumer (1969) said that human behavior or action is determined by the meaning of the thing to the person, rather than stemming from environmental stimuli. Symbolic interactionism, thus, holds that human action is purposeful. The second premise of symbolic interaction is that “the meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which
other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing” (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). For symbolic interactionists, meaning is not believed to be intrinsic to things; nor is meaning believed to arise “through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person” (p. 4). Rather, for symbolic interactionists, meanings of objects are continuously evolving “social products . . . creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 5). The third premise emphasizes the process of interpretation, which Blumer (1969) describes as formative. According to this premise, “meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action” (p. 5), and such a process requires self-interaction and alteration of meanings based on the continually changing situation.

Relationship of Symbolic Interactionism to the Study

This study was guided by the symbolic interactionism framework because it is the theoretical perspective best suited to the purpose of the study. The study sought to explore the meanings of instructional leadership constructed by the participants in their school setting; and this theoretical perspective places emphasis on the meanings people construct in their social settings. Furthermore, the study’s purpose was related to the three premises on which symbolic interactionism is founded. Specifically, symbolic interactionists believe that meaning is a social product derived from social interaction, that human action is purposeful and determined by the meaning of the thing to the person, and that meanings are altered through an interpretive process. This study investigated participants’ perceptions of those interactions and relationships and explored the individual meanings created by the participants in light of their social interactions in the school setting.

Finally, symbolic interactionism recognizes that individuals are influenced by others, but simultaneously acknowledges that individuals are capable of maintaining enough distance from
others to initiate individual action (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explicated this point:

People in a given situation (for example, students in a particular class) often develop common definitions (or “share perspectives” in the symbolic interactionist language) since they regularly interact and share experiences, problems, and background; but consensus is not inevitable. While some take “shared definitions” to indicate “truth,” meaning is always subject to negotiation. It can be influenced by people who see things differently. (pp. 25-26)

Indeed, the present study explored these shared and different meanings of instructional leadership for individual participants in the same setting.

Statement of Research Purpose and Questions

This study investigated the following general research questions:

1. What is the principal’s perspective of her instructional leadership?
2. What are the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership?
3. How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership relate to and interact with each other?
4. How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership impact classroom instruction?

Site and Sample Selection

In this section, the specific methods and procedures used for site and sample selection are explained. The site of the study was selected because it provided an opportunity for purposeful sampling, described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) as a sampling process that includes participants because “they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 65). As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purpose of sampling is to allow the researcher to maximize information collection from information-rich data sources about the study topic. Therefore, the site was selected because it afforded the necessary availability of data sources that were information-rich.
Site Selection

The selection of the research site was guided by Lincoln’s and Guba’s (1985) explication of the purpose of sampling. Based on literature suggesting that emergent teacher leadership is enabled and facilitated in shared governance settings (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996), the study was conducted in a shared governance school. The following specific criteria were used for initial identification of the school selected for the study:

1. The school is a shared governance elementary school and a member of the League of Professional Schools.

2. The school is considered a successful school in accordance with the State of Georgia 2001-2002 Report Card rating system, which is based on 2001-2002 GCRCT test results. The 2001-2002 results are being used due to limited unavailability of 2002-2003 results.

3. The school’s location is within 25 miles of the researcher’s home to make it a feasible site, in terms of proximity.

4. The school is a “high implementing” shared governance school. This identification as a “high implementing” League school is considered important because of research conducted in 1999 by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) which found “evidence that academic performance was higher in schools where the League approach was well implemented” (p. 86).

The search began with the identification of shared governance elementary schools located within the pre-determined mileage radius of the researcher’s home. Seven schools were identified as possible sites on the basis of those two criteria. Test score results for the seven schools were tabulated and compared, and the two top-ranking schools were identified. The League of Professional Schools was contacted to determine the implementation status of the schools. The top-ranking school was determined to be a “high implementing” shared governance school according to League criteria. Therefore, the principal of the top-ranking school was contacted by the researcher. She agreed for the school to participate, pending county approval. Consequently, a research proposal was submitted to the county for approval, and a human
subject’s research approval was submitted to the university. Subsequently, approvals to conduct the research were received from both.

Sample Selection

Research participants were chosen in accordance with grounded theory methodology, using theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Generally speaking, in this sampling method, participants are selected for their ability to provide theoretical insights into the topic under study, and the total sample is not specified ahead of data collection. More specifically, Glaser and Strauss (1967) described theoretical sampling as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (p. 45). Thus, after decisions are made regarding the initial collection of data, advance planning of data collection is not appropriate. Rather, “emerging theory points to the next steps—the sociologist does not know them until he is guided by emerging gaps in his theory and by research questions suggested by previous answers” (p. 47). Consequently, theoretical sampling, based on criteria of “theoretical purpose and relevance” (Glaser & Strauss, p. 48, emphasis in the original), is essential in grounded theory research.

In this study, consistent with theoretical sampling, the initial participants consisted of the principal and one emergent teacher leader for each grade, who were nominated by the principal of the school on the basis of the principal’s perception of the teacher’s demonstrated teacher leadership and instructional leadership. Emergent teacher leadership was defined as the informal, naturally occurring form of teacher leadership that emerges and recedes as needs of the school and of others are identified and resolved. The principal was chosen as a participant by virtue of her position and because of her responsibility for principal instructional leadership in
the school. In accordance with this methodology, as data are collected and analyzed and insights are gained, subsequent sampling becomes more focused and additional participants are selected to participate in the study, based on their assumed ability to contribute to working hypotheses and evolving theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). As concepts began to emerge in the data, additional participants were selected based on the principles of theoretical sampling.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommended that the researcher “maximize opportunities to compare events, incidents, or happenings to determine how a category varies in terms of its properties and dimensions” (p. 202). Thus, participants were chosen from each grade level. Furthermore, they varied in terms of years of experience, years at the school, and years of formal education. In sum, as the criteria of theoretical purpose and relevance are applied to collection and analysis of data, “they are continually tailored to fit the data and are applied judiciously at the right point and moment in the analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 48).

Participants who were selected for the study were provided with information related to the study, including information about authorization, purpose, duration, and participant responsibilities, as well as about participant anonymity issues. They were given the opportunity to participate or to decline to participate, and those who agreed to participate were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and their role in it. Informed written consent was obtained from each participant in the study, and a demographic information form was completed by each participant.

Context of the Study

This study took place in an urban elementary school in one of the largest school systems in Georgia. The school district’s enrollment for the 2003-04 year was 128,856 students, of which 21% were African American, 9.7% were Asian American, 15.7% were Hispanic, 50.6%
were White, and 3% were Other. At the time of the study the district had 59 elementary schools, 16 middle schools, and 15 high schools, and several new school facilities were under construction.

Parker Elementary School, a K-5 elementary school, initially opened for the 1993-94 school year with only 880 students. Since that time, its student population has grown significantly to its current enrollment of 1132 students, and the number of new enrollments and withdrawals during each year has stabilized at approximately 75 students. Parker is a one story brick structure nestled in a residential community in which the estimated median household income exceeds $150,000. The community is comprised of single family dwellings, and, according to data compiled for the 2002-2003 school year, 93% of the students live in 2-parent families. Over 50% of the parent population holds bachelors and/or graduate degrees, and approximately 30% of the remainder of the parent population has associate degrees and/or some college education. Updated information for the 2003-2004 school year was not available at the time the study was conducted. However, the principal felt there had been no significant changes from the previous year.

The 2002-03 student population by ethnicity at Parker was 8% Asian, 4% Black, 3% Hispanic, 82% White, and 3% Other. The school is anticipating an increase in its international community due to the increasing international population in the county. Currently, only 3% of the school’s students receive free or reduced cost lunches; furthermore, 13% of the school’s population receive Special Education services, and 21% receive Gifted services. Updated information for the 2003-2004 school year was not available at the time the study was conducted. However, the principal felt there had been no significant changes from the previous year.
At the time of this study there were 144 staff members, of which 90% were certified faculty members. According to published data for the 2002-03 school year, the mean number of years of teaching experience for the entire faculty was 10 years, and approximately two-thirds of the staff had 1-10 years of experience. Updated information for the 2003-2004 school year was not available at the time the study was conducted. However, the principal felt there had been no significant changes from the previous year.

Parker’s Mission Statement is found hanging prominently throughout the school: “Parker Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, will challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential.” Participants in the study frequently addressed the school’s working partnership with parents and community, as well as the school’s high academic and behavioral expectations for students. Biller, a second grade teacher and one of the participants, succinctly explained the mission:

We’re in partnership with our parents and our community to make a challenging academic environment for everybody, and everybody is working to help the students to be the best that they can.

Lucy expanded on Biller’s view, giving her perspective of the partnership of all stakeholders in Parker’s learning community:

There are a lot of responsible parties, I suppose. One would have to be the community . . . but in this respect, I really do mean the people who live in this area, who value education, and who support the things that are done here. . . . I believe that the principal here has an enormous amount to do with it. She’s very well respected, and she respects the community, as well. She listens and takes into consideration suggestions or ideas that community and faculty have. I think that this is a very strong faculty. So with those three things, those three areas together in support of the children, the children then step up to the plate and have the high expectations that are given to them by the community, the teachers, and the principal. They step up to that.
The partnership described by Biller and Lucy was made possible by the school’s shared governance structure, which stressed the importance of teacher leadership and parental and community involvement.

Parker Elementary School was opened by a principal who believed in shared governance, as did the school’s original staff; accordingly, shared governance was the governance foundation of the school. Subsequently, the school joined the League of Professional Schools during its second year of operation and was still a member at the time of the study. The principal, the school’s third, was in her third year at Parker, and, like the first principal, advocated shared governance:

A wise leader would be a leader who embraces the ideas of shared leadership, shared governance, shared decision-making and incorporates that. Again, without shared decision-making, you are not going to have a community of learners; you’re not going to have a community for improvement, for continuous quality improvement. It can’t happen unless every voice can be heard and every idea can be shared without punitive reactions from administration.

The principal explained that the school’s shared decision-making is well implemented and that the current focus of the school is to take shared governance more directly into classrooms, involving and engaging students in its practice.

In a conversation, the principal, whose office has a bank of windows overlooking the front of the building, gave her description of what she sees at the close of each school day: “It’s like a Norman Rockwell painting, with children departing the school on bicycles, accompanied by their mothers, their younger siblings, and the family Golden Retriever dog.” The warmth and feeling evoked by that description is carried out in the child-centered interior of the building. Entering the front lobby, a large open area with plants, a street lamp, and park benches, one has a view down the main corridor, which the principal refers to as the “Grand Salon.” There, a local artist has painted a mural of stately white columns, of red draperies tied back with gold tassels,
and of rope-connected stanchions. Between the column and drapery images hang display cases holding children’s work and art. The images of the roped-connected stanchions are painted beneath the display cases, conveying the impression that one is standing in an art museum and viewing valued works of art that are protected by distance. Each display case is filled with student work; and, in keeping with their commitment to the Academic Standards of their county, the student work is accompanied by an explanation of the academic standards to which it applies. Looking into the Media Center and into other common areas of the building, the child-centered orientation of the school continues with comfortable and inviting sitting areas strategically located to encourage academic endeavors in a warm and child-friendly atmosphere. Throughout the building are other hand-painted murals depicting various themes linked to the curriculum, as well as artwork created by students.

During its second year of operation, Parker Elementary School joined the League of Professional Schools, a network of schools dedicated to the democratization of school governance. The League, founded by Carl Glickman of the University of Georgia in 1989, seeks to improve schoolwide instruction through the use of a three-part framework: a covenant of teaching and learning, shared governance, and action research. This framework has been in place at Parker for a number of years, and Parker is identified by League staff as a “well implemented” school. Parker meets its responsibility for “maintaining an emphasis on teaching and learning with a commitment to a democratic decision-making process” by encouraging and providing opportunities for all parties to participate in shared decision-making, without requiring them to do so. The Instructional Council, which is chaired by the principal, is comprised of representatives from all grade levels/instructional areas of the school and is the most strategically important body in the school’s infrastructure.
Five Quality Teams serve under the guidance of the Instructional Council. Three of those teams, Language Arts/Social Studies, Math/Science/Health, and Media/Technology, are responsible for the curriculum and special areas for which they are named. The remaining two Quality Teams, Leadership and Community Partnerships, are responsible for school-wide logistical decisions and for interactions with the general community, respectively (see Figure A1 in Appendix A). Membership on all teams is comprised of representatives from all grade levels and/or instructional areas of the school. Based upon collaboration with and reciprocal flows of information and data from its five Quality Teams and in collaboration with the Leadership Team and the Community Participation team, the Instructional Council makes many of the instructional decisions. The decisions made by the Instructional Council are reached by whole-school consensus. Under the guiding rules of governance at Parker, an individual may choose not to participate in decision-making; however, all staff members agree to support and implement decisions once they are made.

An example of the decision-making process is how goals for the up-coming year are determined. After a list of suggested goals is compiled from whole-school input, each teacher is given a set number of stickers. Each teacher then uses his stickers to designate the goals that are most important to him. He can place all stickers on one goal, or he can divide stickers between goals, according to their relative importance to him. For instance, with five stickers, he could use three stickers for math problem solving, and one each for reading comprehension and writing. Through this designation process, the consensus of the instructional staff sets prioritized goals for the following year. The process involves all teachers and staff and fosters total support for goals established, even when personal preferences are not adopted.
Consistent with League ideals and with the shared beliefs of the school’s professionals, Parker developed an eight-point covenant that forms the guiding vision for those associated with the school. It also adopted a Charter committing the school to shared governance and to action research. Thus, democratic decision-making and on-going action research are processes tightly linked to the school’s covenant of teaching and learning and, as the findings of this study indicate, to the culture of the school.

Data Sources

One principal and twelve emergent teacher leaders at Parker participated in this study. Interviews were conducted with the initial seven participants, and, subsequently, as data were collected and analyzed, the final sample size was determined. All interviews were conducted at the school at times convenient to the school’s and participants’ scheduling needs. They took place in private conference or office areas and were, by design, completely private and relatively interruption-free. Initial interviews were conducted in early and late October, 2003. Follow-up interviews were conducted in December, 2003.

All participants in the study were female and Caucasian; the gender and ethnicity of participants were, in terms of percentage, consistent with and representative of the overall population of the school’s professional staff. Further, the participant population was selected based on theoretical sampling with referrals for additional participants made by initial participants without reference to gender or race. The highest degree held by any participant was a specialist degree; one participant was working on a doctoral degree, and one was enrolled in a masters program. Three participants held bachelors degrees, eight held masters degrees, and two held specialist degrees. Participants’ total years of experience ranged from six to thirty years at the time of the study, and the mean number of years of teaching experience for the participant
population was 16.9 years. Four participants had been teaching at Parker since it opened, and six participants, including the principal, had been at the school for fewer than 5 years. The participants’ demographic and professional data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Highest degree</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Years at Parker</th>
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<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
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<td>Specialist</td>
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<td>Principal 13</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Masters</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Masters</td>
<td>4th</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Masters</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Masters</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1st</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were chosen on the basis of their congruence with the study’s pursuit of participant perspectives. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following
research questions: (a) What is the principal’s perspective of her instructional leadership; (b) what are the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership; (c) how do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership relate to and interact with each other; and (d) how do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership impact classroom instruction? The types of data thought to be consistent with that purpose were interviews and documents. In addition to these two data sources, the researcher maintained a researcher journal.

Interviews

In-depth interviews, described by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) as “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words” (p. 88), generate data about participants’ interpretations of their social worlds. Kvale (1996) argued that “interviews are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (p. 105). Kvale’s argument illuminates the suitability of interviews to the subject matter and purpose of this study.

Prior to beginning the initial interviews, the researcher contacted the principal to explain and discuss the purpose of the study. The general process of data collection and analysis was explained, and specific interview procedures were clarified. The two documents that participants would complete, the forms for informed consent (see Appendix B) and demographic information (see Appendix C) had previously been sent to the principal; those were explained and discussed, and confidentiality was emphasized. At the conclusion of that conversation, the timeline for interviewing was discussed.
After the initial sample of participants was selected, the researcher contacted participants to explain the study’s purpose and to thank them for their agreement to participate in the study. A follow-up letter, with copies of the two required documents attached, was sent to each participant. Providing the forms in advance allowed the participants to review the consent information in detail and to complete the demographic form prior to their interviews. Interview dates and times were coordinated and arranged, by e-mail contact, to fit participant schedules. Furthermore, because it had been mutually agreed that interviews would be conducted at the school, dates and times were coordinated through the principal to ensure that the researcher’s presence would not interfere with school business.

Initial interviews took place at Parker Elementary School in a private administrative conference room. Each session began with a review of the purpose the study, with discussion of confidentiality techniques, and with the signing of the consent form. The demographic information form was collected, and permission to tape record the interview was obtained. The interviews were tape recorded to allow the researcher to concentrate on what participants were saying and to preserve their exact words for subsequent review, transcription, and reflection (Merriam, 1998). Prior to discussing instructional leadership, informal conversation unrelated to the study helped establish a level of rapport and comfort between the participant and the researcher. The interviews began when participants were at ease and ready to begin. Initial interviews ranged in length from forty-five to fifty-five minutes, and thirteen initial interviews were conducted.

Initial interviews were relatively unstructured, allowing the principal and emergent teacher leaders to share their perspectives of their individual instructional leadership. Because the researcher did not know the meanings of instructional leadership to the participants, she
chose to use unstructured interviews to facilitate collection of their meanings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that this type of interview is of value when the interviewer “does not know what he or she doesn’t know and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell him or her” (p. 269). The decision not to use pre-determined, structured interview questions allowed the researcher to follow the lead of the participant, pursuing matters of meaning to her. As participants described their practice of instructional leadership, they were encouraged to elaborate on and describe matters of relevance to them. They were also asked to describe the relationship of their instructional leadership to the principal’s instructional leadership, to discuss interactions relevant to those relationships, and to identify impacts, if any, of instructional leadership on classroom instruction. Specific questions were asked to clarify understandings as the interviews proceeded.

As might be expected, some participants gave lengthy responses and required little prompting from the researcher; others provided shorter responses and required more prompting. However, as the interviews proceeded and participants became more comfortable in talking, their responses tended to become lengthier. Furthermore, as the researcher became more adept at probing, participants provided richer responses, often illustrated with stories; similarly, as the researcher learned to use the silence technique during pauses, participants began to elaborate and expand on their thoughts.

As interviews continued, recurrent themes, categories, and sub-categories became obvious. Identification of these allowed the researcher to narrow questioning during subsequent interviews. For instance, having voice was important to all participants. Therefore, the researcher asked later participants to define and describe what having voice meant to them. If they did not do so when they responded, the researcher probed for their perspective of the
connection, if any, between having voice and their instructional leadership. This procedure of asking questions of a more structured nature as later interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted allowed the researcher to obtain more detail about emerging theoretical ideas. Progressive interview questioning is consistent with grounded theory methodology and constant comparative analysis.

Prior to follow-up interviews, the researcher re-read the transcripts from the initial interviews, listened to them again, and made notes regarding matters that required clarification, elaboration, or illustration. Furthermore, she structured questions to fill out categories and to obtain participants’ responses to emerging themes and findings. During the final stages of data collection, nine structured follow-up interviews, which ranged in length from twenty to thirty minutes, were conducted as a means of filling out categories and of member checking. In addition to structured questions, participants were also allowed to share any new or additional insights into their perspectives of instructional leadership.

Following each interview, the researcher wrote field notes about the experience. In addition to capturing pertinent data about the participant’s demeanor and mood during the interview and about her responses to specific questions, the researcher summarized “her take” on the participant’s perspective of instructional leadership. This reflective activity allowed the researcher to record what she thought she had heard, in terms of themes and categories, before she began the process of transcribing and line-by-line coding the data. These field notes were kept in the researcher journal.

Documents

Personal and official documents were also used as sources of data in the study. Merriam (1998) indicates that any written, visual, or physical material that communicates information is
generally considered a document. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested that documents can be personal or official and that both types of documents can be useful. They noted that personal documents may include personal notes and calendars and that official documents may include meeting agendas and minutes, school handbooks, mission statements, newsletters, and other school- or district-produced documents.

Both types of documents were collected for this study. For example, one of the participants, Kelsey, e-mailed the researcher to provide pertinent information she had failed to provide during the interview. A copy of the mission statement, an example of an official document, was also collected. Documents were subjected to line-by-line review and coding, as were interview transcripts, and data obtained from documents were labeled in accordance with their sources, for the purpose of subsequent source identification during retrieval.

*Researcher Journal*

Additionally, a researcher journal was maintained by the researcher to record and organize notes and memos generated during the course of the study. The researcher journal contained a calendar and a research log that documented the nature and flow of work, as well as information related to the overall progress of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This journal was also maintained to summarize daily activities. The log and calendar were used to pre-plan work, to ensure that analysis was keeping pace with data collection, and to meet goals.

Field notes are the notes made by the researcher during or immediately after the field experience to capture and “represent the interactions and activities of the researcher and the people studied” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 224). These notes were written immediately after interviews were conducted and used by the researcher to refresh her memory regarding each participant and the interview, as well as to provide context for deriving meaning from the data.
Research memos, which Glaser (1978) described as “the theorizing write-up of ideas about categories and their relationships as they strike the researcher while coding” (p. 83), were written during the coding process to capture the researcher’s insights, to document her thinking, and to identify pertinent questions. These memos assisted the researcher in several ways: (a) in formulating more structured questions for follow-up interviews, (b) in clarifying her own thinking, (c) in noting the demarcation between her thinking and actual statements of perspective made by participants, and (d) in working logically to find connections in data. Later memos often took the form of models and diagrams that noted connections and relationships among categories. According to Charmaz (1994), “memo writing connects the barebones analytic framework that coding provides with the polished ideas developed in the finished draft” (p. 106). These memos, which are discussed in more detail in the discussion of constant comparative analysis, were critical to the data analysis process and, later, to the writing process, as Charmaz suggested they would be.

Methodological notes were kept in the researcher journal, as well. These notes were primarily written about the research procedures. For instance, they included detailed information about procedures followed during site selection, research approval completion, and sample selection and interviewing. They also contained notes related to analyzing data. Memos about codes and coding are of particular importance during the research process, as they “represent the development of codes from which they are derived. . . . By making memos systematically while coding, the researcher fills out and builds the categories” (Charmaz, 1994, p. 106). Field notes, memos, and reflections maintained in the researcher journal were also subjected to line-by-line coding.
Data Analysis Procedures

Grounded Theory

Methodology, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), “refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers” (p. 3). As previously noted, the methodology for this study of a principal’s and emergent teachers’ perspectives of instructional leadership was grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994) described grounded theory as “a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (p. 273). Grounded theory was chosen as the methodology most appropriate for this study because, as Creswell (1998) has noted, grounded theory is used to generate a theory that relates to a specific social process in which “individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon” (p. 56).

Moreover, Stern (1994) argued that “the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigation of relatively uncharted waters, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation” (p. 116). The use of grounded theory for this study is consistent with Stern’s argument; grounded theory methodology was determined to be well suited to this study because of the study’s specific focus on the relatively unexplored interrelationship among three concepts, instructional leadership, emergent teacher leadership, and shared governance. The study was designed to explore instructional leadership from the perspectives of the principal and emergent teacher leaders, or, in the words of Taylor and Bogdan (1998), “to examine how things look from different vantage points” (p. 9).

Central to grounded theory methodology is constant comparative analysis, “a strategic method for generating theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 21) and a form of data analysis based
on constant comparison of new data collected to data previously received and analyzed. In accordance with constant comparative analysis procedures, the researcher analyzed data as they were received, allowing categories to emerge. As new data were collected, they were compared to existing categories in an on-going process that informed future data collection, thus furthering the thorough examination of emerging theoretical ideas. Categories were filled out and emerging theoretical ideas were checked through the collection of further data (Charmaz, 1994). This process of constant comparison of data has been described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as “continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (p. 273).

Coding, which is the initial phase of analysis, is “simply the process of categorizing and sorting data. Codes then serve as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile, and organize data” (Charmaz, 1994, p. 97, emphasis in the original). There are two phases of the coding in constant comparative analysis: open coding and selective coding. Open coding was defined by Glaser (1992) as “the initial stage of constant comparative analysis, before delimiting the coding to a core category and its properties—or selective coding” (p. 38). During this phase, the researcher is open to all codes, having no preconceived ones, and attempts to discover leads, issues, and ideas in the data by engaging in a line-by-line review and coding of the data.

The second phase is focused coding, which is the selective and conceptual phase of the coding process. According to Glaser (1992), “to selectively code means to cease open coding and to delimit coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable, in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory” (p. 75). Selective coding begins after the researcher has found a core category, or a central category that includes all other categories (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the coding phase, the researcher develops in vivo categories, categories taken from the natural language of participants, or categories from the
researcher’s own analytic interest. Charmaz (1994) elaborates on the purpose of this phase of coding: “The purpose of focused coding is to build and clarify a category by examining all the data it covers and variations from it” (p. 103). Describing the value of focused coding, Charmaz said, “By showing relationships between categories in ways that explain the issues and events studied, focused coding helps to provide the groundwork for developing explanations and predictions” (p. 104).

Constant comparative analysis is used to generate two kinds of “middle-range” theory, substantive and formal. Substantive theory refers to theory developed for an empirical area of sociological inquiry, while formal theory refers to that developed for a conceptual area of sociological inquiry (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, reprinted 1999, p. 32). The four stages of constant comparative analysis were used in this study to analyze data: (a) comparing incidents, (b) integrating categories and properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory. These data analysis procedures are thoroughly discussed in the following sections. Moreover, (a) theoretical sensitivity, (b) theoretical sampling, (c) theoretical saturation, and (d) theoretical pacing, the four components of constant comparative analysis, are described.

Four Stages of Constant Comparative Analysis

Constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in this study to generate grounded theory focused on the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership. As described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), there are four stages of constant comparative analysis: (a) comparing incidents, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory. The researcher systematically worked through these stages, and theoretical ideas grounded in the data emerged. In this section, the four stages are described in more detail.
Stage One: Comparing Incidents

Comparing incidents applicable to each category, the first step in constant comparative analysis, consists of the coding of each incident into as many different categories as possible and of simultaneously comparing incidents “with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106). Comparison of incidents results in the generation of theoretical properties of a category, and categories are labeled as similar data are grouped together.

In stage one of constant comparative analysis, the researcher reviewed the data line by line and coded incidents, the small units of data that explain what is happening in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). She coded incidents in the data using the Comments function in the Microsoft Word computer program. Initially, she used word labels in the Comments bubble to identify the action taking place; eventually, a master list of these labels was developed, with similar or related codes being labeled similarly. Later, as recurring codes became obvious, a numbering system was used to expedite coding. When line-by-line coding was complete, a coded copy of the transcript was printed out.

As the researcher continued the joint process of data collection and analysis, she found similarities among the incidents; as these incidents were grouped together, preliminary categories of two types emerged, those taken from the terminology used by participants and those constructed by the researcher. The identification of these preliminary categories helped determine which questions would be asked in later interviews. In accordance with constant comparative analysis procedures, the researcher compared each new incident with all previous incidents in the same and in different categories. The constant review and comparison of all
previously collected data resulted in an understanding of the meaning of each category, as well as in the identification of the properties of the categories.

As the analyst coded data, she discovered that there were alternative and multiple ways to code and compare data. Because this discovery generated conflicts in understanding, particularly as related to theoretical ideas and notions, memos were written at the time to capture the freshness and general substance of the researcher’s thoughts at that time. In addition to explaining the researcher’s thoughts, they also aided in the expansion of ideas and categories. These memos were coded, sorted, and integrated along with all other data (Charmaz, 1994).

Stage Two: Integrating Categories and Their Properties

Integrating categories and their properties is the second stage of constant comparative analysis. This stage required the researcher to compare incidents to categories. During this stage, the researcher identified properties of the categories that resulted in the first stage of incident comparison and discovered the relationships between properties and categories. During this stage, the categories become more integrated with other categories. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described this integration: “Constant comparison causes the accumulated knowledge pertaining to a property of the category to readily start to become integrated; this is, related in many different ways, resulting in a unified whole” (p. 109). Thus, according to Glaser (1994), “the theory develops, as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison” (p. 189).

In order to record information on each code consistently, the researcher developed a code memo template. The code memo form consisted of three sections: (a) a space for defining and describing the code, (b) a space for pasting extracts illustrative of the code, and (c) a space for
noting ties to the literature. She consistently used this form, updating the descriptive information and copying in each new incident. This served the purpose of providing in one document every incident pertinent to the code; thus, constant comparative analysis was made more manageable. Furthermore, identification of the properties was made easier through the accumulation of information on the code memo form. As the researcher built the properties of the categories, data became more integrated and related. The identification of properties on the code memo form assisted in the discovery of which categories and properties were central to the focus of the study.

Stage Three: Delimiting the Theory

Delimiting the theory, the third stage of constant comparative analysis, is the stage during which the theory solidifies, and modifications are made to streamline the theory and categories. At this stage, the researcher reviewed the original categories and their properties in an effort to discover uniformities, to combine similar or overlapping categories, and to remove nonrelevant properties. This process is known as reduction. Furthermore, categories that no longer fit within the parameters of the emerging theory were withdrawn, and the researcher became more selective or focused in coding and analyzing incidents, giving more time to the constant comparison of incidents within the smaller set of categories (Glaser, 1994). Additionally, theoretical saturation occurs when the collection of data no longer adds new insight to a category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); as the researcher continued the process of constant comparison, she found that certain categories had become theoretically saturated; thus, additional data were not collected for these categories.

When the researcher was confident with categories, follow-up interviews were conducted. These interviews focused on filling out categories not yet saturated and on
confirming the researcher’s emerging theory. Theoretical ideas were shared with participants, and their thoughts were solicited. They confirmed the researcher’s emerging theoretical ideas and, in some cases, expounded on them. These follow-up interviews, which served the dual purpose of data collection and member check, assisted in the refining of the emerging theoretical ideas.

Stage Four: Writing the Theory

The final stage of constant comparative analysis is writing the theory. During this stage the researcher collated all memos on each category, further analyzing the memos and creating an analytic framework. When she was convinced that her analytic framework formed a systematic substantive theory, that it portrayed the participants’ perspectives of instructional leadership, and that it was in a usable form for others to use, she began to write (Glaser, 1994).

Writing began with the creation of an outline based on the analytic framework and with the organization of the code memos, aligned to that outline. Code memos contained the majority of information needed for writing a skeletal draft. The final steps in writing consisted of filling out the findings, choosing the best quote to illustrate the point, eliminating the duplicative use of quotes, and editing. Throughout the writing process, quality checks were run by asking whether the findings presented answered the research questions and whether the categories were defined, described, and illustrated in sufficient detail to prove the findings.

Four Components of Constant Comparative Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe four necessary components of constant comparative analysis: (a) theoretical sensitivity, (b) theoretical sampling, (c) theoretical saturation, and (d) theoretical pacing. Together, these components result in integrated and dense theory. The components of constant comparative analysis are discussed in this section.
Theoretical Sensitivity

As defined by Glaser (1992), theoretical sensitivity is “an ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to the normal models of theory in general, and theory development in sociology, in particular” (p. 27). It refers, in general, to the researcher’s intuitive ability to understand and analyze data, to conceptualize substantive, grounded categories, and to render them into theory.

Theoretical sensitivity of the researcher was enhanced by her personal and professional experiences. For instance, the researcher is an emergent teacher leader and has relied on other emergent teacher leaders in her teaching practice. Additionally, the researcher practices instructional leadership in her own classroom, in her school, and in her school district; and she has worked collaboratively with others on school improvement efforts. These experiences led to heightened insight and greater understanding of what was happening in the research setting. The similarity of position and experiences led to increased rapport with participants. Furthermore, her reflection on these experiences and understandings aided in analyzing data and in generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Familiarity with the literature on instructional leadership and on emergent teacher leadership also increased the researcher’s theoretical sensitivity. This familiarity with the literature allowed the researcher to see connections and relationships in the data and to generate theoretical ideas from consideration of these hypotheses. However, precedence was given to insights gained from the actual research (Glaser, 1978); researcher experience and knowledge of the literature merely served to increase the researcher’s sensitivity to insights gained from the research.

Theoretical Sampling
Theoretical sampling has been defined as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). This methodological strategy was used by the researcher to guide data collection and to pursue emerging theory. Specifically, as data were collected and coded, similar incidents were found. To gain further understanding of these incidents and to discover their significance, the researcher selected additional participants who were believed to be able to add new insights. Thus, as theory evolved, the researcher’s sampling became more selective. As Glaser (1978) suggested it should be, theoretical sampling was used to compare incoming data to the emerging conceptual framework.

**Theoretical Saturation**

Theoretical sampling ends when new categories fail to emerge from the data and when new data fail to provide new insight to an existing category. As Glaser (1978) explained, “Theoretical saturation of a category occurs when in coding and analyzing both no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge as one goes through the full extent of the data” (p. 53). Thus, when no new categories emerged and when no new insights to existing categories were evident, the researcher concluded that categories were theoretically saturated and ended the data collection process.

**Theoretical Pacing**

Theoretical pacing refers to the pace at which the research proceeds and includes two stages: input and saturation (Glaser, 1978). Input includes the collection of data, the analysis of data, and the writing of memos. Because grounded theory results from systematically collected and analyzed data and requires that the researcher go through many steps in the process, it cannot
be rushed. Theoretical pacing also addresses the need to balance data collection with data analysis. Accordingly, the researcher organized her schedule to allow an early morning and an evening session of data analysis and memo writing. In addition to the time spent conducting the twenty-two interviews, four to six hours were regularly spent per day analyzing data and writing memos. Furthermore, the researcher took care to see that interviews were scheduled at a pace that allowed analysis to keep pace with collection.

Credibility

Credibility refers, in general, to trustworthiness and believability. More specifically, as applied to research, it refers to the degree to which the research process was trustworthy and to the degree to which the theory generated from it can be trusted and believed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the test of credibility lies in whether the findings represent the realities of the participants. On this same point, Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued that “the real merit of a substantive theory lies in its ability to speak specifically for the populations from which it was derived and to apply back to them” (p. 267). The specific criteria for judging grounded theory are fit, work, and relevance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each of these criteria was used to enhance the credibility of the study and is discussed in the following section.

Grounded Theory Credibility Criteria: Fit, Work, and Relevance

When research is conducted according to the methodology of grounded theory and the procedures are properly executed, credibility should flow directly from the use of those procedures. The researcher followed the methodology and took great care to execute the research procedures of joint collection and analysis correctly. As a result, she is confident of the data’s fit, work, and relevance to the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
The meaning of *fit* in grounded theory is best explained in the words of Glaser and Strauss (1967): “By ‘fit’ we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study” (p. 3). Because categories were derived directly from the data and reflect what the participants considered important in their instructional leadership, the researcher is confident of their fit.

As with fit, the meaning of *work* is best explicated by Glaser and Strauss (1967): “By ‘work’ we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant to and be able to explain the behavior under study” (p. 3). Because the researcher derived categories from the participants’ explanations and descriptions of their behaviors and because she returned to the question, “What is happening here?” during analysis of the data, she is confident that the data reflect those behaviors and are meaningful to the participants. Furthermore, the participants verified the validity of the categories.

Relevance refers to the degree to which the categories are pertinent to and applicable in the specific research setting under study. Glaser (1978) argued that “grounded theory arrives at relevance, because it allows core problems and processes to emerge” (p. 5). Again, because the categories were derived directly from the data, and data were not forced into preconceived categories, the researcher is confident that they are relevant to the specific research setting.

*Credibility Techniques*

Several research techniques were employed by the researcher to enhance credibility of the study and its findings. These techniques are discussed in the following subsections.

*Prolonged Engagement*

Prolonged engagement refers to the amount of time the researcher is engaged in the research setting and connotes a sufficient amount of time to provide scope and depth to the study.
Implicit in this term is the understanding that the researcher will spend sufficient time and will become sufficiently engaged in the setting to learn the context, to build rapport and trust with participants, and to minimize distortions.

In this study, the researcher was engaged in the setting over a period of several months (September, 2003 through December, 2003) and in various methods of data collection, thus adding scope and depth to the study. Before the study, the researcher engaged in the collection and review of documents related to the school to familiarize herself with it, its demographics, and the community in which it is located. Furthermore, the researcher obtained information about the League of Professional Schools to clarify her understanding of the school’s shared governance foundation.

All interviews were conducted at the school site, which allowed the researcher to become more familiar with the research site and allowed for chance meetings with participants who had been previously interviewed. Small talk before and after interviews also enhanced open communication, and e-mails were sent to recognize and show appreciation for participation. An easy rapport was established, and participants were eager to share their perspectives of instructional leadership and to talk about the school of which they are proudly a part.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to maintaining an external check on the research process by communicating with and utilizing peers to assist the researcher in clearing his or her mind of “emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergence of sensible next steps” (p. 308). Peer debriefing assists the researcher in following methodological procedures, in avoiding bias contamination, and in
working through interpretations. This researcher relied on her major professor for peer debriefing.

Thick Description

Thick description, as a credibility technique, assists others in their understanding of the findings in the study and in their assessment of the transferability of the findings to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Thick description typically refers to the scope and depth of the description of site and sample selection, of research setting and participants, and of data collection and analysis procedures. The researcher thickly described these aspects of the research process to provide the reader with a context for comparison.

Triangulation

Credibility of this study was enhanced through triangulation, the use of multiple data sources and multiple methods to confirm emerging theory and to explain findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Specifically, thirteen participants were interviewed to gain multiple perspectives of instructional leadership. Additionally, documents and field notes were collected and used to verify responses gained through the interviews.

Member Checks

Member checks, as described by Merriam (1998), are reviews of data, findings, and interpretations by the participants from whom they were derived and result in those members’ agreement with or challenge to these research products. Member checks, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), are the most crucial technique in establishing credibility.

During interviews the researcher summarized points and asked if her understanding of what was said was correct. Also, the researcher gave the participants an opportunity at the end
of each interview to summarize their views, to clarify points made, or to share additional insights that were not covered earlier during the interview.

Member checking can be accomplished through several other methods, as well. Included in those methods are the following: summarizing interview content and insights and asking the participant to verify or correct information, allowing the participant to provide further information, and allowing the participant to challenge interpretations; summarizing insights from one participant and checking or testing those insights with another participant; and providing a report of the categories and emerging theory to participants and asking for their written commentaries (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Several of these member check techniques were also used by the researcher. For instance, insights gained from the first interview were noted for each participant; during the follow-up interview, the insights were checked by the participant, and the participant was asked to verify or correct the researcher’s understanding. Some information, including biographical sections of the participant description was e-mailed to participants for their review and editing. During follow-up interviews, insights gained from one participant were tested with another. Any changes or new information gained through these techniques was also coded and analyzed. A summary of categories and findings was presented to and discussed, in varying depth, with nine participants. They were asked to review, comment, question, verify, and/or challenge the findings, and their responses verified the researcher’s findings.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided a thorough discussion of the methodology that was used in this qualitative dissertation study. Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework, and the study was conducted in accord with that theoretical perspective. Data sources included
interviews, documents, and a researcher journal. The methodology was grounded theory, and constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling were used to code and analyze data. The joint collection and analysis of data resulted in a working theory of the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership. Several credibility strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the research process.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was threefold: (a) to explore a principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership, (b) to investigate how the two forms of leadership relate to and interact with each other, and (c) to investigate how each form of instructional leadership impacts classroom instruction. To achieve the purposes of the study and to arrive at theory grounded in the data, the researcher analyzed the interview responses of the thirteen participants about their individual perspectives of instructional leadership and identified common themes and categories among them. Using grounded theory methodology, the researcher identified the theoretical ideas that emerged from analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

There are two major sections in this chapter. The first section provides an introduction of the individual participants in the study, and the second section provides a review of common topics. The topics are organized, in accordance with the taxonomy shown in Table 2, into three main themes and thirteen categories.

Individual Participants

This section of Chapter 4 includes a description of each participant; the description is intended to introduce the participant and to provide insights into her perspective of instructional leadership. The second section adds detail to these individual portraits, and as each one adds its color to the painting of instructional leadership at Parker Elementary School, a collage of the participants in their learning community is unveiled.
Martha

Martha, the principal, was in her third year at Parker Elementary School at the time of the study and had thirteen years of administrative experience, all in the local school district. She had also taught for nine years, prior to moving into administration. Martha held an Ed.S. degree, and she was enrolled in an Ed. D. program at a major university.

Martha’s leadership style was facilitative-democratic. She believed in a shared leadership in which all parties have “an equal voice for appreciation, understanding, sharing of ideas, and discussion of points.” In fact, her leadership was guided by her belief that “there are very few things that cannot be collaboratively decided in a school.”

Martha felt that good principals foster communities of leaders and learners. Thus, her instructional leadership was based on the empowerment of others. She believed her job was to nurture an environment in which power is passed on, and she wanted her instructional leadership to be about leading others to find the leader in themselves. She believed that the collaborative instructional leadership at Parker led to a form of reciprocal empowerment in which instructional leaders offer their strengths to buoy the weaknesses of others and buoy their own weaknesses with the strengths of others.

Martha’s philosophy regarded teacher leaders as the pivotal point in the achievement of the school’s success: “I have to surround myself with . . . teacher leadership, because it is in the classroom where the reality of success is going to take place.” When describing her interactions with her instructional leaders, she used terms such as “total collaboration” and “mutual respect,” and she felt that the key to the success of the school was “keeping a reciprocal instructional partnership” with the other instructional leaders.
Martha believed that a good principal fills many critical roles, including being a reflective listener, a motivator, a supporter, an encourager of risk-taking, a “roadblock remover,” and “an igniter of dreams.” She felt that an effective leader must be visionary and must “keep one leg in the here and now and one in the future.” She shared her belief, too, that an effective leader intuitively knows when to step back and “let that team of expert instructional leaders move forward” without interference. To her, good principal instructional leadership was about striking a balance of collaborative involvement without dominance. She felt that collaboration was essential in Parker’s instructional leadership and that it was her job to facilitate collaboration among instructional leaders. As she described it, collaboration allows “the magic of wonder to come alive in the hallways through the energy” of the collective minds.

To Martha, “doing what’s best for children” was the force driving her instructional leadership. Children were her first priority, and she viewed the success of Parker’s instructional leadership in terms of the students’ engagement, ownership of their education, and achievement. She related one of her personal goals for the children at Parker: “My dream as instructional leader is to get the children to learn that the classroom is equally theirs.”

*Michelle*

Michelle, who held a master’s degree, taught third grade at Parker. She had been there for the past four years and, prior to that, had taught in two other elementary schools in the school district for nine years. She had been actively involved in several formal and informal leadership positions over the last two years and was currently the third grade Team Leader.

To Michelle, the equality of emergent teacher leaders was important; she felt that, as Team Leader, she was an equal who was temporarily filling a grade level leadership position. To
minimize the effect of having a title, she made a point of frequently reminding the third grade team that they were “all in this together” and that they had equal standing.

Michelle felt that being an instructional leader was about sharing the work load, sharing the products of one’s individual work, and sharing one’s expertise to serve the common good. Moreover, she believed that dividing up the work was “working smarter,” and sharing products and ideas was “working better for kids.”

Michelle explained that she learned to be organized as a child and that her organization was the impetus for her emergent teacher leadership. She explained that she really became an emergent teacher leader when other teachers learned that she could be counted on to have everything needed by the team and to have it neatly organized in her notebook; others, she explained, simply began to look to her for support and assistance. Michelle believed that she was using her organizational abilities to teach organization skills to her students.

For Michelle, teaching and leading were all about the same thing: doing what was best for the children. She explained that the “big picture” in her instructional leadership was the children. Michelle summarized her perspective of the responsibility of being an emergent teacher leader and engaging in instructional leadership at Parker in the following way:

So it’s all about the kids. And it’s all about the big picture of making sure that they’re getting what they need with a smile and a loving heart, with a happy T-shirt. So whatever is necessary, whatever it takes for that to happen, to me, is what leadership is all about.

Lucy

Lucy, who held a master’s degree, had transferred to Parker Elementary two years before, switching to fourth grade at the same time. She had worked with Martha before, and her move to Parker was prompted by her desire to work with Martha again. Lucy had been actively involved in her previous school in formal and informal leadership roles for seven years.
Lucy discussed the impact of changing schools, describing that change as “difficult” and “traumatic.” She had been an emergent teacher leader and an instructional leader at her previous school, and, when she moved to Parker, she felt that she lost that identity. The difficulty of making the move was exacerbated by her changing grade levels at the same time. Lucy explained that she had “to start over” when she started teaching at Parker:

It’s very difficult for a veteran teacher with almost 20 years of experience to feel like a brand new college teacher again. It was very difficult. . . . I didn’t know the school, didn’t know the people, didn’t know procedures, and those kinds of things that are so drastically different from one school to another, even in the same county. It was very difficult. It was a very difficult year because I could not be a leader.

At the time of the study, Lucy had begun to re-emerge as a teacher leader, and she felt that she was beginning to be able to contribute. It was important to her to feel that she was making a contribution.

Lucy used terms such as “reciprocal respect and trust,” “partnering,” and “professionalism” when she talked about the relationship among the teacher leaders on her team. Lucy held the view that instructional leadership at Parker was a shared responsibility, and she frequently used a sports team metaphor when she talked about the partnering relationship among the instructional leaders at her grade level:

I see us as a team, and I believe everybody, at one point or another—because we are leaders—takes turns stepping up to the plate. We support our team being. . . . Somebody needs to step up to the plate. Somebody needs to go, and we have the . . . opportunities to do that. I don’t think a leader should be responsible for . . . carrying the whole team. So you kind of have to take turns. It’s my turn to bat; it’s my turn to make the hit.

Lisa

Lisa, who had recently completed her master’s degree, had taught for six years, all of which had been in fifth grade at Parker Elementary. In fact, Lisa had also done her student teaching at Parker, and, when she joined the staff, she went through Parker’s Mentor Program.
She explained how helpful the Mentor Program had been to her and shared her belief that her team’s collaborative efforts served as a similar type of support for teachers.

Lisa had considered changing grade levels, as she felt that it would be wise to broaden her teaching experience. However, she shared with the researcher that she could not bring herself to leave her team “because we have such a good thing going.” She described the team relationships as very strong and supportive, both personally and professionally, and said that the team was always “there to help.” She said the members of her team called themselves the “Steel Magnolias.”

Lisa, like other instructional leaders, was conscious of time limitations on her instructional leadership. She had been involved in a two-year curriculum integration study to address time concerns, specifically how to maximize time by integrating curriculum areas. She talked about that experience, which she felt had improved her teaching, but she noted that it did not resolve the bigger issue of finding more instruction time in each day. Lisa also expressed her concern that shared governance takes time away from instructional efforts.

Lisa felt that Parker was full of leaders, and she referred to herself as “a leader among leaders.” She believed there was a reciprocal understanding among leaders on her team that led to their “taking turns with different responsibilities.” She felt that the mutual support and “sharing [of] ideas” that characterized her team was what had made it so successful. Lisa also felt a responsibility to her team, which she described using phrases such as “being a support,” “picking up on whatever needs to be done,” and “conveying a positive attitude.” She captured the essence of emergent teacher leadership when she described the interactions of her team: “We kind of help lead each other.”
Cheryl

Cheryl was a kindergarten teacher with ten years of teaching experience, all at Parker. Like Lisa, Cheryl started her teaching career at Parker and had worked with two different principals during her tenure there. She held a B.S.Ed. degree. Cheryl was mentoring three teachers on her grade level at the time of the study, and she was also serving as the Team Leader for her grade level.

All of Cheryl’s teaching experience was at the kindergarten level. She said she never grew tired of what she did because each year was different. She worked constantly to find new resources and new teaching techniques that would keep her teaching fresh. In fact, she explained that on the weekend, “for fun,” she went to teacher supply stores.

Like others at Parker, Cheryl talked about the reciprocal “sharing” of ideas and resources, and she described the synergy that occurred in her team’s collaborative meetings. When she talked about the school’s new NCLB collaborative meetings, she talked about the emphasis on joint ownership of all children at the grade level; she believed joint ownership was better for the children and for the teacher because of the multiple perspectives and the many resources available through others. She felt that good instructional leadership involved sharing, collaborating, and helping others improve practice. Describing her feelings about her job and about her fit with the Parker staff and students, Cheryl used a simile to capture her comfort in the job: “I truly love what I do—it’s like I’ve come home.”

Eliza

Eliza was teaching third grade at the time of the study, had been at Parker for four years, and had thirteen and a half years of teaching experience. She had taught kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade, all in the school district. She held a master’s degree and had also
completed the leadership cohort program offered by her school district in collaboration with a major university.

Eliza spoke at length about the topics of mutual trust, respect, and support that she believed had permeated instructional leadership relationships at Parker. She, like other participants, emphasized the reciprocity that characterized and was central to the instructional interactions and relationships at Parker. To her, instructional leadership was a partnership that depended on collaboration.

Eliza was the third grade NCLB Committee representative and was deeply involved in its implementation. She believed that shared ownership of all children and collaboration had been critical not only to meeting Parker’s objective to enhance achievement levels for all children but also to following the intent of the NCLB Act. Eliza felt that those meetings enhanced the all-children and whole-school orientation of teachers and explained that she applied information gained in those collaborative discussions to her own classroom practice.

Respect for the principal and other instructional leaders motivated Eliza to a higher level of commitment. She felt that the teamwork and the camaraderie among instructional leaders at Parker had been critical to the school’s success and that it was incumbent on instructional leaders to “raise the bar” continuously. She emphasized the coordination and cohesiveness of instructional leaders behind a common purpose:

We are a team, and all our children we do own together. We, all together, are going to achieve what we need to achieve and get where we need to be because we’re going to help one another get to where we need to be.

Mollie

Mollie was a first grade teacher and had twenty years of teaching experience at the time of the study. She had taught at two other schools and in two other early childhood grades. Mollie
had been at Parker for eight years and held a master’s degree. She had been in the Teachers as Leaders Group at the county level the previous year and described the experience as “a personal growth opportunity” that she was able to “bring to the table” to share with others; she felt that leaders grew together through the sharing of such experiences.

Mollie felt that her emergent teacher leadership happened, in part, “by default.” She explained that others had come to her because of her years of early childhood teaching experience and because of her years of experience at Parker. She also consciously took on leadership roles and functions because she wanted to be involved and to have input: “At this point in my life, I have an opinion about the way things should be.”

Mollie was involved in staff development as a participant and as a resource to others. She talked about a new book study/literature circle in which she was participating to “expand [my] knowledge of how to teach children through connections with a piece of literature.” She had also recently taught a county-wide class on literacy to a group of new first grade teachers.

Mollie’s perspective of emergent teacher leadership was that no teacher is a leader “over” others; she saw them as leaders “with” each other. In fact, she saw emergent teacher leadership as reciprocal, with teachers leading from their strengths and looking to others for leadership in their areas of weakness. Drawing on her many years of experience as a teacher leader, she offered the following insight:

It’s not just my emergent leadership; it’s the fact that it’s needed and wanted and expected now, more so. Back when I first started, you had the administration; they were the leaders; you were just the teacher with your kids. You might have been the leader in your classroom because you were the one setting everything up, but as far as most [leadership] responsibility, it was really more separated. Now I see it as being intertwined because one person does something, then the other person picks it up and moves with it. I think administration and teachers work so closely together now on the same goals and issues that—I think that the administrators rely on those teachers who are strong in certain areas to take over those roles. That is so different; through the decades, it’s evolved. It’s become very different. The expectations are different.
Brooke, who held a B.S.Ed. degree, taught fourth grade and was in her second year at Parker. She had sixteen years of teaching experience in third, fourth, and fifth grades and had taught at two other schools, both in the local school system. Brooke shared her past teaching experiences, which included teaching 32 fifth graders in a trailer at a school with a large international student population and teaching 16 third graders in a small shared governance school. She had team-taught and partnered, and she had taught in a school where collaboration was basically non-existent. She believed those varied teaching experiences had led her to “stick my neck” out and to participate in leadership.

When Brooke talked about her instructional leadership, she used the terms “give and take” and “payback” because she believed that instructional leadership was a reciprocal process that depended on teachers helping teachers. For instance, she was gifted certified, and she shared ideas for enrichment with other teachers; she also depended on the help of another teacher who had spent a great deal of time in planning social studies.

To Brooke, instructional leadership involved building leadership in students, as well. She was working with students at Parker to implement a student-operated store at the time of the study. She also gave an example of a teaching activity she had used to increase student engagement, ownership, and leadership skills:

I’ve had the students do some teaching along the way, where the kids are involved in, for example, a health unit. . . . So instead of my standing up there . . . they get to take it on their shoulders. . . . That’s worked out real well with establishing leaders with the students. And it just gives them the flip side of the coin. It’s like, “Oh, you have to plan discussions? You have to have objectives? You have to evaluate this somehow? And I have to know the answers?”
Biller

Biller was a second grade teacher, and ten of her thirty years of experience had been at Parker. She held a master’s degree and had taught previously in another state, where she had also held various leadership positions.

When Biller described the people who made up the professional culture at Parker, she spoke of their like-minded and like-valued professionalism; she used terms such as “dedicated,” “very caring, very caring,” “hard-working,” and “loyal to the school” to describe them. She felt that Parker’s success was largely due to the professionalism of the staff, to their partnership with each other and with the parents and community, and to their “caring about the children.”

Biller was the second grade Team Leader and shared her perspective of that role. In her view, she was “just a messenger” and “a facilitator,” a leader who “kind of controls it a little bit,” while everybody else worked with her and shared the responsibilities. Because of the sharing of the workload, Biller felt that “everybody in my grade level could do exactly what I’m doing.”

Biller felt that a partnership existed between teachers at the grade level and throughout the whole school and that the partnership depended on collaboration and sharing. Explaining her view of the critical necessity of working together in partnership, she said, “I don’t think we could do this job if we didn’t all work together.”

To Biller it was important to be a teacher and a leader. Because she was not interested in moving into administration, she was appreciative that the county and school recognized teachers as leaders:

I’ve always liked the feeling that—through the Teachers as Leaders Program—you can be a teacher, not an administrator, and still be a leader. They encourage that and recognize it and appreciate it.
Elizabeth

Elizabeth, who held a B.S. Ed. degree and was enrolled in a master’s program at the time of the study, had taught second grade at Parker for eight years at the time of the study. She had twelve years experience teaching, four of which had been in another state.

Elizabeth viewed leadership as an opportunity to learn and to share that learning with others. She described her drive to participate in leadership as “wanting to be better at what I do.” When she expanded on what her instructional leadership was about, Elizabeth said, “I don’t want to become stagnant,” and “I love teaching. . . . I love learning. . . . I love sharing.” To her, instructional leadership outside the classroom was about growth and sharing, and she linked the two, saying, “Not only do I give, but I get.”

Elizabeth was enthusiastic about learning. She liked to take classes, implement her learning in her classroom, and share her learning with others. She had taught several staff development classes and strongly believed that teachers “need to educate each other.” At the time of the study she was planning a staff development course for teachers based on a learning experience and project she had completed in her master’s degree program.

Elizabeth was proactive in addressing needs. For instance, when she moved to Georgia, she found that there were no teaching jobs in the county. To address her own need to teach and to introduce herself to principals in the area, she volunteered as a reading specialist in three schools, including Parker. She quickly realized that she wanted to teach at Parker because of the commitment of the teachers, and she also realized that her talents in remediation would not be a selling point for a job at Parker. To make herself more attractive as a job candidate, she enrolled in college courses and became gifted certified.
To Elizabeth teaching was not a profession. It was a passion, and it was a part of who she had become:

I used to play teacher when I was a little girl, and I just always wanted to be a teacher. . . . Because I am a teacher. I don’t teach. I don’t teach. I am a teacher. It’s not what I do, it’s who I am.

*Kelsey*

Kelsey had taught fifth grade at Parker for ten years. She held a master’s degree in guidance and counseling and had an Ed. S. degree in early childhood education. In total, she had twenty-five years of teaching experience.

Kelsey was involved in opening Parker and in the implementation of its shared governance. She felt that teachers had to be part of educational improvement, and she shared her belief that teachers at Parker had not only been included but had also been actively involved in school leadership and improvement. In fact, she believed that Parker’s academic success could be attributed to the teachers’ job satisfaction and enjoyment resulting from the school’s encouragement of teacher leadership and teacher involvement in decision-making. To Kelsey, it was important to be involved and to participate, and she felt that she was an active participant:

I also think that when we’re in grade-level meetings, all of us share our opinions and all listen to each other. I do think I take an active part in that, too, trying to volunteer ideas or coming up with ideas of solving a problem we might have. But I’m not the only one. I think all of us contribute to that, but I do think I’m an active part of that.

Kelsey also expressed a belief that teachers at Parker worked harder than at any school she had previously taught in; and she attributed their work ethic to their respect for each other, to their love of their jobs, and to the school’s shared governance. Moreover, she felt that shared governance flowed into student benefits; she felt that students were recipients of improved practice and that they were also recipients through student democratic learning. In her classroom, students were involved in planning learning activities and in social problem solving.
Kelsey believed that instructional leadership at her grade level worked because it was rooted in the norm of equality, because it was shared, and because it was based on mutual trust and respect. Collaboration, which Kelsey described as a “two-way street,” was so important to her practice of instructional leadership that she made the following statement: “I can’t even imagine not having that anymore. I don’t think I’d want to teach without having that.”

Lydia

At the time of the study, Lydia, who held a master’s degree, taught kindergarten and had twenty-three years teaching experience, all in the school district. She had taught at Parker from the time it opened, and she lived in the community. Like Kelsey, Lydia had been involved in Parker’s decision to implement shared governance and in the decision to join the League of Professional Schools. Shared governance was important to her, and, consequently, she was able to provide a great deal of information about the school’s shared decision-making processes.

Lydia had served in a number of leadership positions over the years at Parker and, at the time of the study, was the mentor for two new kindergarten teachers. She was also involved in informal mentoring of other teachers, as well, and frequently opened her room for observation by others. To Lydia, it was important that she deal with others in such a way that they would always want to come back to her; she talked about the importance of honesty and of empathy in her instructional assistance to others.

Lydia believed that effective instructional leaders had to be “good listeners,” had to “pitch in,” “model,” and have a “positive attitude,” and did not have to be “boss.” She also believed that leaders were those who were available as a resource, who were willing to share, and who could build trust. She felt that others came to her because she could be counted on to
answer questions honestly and because she had the children’s best interests at heart. She also felt that others relied on her because of her experience and longevity at Parker.

Sharing and collaborating were important to Lydia. Consequently, she opened her classroom and her files to others. She felt that many individuals had given to her and had contributed to her leadership, and she wanted to do the same for others:

There was a time when I was a young teacher, and I certainly remember who my mentors were and watching them and observing them and taking things that I respected of them as leaders. Principals that I’ve had or assistant principals that I’ve had that are—just sitting back and watching and listening and just hoping that I can some way do for others some of the things that people have done for me.

Joy

Joy was a first grade teacher and held a master’s degree at the time of the study. She had taught at Parker for four years and had eleven years experience, seven of which had been in the local district, and four of which had been in another state.

To Joy it was important “to make a difference within the school and within the system,” and she felt that teacher leadership roles outside the classroom allowed her to do that. At the time of the study, Joy was serving as the NCLB representative for the first grade team, a position she had volunteered to take, despite its time demands and some philosophical differences she had with the NCLB Act. She explained her reason for assuming the NCLB role: “I’m going to embrace the things that I don’t necessarily like.” She described her involvement in NCLB as a learning and leadership-building experience, indicating that it had “stretched” her and had given her the opportunity to practice and emulate leadership skills she had seen others model.

Shared governance was important to Joy; she wanted to have voice, and she wanted to have the opportunity to grow as a leader. She felt that shared governance offered both. Moreover, she felt that shared governance promoted mutual respect and partnering relationships.
As a leader, she worked to promote teacher buy-in and to facilitate consensus through collaborative discussion and reflection.

Joy described the reciprocal nature of her instructional leadership, explaining that, to her, it was about “being a resource” to others and “learning from others.” She was dedicated to sharing ideas and resources; for instance, she had an extensive collection of personal resources related to teaching, which she freely shared with peers. Moreover, she felt that continuous growth through others was essential: “[The key], I definitely feel, to becoming a master teacher is just constantly learning from other people. It never ends. It never ends.”

Common Themes and Categories

Three major themes and thirteen categories emerged from the data analysis to explicate the participants’ perspectives of their instructional leadership. According to the participants in this study, instructional leadership at Parker Elementary School was a cooperative and collaborative practice in which instructional leaders engaged in co-determined instructional leadership strategies. The use of these instructional leadership strategies resulted in process interaction outcomes and impacted classroom instruction. Moreover, reciprocated empowerment and synergy, two dynamics at play in their collaborative instructional leadership, enhanced and multiplied the effects of their actions. Reciprocated empowerment is defined as a dynamic in which the effects of enablement are multiplied by reciprocation. Synergy is defined as a dynamic or collective force in which the effects of the collectivity are greater than the effects of the individual parts.

Table 2 provides an overview of the themes and categories discussed by the participants. As shown, each theme serves as an umbrella for the categories related to it. Theme 1 contains
the findings related to research questions 1 and 2. Themes 2 and 3 contain the answers to research questions 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 2

Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Dimensions Related to the Perspectives of the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders on Instructional Leadership

Theme 1: Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders

Category 1: Sharing instructional decision-making

Sub-category 1: Having voice

Sub-category 2: Participating in instructional decision-making processes

Sub-category 3: Reaching and supporting consensus

Category 2: Communicating for instructional purposes

Sub-category 1: Engaging in informal collegial communication

Sub-category 2: Participating in formal collaborative communication

Category 3: Focusing on improvement

Sub-category 1: Improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning

Dimension 1: Supervising and monitoring classroom instruction

Dimension 2: Building capacity

Sub-category 2: Improving school effectiveness

Dimension 1: Improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning

Dimension 2: Engaging in bridging activities

Dimension 3: Engaging in action research
Table 2 (continued)

*Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Dimensions Related to the Perspectives of the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders on Instructional Leadership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 4: Focusing on instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-category 1: Centering on children</td>
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<td>Sub-category 2: Targeting instruction</td>
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<td>Dimension 1: Planning and developing curriculum</td>
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<td>Sub-category 3: Serving the learning community</td>
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<td>Sub-category 4: Using strategic leadership behaviors to accomplish instructional purposes.</td>
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Theme 2: Process interaction outcomes

| Category 5: Strengthening relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect |
| Category 6: Establishing a partnering relationship |
| Category 7: Creating a positive learning environment |
| Category 8: Overcoming challenges |

Theme 3: Impacts of collaborative instructional leadership on classroom instruction

| Category 9: Improved teaching practice |
| Category 10: Increased leadership capacity |
| Category 11: Increased ownership |
| Category 12: Increased job satisfaction and stability |
| Category 13: Increased student engagement and achievement |
In the following sections of this chapter, each theme significant to the participants’ perspectives of instructional leadership at Parker Elementary School is discussed. Excerpts from the participant transcripts are used to support the findings and to illuminate the participants’ perspectives.

Theme 1: Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Used by the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders

Theme 1: Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Used by the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders is a broad conceptual theme that captures the participants’ perspectives of what “doing instructional leadership” at Parker Elementary School was about. As the findings reveal, participants viewed instructional leadership as a cooperative and collaborative practice of co-determined instructional leadership strategies. The strategies they described consisted of processes and actions that had been set forth in the school’s covenant and charter and which led to the fulfillment of the shared mission. Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders refers, then, to the processes and actions strategically engaged in by the principal and emergent teacher leaders in their practice of collaborative instructional leadership. This theme corresponds to the first and second research questions that guided this study: (a) What is the principal’s perspective of her instructional leadership, and (b) what are the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership?

Every participant in the study described being an active participant in cooperative and collaborative instructional leadership at Parker. Through their interviews, they identified four collaborative instructional strategies, consisting of instructional processes and actions, which comprise the practice of instructional leadership: (a) sharing instructional decision-making, (b)
communicating for instructional purposes, (c) focusing on improvement, and (d) focusing on instruction. In the following sections, each category is defined and described, and examples are presented to illustrate it.

Category 1: Sharing Instructional Decision-making

Sharing instructional decision-making refers to being involved in governance processes that ensure active participation of all instructional leaders in making instructional decisions. In talking about sharing instructional decision-making, participants discussed three sub-categories: (a) having voice, (b) participating in instructional decision-making processes, and (c) reaching and supporting consensus.

The instructional leaders believed that, under the school’s governance structure, they had a right to be heard in the instructional decision-making processes, that they had a right to participate in them, and that they had a responsibility to support decisions reached by consensus. The importance of sharing instructional decision-making is evidenced by the fact that all thirteen participants in the study discussed shared decision-making as a process that had promoted voice, permitted their involvement in instructional matters and decisions, and encouraged leadership. All thirteen participants mentioned reaching and/or supporting decisions made through the process. Moreover, they all participated in instructional decision-making at the school level, grade level, and classroom level.

Parker’s shared governance structure and its shared decision-making processes had a powerful effect on instructional leadership at the school. Shared governance was the philosophy of the original leadership and staff of Parker, and the school joined the League of Professional Schools shortly after it opened, adopting shared governance as its organizational structure. Ten
years later, shared governance had become an essential part of its identity. The principal elaborated on the relation of shared decision-making to Parker’s culture:

> It’s just part of the culture. A decade of involvement has just made it a part of our foundational pieces. We could never go back to not having shared decision-making. It just makes sense to us now. (Martha)

Parker’s mission, covenant, and charter (see Appendix D) were based on a commitment to teaching and learning, to the sharing of power with teachers, and to an ongoing program of school renewal. The school’s charter charged teachers and other staff with responsibility and accountability in the democratic decision-making process. The data strongly indicate that instructional leaders at Parker were dedicated and committed to Parker’s established mission, covenant, and charter; a number of topics discussed by the participants and presented in this chapter are directly related to points in the governance framework.

In addition to the organizational structure of the school impacting instructional leadership, the principal’s facilitative-democratic leadership style and belief system regarding shared governance strongly affected the instructional leadership of emergent teacher leaders. Martha shared her belief that shared decision-making and instructional success are causally linked: “I don’t think that anything can be successfully implemented . . . in the classroom, unless it happens through the [shared] decision-making.” This belief was central in her practice of instructional leadership.

Moreover, Martha’s leadership was guided by two assumptions related to shared decision-making. She believed that teachers were the most instructionally knowledgeable and, thus, were the logical ones to have primary voice in the instructional decision-making arena. That view guided her instructional involvement at the classroom level. She realized that, because she was not in the classroom every day, she did not have the first-hand knowledge
teachers have; consequently, she felt that they should have the predominant role in leading the instruction and that she should take the lead on the climate for instruction. Martha also believed that teachers’ decisions were the ones that mattered in implementing change, in that teacher ownership of decisions was what carried decisions from implementation into routine practice. She believed that teachers who made decisions implement decisions. She elaborated on how she encouraged buy-in and ownership:

Turning decision-making over to them, especially the critical decisions—all of the decisions that speak directly to their classroom needs—encouraging their thoughts, their planning, and their buy-in. It’s not that the program needs my endorsement; it needs their approval.

Martha’s beliefs matched Parker’s governance structure and set the leadership tone for shared decision-making.

Decision-making at Parker was a democratic and inclusive process dedicated to securing consensus for all decisions made. The process ensured that all teachers who wanted to be heard were heard. Biller summarized the perspectives of all thirteen participants when she explained that Parker’s shared decision-making process encouraged teachers to share their opinions, without forcing them to do so: “Everybody does attend, and everybody does feel free to speak, or not. I think that’s important, too. I mean, we don’t force anybody to contribute or to volunteer for anything.”

After informed discussion of instructional matters, decisions were made by reaching consensus. Lydia provided a description of the whole school decision-making process for determining Local School Plan for Improvement (LSPI) goals:

We usually come together again to generalize and say, “Okay, if we’re going to target two or three goals for next year, what are they going to be?” The way we do that is we have a sticker day. . . . We put the goals up, and every teacher is given like five stickers, the same amount, and then you’re able to go and look at all the things that we thought, as a school, we need to work on. That’s how we decide. This year we’re working on the
LSPI goals of reading and writing or comprehension, basically, and then math, some math problem solving. But how it was decided, we put our stickers on it. If I wanted to put all five stickers on comprehension—if I felt that strongly that that was the main thing—I could put all five there, or if I wanted to put three on comprehension and two on problem solving, I could do that. Then at the end, we just basically look by the stickers at which ones really are the goals that the majority of the school wants to work on. And what’s happened is—we’ve talked about it all year, so it’s usually not a surprise. You kind of know when you go in there that you feel like the school, as a whole, feels important.

Kelsey, who had been a teacher at Parker since it opened, explained the decision-making process at the grade level:

When I was grade leader, I didn’t feel like I was making decisions for my grade. I didn’t go to my grade and say, “Here’s how we’re doing it.” I went to my grade and said, “How do you want to do it? What are your ideas? Who would like to help me make these decisions, or [to] work on it together and give me your ideas?” which is basically what our administrators are doing with us. I think that is a very democratic way—nothing is done from an authoritarian point of view. It’s all done from, “How do we as a grade level want to do this? What are your concerns?” Even when we come up with an idea, and, let’s say five out of seven of us think this is a great idea, but two have a concern, we keep working until we have addressed the concerns so that everybody can feel comfortable with what we’re going to do. And I think that’s what our administrators are doing with us.

Kelsey continued, explaining her view that the decision-making process followed at Parker, which includes research, discussion, hearing all voices, and reaching consensus, ensured support for decisions:

By the time it goes through that process, you may not get the plan you were hoping for, but you are very clear that the plan that has been adopted is in the best interest of the school as a whole. And that everybody contributed to it. Therefore, it’s easy to buy-in to it, even if it’s not what you personally wanted.

As Lydia’s and Kelsey’s examples make clear, having voice was ensured by the process at the school level and grade level.

Sub-category 1: Having Voice

Having voice refers to having the opportunity to express one’s opinion and to have that opinion seriously and equally considered in the decision-making process. Having voice was
important to the instructional leaders in the study; all participants expressed their feeling that it allowed them to be collaborating partners in decision-making. The value of every voice and the norm of equality were respected and fostered in the shared decision-making processes.

Martha sought to establish equality in her dealings with emergent teacher leaders, and she wanted to have equal voice with other instructional leaders. She wanted to be seen as a partner of equal standing, rather than as one in a position of dominance, on instructional matters. She believed in working through others and in using the ideas of others, minimizing her voice and accentuating theirs. Providing the opportunity to others to be heard and to be equals on instructional matters was a priority in her leadership:

Listen to the pulse of the school, let the school belong to the masses of people that work inside the school, give everyone a voice, plant seeds of opportunity, provide as risk-free an environment as possible, and let the magic of wonder come alive in the hallways through the energy. Bring energy, passion, and let them feel that.

Similarly, to emergent teacher leaders, having voice meant having the freedom to express their opinions openly, as equals, in a school that belonged to them. Joy’s comment exemplifies the emergent teacher leader view that having voice contributes to the sense of cohesiveness: “We feel very free in voicing our ideas and our comments and what we feel is good and what we feel we don’t want. . . . Then we’re all on the same team. And it’s not administration versus teachers.” Like other emergent teacher leaders, Joy felt that not having voice was “very detrimental to teachers’ well-being.”

In addition to being involved in instructional decision-making, emergent teacher leaders at Parker were also included in school level problem solving. All emergent teacher leaders felt that their involvement in problem solving and the openness with which problems were discussed and handled at Parker had contributed to the positive climate. Eliza explained that “it’s like a
safety net mindset, so to speak, that you can really speak what you need to say and feel that it’s going to be received well and valued.” Cheryl’s comment expressed the shared view:

The meetings are very uplifting in a sense. We don’t really dwell on the negative, but we’re able to discuss [issues] if there are things that are nagging at us or causing some grief on the grade level. It’s nice to have that opportunity.

Moreover, all thirteen participants in the study felt that their opinions were valued, and they felt that they were treated as professionals. Being heard validated their sense of professional value, as the following comments indicate:

Our administrators ask for our input all the time and respect us as professionals and really do value what we say. (Kelsey)

[Martha] really makes you feel like your opinion is valued and accepted and that she’s ready to listen and wants you definitely to share your opinions. (Eliza)

Just as instructional leaders wanted voice and wanted to be heard, they all felt strongly that they had the responsibility of hearing the voice of others. As Kelsey previously noted in her description of grade-level decision-making, the minority was not ignored; their voice was heard, and consensus was sought. Similarly, Eliza expressed the shared view of her team that every voice was worthy of being heard and considered. She associated that view with the culture of the school:

We are all members present at our team meetings—because all members have value and worth and contributions on helping all of our children succeed. I believe, no matter where you are in your teaching career, we want your opinion, and we want to hear what you have to say. I think that’s definitely part of the culture of our school.

As the data demonstrate, Parker’s shared governance structure fostered equality and respect.

All participants in the study specifically stated that they trusted and respected their peers, that trust and respect led them to value the thoughts and beliefs of others. Lydia shared her belief that hearing others’ views, particularly when they diverged from her own view, led to reflection, to a broadening of thinking, and to the building of respect for the thinking of others:
Having the opportunity to hear the voices of other people makes me sometimes stop. Or sometimes there may be something that I don’t think is that important, but, then when I hear other people share, it makes me take another look and realize that maybe I need to study something more, that I need to think about it more.

All emergent teacher leaders shared Martha’s belief that shared decision-making facilitated buy-in to decisions and, thereby, increased decision implementation. Kelsey’s view was representative of emergent teacher beliefs; she believed that giving teachers voice, involving them, and getting them to buy-in is critical to improving schools:

I think buy-in is important. If you’re not buying in, you’ll do it, but you’re not going to do it happily, and you’re not going to do it thoroughly, and you’ll undermine it. I think teachers have to buy-in.

Nine participants in the study also expressed the belief that the shared decision-making processes in place at Parker led to better decisions because the processes called for decision-making informed by research and data, for reflective collaboration by all teachers, and for consensus. Participants felt that decisions reached through these processes capitalized on the collective mindset, experience, and expertise. Lucy summarized this belief, offering her view that collaborative decision-making efforts, whether at the grade level or the school level, were superior to individual efforts: “Two heads are always better than one.”

In sum, participants indicated that having voice was important to their instructional leadership, and they felt that Parker’s shared decision-making structure had ensured their voice, without forcing it. They also believed that it was their responsibility to listen to the voice of others.

Sub-category 2: Participating in Instructional Decision-making Processes

Participating in instructional decision-making processes refers to contributing to and being actively engaged in the processes through which decisions are made. While all teachers had voice and took part in decision-making at the whole school level, voice was amplified and
decision-making participation increased in proportion to their involvement in instructionally-related committee and team activities. Representation and greater participation in the governance process were effected in two ways: participants volunteered to participate, or they were elected by their peers. All participants mentioned being engaged in collaborative decision-making activities through committees and teams at the grade level and school level; in fact, most were involved in at least two committees and/or teams. They also had responsibility for decision-making in their classrooms.

Volunteering was, by far, the main way positions were filled and functions were performed at Parker; elections were less common. All of the emergent teacher leaders described volunteering for instructional decision-making activities and for leadership functions. Elizabeth provided an example of representation that involved both volunteering and being elected. The School Council at Parker had two teacher members who were elected to represent the teachers. Elizabeth, who was subsequently elected, explained that she had volunteered to be considered for the position because of her interest:

I serve on the School Council—two teachers serve on a council, called the School Council, it’s made up of our principal, two teachers, two business leaders, and two parents and we meet every month and discuss school functions. When I found out that we needed two teachers to serve on it, I volunteered to be one of the people to be voted on. I like to do that kind of thing. I really do.

Lucy explained that she did what needed to be done: “I just step up to what’s needed,” but she noted that she did so with a bit of caution against over-extending herself. Several participants noted that they periodically had to set limits, as Lucy expressed in this comment: “The time has to come away from something. And that’s probably why a lot of us draw [a line]. You have to draw a line for yourself somewhere over time.”
The norm of equality played a significant role in shared governance and in instructional leadership at Parker. All participants discussed the norm of equality, and all expressed that it was important to them. Martha wanted to be an equal, a partner, in the school’s instructional work. She explained that she worked for that equality:

I spend many hours, many conversations, many dialogues, equalizing the playing field. The first thing that I said to this group when I came here was that there was no division in who we were, that we were together in this effort that we do every single day here for children.

Similarly, emergent teachers wanted to be perceived as leaders; but they also wanted to be “one of many.” In fact, emergent teacher leaders were hesitant to do anything that, as they saw it, placed them in an elevated role or gave them a title, unless a collaborative decision placed them there. Michelle illustrated this view with an example:

When our previous grade level leader moved to a different school, several of my friends said, “Oh, you should do it, you should do it.” I’ve done it in another school, and I was very willing to do it. But I also wanted to make sure that it wasn’t just my friends talking. I was very insistence on the whole grade level having a say, and, if that is what they wanted me to do, then I would be happy to do it. . . . I wanted the whole grade level to say, like if there was someone else who wanted to do it. No one else wanted to do it. They were very happy with letting me do it. So I’m the grade level leader for this year.

Elizabeth expressed the shared perspective: “I don’t want to stand out. I don’t want to be a step above. I want to be with my team.” The data indicate that emergent teacher leaders preserved their equal status by taking turns, which is discussed in Category 4.

All twelve emergent teacher leaders who participated in the study believed that Parker’s shared decision-making structures and processes allowed them to be leaders. They also believed that, in participating in shared governance, they had developed leadership skills and abilities. Emergent teacher leaders agreed that leaders are born from having voice. Joy believed that shared governance encouraged leadership: “Being able to take part . . . having shared governance allows us to be leaders. We are able to voice our feelings. I feel they are definitely
heard. [Our voices] definitely are heard here.” Participants believed, too, that shared
governance provided opportunities for leadership. Lucy elaborated on this belief:

There are many, many opportunities here to step into those leadership roles, to either be
the representative at a conference or to be a representative from your grade level at a staff
development. There are opportunities like that all the time. . . . The opportunity is there
for anybody who really wants to do it. There are many more opportunities for leadership
here than there have been in other places.

Similarly, Lydia shared her belief that teachers are allowed and encouraged to be leaders at
Parker: “I think that’s the main thing with the instructional leadership at our school—we’re
allowed to be leaders. And it’s very much encouraged here by the administrators.”

At the school and grade level, through shared decision-making and consensus, emergent
teacher leaders were involved in adjusting instruction to the style of Parker, or in “Parkerizing”
instruction. Martha explained her belief that having the freedom to Parkerize instructional
initiatives and having freedom in classroom instruction had played a major part in the building of
instructional leadership:

Whether it’s books that we purchase or implementations—this year there is a new
mathematics implementation, and language arts is coming on board next—we have to
take what is given to us and make it our own. It’s in the making it our own that we build
an instructional leadership. It’s not my decision how we do that mathematics; it’s my
leaders in the classroom that will determine how we take that math adoption and make it
into a critical program of quality for our children. That’s how the instructional leaders
come up in the classroom.

The infrastructure of Parker was a web of instructionally-related committees and teams
that functioned at the grade level, across grade levels, and at the school level to facilitate
responsible shared decision-making, to provide effective communication channels, and to target
and support specific areas of instruction. Joy explained the perspective of all instructional
leaders that these committees and teams had played an important role in the school’s shared
governance, providing opportunities for participation in decision-making and providing vehicles for teacher voice:

There is definitely shared governance. I definitely feel that in this school, the teachers make decisions that impact the school’s future and our goals. It’s not a dictated something coming down to us, “This is what we have to do.” We really decide.

Each teacher at the grade level participated on a Quality Team. These teams (see Appendix A) represented the five major curriculum areas (language arts, math, social studies, science, and technology) and several other special areas, including a team for the safety of children and teachers. Quality Teams performed instruction-related work and managed progress on LSPI goals. One representative from each of the Quality Teams, the principal, and the assistant principals served on the Instructional Council. The Instructional Council coordinated instructional progress in all academic and special areas. Martha, who described the Instructional Council as the “key team,” explained that its purpose was to make sure “that instruction is always paramount.”

A representative from each grade level team served on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Committee, a committee implemented this year to ensure the school’s compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. From the perspectives of all of the participating instructional leaders, that committee was the most comprehensive and involved of all committees. The grade level representative facilitated meetings with teachers at the grade level two times per week during their joint planning time to discuss, resolve, and/or implement matters addressed by that committee. At one meeting during the week, they engaged in collaborative activities related to reading and language arts; at the other meeting, they worked collaboratively on math-related activities.
As described above, all teachers at Parker participated in whole-school instructional decision-making through committees and teams. Lydia talked about the involvement of all teachers in collaborative decision-making related to the school’s improvement plan and provided an overview of the process and its coordination through the LSPI Team:

The whole school is actually involved. We meet together as a grade level and discuss it, and then it goes to leadership, which is one representative from each body of the school, each grade level and special area and special education, and they discuss it. And then there is actually a team—after all is discussed and decided—then the team, the LSPI Team, those teachers sit down and write the goal. After they’ve written, they go back to the staff to look for corrections, for anything they need to add—it’s definitely a process where there’s much discussion, and everyone has input.

When schoolwide instructional problems or needs were identified at Parker, special ad hoc committees were formed to study the problem or need. Elizabeth provided an example that illustrates the way teacher voice at Parker led to action and to involvement:

We weren’t happy with our spelling program. We formed a committee, a Spelling Committee, and now we are in the process of implementing Abel County’s spelling program, Rebecca Sitton. We had only taken bits and pieces of it in previous years, and we just weren’t feeling completed. We talked about it in Literacy Team, and . . . we just wanted to take it to another level and to really implement the spelling program. So we now have a Spelling Committee, and myself and two other second grade teachers are on the Committee, as well as someone from each grade level.

Two emergent teacher leaders at Parker described being involved in another schoolwide decision-making process. They participated in hiring new teachers. Michelle had served on the Interview Team, and she talked about her involvement in the hiring process:

I served on the Interview Team here at Parker. . . . One of three [teachers] that talked with the applicants hoping to come to this school, either as transfers or as new teachers. The administration had a time with them, and we had a time with them. We were given questions to ask, but we were not limited to those. We were very supported in what things you can ask and what things you cannot ask. Then we were, after the interviews were over, able to give our input and write down some things we saw from these applicants. We had oral discussions with the administration to touch base, to see if they were hearing the same type of things that we were—and also seeing if different teachers were a good fit with different grade levels.
All thirteen participants shared the perspective that decision-making at the classroom level was in the hands of emergent teacher leaders. They had the freedom and autonomy to make all instructional decisions, as long as those decisions conformed to county system requirements and to the school’s co-determined instructional decisions. Martha shared her perspective on the importance of granting autonomy to teachers at the classroom level and at the grade level:

Knowing that we’re operating within the Abel County school policies and procedures, of course, I need to allow, for example, Cindy Knorr, who you met this morning, to be the specialist, the developer, the creator, the artist of that classroom. If I don’t, then she’s going to become stifled.

Lisa agreed with Martha that teachers should have autonomy and freedom to teach in their own style: “My opinion is that, to be a good educator, you should not be put into a cookie cutter mold. I think you need to have your [autonomy]. . . . [Otherwise], it would like a robot teaching.”

The principal’s belief in and respect of instructional leaders as “distinguished professionals” and “experts” guided her granting of autonomy and classroom decision-making freedom. Martha explained her belief:

I equate empowerment with the trust and the belief and the support system to get their job done, but according to their road map, as long as they’re within the auspices of the Abel County Board of Education.

She explicated her view that it was essential that she empower and endorse the instructional specialists through her trust and respect of them and that she allowed them to meet expectations in their individual styles of instruction:

I will simply lay the parameters of the new expectations of the county, back up, and let those teachers do that. I empower them with trust. Empowering and endorsing and encouraging and creating, hopefully, a risk-free environment. All comes under the umbrella of empowerment. Empowerment, enablement, encouragement, trust; it all comes under trust. If I empower them, hopefully, they see that I trust them to do the professional job that they do.
Emergent teacher leaders were appreciative that they worked in an environment in which they were allowed to make decisions and were free to run their own classrooms. Mollie noted her view that the freedom and autonomy to make classroom and grade level instructional decisions were granted by Martha: “I think that we wouldn’t be able to do that without the allowance that comes from the top.” Lucy also talked about her empowerment in the classroom, acknowledging the trust upon which it was granted:

She empowers me because she trusts me. I feel empowered to do my job because I know that the people who are leading me know that I’m here to do the very best that I can, and they trust me to do that. She hired me to do it. She knows that I’m capable of doing it, so she kind of turns it loose and lets me do what I know is the right thing to do.

The framework for Parker’s shared governance supported mutual respect and equal status, as well as a responsibility to support teaching and learning, and also empowered emergent teacher leaders. Having voice and collaborating promoted open exchange and acceptance of help among the emergent teacher leaders. They were non-directive in offering help and advice to their peers; in other words, they offered their ideas as respectful equals, which the following comments illustrate:

When I send an e-mail and say, “Here’s how to do the health grades on the computer,” they all know that I have to do that, too. And it’s not me telling them what to do. It’s, “I have some information that can help your day with health. Here’s how we do it.” I think that it’s easier to lead when you’re all at the same place. It’s just very lateral. (Michelle)

I love sharing what I do. And I think that’s where [her leadership] really comes from. I don’t think that I’m a bossy person. Like I said, I don’t ever push anything on anyone. I just take it, and say, “This worked for me. If you’d like it, let me know.” Or just putting it in someone’s box, they can throw it out, for all I care. But I’m just passing on information. (Elizabeth)

Emergent teacher leaders did not feel coerced or obligated to take the advice or to use the materials given to them. They had free choice to make decisions regarding the implementation of others’ ideas, and they respected the right of others to make their own decisions. Moreover, in
offering ideas and materials, they respected the teaching style differences among themselves.

Lisa, for instance, believed that their collaborative efforts at the grade level had elevated teachers’ sense of ownership of all instruction without jeopardizing teachers’ individuality. She explained her belief:

> We’re brought together because we have that professional respect; we don’t need to do it the same way. And I think if we felt the need to do it the same way, it would be stifling. It’s amazing to look at the different teachers on our grade level and how differently we teach. . . . We respect each other’s professionalism—but we are willing to help, give resources, give feedback to each other—and it’s always in a respectful way.

When their ideas took them into the realm of risk-taking, the instructional leaders engaged in collaborative instructional decision-making with Martha. For instance, Martha collaborated with and supported the use of a math program in Joy’s first grade classroom that was different from the county’s adopted program. Their collaborative plan for her classroom is discussed in more detail in Category 4.

In summary, all of the instructional leaders in the study participated in decision-making processes. These processes occurred at the classroom, grade, and school levels, and emergent teacher leaders felt that shared governance structures and processes not only allowed an increased level of participation but also promoted leadership.

**Sub-category 3: Reaching and Supporting Consensus**

*Reaching and supporting consensus* refers to arriving at a common agreement and standing behind the collective decision made through the shared decision-making process. Consensus is the desired outcome of shared decision-making at Parker, where the governance was based on a belief in the value of every voice and an assumption that the best decisions are those based on collective opinion. For the instructional leaders in this study, having voice and participating in decision-making were rights, and supporting consensus was a responsibility.
While reaching consensus was discussed by twelve of the participants, only five participants discussed supporting decisions reached by consensus, possibly because that support was, for the most part, taken for granted.

As noted earlier, in accordance with the rules of their governance, instructional leaders at Parker were expected to support and implement decisions. They believed that, because consensus was derived from a democratic process in which they were included and in which they had voice, it should be supported. Lydia shared her thoughts regarding consensus:

With shared governance, everyone is in on the decision. Even if it didn’t turn out exactly the way you personally wanted it, after hearing the discussion of others, you realize why it went the way it did, why that particular decision was made. Then everyone’s asked to support it.

All participants in the study felt that outcomes and impacts emanating from the effect of shared governance on their instructional leadership were overwhelmingly positive. However, four participants noted that there was a negative side of shared decision-making. The outcomes and impacts of shared governance are discussed in Themes 2 and 3.

In sum, to the participants in this study, sharing instructional decision-making was an important right and a responsibility granted through the school’s governance structure. It allowed teachers to be heard, to be represented in decision-making structures, to have equal say in decisions, and to participate in decision-making structures. It carried the responsibilities of making responsible, informed decisions and of standing behind decisions made by the group. Shared decision-making was integral to the other strategies of collaborative instructional leadership at Parker; in fact, it was the foundation on which instructional leadership was built.

Accountability and responsibility were important concepts in instructional leadership at Parker. The Preamble of the school’s Charter states, “Accountability and responsibility are two key words describing our democratic decision-making process.” The school’s shared decision-
making structures and processes provided the framework for accountability and responsibility. On-going pursuit of increased instructional knowledge, openness to instructional change, continuous monitoring of instructional progress, and continual cycles of action research characterized instructional leadership at Parker. In the remainder of Theme 1, findings related to these instructional actions are discussed.

Category 2: Communicating for Instructional Purposes

Communicating for instructional purposes refers to engaging in formal and informal communication interactions for purposes related to instruction. Throughout the participants’ discussions of their instructional communications, there were two recurring sub-categories: engaging in informal collegial communication and participating in formal collaborative communication. According to the data, all of the instructional leaders engaged in informal collegial communication and participated in formal collaborative communication for instructional purposes. Informal collegial discussions generally supported classroom instructional efforts and were fostered and encouraged by the physical layout of classrooms and by the daily schedules of teachers. Formal collaborative communication occurred through the school’s infrastructure of instructional committees and teams and through whole-staff meetings. They served to coordinate grade and school-level instructional efforts and provided a forum for discussion of instructional decision-related issues.

Sub-category 1: Engaging in Informal Collegial Communication

Engaging in informal collegial communication refers to having informal professional conversations with colleagues. All participants described engaging in informal collegial conversations and discussions to support instructional efforts. In their interviews they used the
term *sharing* to characterize these informal discussions; in fact, *sharing* was the term most frequently used by the emergent teacher leaders in their interviews.

Informal collegial communication was critical to Parker’s instructional leadership; it was a source of support and facilitated teacher-to-teacher growth. The participants supported others by sharing ideas and resources, by answering questions, and by offering suggestions; and they were supported by others in the same kinds of ways. Their sharing included support on curriculum planning, on instructional delivery, and on student concerns, and led to teacher learning.

The informality of collegial discussion was important; it occurred anywhere and anytime, allowing instructional leaders to address instructional matters in a timely manner. All twelve emergent teacher leaders participating in the study described frequent engagement in collegial discussions. Brooke commented on the anywhere-anytime nature of these discussions: “There are informal interactions which we have all the time—at the copy machine, at the end of the day. . . . We’re always talking back and forth.” Eliza referred to informal collegial conversations as “on the spot discussions”:

I also, informally, have many on the spot discussions with teachers regarding things such as our Read the Schools, for example. We’ll have conversations about what goals we want to achieve and how can we get there. We’ll have other kinds of on-going discussions relating to curriculum or sharing of lesson ideas.

Michelle reinforced the fact that informal collegial communication happened anywhere and anytime colleagues were together and a need for discussion arose. She discussed informal collegial discussions at Leadership Meetings:

And then sharing information when we come to the Leadership meetings—I often talk to the second and fourth grade teachers because our kids are going through about the same type of things, and so we might talk about how best to incorporate the Sitton spelling.
Informal collegial discussions occurred for a number of reasons. Participants described instructional discussions related to curriculum and instructional needs, to shared interests, to shared expertise, and to shared experience. The following comments exemplify informal collegial discussion promoted by a need or an interest related to curriculum planning or instructional delivery:

I would say informal kind of happens as needed; they’ve got a question, and they want to know the answer right now. They don’t want to wait two days until the meeting. They come and ask. Or, when you’re sitting at lunch and something comes up, it’s like that reminds them of a question they want to ask about something. (Lydia)

I’m trying to give them some helpful tips, and I guess we’ll just discuss a way or two to present the information that’s new, that they’ve never seen before. That sometimes is a little more helpful, if we share the way we present it to the students. . . . But then at the same time, I need help with maybe my literature circles, and I’ll go in and say, “You know, I just feel like this did not work. Help me!” And then I get my information from them. (Lisa)

As Lisa’s comment indicates, sharing at Parker was also reciprocal. It was based on “give and take.”

Just as Parker’s shared decision-making structures and processes promoted teacher voice, they also set a framework for the value of all opinions. Kelsey provided an example of how a teacher new to Parker two years ago had been a resource to others on guided reading:

She’s had a lot of experience in her student teaching with reading workshops and how to have guided reading and that kind of thing with the students. Now, we’re doing that here. But, we’re just getting our feet wet. . . . We know we have to grow. She’s had different experiences than we’ve had, and she shared with us some of the ways she conducted it in the classrooms she was observing and has given us help.

Eight participants indicated that they communicated with others because they shared an interest or expertise. Brooke, a gifted certified teacher, provided an example of emergent teacher leaders seeking out others who shared the same interest and expertise:
I talk a lot with the other gifted teacher, who has been here several years, and she has some great feedback. We also meet, the gifted teachers meet, and we share ideas and problems that we’re having and how to solve them.

Eleven participants described how shared experiences of teaching also served to promote informal communication and sharing. Brooke explained that she and another teacher had developed a relationship because they shared the common experience of being new teachers at Parker last year. She described talking with that teacher about social studies and planning with her:

The teacher next door to me was also new last year. We did a lot of survival skills last year. She did a lot of planning on the social studies, and since I’m teaching social studies, I’ve been talking to her and planning and problem solving with her a good bit.

Joy provided an example of informal communication emanating from a shared experience, the need to generate newsletters to keep parents informed of classroom happenings:

I develop a newsletter for my students every week to send home to the parents, and I found a very easy and quick way to do it on the computer. When I came to the school, I shared it with a few of the first grade teachers. . . . I said, “Y’all need to try to do it this way because it is a lot easier.” And from sharing it with a couple of teachers, other teachers have come to me and asked me to teach them how to do the newsletter.

In addition to discussing face to face communications, ten instructional leaders related how they had shared materials and ideas by making copies and placing them in other teachers’ mailboxes and by e-mailing ideas and resources to each other. Elizabeth described these reciprocal practices:

We just share each others’ ideas, even if it’s something as mundane as a new worksheet I made up or a new activity that I typed up to go with a lesson. Like I said, we’ll make eight of them, or we’ll just e-mail it as an attachment to everyone on the grade level.

The data indicate that emergent teacher leaders shared a what-is-mine-is-yours attitude regarding instructional ideas and resources. All of the emergent teacher leaders described this
selfless sharing of ideas and resources. “Pride of ownership” appeared to be non-existent at Parker. Michelle illuminated this point:

Whenever I’m doing anything that I know the whole grade level could benefit from, I just try to e-mail it with an attachment, or put it in their boxes. I don’t need to have my name all over it. I don’t even need for them to know who did it, unless they want to change it.

Elizabeth explained why she thought “pride of ownership” did not interfere with the free flow of ideas at Parker:

We share ideas, particularly in our grade level. There are so many days there’s something in our boxes, and we have no idea where it came from. . . . You don’t have the ownership of, “My class did this.” You share your ideas because, I think, we take into consideration what’s best for the child, not what’s best for us as a teacher. I don’t think you need to have ownership of those ideas.

The sharing of materials and ideas by emergent teacher leaders occurred between and among equals and was, therefore, non-directive. In their communications with each other, materials and ideas were offered with respect for the teaching abilities of others and with the knowledge that teaching styles differed among teachers. Instructional leadership at Parker, among the emergent teacher leaders, appeared to work because it was collaborative, because it was two way, and because it was non-directive; these were recurring topics in all emergent teacher leaders’ interviews. Kelsey’s comment exemplifies these topics:

We can either use it or not. But we have that at our fingertips if we choose to. And we can modify it. Nobody’s insulted if I like your idea but I want to modify it to make it work in my classroom; nobody’s insulted by that either. So you can pick and choose from all these ideas, but you have a new source of them.

Similarly, Michelle talked about the non-directive nature of emergent teacher leadership, noting that sharing was a reminder to others of the shared experience: “So by sharing you’re not saying, ‘Do it like me,’ at all. But you’re saying, ‘I’m doing this too.’”

All of the participating instructional leaders believed that cooperative communication and sharing made sense because it eliminated duplicate work. Michelle provided an example in
which she worked with the technology specialist to better understand how to implement
computerized report cards, and she shared the results of that work with her teammates:

Well, as we started going through this, I realized they need a copy of it just as much as I [did]—so I asked her, “Would you be able to copy eight more, so that we can all have one?”—so that, when we come to the meeting next week, it’s not brand new.

All of the participants expressed the belief that informal collegial communication had been critical to their instructional leadership: through it they grew; through it they coordinated; and through it they developed relationships. The following comments exemplify emergent teacher leaders’ use of informal collegial communication for instructional coordination:

We are all checking with each other on pacing a curriculum and where we are with instruction. Generally we’re all around the same area, and we’re all teaching the same kind of skills. It’s timely kinds of discussions. (Eliza)

We’re also using some lessons—the county has made lesson plans—so we’re trying that as a grade level to try to help bring us together. Just bouncing ideas back and forth—we’re all kind of on the same point, too. (Brooke)

We have a new spelling program this year. As we’ve implemented the spelling program, we’ve had lots of staff development as a whole school. Nonetheless, as a grade level, we have to decide how are we evaluating it, how are we doing it, how are we fitting it into our schedule, and we’ve all shared those ideas. (Kelsey)

Nine instructional leaders explained their belief that informal collegial discussion was generally more valuable to them than the formalized collaboration that took place through committee structures. For instance, Lisa felt that informal collegial discussion provided a greater opportunity for timely response; as she saw it, teachers needed to collaborate when they needed to collaborate. She explained what she meant: “It’s usually during lunch, really, not when we’re told to collaborate. It just happens, when it’s needed.”

Biller concurred with Lisa’s view that formal collaboration was important but that informal collaboration better met immediate needs. She discussed her belief that informal collegial discussion allowed more detailed and specific discussion:
I think it’s important. In the past we had formal collaboration meetings, where second met with first grade or second grade met with third grade where we all discussed—personally I don’t think that’s as valuable as the informal collaboration where you go to somebody and say, “I want to talk about this or that.”

All instructional leaders felt that communication was essential and that collaboration, informal and formal, had been critical to their instructional leadership and to the communal oneness.

Like the emergent teacher leaders, Martha engaged in informal collegial dialogue and in formal collaborative discussions. These forms of communication, she believed, kept her informed about emergent teacher leaders’ instructional efforts, allowed her to be a collaborating participant in instruction, and facilitated coordination of efforts toward a common instructional goal. Martha often used reflective questioning during collegial discussions to promote self-reflection and to encourage leadership growth. She gave an example, in which she had asked emergent teachers leaders, “Where are you now, this year, as a leader?” She also offered support for instructional efforts by asking, “What can I do to support you?” Kelsey provided a description of such a conversation with Martha:

Just words of encouragement, you know, saying, “Anytime you are interested in pursuing another interest or in another area of your personal development, please come discuss it with me. I’d like to see how I can support you.” I think those kinds of things are really encouraging.

As it was for emergent teacher leaders, listening was also a critical part of Martha’s instructional leadership. She believed that being a good listener was essential to instructional leadership: “I think it’s listening for their passion, seeing where they want to go, and not attaching anything that will hold them back because it’s that passion that you don’t want to diminish. It’s from that passion that good things will happen in their classroom.” She explained her perspective that their two-way communication, collaboration, and collaborative decision-
making had allowed them to create a path together: “So why should I, as a leader, invent the path for us? Why don’t I listen to my people and we create that path together?”

Creating a path together necessitated the opportunity for interaction. Martha believed that collegial and collaborative communication was equally important for teachers and felt that the school’s physical layout and the teachers’ schedules should serve to open communication channels. Therefore, she implemented two major changes this year, the clustering of grade level classrooms and the arrangement of joint planning time at each grade level. Participating emergent teacher leaders shared their views about grade level clustering and about having joint planning time:

This year it was made a priority to get grade levels together and teachers together so we could more easily have our planning meetings and we could have those informal, but ongoing, discussions about curriculum and children throughout the day. (Eliza)

The shared planning time that we have this year certainly gives us more time to be there for each other and to share and to give suggestions. (Lydia)

Eight emergent teacher leaders explained that being clustered and having joint planning time facilitated coordination of instructional efforts through informal collegial dialogue and fostered special teaching arrangements with other teachers, as well. For instance, some teachers routinely planned together; others co-taught. Lucy discussed working cooperatively with another teacher on planning:

Another fourth teacher and I shared lots this summer and are now collaboratively teaching—and I know there are two other fourth grade teachers that are doing that, too—just with one subject. We’ve tried it with one subject now. So just sharing information, sharing materials, sharing workload, sharing ideas has made us be much more productive. You can be more productive that way.

In addition to talking with others about teaching ideas and strategies, all instructional leaders related that they communicated informally with others about specific students. They
sought the suggestions and ideas of others for dealing with learning problems, as Biller’s comment illustrates:

If I’ve had questions for another teacher at another grade level, I don’t ever hesitate to ask or to go to them, and I think they come to me, especially when you’re talking about a student. Like if you’ve been concerned about a student this year, and then they move on. That teacher might come to you and ask, “How did things go last year with this student?” And you’re still concerned. I think there’s a lot of that cross grade level talk, very informally. At lunch a lot of that happens.

Michelle explained that she went to her peers when she encountered a child who had been struggling to understand a concept, and she gave an example of what she might ask: “How do you think I should teach little Johnny, who is just not getting it?”

Emergent teacher leaders also communicated informally with other teachers about students who were pulled out of the classroom for services, and some planned with those teachers on curriculum and instructional delivery matters. Biller discussed collaborative planning that she had done with another teacher to coordinate the work of a special needs student: “I collaboratively plan with my mainstream student’s teacher, actually once every other week.” Similarly, Elizabeth talked about her continual communication with a math specialist who had worked with one of her students:

It goes beyond the grade level to the special areas teachers also. I have one student right now that is being tutored by the math specialist. We continually talk about her progress so the things the math specialist does with her in her tutoring can fit in with what I’m doing with my classroom. So it goes even beyond the grade level.

Summarizing, instructional leaders frequently engaged in informal collegial discussions with their peers. The discussions occurred for a number of reasons and provided curriculum support, instructional support, and student support. The discussions also built relationships and fostered teacher growth.
Sub-category 2: Participating in Formal Collaborative Communication

Participating in formal collaborative communication refers to engaging in formally planned, cooperative interactions, in which the best thinking of all participants is brought to bear on the instructional issue under discussion. Collaborating was the second most frequently used term in the interviews; all instructional leaders in the study participated at the grade and school level in formal collaborative discussions and meetings to support decision-making, to coordinate instructional efforts, and to enhance teaching and learning.

As explained previously, formal collaborative communication at Parker occurred through an infrastructure of committees and teams. The purpose of the formal communication systems and structures was coordination of a seamless operation, wherein instructional decisions were made cooperatively and collaboratively for the benefit of the whole and communication flowed in two directions through the organization in a timely manner. Lydia described the whole-school orientation that was fostered through formal communication: “Our main purpose is to see the whole school, to not get locked up in your grade, thinking only about yourself and forgetting that there are other grade levels.”

The communication systems and structures allowed the community, dispersed over the expanse of a large building, to run along parallel tracks, crossing planes and intermingling for collaboration and coordination often enough to sustain the focus on their mutually determined destination. Martha explained her role in and her vision of these coordinated instructional efforts:

I need to be an informed supporter, but a conversational participant and advocate so that, rather than just being a parallel track of leadership to instruction, I’d like for our track to intermingle and cross planes, so that we are doing [it]—moving it together. So if I could provide a vision, it would be a parallel to excellence with my continual interruption and participation in their dialogues and in their planning and being a part of their planning team.
All instructional leaders at Parker felt that they were coordinated in terms of instructional values and in terms of instructional efforts. For instance, Biller commented, “I think everybody is on track, moving in the right direction.” Martha’s comment exemplifies the shared view that their instructional leadership had been a coordinated and collaborative effort behind a common purpose:

We don’t interfere . . . [with] each other in this positive culture. We run parallel with each other toward the same goals. I know my staff now where we’re not bumping heads at all. We’re moving in a constant direction. Have I helped set that direction? I would think so. That would be part my role of being assigned here. But, instead of just simply setting the direction, the minds—the collective minds—come together in parallel pathways, and we move simultaneously together.

Committees and teams were the conduits for the flow of information and coordination of instructional work. For instance, through the Team Leader, business matters of the school were brought to the grade level team meetings, where they were collaboratively discussed. Similarly, team business matters and information flowed back to the Leadership Team through the Team Leader. The following comment illustrates the two-way flow of information:

We have a Leadership Team [member] that reports back to us. So we’re getting direct information. . . . Any input we have about an issue at school goes to our grade leader and then goes on to the Leadership Team. (Lisa)

As previously explained, Quality Teams represented the major curriculum areas, as well as special areas. These cross grade teams worked collaboratively to coordinate instruction in each area of the curriculum. In keeping with the school’s charter and covenant, instructional work in each curriculum area was continuously monitored at the grade level to ensure that LSPI goals and county standards were met. Information flowed through the grade level representative for each Quality Team. Lydia explained the importance of the cross grade structure of the Quality Teams:
It’s across grade level. . . . Kindergarten teachers are able to go to these meetings and actually hear what 4th and 5th grade teachers are saying. Because the important thing for us, as a school, is [a whole-school orientation]. . . . It’s really beneficial for us to hear issues of 4th and 5th grade, because, when our decisions are made, we make them as a whole school. We’re making them for the best of all the students. And on Quality Teams, that’s where it’s important to meet across-grade-level, to hear how the flow goes.

Eliza shared her belief that the cross-grade-level composition of Quality Teams had enhanced instructional discussions and encouraged ownership of all children:

We have a variety of different Quality Teams where teachers are divided up, not just by their own grade level, but they all serve on different committees—which make for good cross curriculum discussions, in terms of all of us having ownership of all of our children together. It’s good to bring different people together with different ideas to share and discuss different target areas of concerns.

At their grade level meetings, emergent teacher leaders received and discussed instruction-related information flowing from the Quality Teams and the Instructional Council, and they provided information to those teams. For instance, they reported on their individual progress on teaching the standards, as well as on progress related to LSPI goals. All participants described how they had worked collaboratively during their grade level meetings to address issues related to their instructional progress. Michelle provided an example of collaborative instructional work accomplished by her team:

Then we had a planning meeting where we came up with this big chart about how to convert a writing stage to a grade. I decided it would be good to type it out and make a copy for everyone.

Lydia explained the connection between the Quality Teams and the Instructional Council and described the instructional information flow between them:

There’s also a representative from each Quality Team that makes up another committee [Instructional Council] that actually meets with Martha and the assistant principals. And then they talk to her about specific issues for the certain curriculum area they’re talking about. So it’s kind of just a different way for her to hear because, with grade level, she kind of hears general concerns. Leadership’s the whole school, but when the Quality Team leaders meet with her, it’s basically [academic area] specifics: “This is an issue we had in Social Studies, or this is something we’re trying to work on in Language Arts.”
Martha confirmed that she and Instructional Council members “brainstormed” teaching and learning in all academic areas. She explained that it was through the Instructional Council that she kept her “ear to the ground for needs and aspirations and dreams of instructional movement in our school.”

The formal collaborative effort discussed most often by the emergent teacher leaders was the newly formed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Committee and its work. Because of the frequency of meetings, because every emergent teacher leader participated in them, and because of their curriculum-based and instruction-based purpose, the NCLB meetings were an integral part of the instructional leadership of each emergent teacher leader. All participants believed that the collaborative meetings had provided a regularly scheduled opportunity for collaboration on curriculum and instructional ideas and materials and on student instructional issues. The following comments illustrate their beliefs and the multiple benefits of these meetings:

I don’t know how we would have started our new spelling program . . . and I don’t know how we would have been using our [new] math, if we hadn’t had time to get together and talk about it. (Biller)

But then the sharing in conversation at our grade level meetings—we meet twice a week during our planning time—one day a week is language arts; one day a week is math. And we share ideas that way too. We go around the room and just—“What worked for you really well this week,” “What activity blew you away this week that you want to share with others?” And usually there’s something from everybody. You can’t do all the activities, but you get to pick and choose. (Elizabeth)

We are working on the team times, collaborative planning, putting faces to data, so to speak, looking at children and identifying students that might be at risk of not succeeding on the CRCT tests. (Eliza)

The collaborative effort through the NCLB Committee extended beyond the grade level. Lisa noted that an AP attends the collaborative meetings. She felt the presence of the AP enhanced communication and coordination between the grade level and the Administrative Team:
We also have an assistant principal that comes to our collaborative meetings. So we’re getting feedback from administration; they’re addressing issues we might have, and they’re also giving suggestions. And they ask for our input.

Eliza explained that, through the collaborative work, the team members had been proactive in their strategies to prepare students for CRCT testing and for meeting requirements of NCLB.

Four of the participants expressed some reservation about the formal structure of the NCLB meetings. For instance, one emergent teacher leader mentioned the fact that set meetings had not necessarily matched to needs, in terms of agenda and time. Lisa felt that collaboration, as it was handled prior to the implementation of the NCLB initiative, had been effective and timely:

We’ve been meeting twice a week, which has been mandated, to collaborate. I think that collaborating with teachers is very positive, but I felt like we did an excellent job with that before. I feel that the structure is a little difficult to do, because I’m not positive I’m going to be ready to have questions to collaborate on a Tuesday, necessarily, or a Thursday. I found we were very successful in doing that when we needed to [before the NCLB formal structure].

In addition to serving on committees, six of the participants had served as mentors at the time of the study. Michelle explained that the Mentor Program, which is discussed in Category 3, has a monthly meeting for collaboration among all mentors and mentees. The mentors, however, talked more about the informal collegial meetings between the mentors and mentees than about the formal meetings.

Nine participants felt that the collaborative efforts of the instructional leaders at the grade level supported segregation and delegation of tasks among members of the teams. They often coordinated their efforts during collaborative meetings, with one team member assuming responsibility for a team function. Michelle provided an example of coordinating efforts:

It’s taking collective questions from the grade level and then that one person going to the media person or the technology person, saying, “My grade level has this question. Can you tell me and then I’ll go tell them.” [It avoids] all of them, having to find their way
down, and asking nine different questions. So it helps the technology lady, not to say it nine times, it helps the grade level to have one answer, and it helps us talk through things to see what our [collective] answer should be.

In addition to fostering communication by clustering grade level classrooms and by coordinating joint planning times for the grade levels, Martha had facilitated communication among teachers by creating two full-time stellar substitute teacher positions and by adding one formal position, a Master Mentor Teacher position. The stellar subs and the Master Mentor Teacher were available to allow teachers to interact and communicate with other instructional leaders to improve teaching and learning. These programs are discussed in more detail in Category 3.

This discussion of Category 2 focused on how all participants in the study engaged in formal collaborative communication through the school’s infrastructure of committees and teams. They collaborated at the grade level and at the school level, and all participants felt that formal collaboration was critical to instructional leadership. Participants in the study engaged in two forms of communication related to instruction: informal collegial discussion and formal collaborative communication. Through these forms of communication they coordinated instructional efforts to accomplish their common purpose. Communicating for instructional purposes was, thus, an important part of their instructional leadership.

**Category 3: Focusing on Improvement**

*Focusing on improvement* refers to setting instructional priorities and adhering to prioritized instruction-enhancing activities that build capacity of staff and lead to school renewal. Focusing on improvement includes two recurring sub-categories: *improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning* and *improving school effectiveness*. In general, improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning includes activities related to staff improvement;
improving school effectiveness includes schoolwide efforts to increase school outcomes and to move the school forward in its instructional endeavors.

All of the participants in the study engaged in and discussed their involvement in activities related to improvement of themselves and others and to school improvement. For instance, all emergent teacher leaders had engaged in efforts to improve classroom instruction and participated in grade level and school level instructional improvement efforts, as had the principal. Emergent teacher leaders had the more active and direct role in improvement activities at the classroom and grade level; they self-directed their own growth and development activities, and they self-monitored and auto-supervised their own practice. They also collaboratively monitored grade level instructional practice. The principal’s leadership style directly impacted the emergent teacher leaders’ and the school’s focus on improvement. Moreover, the principal had a broader role than emergent teacher leaders had in directing school improvement activities.

Martha’s leadership style and beliefs dovetailed with the school’s philosophy and organization. She believed that, by building the leadership of others, she could contribute to a successful and stable school that was not reliant on the leadership of one but rather on the leadership of all. In fact, she subscribed to the theory that the proof of a good leader is the leader’s dispensability. As Martha saw it, a good leader builds leadership in others and moves into theoretical obsolescence, becoming a dispensable part of the organization. She wanted instruction to be a seamless process, independent of her presence. As she explained in this comment, building a seamless process and becoming a dispensable leader were goals of her instructional leadership:

My job is to build leaders, and I needed to prepare for my exit from the moment I arrived on the scene. In other words, I want to build leadership, build the decision-making, and
build responsible caretakers of the instructional program here as though I was walking out the door tomorrow. I needed to prepare for my exit from the moment I came almost three years ago.

Consequently, Martha sought to accomplish this goal of building leadership in others and of improving the school through her practice of instructional leadership.

**Sub-category 1: Improving the Quality of Classroom Teaching and Learning**

*Improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning* refers to engaging in activities that enhance and improve instruction in the classroom. This sub-category consists of two major activities: *supervising and monitoring classroom instruction* and *building capacity*. Both activities contributed to improvement of the school’s effectiveness. All thirteen participants had engaged in both of these activities, and all thirteen discussed them.

*Supervising and monitoring classroom instruction* refers to performing instructional oversight activities at the classroom level to measure and ensure effectiveness of instruction. All participants engaged in this instructional activity, and it was discussed by all participants. Moreover, the responsibility for supervising and monitoring classroom instruction was directly tied to the school’s charter.

Martha’s instructional leadership included the responsibility of monitoring classroom instruction through teacher supervision and evaluation functions and of overseeing grade level instructional activities. Emergent teacher leaders performed auto-supervision of their own classroom practice, and they worked collaboratively with other team members to supervise and monitor progress at the grade level. Their oversight at the grade level also included unofficial supervision of others, particularly of new and struggling teachers.

Martha believed that she had to train not only herself but also the instructional leaders to recognize quality instruction. She believed that, if they were trained to recognize quality
instruction, they would be more effective in delivering it. As the following comment reveals, Martha engaged in reflective questioning of herself about her responsibility for providing what the staff had indicated they needed for on-going growth:

   But I also have a dual role of making sure that quality leadership and quality instruction are taking place in those classes. How do I train myself to have an eye for that? And how do I provide what the staff tell me they need as far as staff development—the experiences, the opportunities, the observations, the training—so that they know that they are providing the quality instruction for those children?

   At the classroom level, in accordance with her trust of the instructional staff and of their distinguished professionalism, Martha allowed classroom instructional leaders to do “what they are best at” and to self-monitor their own classroom instruction. With the following comment, she explained her perspective: “They don’t need me on their shoulder. They don’t need me on their coattails. They need to be empowered to do their excellent thing, what they are best at.”

   In fact, Martha felt that her role in classroom instruction was secondary and that it should stay relegated to that position. She believed that her over-involvement would stifle the work of the instructional leaders; as she explained it, she felt that her over-involvement would “taint the territory”: “So there comes a time when I say to my assistant principals and my leaders, I will only be a part of this up to a point because there comes a point when I ‘taint the territory.’”

   Martha’s beliefs in emergent teacher leaders’ self-monitoring practices were well founded; all participants confirmed their use of informal self-monitoring, or auto supervision, as well as their self-directed engagement in growth activities. Brooke, who had often taught the same lesson to two classes, her own and that of another teacher, described how she reflected on and inquired into her own practice, making changes to her instruction after teaching her class first:
I experiment with my class first. I do a unit with my class first, and then . . . the things that I thought of when I’m teaching it . . . I can tweak it as I go. And so her class gets a real good unit.

Brooke also noted that she had conducted informal action research in her class to monitor the effectiveness of her instruction and student learning. She explained, for instance, that she had developed an Excel spreadsheet to record and monitor student data and growth, and she described how she used the spreadsheet during parent conferences:

I was able to create an Excel spreadsheet that would show the parents at conference time—first conference, second conference, and the end of the year—this graph of here’s where your child was . . . . They see this chart, and they see that he made a zero on a pre-test, or he made a twenty on the pre-test, and it helped me explain to them—or helped the parents see that—“Okay, he didn’t make an A on it, but he knew minimal going into it.”

Similarly, Lucy and Eliza explained their use of assessments in informal classroom action research:

The pre-testing and the post-testing—seeing what worked and what didn’t and then moving on from there and changing instruction based on the group you have. (Lucy)

I think as you take frequent assessments with your children, weekly assessments in a variety of curriculum areas, you’re monitoring the children’s progress and constantly rethinking your instruction—instructional strategies—according to your children’s abilities and how you can help each child achieve mastery of the objectives in a short period of time. (Eliza)

Emergent teacher leaders felt safe and comfortable in sharing their shortcomings and failings; honesty with their peers was non-threatening. As previously noted, their peers knew their weaknesses, as well as their strengths. When they failed in instructional delivery, they admitted it and asked for help. Michelle, who had continuously assessed the value of her teaching techniques and resources, provided an example that demonstrates the openness that exists among teacher leaders: “And if it turns out to be a bad idea, I’ll change it. I’m not above saying, ‘It sunk. And it wasn’t a good idea. How can I change it?’” Biller noted that, during the second grade NCLB meetings, team members identified their instructional successes and shared
their teaching failures to allow others to learn from their achievements and mistakes. This practice, which was initially implemented to assist a struggling teacher, had provided scaffolding and, simultaneously, moral support without singling out the teacher. Biller explained:

> We’ve just started having conversations at the grade level, “How’s this working for you? What kinds of things are not working for you—not you, but you as a whole—let’s talk about how it’s going.” So just opening it up in that way for everybody. And hearing what other people are doing or not doing or what they’re struggling with and just trying to not to go right at the person.

All twelve emergent teacher leaders reported feeling a responsibility to assist anyone who was struggling, whether help was sought or not. Lydia felt that it was an instructional leaders’ responsibility to step in “if you see something that you think they’re not doing.” However, she felt that help should be provided in an empathetic and positive way that did not single out the individual’s weakness. Lydia shared her perception that rendering supervisory assistance in a positive manner was in keeping with the principal’s way of supervising: “I think the principal and I very much agree on helping someone who needs help but doing it in a way that’s positive for everyone involved.”

All twelve emergent teacher leaders discussed working collaboratively at the grade level to coordinate and monitor their instructional efforts. They continuously assisted each other in monitoring their pacing and their progress through required curricular standards. Through their joint planning meetings, they ensured effectiveness of teaching strategies and curricular materials, and, thereby, ensured that all children at the grade level were receiving quality teaching. Lucy’s comment illuminated the coordinated work of the grade level team:

> We try as a team to stay pretty close together curriculum-wise, but if somebody else is a chapter ahead in math, they will certainly share with us what not to do or what to definitely do or what worked or what didn’t. So we actually make some adjustments informally along the way.
Martha typically supervised and monitored classroom instruction through on-going classroom visits, through reflective professional conversations, and through input from administrative staff and committees. She referred to her classroom visits as “cruise-bys”:

I trust them tremendously, because they’re doing a good job. And if for any reason they’re not, I typically know that, as well, through observations, through cruise-bys, through visits, or through a parent phone call.

She frequently engaged in professional reflection on practice with teachers, which she referred to as instructional counseling. When she was asked to describe that role, she said, “Again, one of monitoring, one of reflecting with them. Probably one of my most critical roles here is to be the instructional counselor.”

At the grade level, Martha monitored instruction through feedback from administrative staff, as well as from the Master Mentor, who had been assigned to work collaboratively with the different grade levels and with the Quality Teams for each academic area, through reports generated by committees, and through her own involvement in the committees:

I have the honor of leading the Instructional Team, where I get to keep my ear to the ground for needs and aspirations and dreams of instructional movement in our school. So being an instructional leader and supervising the dynamics of the instructional program, I can’t and I don’t need to turn loose of that.

Martha was aware that lack of time and her title limited her supervision efforts. For instance, she knew that a full tour of all classrooms took two and one half hours, and she was fully aware of the burden of her title on supervision. She shared her view of the hurdle created by her title:

Supervising to the point, and then comes the cloud of evaluation, and that tends to spoil everything. So you’re always guarding between being a supervisory encourager, a reflective practitioner helping them see the next possibility of where we can go instructionally, to the point where they know, I know, and it’s in black and white, because we sign our names, I’m their evaluator. Then the role becomes tainted.
To offset the limitations in her involvement, she maintained an “open door” policy to make herself available, and she kept herself informed of instructional activities in the school. Moreover, Martha had taken a proactive step, the creation of a full-time position for clinical supervision, the Master Mentor, to fill the void in supervision.

As part of her instructional leadership, Martha was also charged with the responsibility of maintaining quality staff in the classrooms. Thus, improving the quality of classroom instruction brought the responsibilities of hiring and terminating staff. Martha involved other staff members in the hiring process. Through additions to the staff she sought to enhance learning and teaching within the learning community; she looked to hire individuals who could add to the existing talent and knowledge pool. Martha explained that, on rare occasions, she is faced with personnel termination. She discussed this aspect of her job, as well:

Occasionally, unfortunately, with those that cannot either keep my trust or keep my feelings of endorsement towards them, because of their actions or their ineffectiveness as an instructional leader, we have to have some very direct instructions and plans for improvement and/or resignations from their positions here. Because the teachers know, as I do, that we operate with quality for these children; and if, again, they can’t teach my personal children, I can’t allow them to be empowered to teach other people’s—or attempt to teach other people’s children. So sometimes it goes to that sad element, too, of the removal of the empowerment.

To summarize, instructional leaders at Parker monitored and supervised instruction. They engaged in self-monitoring to ensure the quality of their own instruction, the work of others, and the collaborative work of the grade level. The principal monitored and supervised through classroom tours and reflective discussions. More formally, she performed evaluations of instructional practice. She also performed the personnel duties of hiring and firing.

Building capacity refers to being actively engaged in the growth and development efforts of one’s self and others to improve teaching and leading abilities. Participants in the study assumed responsibility for their own on-going learning; they shared their learning with others to
facilitate the growth of others; and they learned from others. It was strongly evident that building capacity had been an important part of the instructional leadership practice of the participants, in that all participants discussed their involvement in a variety of growth-producing activities. Those activities ranged from formal educational activities, such as college courses, staff development, mentoring, and book studies, to informal experiential and independent activities, such as collegial discussion, risk-taking opportunities, and professional reading.

The principal at Parker believed that her job was to build and enable leaders. As she viewed it, her task was a balancing act of supporting teachers and of nudging them in the direction of their own leadership:

I’ve got to be the nurturer, the protector, the provider, but the encourager to their own individual leadership. I can’t be the nursemaid; I’ve got to enable them to grow and to become instructional leaders and the enabler of their own leadership.

Moreover, Martha believed that it was teacher leadership, not administrative leadership, which determined classroom success: “I have an unbelievable administrative team that surrounds me, but that’s not what’s important. The importance will be in the teacher leadership that I build in the classroom.” These beliefs guided Martha’s leadership style and promoted openness to and encouragement of leadership development opportunities at the school.

At the time of the study, two participants were pursuing advanced degrees, and two had recently completed advanced degrees. Of the thirteen participants in the study, ten held advanced degrees, and one participant indicated that she was considering pursuit of another advanced degree. Of the thirteen participants, three specifically discussed their work on their advanced degrees, and all three described application of their college learning into their practice at Parker.
All participants expressed their belief in the importance of lifelong learning. Elizabeth, who was working on a master’s degree at the time of the study, expressed this belief in a comment that exemplifies the shared view of instructional leaders at Parker regarding the importance of continual growth:

I’m in a master’s program right now, and I’ll graduate in May. Before I even got into the master’s program, I had thirty graduate credits that don’t count because they’re more than five years old. Since I began teaching, it’s always been my philosophy to take summer workshops, summer classes . . . because I just feel that you can’t be stagnant as a teacher. Even though your curriculum changes, you’ve got to change more than with the curriculum. You’ve got to be up on the newest ways of teaching, work smarter, not harder.

All thirteen instructional leaders in the study discussed their efforts to incorporate their formal learning into their practice. Lisa provided an example of incorporating the teaching model used in her graduate class into her fifth grade classroom. That model was designed to increase student engagement and ownership, which fit with Parker’s student democratic learning initiative. Lisa described her practical application of that model and the result:

I found in letting them design more, it means more to them, it means more to me. . . . I found that my students were able to rationalize why what they were doing was important. They were able to create guidelines for literature circles. . . . I asked them what would make good literature discussion, and they came up with it. I didn’t have to tell them. They knew what would be beneficial to them.

All of the instructional leaders in this study described attending staff development courses, which were offered through the school and through the county. Joy explained her view that taking staff development classes during the summer had provided time to plan implementation and application of learning:

When you have that time in the summer, your mind is fresh, and you’re able to really absorb it and understand it, and you’re not worrying about getting back to your classroom to teach your children. You really can just soak it in, think about it, and start trying to figure out how to implement it the following year.
All thirteen participants in this study not only attended staff development programs but also discussed how they had shared their learning with their peers, sometimes informally and sometimes in formal staff development classes at the school. Elizabeth explained that Martha encouraged and supported in-house staff development offerings by the staff:

You can do as much as you want. The administration is always open to us. They love the fact that you want to do in-services, you want to teach others. . . . I don’t think there are any stumbling blocks to our growing professionally as a teacher.

Joy described a two-week writing institute she had attended over the past summer and explained how she had brought her learning from that institute back to her peers:

This summer I did a writing institute. . . . Another first grade teacher did the program also—and we brought back all these wonderful tools for the other teachers and were able to share these great ideas . . . with the other teachers. . . . When you go and learn, you’re able to bring back to the other teachers and show that leadership in just helping them with instructional techniques.

Seven participants also described developing and conducting staff development programs for their peers based on off-site workshops and training they had received. Michelle and another team member attended a training workshop presented by Rebecca Sitton and became the grade-level “experts” and trainers on that method of teaching spelling. Michelle described that experience:

I went last year to listen to her speak to Abel County teachers. One or two teachers from each grade level went. . . . We came back and delivered it to our grade levels. We ended up having lots of staff development meetings where the other teacher and I were in charge to walk them through it. . . . Our job was to go back and hand-hold [Parker teachers] through . . . to show them that this can work, and it does work, and it’s a good program.

Formal book studies were described by six participants as another way instructional leaders at Parker learned together. Elizabeth and a co-worker attended a workshop on non-fiction writing. She explained that, from the workshop, they developed a book study, which became a 10-hour staff development program for other teachers:
We went to see Tony Steed, who is a fabulous instructor and speaker. . . . The school purchased the books—for anyone interested in the book study—and we led the book study. And it’s a kind of formal leadership. We wanted to share. We were so excited about these ideas and how they changed our teaching of non-fiction.

In addition to staff development classes and book studies, seven participants described using their expertise and talents in other formal ways to teach others. Mollie taught a literacy class this past summer for new first grade teachers in the county. She made the point that the materials she presented to the new first grade teachers were an accumulation of ideas and materials gathered from many different teachers over a period of years. She shared her hope that these new teachers would, in turn, share with her one day:

I’ve learned a lot through the years. I don’t think I have an original thought in my head anymore because I take from everybody else. For instance, I taught a class of brand new, incoming first grade teachers this summer on literacy. I was basically the classroom manager on literacy. But it was fun to share the information because, looking through all of that and making my presentation, I realized how much is coming from so many different directions to that particular point. And so what I was sharing with them, I’m hoping that they will even, in turn, share with me later on.

As Elizabeth’s and Mollie’s examples demonstrate, emergent teacher leaders learn, and they share with others and learn through their sharing. In other words, instructional leaders reciprocally share what they have and what they know with each other; and they are the recipients of what other instructional leaders have and know.

At the time of the study, eleven of the emergent teacher leaders in the study were serving as mentors or had done so in the past. Because every participant mentioned the mentoring program, it is strongly evident that the mentoring program, through which the emergent teacher leaders had led new teachers into the practice of teaching at Parker, was perceived to be an important part of their instructional leadership. The mentoring program had two components, a formal monthly meeting and an on-going informal collegial support component. Michelle
described a recent formal monthly mentor meeting and the practical information provided at that meeting:

We have mentor meetings every month that we go to. Yesterday we had a mentor meeting where the mentor—the lead mentor teacher—asked if I could do this skit to role play how conferences go. I enlisted another third grade teacher, and we did three skits during the meeting. One of them was to show . . . what not to do in a conference. The second was to show, when you have a parent that’s difficult, what a teacher would do to help with that. And then the last one was to show how wonderful it can be when the teacher and the parent are on the same page and everything goes well. So we worked in the mentor meeting to help lead those new teachers who have never been through a conference at Parker, or maybe anywhere else, to be prepared.

Lydia, who had been working with two experienced mentees, talked about a different aspect of that program, the day-to-day assistance and guidance offered by a mentor:

I have two teachers who are job sharing. They both have experience. One has done some long term subbing here, so she’s familiar with the policies of Parker. The other one transferred in from another Abel County school. I meet with them, really on a daily basis, discussing with them questions, any questions that they have about Parker or about the instruction of kindergarten here.

Lisa shared a different perspective of the mentoring program, having been a recipient of its benefits, and offered her thoughts on its value:

I went through it myself. And it was so nice to have a teacher that you could sit down with and really discuss . . . on a practical basis, everyday—“What do I need?” and “Where do I get that information?”—and really just tricks of the trade. I think the first year is so valuable . . . and I think that kind of carries over into our collaborating.

The principal at Parker believed in the importance of support for new teachers. In fact, she had been on a county task force, researching the attrition problem with new teachers, and was proactively addressing the problem at Parker. As a result of her research, she not only supported the Mentor Program but had also implemented a Master Mentor Program this year.

Parker’s Master Mentor Program was designed to augment the traditional mentor program model and to offer on-going clinical supervision. This program was mentioned by every participant, and those who discussed the program talked about its immediate benefit to
new teachers as an additional level of support and/or about its potential benefit to their own personal growth and improvement. Martha explained the program and the rationale for it:

Ms. Cook [pseudonym] is our master mentor teacher in a true supervision model of leadership in our school. And her whole entire role is to supervise, reflect, self-talk with them, and provide opportunities of cross-observation between mentors and mentees—non-evaluative. I don’t even ask her how they are doing instructionally. I trust her to lead that initiative in the school. And if there are ideas and seeds to be planted, she plants those without the word evaluation between the two of them. . . . This year, I took an entire teaching position salary and placed what I feel like is critical, Clinical Supervision Model of Mentoring, in this school for existing staff, but most especially for new teachers. And she will stay with them for two to three years because the researchers told us that two to three years of supervisory mentoring support is what will carry these young women in a system as demanding as Abel.

Joy explained how the Master Mentor Program had been designed to promote the growth of experienced teachers, as well, and shared her view of the importance of being able to observe the practice of other teachers, which was being facilitated through this new position:

That program has actually, this year, allowed for Ms. Cook, the mentor teacher, to come into our classroom and . . . do a quick substitute for 30 minutes or an hour or however long we need. We can go visit other teachers and see some of the programs and techniques that they’re using. . . . That, I think, is the key. I feel very fortunate with our administration, which have been very supportive if we want to go observe a teacher at another school because we know she’s doing something incredible over there. They’ll find the money, and let us go.

Every emergent teacher leader in the study discussed another mentoring responsibility, the unofficial mentoring function, which they shared. Emergent teacher leaders shared an understanding that teaching is a demanding profession and felt that doing it well demands an ongoing cooperative and collaborative approach, particularly for newcomers. Therefore, they all served as unofficial mentors. Kelsey elaborated on unofficial mentoring:

But on top of that, all of us answer questions all the time for a new teacher. She’s not limited to her mentor, I guess is what I’m trying to say. If after school her mentor is gone, she comes to any one of us, and we’ll share with her what we have and tell her how we do it.
Michelle, whose grade level has two new teachers this year, talked about the unofficial mentoring role, as well: “They both go to everyone to ask. They see different teachers doing different projects. So they will just go to that person and say, ‘Hey, tell me how to do this.’ They don’t just stick with their mentor.”

In summary, participants at Parker valued learning and were actively involved in formal educational experiences. While only a few were enrolled in graduate programs at the time of the study, all of the participants took advantage of the on-going staff development opportunities provided by the county and by the school. Not only did they attend classes, but over half of the participants also mentioned that they had taught workshops or classes at the school or county level; and most of the participants had been involved in the Mentor Program, either as mentors or as mentees. Moreover, the principal, who valued clinical supervision as a model to support ongoing growth, had implemented a new Master Mentor Program to provide a clinical supervision model.

In addition to growing through formal educational opportunities, every participant in the study described growing through a variety of informal experiences. For example, they discussed learning by observing others, learning from collegial discussions and collaboration, learning by doing, and learning by engaging in independent learning activities. All of the participants in the study expressed their belief in the value of the observation of others and felt that observing others was a valuable tool for improving practice. Martha believed in the power of observation, as well, and considered it her responsibility to provide opportunities for teachers “to step out of the demands of [their] individual classrooms, to have time and opportunity to visit other classrooms, to visit other schools.” To accommodate the release of teachers for observations,
Martha had implemented the Master Mentor Program and two full-time stellar substitute teacher positions.

Lydia talked about past opportunities she had had to observe inside and outside the school and shared her view of the importance of it to growth. She also illuminated the value placed on it by the administration:

We have had times where we’ve even gone to other schools and shared and observed things that are being done at other schools. If we stayed in our own classrooms and never left, I don’t think we’d grow, and I think that’s important. And the administration truly believes that and encourages us to go and observe one another—and they remind us every meeting, “You can go. All you’ve got to do is to let us know.”

Two instructional leaders in the study explicitly stated that they learned by doing. For instance, Lydia made this statement: “I believe that you, if you’re a leader and you help lead others, it’s going to make you be a better teacher, a better leader. You kind of learn by doing.”

Joy told a story of her first leadership experience, in which she learned by doing; it occurred during her first year of teaching. Joy’s story indicates that, when her early leadership endeavors were successful, her confidence grew, and she was encouraged to engage in repeat leadership endeavors. The story also indicates the importance of the role of confidence in leadership endeavors:

I had a principal that I feel has a special gift of seeing things in people and giving them those opportunities to shine. And [his suggestion that I lead a summer program] scared me because I really did not feel like I had that much leadership ability prior to that. . . . He said, “Joy, I’d like for you to do this.” . . . I was in charge of a summer program. That was actually very huge for me to leave college and go right into that program the first summer of teaching because I became a manager. I was like doing timesheets and budgets. . . . I feel like I was able to get those opportunities prior to coming to a larger school system. The program was successful, very successful. It’s actually still going on now. . . . [That experience] gave me the confidence. It really did. It gave me the confidence to say I could do it.

Another participant, Lucy, also noted the role of confidence in leadership endeavors when she explained her involvement this year in leadership activities related to curriculum
planning: “Confidence and the comfort level with the curriculum makes you a better leader, guider.”

Risk-taking is another way in which teachers grow; however, Martha was the only participant who explicitly discussed learning and growing through risk-taking. Other participants did not directly use the term risk-taking; however, they talked about trying new ideas and experimenting in their classrooms. Because they were experimenting with new ideas, and the outcomes of the experiment were unknown in advance, they were, in effect, practicing risk-taking; and they were encouraging risk-taking when they shared ideas with peers.

Martha viewed risk-taking as a necessary part of growth; therefore, encouraging risk-taking was an instructional leadership strategy she employed to encourage teaching, as well as leadership, growth. As the person ultimately responsible for growth of teachers, she promoted sound instructional risk, offering the protection of her backing and freedom from punitive damage should the risk prove not to be worth the effort. She shared this thought on promoting risk-taking as a growth activity:

When those risk ideas are presented to me . . . if they have passion in their eyes and they have a plan that I know leads to not only their success, but more critically, to the success of their children . . . they will see me soak up their passion, endorse their passion, and open the doors, any doors that are in their way.

Joy felt encouraged by the administration to try out new ideas. She expressed her belief that, by experimenting with new ideas, she learned, and she explained that she had shared her learning with her peers:

I’m able to do what I want in my classroom. I have a curriculum. I know I need to follow it, but the way I teach it is definitely supported in my own way. The administration allows me to do that and supports that. I’m able to explore and try these new ideas . . . that I learn from other teachers, ideas that I get in training. . . . I’m able to see that it really does work. And then I’m able to go share that.
Collegial communication occurred formally at Parker as collaboration and informally as sharing ideas. These two forms of collegial communication were discussed in detail in Category 2, and many examples were given. Thus, they are only summarized in this section. Formal collaboration at Parker was mutually beneficial. In their discussions of their instructional leadership, sharing and collaboration were the two terms most often used by the participants, strongly indicating the value instructional leaders placed on these interactions. Every participant used both terms, and every participant noted the implicit reciprocity and mutuality in each term. In other words, they felt that sharing their ideas informally and formally through collaborative processes was an important part of their instructional leadership of others; conversely, they felt that they had benefited and grown from the ideas of others. Moreover, they felt that their growth had positively impacted their classroom instruction; those impacts are discussed in Theme 3.

Teacher-to-teacher teaching was the main source of teacher growth at Parker. All emergent teacher leaders discussed their growth through informal and formal discussion more than through any other type of growth opportunity or activity. The data indicate that, even when learning was obtained from other sources, it was eventually shared through ongoing collegial interactions. Moreover, as the data demonstrate, through their formal and informal collaboration, emergent teacher leaders worked in sync and as partners, particularly at the grade level, relying on each others’ strengths and bolstering each others’ weaknesses.

In addition to the growth opportunities already presented, instructional leaders at Parker also engaged in various independent growth activities. More than half of the participants discussed engaging in professional reading as an independent growth effort. For instance, Biller said, “I learn from . . . professional reading of my own choice.” Cheryl, who makes it a practice
to keep up with current teaching resources by visiting school supply stores, explained that she
learns by “exploring what’s new and keeping up with what we have [in Parker’s Media Center].”

The data also indicate that most growth and development activities at Parker were self-
directed. A wide variety of programs had been offered to accommodate the needs and schedules
of all, and most of the participation was left to the discretion of the teachers. They were viewed
as professionals who would do what needed to be done, working at their own comfort level.

Martha illuminated the continuous improvement approach of the professionals at Parker:

The academic program is stellar, but we’re not quite good enough. So we either adjust
ourselves to the needs of the children with our population changes, or we adjust to best
practices through the research efforts, the book studies, the county initiatives, the self-
generated initiatives.

Eliza demonstrated her commitment, one that was shared by others, to continuing professional
growth:

Even though I have already been to school and then got my master’s degree, I still want
to learn more. And continue to grow as—not only a teacher—but as an individual person
and broaden my mind with as much information as I possibly can.

Instructional leaders at Parker learned through a variety of experiences and through other
informal learning situations. For instance, they observed others, and they read professionally.

They also learned by doing. The data in this study indicate that continuing growth was
considered by the principal and the emergent teacher leaders to be a critical part of their
instructional leadership. The participants in the study considered themselves to be learners; they
were motivated by a desire “to do [teaching] better”; and they engaged in a variety of learning
opportunities to accomplish personal growth as teachers and leaders and to assist others in their
growth. These opportunities ranged from formal college education and other formal courses of
study to more informal types of growth, such as collegial discussion and collaboration. They
also learned by doing, by risk-taking, and by engaging in independent efforts to improve their knowledge.

**Sub-category 2: Improving School Effectiveness**

*Improving school effectiveness* refers to engaging in activities that improve the school’s current academic performance and prepare the school for a higher level of academic success in the future. Improving school effectiveness consists of three types of improvement processes or activities: *improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning, engaging in bridging activities, and engaging in action research*. *Improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning* was discussed in great detail in the preceding section; therefore, the discussion in this section addresses the remaining two types of improvement processes. All participants had engaged in school improvement and effectiveness activities; and, in varying degrees, all discussed their involvement.

Parker had been the highest performing elementary school in the county, yet its on-going improvement was important to all participants. In the following comment, Martha illuminated her perspective of improving school effectiveness:

*Sometimes in a school like Parker, because they do have a history of excellence, you must be very, very careful not to become stagnant in knowing your reputation. And so we are always looking at the term *continuous improvement*. We have our academic knowledge and skills that we have to address. Our test scores are unbelievably high, but each and every year we reexamine ourselves through the Local School Plan for Improvement goal setting and our State of the School Reports.*

In other words, instructional leaders at Parker “lived” their commitment, responsibility, and accountability to school renewal, as set forth in the school’s charter and covenant.

*Though the other instructional leaders did not carry the assigned burden for school effectiveness that Martha did through her job description, instructional leaders at Parker assumed responsibility for it through their involvement in various school improvement efforts.* The
following comment by Mollie illuminates the involvement and shared leadership mindset of emergent teacher leaders in Parker’s school improvement:

Having set goals and working towards those goals keeps everybody focused, and people who are leaders will take ownership of that and work with it. Whether it [is] like a little portion of the SACs or on a language arts question or something that has to be done for language arts within the quality team, we just take care of it.

*Engaging in bridging activities* refers to being actively involved in efforts designed to move the school successfully into the future. Bridging, as it was described by the principal, is about moving the school toward the desired instructional future, while keeping that unblinking eye on instruction today. Bridging was a major focus of Martha’s instructional leadership:

You’ve got to plan the future of the school, as well. One leg is in the here and the now, taking care of the business of the here and the now—the eyes are watching for the quality of the here and the now—while the visionary instructional leadership is planning and moving the team collaboratively toward the future.

Martha talked about keeping one leg “in the here and the now” and allowing the other leg to step into the future; she saw herself as a bridge between the two, balancing current and future responsibilities. Instructional endeavors to enhance understanding and growth in the present were necessary building blocks to and for the future, Martha believed. Thus, bridging required that Martha stay on the forefront of changes in education and teaching practices, while tracking school trends and projecting future needs, to avoid being caught unaware by the directions in which her school or education, as a whole, were moving; and it required that she provide others a passageway through those changes and into the future. She shared her thoughts on how a principal can lead others to embrace change and cross that bridge: “Help them own the dream, wisely, through planting of seeds, and it’s their energy that will carry whatever personal dreams we have for a school into the future.” Consequently, Martha had the dominant role in bridging activities.
In accordance with her perspective of her own instructional leadership responsibility, Martha held herself responsible for staying abreast of the bigger educational picture, for tracking population trends at Parker, and for overseeing the bridging process between the present and the future vision of the school. In addition to requiring that she keep herself and others current on instructional matters, bridging required that she capitalize on the wealth of information available from her other instructional leaders. She saw herself, then, as a collaborator with other instructional leaders on how to accomplish their vision and fulfill their mission, in accordance with the school’s covenant and charter.

Instructional leaders at Parker used data to elevate their educational discussions, reflections, and dialogues. That communication was critical to the cohesiveness of their efforts. For instance, their progress toward LSPI goals was monitored at each grade level, as was the quality of instruction in each academic area, through Quality Teams. Furthermore, test results and report data were tools used to evaluate past efforts and to pinpoint current status, and they became the foundation for discussions of future schoolwide instructional efforts and of future planning. The data were then merged with futuring scenarios and with reports projecting future population trends, for the purpose of informed planning. Martha described the process:

We use something called futuring scenarios where we can look ahead . . . to what we will look like with our ethnicity and our free and reduced lunch ratios. But even though this school is projected to change very, very little before the year 2014, we will have enough needs that we need to start being proactively ready for the instructional needs of the children. I have to be savvy enough to see the trends of my school, both historical trends and the future projections.

She also described recent work of the administrative team on strategic planning:

Just this week I met with my administrative team for four hours, external to the building, looking at future possibilities for this school five years from now. We’re planning how—with each of them specializing in [specific academic areas]—we can pool their talents, move their Quality Teams that deal with those particular instructional entities. How can we plant the right seeds at the right moment, while gathering the seeds of thought from
all of the other members of these teams, and place ourselves in a positive agenda five years from now, just as strong as we are today, as the number one school in Abel County? I love the visionary work that I get to do—planning the vision for three to five years from now.

Leading the bridging activities was an important part of Martha’s instructional leadership, but it was dependent on capitalization of the pooled talents and of the collaborative thinking of all instructional leaders.

*Engaging in action research* refers to being involved in an on-going cycle of collecting data, analyzing it, interpreting it, and taking action for improvement in a specific focus area. Emergent teacher leaders engaged in action research in their individual classrooms, which has already been discussed in this category, and, they were involved, more formally, in schoolwide level action research through their work on committees and team. Mollie explained that action research permeated the instructional work at Parker:

> Action research—it just permeates throughout everything we do here at Parker. We take information that we gather about our students and then we look at what the greatest needs are, and we work towards pulling in instruction materials, support, ideas. I think we do it in just about everything that we do. It is what drives our LSPI goals.

Parker’s LSPI goals were the foci of on-going action research. LSPI goals were determined by schoolwide consensus, as previously discussed, and became the focus of year-long cycles of action research. State of the School Reports, which were generated in January and in the spring, reported the progress of the school toward the identified goals. Martha explained the process:

> In January, we will do a State of the School Report, where every single grade level will come together and share a State of the School Report. Here is what we’ve accomplished to this point, here’s what we’ve not been able to do, and here’s what we need to be about second semester. Then at the end of the year they will bring forth to the staff a State of the School Report. Here are our accomplishments for the year and, simultaneously, in the spring of the year, we will have already stepped forward into the 2004-2005 year at that point. . . . It’s an accountability piece, but it doesn’t really turn into me listening to guarantee they’re doing their job. It endorses, but it elevates the educational discussions.
within the school. And it lays the framework for the learning climate, the professionalism of the staff.

In addition to the LSPI goal action research, instructional leaders served on task forces and ad hoc committees that engage in problem solving action research. For instance, spelling instruction was previously identified as a focus for action research; as a result of that action research, the school decided to implement the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model. At the time of the study, that model was in the implementation stage. Elizabeth, who was involved in that action research through her work on the Spelling Committee, explained how the process moved from identification of a problem to implementation of a new program:

But it was just action research. This wasn’t working for us. We weren’t happy with the spelling program; we weren’t getting the results that we wanted. . . . And now we’ve changed our spelling program through action research. Our team—the Spelling Team—had an in-service last May to tell the teachers what was coming, gave the books out over the summer, and we’ve already had ten hours of in-service this year on the new spelling program. At our afternoon meetings where we meet with grade level, we talk about what works and what doesn’t work with it. The whole new spelling program came out of action research. This just isn’t working. The children aren’t using those words; they want harder and harder words, and then they spell them wrong. . . . But we brought [the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model] to the school through action research.

In summary, despite the reputation of excellence at Parker, instructional leaders were highly involved in on-going efforts to improve school effectiveness. Generally speaking, the principal had the dominant role in improving school effectiveness. She monitored the school’s on-going LSPI action research, and she served as a bridge between the present and the future to aid the school’s successful transition between the two temporal periods. Other instructional leaders worked on the school’s action research through the various committees and teams on which they served, as well as working independently on informal action research at the classroom level.
The principal and emergent teacher leaders at Parker worked collaboratively to keep their focus on continuing improvement. They accomplished that end by improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning and by improving school effectiveness. In other words, they engaged in the on-going improvement of the professional staff, and they maintained a continual school renewal program. All of the instructional leaders were actively engaged in these endeavors as part of their practice of collaborative instructional leadership.

Category 4: Focusing on Instruction

*Focusing on instruction* refers to maintaining the priority of providing quality teaching and learning through day-to-day processes and activities that sustain philosophical alignment with the school’s mission, covenant, and charter. The interactional processes discussed in the previous three categories serve to buttress coordinated progress toward goals and to sharpen the focus of instructional leaders as they engage in the process of focusing on instruction. This category has four sub-categories which are: (a) *centering on children*, (b) *targeting instruction*, (c) *serving the learning community*, and (d) *using strategic leadership behaviors to accomplish instructional purposes*.

Activities included in this category were engaged in both individually and collectively, and the first three sub-categories were co-determined activities, or activities that had been defined by the community as being critical to keeping the school’s focus on instruction. The fourth sub-category, using strategic leadership behaviors, refers to strategic or tactical behaviors used by participants to influence others toward the goal of quality instruction. The importance of these activities to instructional leadership at Parker is evidenced by the fact that all participants talked about focusing on instruction.
The sub-categories associated with focusing on instruction were directly tied to the school’s mission, covenant, and charter. These documents provided the framework in which instructional leadership at Parker functioned. The mission statement was not only prominently displayed in the halls, but it was also prominent in the participants’ discussions of instructional leadership: “Parker Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, will challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential.” The preamble to the school’s charter began with a shared belief about the school’s emphasis on instruction: “It is our shared belief that we maintain an emphasis on teaching and learning.” The school’s covenant served as a binding agreement of the staff to serve the learning community and its common good. These documents provide a philosophical roadmap to instructional leadership at Parker; the data provide a guided tour through that instructional leadership practice.

Instructional leaders at Parker were dedicated and committed to their common goals and to the instructional processes that had facilitated achievement of those goals. Martha described the work ethic and dedication of the instructional leaders at Parker to their goal of fulfilling the school’s mission, noting the shared understanding of the focus on instruction:

We all know what we understand about each other, as far as being distinguished professionals, conducting ourselves in a professional manner and working toward continuous improvement of professional practices, being the best we can be for these children, all in the name of success and academic achievement for children.

Martha believed that fulfilling the mission required keeping an unblinking eye on quality instruction. She described the on-going focus on instruction as “always eyeing quality instruction” and as “being the best we can be for these children.” The data indicate that this focus permeated instructional leadership practice at Parker.
Sub-category 1: Centering on Children

Centering on children refers to maintaining a child-centered instructional focus. Participants made decisions for children, maintained an all-children orientation, and fostered child-centered classrooms. The importance of this sub-category to the participants’ practice of instructional leadership is evidenced by the fact that all participants talked, directly or indirectly, about centering on children.

Maintaining a child-centered focus was an outflow of Parker’s mission. The principal’s view was that the work of instructional leadership is a shared effort, or partnership, for the sake of children: “We are together in this effort . . . for children.” According to the data collected, Martha’s view was shared by all of the instructional leaders. Michelle offered this comment: “The big picture here is the kids—absolutely the kids. And if it’s something that’s going to help these students in any way . . . we’re doing it—so that we can be better teachers for them.”

Partnership was a recurring category in the discussions of instructional leadership. Biller elaborated on the partnership between the staff of Parker and the parents, wherein the children had been the center between them: “We’re in partnership with our parents and our community to make a challenging academic environment for everybody, and everybody is working to help the students to be the best that they can.” Elizabeth described a working relationship in which “pride of ownership” was non-existent; rather, students were the center, and teachers worked together to give children their collective best:

I have never worked with a teacher in this school that has the philosophy, “That’s mine.” and I want to take ownership for that. I can’t even tell you where half my ideas come from, nor can anyone I’ve shared with tell you where their ideas came from. We don’t even worry about where it came from, we just worry about did it work for my class and was it successful.
Elizabeth’s comment captured the essence of centering on children and of the cooperative working relationship between teachers at Parker for children; her comment was representative of other instructional leaders’ views.

All participants in the study indicated that they had engaged in classroom, grade, and school level instructional decision-making that was guided by the center, children. For instance, according to the instructional leaders, instructional decision-making was informed by two questions: (a) *What is best for children*, and (b) *what will best serve their learning needs?* The principal explained the understanding between herself and the instructional staff about the criteria to be used in making instructional decisions: “They know that I trust them as long as it’s instructionally appropriate for our children and offers a pathway to their success and to engage them in quality work.” Martha also explained that children’s needs, rather than teachers’ needs, were the determining factors behind instructional decisions: “We try to make decisions—not what is best for the teacher—but we try to keep our focus on what is best for the children.”

All emergent teacher leaders confirmed their reliance on the what-is-best-for-children question. Biller, a second grade teacher described instructional decision-making in light of this question:

> We’re trying hard to have a student centered school. Certainly the phrase, what’s best for kids, is driving us a lot. We hear it, we say it, and when we’re really down to the final decision around the table, and it is, “Okay. What’s it going to be? What is really the best for children?” . . . That is basically the bottom-line.

Participants at Parker also maintained a focus on *all* children. Lydia discussed this topic, noting that, when instructional leaders made decisions, they made them “for the best of all the students.” In fact, all participants discussed the conscious design of the decision-making structures at Parker to encourage a whole-school and an all-children orientation. Eliza shared her thoughts on the importance of the all-children orientation at Parker:
I think you’ve got to step out of just your own class and your own children and think about the whole school, think about your whole grade level and then school-wide. I think it’s a difficult step sometimes because your classroom is your world. But I think that when you start looking at the big picture, things start to fall into place, and you think about all of our students together and not just your own classroom.

At the time of the study, Parker had taken a very proactive approach to meeting the requirements of the NCLB Act, with the establishment of the NCLB Committee and its twice-weekly collaborative team meetings to discuss the needs of specific children and the instruction of all children. The NCLB Committee was previously discussed in Category 2. All of the participants in the study discussed the formation of the new NCLB Committee and its impact on their instructional leadership. They specifically discussed the emphasis of this committee on increased ownership of all children. Eliza, who was serving on the NCLB Committee, explained the process and intended purpose:

We’re trying to identify children that are at risk of not succeeding in school. We’re trying to take ownership of all of our students, rather than me just worrying about a little child in my classroom. We all need to take ownership of all of our students on third grade, [those] that we’ve identified as being at risk.

All emergent teacher leaders believed that collaborative work had offered support for teachers and students and that it had increased their sense of ownership. Responding to a question about the emphasis on all children, Elizabeth illuminated a shared belief in the value of collective thinking:

I think [ownership of all children] comes from . . . our great effort in meeting No Child Left Behind. No matter how much experience you have—you work with each child the best that you can—but nobody knows everything. If you share at your grade level, “I’m having trouble with this child. He’s just not getting this skill,” you can get other people’s input from your grade level on how to deal with that. Or another teacher might say, “Well, I tried this, and it helped” or “I tried that, and it helped.” So by bringing that child forward in a meeting situation . . . you can get more input from other teachers that way, and then you can do a better job of helping the whole child and make sure that no one is left behind.
Cheryl shared her view that the new NCLB collaborative meetings had taken the all-children focus to a new level:

> With the No Child Left Behind, and the way that we’re going to be setting up a whole forum for helping children individually, we’re going to be taking ownership of all the children on the grade level who are struggling. I think that’s going to be a big help for everyone.

In their discussions of NCLB meetings, instructional leaders noted that the new program was designed and implemented to ensure that no child was left behind at Parker. While special attention was given to struggling students, the meetings were also designed to improve the instruction of all children. Brooke elaborated on her contributions as a gifted-certified teacher:

> With No Child Left Behind, the different grade levels are all meeting, and we’re brainstorming some ideas of how we can meet the needs of all the children in our classroom. I’m also a gifted teacher. One thing I have to address all the time is making sure that, not only am I remediating, but that I am enriching students. I do that in math and in social studies and in language arts, but I share those ideas with the grade level and other teachers.

Eliza described the all-children concern of instructional leaders and addressed an on-going inquiry at Parker—how to raise the bar on the outcomes of all children:

> As a whole—how can we take children with just medium expectations and raise them to the next bar—to exceeding expectations. We’re blessed with a nice population in terms of children that are doing well here at Parker, so we’ve had to Parkerize it—not only worry about children that are possibly not going to succeed, but all of those children with medium expectations, taking them to the next level—and how can we do that—and taking mastery students beyond to a higher level.

Instructional leaders at Parker believed that classrooms and the instruction taking place within them should be child-centered. Twelve of the participants in the study discussed their efforts to increase student engagement and student involvement in the classroom. In fact, there was a schoolwide emphasis on implementing student democratic learning. Ten teachers at Parker had engaged in a year-long book study last year about the subject; at the time of the study,
they were applying their learning. Martha described her desire to see the school expand its shared governance philosophy into classrooms:

   I’m hoping to see this school move to where student engagement, total student engagement, goal setting, and letting them have student led conferences, rather than teacher led conferences, will just be part of what we do. The League has offered the foundational pieces for building that climate.

Implementation of student democratic learning, at the time of the study, was making its way through the participants’ classrooms. Eight emergent teacher leaders discussed having the students in their classrooms involved in teaching and self-directing their own learning. For instance, Lisa talked about bringing into her classroom the same ownership model that had been used in her college graduate program, wherein students were required to plan their own program of study and to write the rubric for assessing their performance. Brooke had students take on the responsibility for teaching lessons; and, at the time of the study, she was implementing a student-operated store. The following comments provide examples of participants’ efforts to foster child-centered classrooms:

   I’m trying to have a student centered learning classroom. We have class meetings, and we try to set goals and we try to brainstorm together. I don’t want to be the one that writes it all down and says this is what-we’re-going-to-do kind of thing. I’m really trying to have that kind of a classroom . . . decision-making and problem solving responsibility. (Biller)

   We’ve had class meetings in my classroom to discuss and iron out problems. How do the students want to solve a problem? For instance, they were too loud in the cafeteria, so right now they’re on assigned seats in the cafeteria. They don’t like assigned seats, and they’re begging me to get off. Well, before they get off those assigned seats, we’ll probably take time for a class meeting, and I’ll say, “Okay. It’s your lunch, it’s not my lunch. I’m getting to talk at my lunch. How do you want to correct the problem? You know, you’ve seen how I corrected it. I had to assign seats, and that worked. What’s your plan going to be?” And we’ll talk about it. I’ll say, “Okay. If you’re in agreement, we’ll try your plan. But what happens if it doesn’t work? Well, we’ll have to go back to my plan, or you’ll have to come up with one that’s more successful.” I put them in charge of solving, particularly, social kinds of problems that they have. I can sit there and dictate all I want what the rules are, and I can enforce those rules. But if I want a solution to
those rules, they’ve got to be part of it. They’ve got to buy-in to it. I think that’s the same kind of management style that we’re doing here as adults. (Kelsey)

Instructional leaders at Parker made decisions that were child-centered; they kept their focus on all children, rather than on a segment of the student population; they fostered student democratic learning by implementing classrooms centered on children and “owned” by them. Centering on children was integral in their practice of instructional leadership.

Sub-category 2: Targeting Instruction

Targeting instruction refers to engaging in instruction-related functions to affect quality instruction. Specifically, all participants engaged in planning and developing curriculum and in delivering instruction. The principal was less directly involved in these functions. All participants discussed them; the emergent teacher leaders described participating individually and together in these functions and were involved in them at the classroom level, grade level, and school level. Staff development and supervision were two other instruction-related activities in which instructional leaders were actively engaged; findings related to their involvement in staff development and supervision were presented separately in Category 3.

The principal described the culture of Parker as a “performance culture.” She believed that, because of the performance culture and the distinguished professionalism that supported it, positive instructional things had happened at Parker. She explained how instructional leaders created that positive instructional culture: “We build the culture, but we elevate the dialogue so that we are professionally targeting instruction, with distinguished professionalism.” By constantly raising the bar of instructional expectations for themselves, instructional leaders at Parker maintained their instructional focus and supported on-going school renewal.

Planning and developing curriculum refers to performing the necessary functions related to preparing the curriculum and support materials for delivery to students. From the perspectives
of the principal and emergent teacher leaders, trust and autonomy played an important part in their functioning as instructional leaders. At the classroom level and grade level, Martha entrusted instructional leadership to the teachers, whom she described as “experts” and “specialists in the classroom.” Martha wanted instructional decisions to be based on individual classroom needs, and she wanted teachers to be able to support their decisions with the following response: “This is what works best for my children.”

Implicit in Martha’s trust was the understanding that instruction would meet the system’s requirements and would fulfill Parker’s shared mission, in accordance with its covenant and charter. Martha shared her thoughts on classroom autonomy and freedom:

So allowing them to take that critical lead on instructional focus. Yes, we have to move as our county does. We have to dovetail some of our initiatives to the county initiatives. Yes, we have to implement the textbooks that are accepted. But we use the term “We Parkerize things.” And that’s where you personalize it to the needs of the children and the staff of this school. So turning those decisions, turning those ears to the people who are the most critical in the front lines and that would be my teachers. . . . They need my full endorsement. They don’t have to ask for my approval.

As Martha’s comment demonstrates, she believed in the necessity of trust in her relationships with the classroom instructional leaders. She elaborated further on her perspective of the role of trust:

[I’ve] got to trust and believe the people who are in these classrooms. Otherwise, I should have made a personnel decision for them not to be in that classroom. . . . The woman, the man in that classroom is the critical link to instructional improvement. . . . It hinges on that expert, that artist, that practitioner who’s in the classroom. She’s got first line, or he’s got first line, of making that instructional advantage, that instructional improvement. I have a secondary role in that, but it’s a secondary role of critical importance.

Recognition of her secondary role in the classroom played an important part in Martha’s involvement in targeting instruction. She described how she viewed her role:

The superintendent paints our role in a new light, and I like this one much better; it describes me much better. It’s the CLO; the Chief Learning Officer of the school is the
principal because we need to be, and I have a desire to be, entrenched in the instruction. Now again, what I say to the assistant principals, the Instructional Council, the Quality Team members, grade levels, because I’m only one person, I can’t be fully engaged in every movement in instruction in the building. But I need to be deeply informed and aware and feel responsibility and accountability as an instructional leader to be supervising the flow of instructional patterns in our school.

Martha also felt her role included the responsibility of motivating the classroom professionals, of providing them with resources they need to deliver instruction, of collaborating with emergent teacher leaders, and of removing roadblocks to their instructional effectiveness. She expressed her view of her responsibility in the following comments:

Part of my job is to be the instigator of progress. . . . I sprinkle the seeds out, and the wise ones of this building, the real progress makers of this building, would be those who can cultivate and grow the seeds, and that would be my teachers.

The joys are taking roadblocks away, being a supporter, being a collaborative supervisor, without risk to them. Let them take the risk without any punitive reactions from me, and let me provide the resources that will enable them to get there. In that way, I get to be a supervisor of actions for their classroom.

Martha maintained that teachers should make the decisions they feel are right for their classrooms. Continuing her gardening metaphor, she reiterated her belief that she had the responsibility to provide the instructional tools needed by teachers, and she shared her belief that teachers should have the freedom to direct instruction in their classrooms: “I best be about bringing all the components that would help you—if they’re right for you—plant those seeds, cultivate those seeds, nurture those seeds.”

In addition to supporting teachers with her collaborative presence and with ideas and resources, Martha supported teachers with her absence. She explained that, in her practice of instructional leadership, she moved out of teachers’ way after she had fulfilled her responsibilities to them. In other words, she provided motivation, and she provided the instructional tools to support instruction; and, having done those things, she moved out of the
way so that the instructional leaders could get on about the business of developing curriculum and delivering instruction. She explained her view: “I need to empower and then I need to back out of their way so they can get their work done.”

At the classroom level, emergent teacher leaders had direct responsibility for curriculum planning, development, and delivery, including pacing, making and acquiring supplemental materials, and tailoring them to the needs of the individual students. They worked individually, cooperatively, and collaboratively to plan and develop curriculum and instructional programs. Lisa’s comment captured the essence of the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership:

I guess being a leader to me would be having control in my room and being on top of the day-to-day things, then being able to share what I’ve learned with my friends and my [fellow] teachers.

Joy provided an example of an emergent teacher leader working individually on curriculum development. Because she was in disagreement with the county-adopted math program, she utilized a math program she had previously piloted, along with supplemental resources, to teach math in a manner consistent with her philosophy. She described what she was doing:

If . . . I don’t feel it’s the best for students, then I’m going to find whatever resources I need to make it best for students and teach the curriculum the way I need to. . . . We have started a new math program, and I totally don’t agree with it—at all. There’s another program that I piloted that is incredible—the Chicago Math Program—and that makes so much more sense to me that, I’m like, “You know what, I want to use this program.” And I’ve been very lucky to have the administration support me in that.

Though emergent teacher leaders frequently worked independently to find or make supplemental curricular materials, they shared them; consequently, individual work generally became group property. It was strongly evident in the data that the emergent teacher leaders
cooperated with others in a reciprocal sharing of ideas, work, and resources. Michelle and

Kelsey offered descriptions of this cooperative sharing:

I started this project a couple of years ago where every other month, the class would memorize a poem and recite it at the end of the month, and then every other month they do a book report. Well, that book report letter has ended up going through the grade level, and a lot of other teachers have decided to do that. The teachers come and say, “Will you pull up your book report letter and let me change the dates, so that it’s [adapted] for my class.” And I say, “Here we go. Here’s the folder. Here’s the thing. Go ahead and do it.” (Michelle)

Right now on the computer, we try to use web hunts every once in a while to look for things. If somebody creates forms, we give a copy to everybody. If somebody designed some kind of worksheet to give extra practice or help on a particular subject, they’ll make a copy for everybody. If somebody designed a rubric to help evaluate something, they’ll give a copy to everybody. (Kelsey)

Eleven emergent teacher leaders at Parker described independently assuming responsibility for instructional tasks or functions and sharing the results with others. For instance, Michelle explained how she had worked with the technology specialist to generate supplemental assessment materials for standardized testing and how she and the technology specialist had shared the information with the other teachers. Joy described supplementing the curriculum with materials she found through independent research and, subsequently, sharing those materials:

I’ve also worked at Peach Star, Georgia Public Television, doing some consulting work with them on their video programming. And through that, I have found some incredible social studies videos that match our Abel County curriculum. I’ve come back here and shared that with the teachers.

Cheryl explained that she wrote a PTA proposal to get phonemic awareness kits for all of the kindergarten teachers:

I felt strongly enough about it that I felt that every teacher on the grade level needed one. Because it was a kit that everybody could use. . . . PTA had plenty of money left over, so I wrote a little proposal and got one for all the classrooms.
Seven of the participants noted that they had personal libraries of resources they utilize and share. For instance, Michelle maintained a highly organized notebook of instructional resources, including the county’s academic standards requirements and instructional standards; other instructional leaders used her notebook. Elizabeth explained that she had read and purchased resources on teaching practice, attended training on them, implemented the practices she learned, and shared the resources with her peers:

I enjoy reading books by other teachers, by other mentors in the field of teaching, and using their ideas. I enjoy going to conferences and coming back and changing my whole classroom. . . . I went to. . . the writing institute. It totally changed my way of teaching writing when I came back. Then I shared it with my mentors, as well.

Elizabeth’s comment demonstrates the commitment of instructional leaders at Parker to the school’s covenant and charter, which, together, provided that the instructional leaders would hold themselves accountable and responsible for their own professional renewal and for the school’s renewal.

Six emergent teacher leaders reported that they had engaged in individual problem solving related to curriculum planning. For instance, Elizabeth identified a curriculum coordination problem between regular classroom teachers and special needs teachers. She explained that she had approached Martha with a staff development program to address the problem and had secured administrative backing to coordinate the program next year. She elaborated on the need and on the details of her plan:

And I not only have an inclusion student, but I also have two students that are resource students. I would like that resource teacher to tell me what she’s doing. We are so busy in our day; I don’t know what she’s doing with my children when they go to her room. I know that she’s doing Herman reading with them. I don’t know what Herman reading is. I would like for her to tell me what it is, because maybe something that she’s doing will help—I could take a piece of it and accommodate that child’s reading when she’s in my room. So maybe I can help that whole child that way. . . . But there are other teachers in other grades that also have children at that low level, so I got the idea that, if we had inservices with a different special ed teacher attending each meeting and telling what they
do in their program, we would bridge that gap between regular ed and special ed—
because we are all supposed to be teaching every child. . . . I want other teachers to get to
that realization that there is more that you can do, that we need to educate each other. I
went to Martha with that idea, and I think we’ll have it in place by next year.

As Elizabeth’s story demonstrates, when instructional ideas were shared with Martha, they often
became instructional realities at Parker. Elizabeth shared her view of Martha’s receptiveness to
new ideas, explaining that she not only carried ideas to Martha but that she also received them
from her:

Martha loves it when you come to her with an idea—she calls it your dreams. If there is
anything you want to do differently in your classroom, you just go to her with your ideas,
and she will help you to bring it [to life]. And I feed off of her too.

Lucy concurred with Elizabeth’s view of Martha’s openeness to instructional ideas.
Moreover, she shared her own view that Martha invited ideas and collaborative work on them:

She’s very open to discuss—I guess you’d call it an open door—any ideas; she’s very
open to ideas and makes it known: “Come talk to me. Come let me know, and let’s
discuss together; let’s decide together.”

Elizabeth’s and Lucy’s descriptions of Martha’s openeness to ideas dovetailed with
Martha’s own description. Martha wanted emergent teacher leaders to pursue their ideas, and
she liked to be a part of their realizing them: “I like for them to chase dreams, and I like to help
them achieve those dreams.” She considered herself to be one who “sprinkles seeds” and “opens
doors,” rather than as one who forced new ideas on classroom teachers:

I say, as a leader, “I can’t harvest the crop for you; that’s got to be you and the magic that
you work as an instructional leader in the classroom. But I can open the doors. . . . Then
you internalize what is good for you and the learners that you are serving.” I try to swing
those wide open, so that they, not me, can move forward.

All emergent teacher leaders at Parker discussed working collaboratively on curriculum
planning and development with other emergent teacher leaders. The following comments
illustrate how they “teamed up” with other teachers:
I work very closely with the person next to me. If we had them all in one class, we’d be team teaching because we’re really kind of working off of each other. We share a lot. (Mollie)

I have another co-worker at this school that—we work really well together—and will create new programs within our first grade classroom. And we share it with the other teachers. (Joy)

In addition to individual arrangements for collaborative curriculum planning, teachers at the grade level worked as a collective and collaborative unit on curriculum planning. Kelsey provided an example of collaborative efforts to coordinate grade-level documentation of learning. In the example, she illuminated how the best thinking and the best products of the individual emergent teachers were pooled and funneled into collaborative writing evaluations that represented their collective thinking: “Some of mine was adopted. . . . It was combined, what I do and what somebody else does and another teacher does, to come up with something that’s more user friendly.” Instructional leaders felt that collaboration led to better instructional products.

Lisa and Kelsey offered an example of a formal collaborative curriculum-related problem-solving effort at the grade level. Lisa explained that the fifth grade team had concerns and frustrations regarding instructional limitations imposed by time. Together, team members decided to study curricular integration as a possible solution to their instructional time limitations. Kelsey explained the project:

Fifth grade worked for two years on a special project where we collaborated with each other to integrate our social studies and language arts curriculum. We had a grant providing substitutes for 8 days one year, a week in the summer, and six days the next year in order to share ideas for effectively integrating social studies and language arts. Lisa described the team’s effort to problem solve through formal action research and discussed the result:
We were trying to find more time in our school day; we were trying to find more time in our planning time. Basically our goal was to try to integrate some of the subject areas. . . . It was very successful. We still didn’t find that we had more time. Our goal was to find more time. What we found was . . . that our quality improved—but we still wanted more time. That’s never going to change. I think that we finally answered our question; it’s just not going to happen.

In addition to collaborative work of the whole team, individuals or small groups of individuals also informally assumed specific curriculum planning functions for the team. For instance, curricular pacing had been identified the year before as a fourth grade need, and Lucy volunteered to work on it over the summer. She and several other emergent teacher leaders planned and mapped delivery of instruction to ensure coverage of the standards in all curricular areas.

Communication and opportunities for interaction among teachers were critical to curriculum planning and instructional delivery and, thus, were critical to their instructional leadership. Accordingly, eight of the participants discussed the benefit of the clustering of grade-level classrooms; they felt that informal communication had been enhanced during the past year because of clustering. Eliza shared her thoughts:

It’s nice because we’re all together on the same hallway this year. I think the administration saw that as a priority and helped us come together because, for several years, we had been separated. Some people were out in trailers, some people were on different hallways, and that made interaction less attainable and more difficult.

They also felt that having joint planning time had increased communication; and, specifically, twelve of the participants felt that the collaborative NCLB meetings, by structuring collaboration time, had enhanced instructional communication. Michelle shared her view:

I think the communication between [us on] our grade level is much, much stronger because we have more time to talk. Whereas last year we had a lot to say, but it might take a few weeks to get our group together to talk.
At the grade level and the school level, formal collaborative communication on the processes and activities related to curriculum planning and instructional delivery occurred through formal committees and teams. The Quality Teams, the Instructional Council, and the NCLB Committee and NCLB grade level teams were the committees and teams directly involved in matters related to curriculum planning and instructional delivery, and all participants served on a Quality Team and on the grade level NCLB team. Martha and six of the emergent teacher leaders mentioned their instructional work on the Quality Teams and/or on the Instructional Council, but all participants discussed their work in the twice-weekly collaborative grade-level NCLB meetings, which occurred during joint planning time.

Emergent teacher leaders felt that the Quality Teams provided a structure “for good cross-curriculum discussion” focused on one academic area. Furthermore, they maintained that the Quality Teams facilitated their progress toward LSPI goals. At the time of the study, however, it was strongly evident that their grade level participation in NCLB activities was having a profound effect on their instructional leadership and on teaching and learning at Parker. Eliza described the structure of the grade level NCLB work:

Each week, we meet collaboratively, two days a week. We discuss math on one day, curriculum discussions pertinent to math—where we are instructionally with that and how our students are doing and what goals we are working on and how to meet those goals. We discuss those kinds of things. And then one day is set aside for language arts, team time discussion, where we look at different areas of language arts, perhaps writing one day, perhaps reading another. We talk a lot about different skills we’re working on, where our students are, perhaps, some students that are having difficulty, [and] how to help those students achieve.

Participants discussed the multiple purposes of the NCLB activities:

Our goal is to know the children on the grade level regardless of the teacher—to know the children we’re concerned with, for any reason—so that we can discuss what’s being done for them, what else could be done, and how, and so that we can constantly brainstorm and come up with suggestions for children who might be at risk. (Biller)
It’s a team meeting, where we basically put faces to data, so to speak. We look at our data, we analyze the data, we see and identify those children on our grade level that are struggling or that have the potential for not succeeding on the CRCT tests, which is the state standardized test in the spring and what can we do to help them to succeed. And not only those children—we’re looking at our entire Parker population. (Eliza)

Eliza described specific benefits emanating from the grade-specific NCLB collaborative discussions, noting her classroom utilization of instructional information garnered from the meetings:

I think that going back to serving on this committee has helped me think about ways that I can focus in on individual children’s needs, in terms of what areas are they weak in and how can I develop a plan to help them systematically achieve mastery on particular target areas of concerns and target objectives, and looking at a timeline for the year.

Joy and Biller, both NCLB representatives for their grade levels, noted that it had been difficult initially to get teachers to “buy-in” to giving up two planning days each week for NCLB activities. Joy addressed the initial resistance of teachers and their subsequent recognition of the value of the formally scheduled and planned collaboration meetings: “At first, it was hard to sell because it’s taking away planning time from the teachers. But I can tell now that the teachers see the quality, the importance of it, the true importance.” Biller, the NCLB representative for the second grade, described an experience similar to Joy’s. She noted the advantage arising from her team’s use of their common time to collaborate on curriculum planning and shared her view of the value of the grade-level meetings:

People were a little concerned and maybe resistant to the change, because it’s planned for our specials—when our children all leave, we have a common time, which used to be just our planning time, our common planning time. But as we’ve gone through it and we’re living it, there’s value in it. Nobody can argue the value and the time we’ve spent talking about our curriculum. We’ve had new curriculum to talk about this year. And it’s given us plenty of opportunity to figure out how it’s going to work and we can use it and how it’s going.

In addition to the direct benefits of the pooled thinking at these meetings, Eliza believed that the formalization of collaborative meetings had heightened the level of professionalism
because the meetings kept teachers focused on the curriculum and on children: “And our team meetings are more professional, so to speak; we’re putting our best foot forward all the time. Our meetings are more curriculum-centered, student-centered types of discussions.” Like other instructional leaders, Eliza felt that NCLB grade-level meetings had increased the ownership of the teaching and learning of all children at the grade level:

In the past, you might have had a teacher who had three or four children that were struggling, and we might not have known about that. You might have had a shared conversation about somebody having difficulty, but now the conversation is more thorough and precise. We also have confidentiality agreements where we can—it’s almost like a mini SST—where we actually know which child is having difficulty. We know the teacher; we know the child; we know what problem areas they’re having. We all take ownership together to help that teacher help that child to succeed.

All emergent teacher leaders, even those who had been reluctant to embrace the concept at its inception, shared Eliza’s view that the NCLB initiative was having a positive effect on the learning community. Mollie felt that there was an increased sense of oneness and partnership, as well as a heightened sense of purpose, emanating from the NCLB grade level meetings:

With No Child Left Behind, we’re meeting more often during our planning period, as a team—as a first grade team—so that we can discuss issues. We’re really working more as a team. . . . We’re kind of all in it together, more so now, the way we’ve organized it.

Eliza expressed her view that being “in it together” extended beyond the grade level to the school level. She shared her thoughts on the partnership of instructional leaders across grade levels at Parker:

I feel comfortable going to any grade-level leader and having a discussion—and we will work through the issue together. I feel very comfortable with fourth grade or walking down to first grade or kindergarten. Even though the curriculum is different, all of our goals are really the same in terms of getting all of our children to meet their potential, and we all feel very comfortable with one another. . . . [There is] a true partnership here, where we can just discuss things freely amongst ourselves and get the work done.

In summary, emergent teacher leaders and the principal worked together on curriculum planning and development and on supplemental resource development to facilitate quality
teaching and learning. Emergent teacher leaders took the primary role, and the principal took the secondary role. They worked individually, cooperatively, and collaboratively to affect quality curriculum planning and development and viewed this instructional function as an important aspect of their instructional leadership and as a necessary prerequisite to their instructional delivery function.

Delivering instruction refers to utilizing instructionally-sound teaching practices to guide students to curricular learning. Participants in the study worked individually, cooperatively, and collaboratively to deliver and to improve instructional practice at the classroom level. Moreover, delivering instruction was an instructional leadership function in which all emergent teachers had directly engaged; the principal’s role in instructional delivery was secondary. All thirteen participants in the study depended not only on their own efforts but also on the efforts of others to enhance instructional delivery.

While all emergent teacher leaders delivered instruction individually in their classrooms, five reported working with others in creative teaching arrangements designed to utilize their talents and to meet the needs of all children better. Joy provided an example of an arrangement to meet student needs more effectively:

Another teacher has an academically needy group, and the two of us have really bonded more this year because of that. In fact, we’re trying to find ways we can help each other out. She’s like, “Let me take your academically low children for a little bit, so they can come in and have the reading assistance in my classroom.”

Brooke recounted a previous teaching arrangement, one that capitalized on the talents of each teacher:

We started doing a pre-test before we started a unit . . . and we would group them according to who needed what . . . The other teacher usually took the ones who really needed a lot of review. She was a song-and-dance girl; so she loved that group. They would sing, and they would dance. Multiplication facts with food—they did a lot of hands-on that really got those kids learning. And she’d do an average group, and I’d do
an average group, and I’d do the above-average [group]. I tend to be better with the above-average kids. We knew what our talents were. So we’d do it that way.

While Martha’s role in instructional delivery was secondary, she supported instructional delivery as a resource, as a resource provider, and as an opportunity provider. For instance, Martha felt that it was her responsibility to stay abreast of best practices: “Part of my leadership is to be abreast of the leadership, to keep myself in the mode of what is the forefront of excellence, what are the best practices across this country, not only in this county.” Like other instructional leaders, she believed that it was her job to share that information: “I’ve got to provide you with the opportunity to open your door back, expand your vision, both with your ideas and with ideas that I sprinkle in front of your feet.”

Additionally, Martha believed that the other instructional leaders had been an important resource to her through their independent learning experiences and their ideas; therefore, being a “reflective listener” was an important part of her instructional leadership. She saw herself as “one of many” in a process that depends on the combined brain and skill sets of many. Wise leaders, she believed, recognize that their individual skills are minimal compared to the collective skills. She believed they lead by establishing visionary thoughts and goals and then by stepping aside to let other instructional leaders carry them into reality. She explained her view in the following comment:

I’m foolish if I don’t plant the visionary seeds. My intuition as a leader has to guide me as when best to sprinkle the seeds of thought. Just thoughts. Then I’ve got to be wise enough to step out of the way….The best decisions, the best planning, the best implementation strategies, the best fertilization of those seeds comes right at the point of impact. And that’s the classroom instructional leaders.

In her comment, Martha was describing the dynamic of synergy that emanates from their partnering in collaborative instructional leadership.
Emergent teacher leaders shared Martha’s view that continuous learning is important and that sharing one’s learning is critical in a learning community. Elizabeth shared her thoughts, which were representative of the shared beliefs of all of the instructional leaders:

I believe very strongly that teachers are learners. And I believe that part of the process of teaching is for me to continue to learn new ideas from my peers, which is just sharing of ideas, as well as going on and taking classes.

All participants expressed their desire to be the best they could be for the children, and they worked independently and together to bring their desire to fruition. When asked about the impetus for her instructional leadership, Elizabeth responded, “The leadership just came from wanting to be better at what I do.” Simultaneously, emergent teacher leaders wanted to help others become the best they could be.

Therefore, emergent teacher leaders at Parker helped each other improve instructional practice by sharing their knowledge, expertise, and resources; in effect, through their on-going interactions, they taught each other. Kelsey described getting help from a co-worker on time management for writing conferences:

When we were sharing the ideas for the writing, how to evaluate the writing, there’s one teacher who really stands out in how she is working her writing workshops. She’s been more successful than the rest of us at finding times to individually conference with each student. We all try to do that, but we’re having trouble organizing it so that we all get to every student. I sat down with her, and I’m getting ideas from her, and I may even go and observe her.

In fact, all emergent teacher leaders in the study felt that instructional help, direction, and support were readily available to them for the asking, from their co-workers and from the administration. The two comments that follow illustrate the common view among the participants that instructional help at Parker had been accessible through the in-house talent pool:

There are people in this school that I know I go to first if there’s something that I’m struggling with, something I have a question about, or something I don’t understand. I
certainly have people that I go to that I’ve known for several years . . . or I have the math person that I go to, and I have the language arts person that I ask questions of. (Lydia)

If I went to my assistant principal and said, “I am really struggling to teach this math lesson. I can’t get this concept across to the children. I’ve tried this, I’ve tried this, I’ve tried this, but they are not getting it,” she will spend time going and locating lesson ideas, materials, and ideas. She would even come and model a lesson if I wanted her to. But she will get busy trying to find another approach I could take that would help my students on that day. So I always know that support is there. (Kelsey)

All emergent teacher leaders maintained that observing the instructional delivery of others was an effective way to improve one’s own practice. Martha agreed and consciously supported in-house observation opportunities, as well as observations in other schools. She had facilitated observation opportunities through two programs, the stellar sub program and the Master Mentor Program, both of which were discussed in detail in Category 3.

Teacher-to-teacher teaching by emergent teacher leaders at Parker had increased application of learning into classroom practice and provided the availability of follow-up; teacher-to-teacher teaching had also provided a foundation for the development of on-going relationships. Opening their own classrooms for observation by others was one aspect of emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership; seven emergent teacher leaders discussed making their classrooms available to others. Lucy, for instance, said, “I think it’s important that other teachers know that I’m very comfortable with them coming in.” Lydia told a story that demonstrates the value of the instructional expertise of an emergent teacher leader as an in-house resource for others. Lydia began her story by explaining that she had opened her classroom to two other teachers to allow them to observe her teach interactive writing with her kindergarten class: “We worked out a time when they could come, and they actually watched me do a lesson. And then we met later that afternoon and discussed what I did.”
Lydia felt that it was important to have post-observation reflective sessions. She felt that observing teachers should have the opportunity to ask questions about what they had observed:

Meeting afterwards, I think that’s important too. After someone comes in to observe you, following up to answer any questions they may have—why I did something a certain way or why I only did it for only 12 minutes when it was going great. . . . I think that’s important, the questioning time afterwards.

Following the observation follow-up, Lydia received a request from the teachers that she observe their teaching of interactive writing: “They asked me if I would come in and watch them do a lesson.” She recounted her observation session with one of the teachers, noting that she and the teacher worked as partners on the lesson, each doing part of the lesson: “With that, I actually was part of the lesson. . . . So I modeled with the teacher, as well as the teacher doing it. . . . It was kind of like a partnership. . . . We sat down again later and discussed [it].” Lydia concluded her story of that experience, explaining that she now had on-going relationships with the two teachers and offered her expertise to them on an as-needed basis: “And then they basically went out on their own. And I’m still the one that they come to if they have a question.”

In summary, emergent teacher leaders, because of their responsibility for classroom instruction, took the lead in the area of instructional delivery at the classroom level, and the principal worked behind them in a support position. The emergent teacher leaders delivered instruction individually, but they relied on the cooperative and collaborative sharing of ideas to ensure a high quality of instructional delivery. At the grade level and at the school level, the emergent teacher leaders and the principal worked collaboratively through committees and teams to ensure quality instructional delivery in all academic areas. In other words, instructional leaders reciprocally shared what they knew and what they had to enhance instruction of all children.
To review, the principal and emergent teacher leaders at Parker targeted instruction by working individually, cooperatively, and collaboratively in the classroom, at the grade level, and at the school level. Together, through interactions based on mutual trust and respect, they planned and developed curriculum, and they delivered instruction. Moreover, instructional leaders at Parker capitalized on the collective mindset. In addition to engaging in reciprocal sharing of ideas and resources, they respected and depended on the strengths each of them brought to their collective effort, and they relied on each other for support.

Sub-category 3: Serving the Learning Community

Serving the learning community refers to volunteering to perform instructional functions that are necessary for the fulfillment of the school’s mission. Emergent teacher leaders frequently referred to this voluntary engagement in instructional functions as stepping up. This topic was discussed by every emergent teacher leader and was more applicable to emergent teacher leaders than to the principal, in that her role as principal assigned her the responsibility of oversight of all of the school’s instructional efforts.

Instructional leaders at Parker stepped up, or emerged, to serve the communal cause for a number of reasons. For instance, they volunteered to fill positions and to perform instructional functions because of identified needs: (a) identified peer need, (b) identified team need, (c) identified school need, and (d) identified student need. They also volunteered because they possessed expertise or talent in an area or because they had a personal interest in providing additional benefits to students. The degree of their involvement in instructional functions and activities was often determined by their personal responsibilities and by their other professional obligations. In other words, availability of time was a factor in their serving the learning community.
All instructional leaders at Parker believed that their talents and expertise should be used for the common good. Martha coined a phrase to express this shared mindset at Parker regarding support of peers: “Who has the strength? Let’s turn to them. Who has the needs? Let’s assist them.” Participants in the study illuminated how instructional leaders stepped up to use their strengths to buoy their peers’ weaknesses:

We have some teachers who are stronger in science. If the issue is what to do in science, they will kind of take the lead because they’ve worked through their science ideas more thoroughly than, maybe, the rest of us. They’ll share with us what they have. And another teacher is stronger in math or language arts, and they’ll take the lead [in those areas]. (Kelsey)

I will only volunteer for what I think I can do, give a contribution to, and do well . . . just where I think I can make a benefit [for others]. (Elizabeth)

In other words, instructional leaders knew their strengths, and their peers knew their strengths, as well. Peers sought out emergent teacher leaders to capitalize on their strengths; and instructional leaders volunteered and contributed in ways they felt utilized their strengths.

Similarly, emergent teacher leaders sought the advice and help of other emergent teacher leaders to bolster their own weaknesses; for instance, Brooke went to another teacher for assistance in social studies, and Kelsey sought the help of a peer in science. When she was asked to explain the free flow of assistance among peers, Kelsey elaborated, “It’s caused by a mutual respect, I think, for each other, but also by valuing our strengths. We all know our differences and who’s strong at what and that kind of leads it, as well.”

Emergent teacher leaders served as a scaffold in the growth process of others. In fact, Lucy equated the support of peers with scaffolding, describing it as a continuation of what teachers do in the classroom:

That’s the same as [what] we do in the classroom. When the need arises for more one-on-one, we give it, and then we back away. It’s kind of like testing the waters and making sure that somebody is okay before you back away. You give them the support they need.
then you back away, because—just like parenthood—our goal is that they’re going to be independent at some time.

Michelle provided an example of the scaffolding of teachers in the implementation of the new spelling model. She explained that she had been trained to support teachers in the implementation of the model and that the need for the ad hoc Spelling Team and the need for her expertise as a trainer would fade into obsolescence when the model was fully implemented and when all teachers had learned to plan and deliver this spelling model:

I was on a team called the Literacy Team, and . . . two went from each grade level [to a training program for the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model], and they emerged as the Spelling Team. . . . But, as we all learn, we won’t have a need for a Spelling Team. It won’t be me and her, the experts, because we’ll all know. So that’s going to naturally go away because everyone’s going to get up to the same spot.

All emergent teacher leaders described the collectivity of teachers at the grade level as a team and as a community. The data indicate that each grade level had its own culture and that the practice of stepping up to serve the grade-level community was common in all of them. Lucy explicated this view: “I see us as a team, and I believe everybody, at one point or another—because we are leaders—takes turns stepping up to the plate. We support our team being, and I’m thinking of the grade level team.”

Emergent teacher leaders took turns, sometimes stepping up and sometimes stepping back, to serve the cause of the team, school, colleagues, or students. As previously noted, the stepping up of emergent teacher leaders to share instructional ideas and resources was a reciprocal practice, in which all members “get and give.” Brooke explained that, in addition to taking others’ ideas, instructional leaders “pay back” with ideas of their own: “We’re really good—if people have different ideas to help supplement our lessons and if we have [a good curricular idea or resource]—to pay back.”
Similarly, emergent teacher leaders stepped up to perform functions for the team. Kelsey described the way the responsibility for functions was assumed by emergent teacher leaders: “Whenever a problem comes up, somebody will take the lead on that problem, go solve it, and share it with everybody else.”

Emergent teacher leaders took turns in assuming responsibility for functions, in accordance with norms of fair play and equality of their grade level culture. In other words, they assumed their fair share of the load, and, similarly, they stepped back to give others an opportunity to lead. Elizabeth, who is on the second grade team, illustrated this aspect of her instructional leadership:

I enjoyed being on the Leadership Team here as my grade level representative. It’s a lot of work, and I did it for three years—that’s the normal term. I was glad to take a pause from it. I’ll do it again in a few years after other people have had a turn. . . . Sometimes I will just step back and wait until someone else volunteers—unless nobody else wants to take it. You have to kind of be careful, I think, when you’re one of many.

Elizabeth explained that her team had spread responsibility for functions by taking turns, which was guided by the question, “Whose turn is it to volunteer for something now?” Brooke, who was on the fourth grade team, described a similar sharing in which the work load itself was spread around: “The grade level leader—there’s lots of work that she has to do during the year, and we’re really good about splitting those tasks up, where each person takes a little bit of the load away from her.” Kelsey explained that functions and work were so evenly spread out at the fifth grade level that, in effect, there was no leader: “Now, I do one thing, and our grade level is really wonderful, everybody helps with something. So I don’t think any one of us is the lead. I think we all take our turn being a leader.”

Kelsey noted that respect for each other played a role in volunteering at the fifth grade level. She explained that they monitor for a fair balance of work: “I honestly think we have so
much respect for each other, we just kind of monitor—if I’ve done a lot for awhile, then somebody else is going to take their turn.” In addition to discussing stepping up for their peers and their grade level, ten emergent teacher leaders at Parker described stepping up to serve the school and the students when they saw a need. As previously discussed, Lucy stepped up when and where help was needed. Similarly, Michelle “pitched in” wherever she was needed: “I think that my role here is just to pitch in anywhere it’s being asked.”

In addition to volunteering because their strengths were needed or because they were drawn to their areas of strength, emergent teacher leaders indicated that they volunteered because of their desire to serve the school and children and to “make a difference.” The following comments illustrate these reasons for volunteering:

If we have a focus or a certain goal that we’re working on, then everybody who’s strong in that particular area—it’s just kind of like magnets—they go right for that. I wanted to go. And I think it’s all for the good of the school and for the kids. (Mollie)

I really am very interested in wanting to make a difference within the school and with the system. (Joy)

Eight emergent teacher leaders explained that they assumed additional responsibility because they wanted to provide something extra to students. They often did so at a personal cost to themselves. In other words, giving to the collective cause entailed personal giving. Elizabeth described Morning Clubs, a before-school enrichment program, illustrating how instructional leaders had stepped up to provide something extra for children at a cost to themselves:

You really see that [volunteering at a personal cost] in this school in something that we call Morning Clubs. There are six weeks in the fall and six weeks in the spring where I would be willing to say that thirty to forty teachers—I don’t know the exact number—give up their morning planning time, six days in the fall and six days in the spring, plus outside planning time, for those Club days and have Clubs for children before school and after school. It’s during our working hours. If we didn’t serve on a club, then we would have planning time in our room. But we have so many—we have a huge Club program here because teachers give up their planning time to serve on Clubs.
Michelle, who was involved last year with the Web Design Club for fourth and fifth graders, although she was teaching third grade, was assisting with it again this year. She noted that Clubs were voluntary: “Every leader that is in Clubs is there because he or she volunteered to do it.”

Kelsey and Brooke offered two other examples of emergent teacher leaders’ volunteering to provide something extra for children. Kelsey explained that they volunteered to tutor students to prepare them for the writing test:

As we’re getting closer and closer to that writing test, we will look at the children who we identify in our classrooms as being weaker writers, who I would already have worked with myself a lot, and we will offer them tutoring programs on writing. Most of the time, it’ll be before school. Our parapros will often volunteer to teach some of those; teachers will be involved in teaching some of those.

Brooke described an authentic learning project she was working on at the time of the study, the plan for a school store run by the children. This example is discussed in greater detail in Category 13.

In summary, instructional leaders stepped up, using their expertise and talents to serve the other instructional leaders, the grade level, the school, and the students. Most frequently, they were motivated to volunteer because of identified needs, a sense of personal responsibility, and/or a desire to provide additional benefits to children above curriculum requirements.

Sub-category 4: Using Strategic Leadership Behaviors to Accomplish Instructional Purposes

Using strategic leadership behaviors to accomplish instructional purposes refers to employing instructional leadership behavioral tactics to influence others to accomplish instructional purposes. The principal, in her instructional leadership, regularly used instructional strategies and behaviors. Among the instructional leadership behaviors she used were the following: modeling behaviors, making suggestions, seeking/giving advice, recognizing and
praising accomplishments, being accessible and open, providing resources, and granting autonomy. Emergent teacher leaders at Parker also used instructional leadership behaviors when working with their colleagues. All thirteen of the instructional leaders in the study discussed using strategies in their instructional leadership, and eight discussed being influenced by them.

Participants in the study modeled behaviors they sought to have emulated. For instance, Martha consciously modeled the expectation of professionalism she had for staff:

I have to be the modeler. I have to be the standard bearer. I have to endorse these people, support them, and affirm them as who they are. My role is varied. I’ve often said that I live in a fish bowl because I have to be who I say I am. I can state the philosophy, but it doesn’t make any difference at all unless I emulate that philosophy every single day. If I talk about distinguished professionalism, then I have to look and act and breathe, as though I know what I’m talking about. It can’t be a dichotomy between what I feel, what I state, what I envision, what I share. I have to be those, as a role model, but I have to encourage that, affirm that, recognize that, and reward that in others because sometimes teachers, educators, in general, do not give themselves the credit that is due. . . . But the role is reciprocated back to me.

Eleven participants discussed their feelings about Martha as a role model. The following comment from Lisa is indicative of the thoughts they all shared:

I think our principal is a wonderful role model for educators. She has a very positive attitude, and I think that is [the] key when it comes to being a leader. Without that, a leader is just not a leader. She acknowledges challenges, she acknowledges the problems, but then finds a way to solve those problems in the best way possible. I feel like she is a good model for us in that. She tries to see the sunshine when really it’s hard to see. I think that’s a true characteristic of a good leader, too.

In addition to feeling that Martha was a role model, seven participants spoke directly about the influence of Martha’s behavior on their own behavior. For instance, when Kelsey was grade-level leader, she emulated the democratic leadership style of administration. Joy, in the following comment, explained that she emulated them, as well:

Through being an instructional leader with this [NCLB] program and leading these meetings . . . I have definitely [learned]. People have said that I’ve done a really wonderful job in facilitating the meeting, but I feel that I’ve just learned from our leaders how to get everybody talking.
All thirteen emergent teacher leaders discussed modeling behaviors for their peers and for their students. The following comments point to their use of modeling as a strategy to influence others:

I think making sure that when others look at me that they see me being calm, doing what needs to be done, helping, pitching in, modeling, inviting others to look at what I’m doing. It’s not just in the classroom; it’s—whether I’m in the hall or eating lunch or out in the parking lot or wherever—that they see me being positive, being a professional and, you know, answering the questions as honestly as I can and just being supportive. (Lydia)

I think with your children, you always want to set an example that learning is a life long process. We want to have our children become life-long learners, and so we want to set up that example that we, as teachers, are life-long learners. . . . When I was in graduate school getting my master’s degree or when I completed that leadership program, I thought it was a kind of a nice model for my children. I was walking out with a backpack at the end of the day. I discussed with them what I learned from class the night before. (Eliza)

But I think it all boils down to [when you share]—you are leading by example. And showing that you’re doing the same thing. Instead of just saying how to be a good teacher, showing how to be a good teacher: “Here’s what I’m doing, you know, maybe this is something you might like to do, too.” So [setting] example and sharing go hand-in-hand. (Michelle)

The instructional leaders in the study made suggestions that were non-directive and non-threatening. In talking about making suggestions to emergent teacher leaders, Martha described the importance of respecting their right to make their own decisions and of respecting their level of development:

I try and swing those wide open, so that they, not me, can move forward; and how far do you want to go, and it might be at a different level and at a different pace from your colleague next door. And we need to respect those differences.

Elizabeth explained how Martha, at a faculty meeting, once suggested that teachers might be interested in implementing student-led conferences to enhance student ownership of learning. Elizabeth incorporated the suggestion into her practice. She shared the story, which illustrates the effectiveness of making suggestions as a leadership behavior and, simultaneously,
demonstrates how Martha nudged teachers in the direction of Parker’s democratic schooling goal:

She mentioned at School Council meeting one time and then again at a full faculty meeting one time that she had been doing a lot of research and thought it would be a really interesting thing for teachers to have children come to their parent/teacher conferences and be an active part in that whole how-are-you-doing thing—be an active part, not being talked about, but being talked with and being talked to. And I thought that was an interesting concept. So my co-teacher and I went up to her and said, “We’d like to take this a step further. We’d like to do it.” So we were kind of a pilot last year.

All of the emergent teacher leaders in the study reported making suggestions to their peers. Like Martha, they respected the rights of their peers to teach in their own styles and in their own ways. Thus, suggestions were non-directive; they were offerings of peer-reviewed resources, practices, and ideas. For instance, Elizabeth referred to making suggestions as “passing on information”; she emphasized that it was “never a pushing of anything.” Kelsey noted that emergent teacher leaders made suggestions but did not feel that everyone had to do the same:

We also don’t believe you have to be the same. We’ll share with [a new teacher] what we do and then tell her, “That’s just one suggestion. Pick and choose from what I do and from what other teachers do and then create your own.”

Lisa expressed the same thought when she noted that emergent teacher leaders did not feel that they had to be “cookie-cutters.”

In their practice of instructional leadership, Martha and all emergent teacher leaders shared what they had and what they knew. They provided resources and were, reciprocally, available as resources to others. Availability and accessibility of help from other instructional leaders was mentioned by all participants; they felt that it was critical for instructional leaders to be available and accessible, and several participants mentioned that clustering and joint planning had increased their availability and accessibility to each other. Martha maintained high visibility
through “cruise bys” and short visits in classrooms, and she made a conscious effort to telegraph her availability by having an open door policy.

As previously discussed, Martha and the other administrative staff at Parker sought the advice of the other instructional leaders. All emergent teacher leaders felt respected because they felt their opinions were valued, even when their ideas were not used. Kelsey made this point:

It’s not that they are necessarily going to go along with what we suggest. But they want the input. Because it’s respected, I think at this school, there’s an increase in teachers who are willing to participate.

Brooke shared her belief that asking teachers’ opinions had resulted in a more positive instructional climate because teachers felt that they had a say:

I think all teachers react very well to times when they’re asked their opinion and have some say in it rather than to be told what they have to do. . . . I think it just adds to the positive climate.

Kelsey explained one particular success story; because teachers’ opinions and ideas were sought to solve a problem, a new volunteer tutoring program was born at Parker:

But it was because of the administrators saying, “Here’s a need we have in the school. We’ve given every extra amount of help we can give during the school hours. How can we solve this problem and still give these students the extra boost they need?” And so that was the plan we came up with—that we would offer this [Special Math Enrichment].

Like Martha, other instructional leaders sought advice and opinions, and they gave their own, as well. For instance, they gave their opinions in shared decision-making processes. Participants often gave and sought opinions and advice to bolster instructional planning and delivery. Kelsey, using herself as an example, summed up this aspect of asking advice when she noted that each teacher had strengths and that other teachers tapped those strengths by asking for instructional advice and opinion:
I sat down with her, and I’m getting ideas from her, and I may even go and observe her, just to see how she is managing her time differently than how I’m managing my time, to fit in more time to help individual students.

Michelle explained that she sought the advice and opinion of other grade-level leaders on scheduling issues. For example, she sought the advice of the fourth-grade Team Leader on how to handle the scheduling of outside time: “I was having a bit of a trouble because we have nine teachers, and I was trying to best do this. I went to the fourth grade leader and said, ‘How do you guys do it?’” Michelle also gave an example of giving advice to and sharing resources with the same fourth grade Team Leader on how to equate writing stages and grades.

Martha believed that “affirming, recognizing, appreciating, and rewarding” teachers is important. Kelsey discussed Martha’s acknowledgement of their work and accomplishments:

They recognize—when we have faculty meetings—they recognize people who’re going for degrees or doing course study work. They always recognize people who worked on various committees to either solve a problem for this school or to represent their grade on some official committee. They always recognize those and thank them for the efforts they’ve made.

In addition to publicly recognizing their work, Martha also privately demonstrated to teachers her appreciation and support of their efforts. Eliza shared her perception of how Martha had demonstrated to them that they were valued and that their talents were recognized:

[Martha] makes you feel as though you are a very vital, important member of the team here. She does that, perhaps in just informal conversations in the hallway. She might send you an e-mail that’s an uplifting one or that kind of helps set the tone for the day, perhaps. She might come on the intercom in the morning and tell you how important and valuable you are.

Emergent teacher leaders also felt acknowledged by other emergent teacher leaders when their ideas and resources were used in other classrooms and when others sought their help.

In sharing her perspective of her instructional leadership, Martha described being a “cheerleader” for the teachers, encouraging their leadership efforts and growth and offering her
support. Martha believed she should encourage the instructional and continuing education
efforts of teachers and their leadership: “I’ve got to be the nurturer, the protector, the provider,
but the encourager to their own individual leadership.” All twelve emergent teacher leaders felt
encouraged by Martha to step into leadership functions and roles. Kelsey expressed their shared
feeling as she confirmed that leadership efforts were encouraged at Parker: “I think we’re all
couraged to [provide leadership].”

Emergent teacher leaders knew the strengths of their peers, and, as previously discussed,
they relied on them. Kelsey made the point that the administrative team knew the strengths of
the teachers, as well, and that Martha nudged teachers, by encouraging them, to use their
strengths: “Sometimes, if they think a particular teacher is suited for a particular area, they’ll
ask, not require it, but ask, if they would be willing to serve.” Kelsey also believed that teachers
are encouraged by the vote of confidence from Martha. Michelle and Lucy provided specific
examples of Martha’s encouragement of all teachers:

She just offered her encouragement and support and she said, “You know I know we’ve
got a lot going on. And this first nine weeks is real heavy and what can I do to help you?
And just know that I know that your plates are full.” And sometimes that’s all you need
to know is to know that someone else knows. I mean there wasn’t anything that we asked
her to do. But just hearing her say I know your plates are full. Like that’s good. It just
makes you feel better. (Michelle)

She’s very open to ideas, you know, “Come talk to me. Come let me know [your ideas],
and let’s discuss together; let’s decide together.” . . . She makes it very possible to be a
leader, if that’s what you choose to do outside the classroom. (Lucy)

Like Martha, emergent teacher leaders used the strategy of encouraging behavior. Lucy
provided a description of multiple ways in which she had been encouraged by instructional
leaders, including Martha, when she was new to Parker:

I had tremendous support from my grade level, from the administration, checking on me:
little notes that said, “How are you doing? Thinking about you”; patting me on the back;
just a smile of understanding; [expressing], “We’ve all been there; we understand.”
Martha wanted teachers to be risk-takers, and she wanted to be the “door opener” to risk. She felt that it was her responsibility to provide an environment that allowed, encouraged, and celebrated forays into the unknown. She also felt that teachers had to feel her support of their risk-taking; in other words, she felt that she had to establish a “trusting relationship for risks” and that she had to back up that encouragement for risk with the necessary resources and opportunities to facilitate it. She offered these thoughts about risk-taking and her encouragement of risk-taking as an instructional strategy:

A lot of my job is affirming, recognizing, appreciating, and rewarding [teachers], so that they will take greater leaps, greater risks, greater stretches of their imagination, operate themselves outside of the box with full endorsement of going for what their gut tells them is best for children. Not what a text book or a [standards] book or a QCC might tell them to do, but let what the nature inside of them take over to tell them what’s the best strategies for the children they have.

I need to show them that they’re trusted, to take their risks, to use their plans, to use their strategies without me overwhelming them with my presence in their lives.

Emergent teacher leaders did not explicitly discuss encouraging risk-taking in others. However, as the data have demonstrated, by providing new ideas and offering support of others who wanted to try them, emergent teacher leaders encouraged risk-taking.

The principal and the emergent teacher leaders used strategic behaviors to influence others in instructional areas. They modeled professional behaviors for others. They made themselves available and accessible, served as resources for others, and provided resources to others. They asked advice, made suggestions, and encouraged each other. They also acknowledged the accomplishments and efforts of others. Through these strategic behaviors, they empowered each other and facilitated the development of leadership skills in others.

The discussion of Category 4 focused on the way instructional leaders at Parker centered on children, targeted instruction, served the learning community, and used strategic leadership
behaviors to accomplish instructional purposes. The activities they engaged in were tied directly to the school’s mission, its covenant, and its charter. Through their engagement in these activities, they fulfilled their responsibility to the school’s mission, and through their collaborative instructional leadership, they assisted others in doing so. All of the instructional leaders were directly involved in the focus on instruction; it was a priority in their practice of instructional leadership.

This discussion of Theme 1 has explained how instructional leadership at Parker was a collaborative effort of the principal and emergent teacher leaders. They shared instructional decision-making, communicated to accomplish their instructional purposes, and focused on improvement and instruction. Shared decision-making was the girder that supported the other collaborative instructional leadership strategies. The processes associated with shared decision-making, with the communication systems and structures, and with the improvement activities fed into and facilitated the processes associated with focus on instruction. Additionally, the processes discussed in Theme 1 led to the process interaction outcomes and to the impacts described in Themes 2 and 3, respectively.

**Theme 2: Process Interaction Outcomes**

*Theme 2: Process Interaction Outcomes* is a conceptual theme that sets forth the principal’s and the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of the outcomes of the process interactions delineated in Theme 1. *Process interaction outcomes* refers specifically to the outcomes emanating from the interactions of instructional leaders as they engaged in collaborative instructional leadership strategies. This theme relates to the third research question that guided this study: How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership relate to and interact with each other? In this section, the outcomes of the interactions
and relationships between and among the instructional leaders and their instructional leadership are presented and illustrated.

It is strongly evident in the data that the interactions in the instructional processes described in Theme 1 led to the outcomes described in Theme 2. Every participant in the study discussed process interaction outcomes, and all thirteen participants believed that their interactions in Parker’s instructional processes led to these outcomes. Specifically, the outcomes identified by the participants included (a) strengthening relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect, (b) establishing a partnering relationship, (c) creating a positive learning environment, and (d) overcoming challenges. In the categories that follow, each outcome is defined and described, and the words of the participants are used to illustrate the findings.

Category 5: Strengthening Relationships Built on the Foundation of Mutual Trust and Respect

Strengthening relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect is a conceptual category that refers to the strengthening of relationships as a result of trust and respect built during the collaborative processes of instructional leadership. All thirteen of the participants in the study believed that their relationships had been strengthened by their collaborative practice of instructional leadership; as they interacted, their trust of and respect for each other and for each others’ instructional leadership increased.

Interactions in the processes of collaborative instructional leadership provided the opportunity for individuals to reach greater professional understandings of each other; they also allowed individuals the opportunity to demonstrate their professional and personal respect and trust of others. Professionalism, which was discussed by eleven participants, was a valued norm
at Parker and played a significant role in relationships of trust and respect. Mollie shared her view:

You couldn’t find a finer group of teachers anywhere in the world than we have right here. Everybody’s hard-working; everybody’s respectful. We care about each other. We care about the kids. . . . I don’t know how anybody couldn’t succeed in an atmosphere like this.

In other words, professionals at Parker trusted and respected others who had demonstrated a strong work ethic, respect of others, and caring. These characteristics were valued; those who demonstrated them were trusted and respected.

In general, as interactions increased, trust and respect increased and relationships deepened. While it is equally possible that trust and respect could decrease as a result of interactions and that relationships could have been negative, the relationships described by participants in this study were all positive. Twelve of the participating instructional leaders at Parker discussed the belief that trust and respect are earned over time. Martha, whose title had placed her in a unique position among the other instructional leaders, shared her view that teachers’ trust of her was critical to a collaborative relationship:

One of the biggest things that we found in research on staff retention is the qualities of your leader. In other words, they have got to believe in me, they’ve got to trust me, and I’ve got to create that for them. I need to earn their [respect]. I need to earn their trust. I can’t just accept it with the title, because it’s non-existent. The title’s one thing, the qualities of a leader another. I’ve got to be the kind of leader that earns me the right to say I’m trusted and earns me the right to say that they’ll listen to me and I can listen to them and that I deserve a collaborative relationship with them.

Similarly, all emergent teacher leaders believed that one’s place as a leader is earned. Lydia’s view of the role of trust in leadership practice was representative of instructional leaders’ perspectives:

I think becoming a leader is not something that just all of a sudden happens. It takes time, and it takes trust. I think someone has to trust you before they come to you . . . especially
young teachers; some have a harder time admitting that they’re struggling with something because they don’t want to get a mark by their name.

Kelsey’s description of the trust and respect that characterized relationships on her team was repeated by instructional leaders at other grade levels, as well:

I just know for sure the fifth-grade teachers are [trusting and respectful of others’ instructional ideas and practices]. And I know for sure that we have this absolute deep respect for each other.

Instructional leaders at Parker also recognized that relationships are as fragile as the trust and respect on which they are built. They consciously protected that trust and respect and, thereby, protected the relationships. Emergent teacher leaders, as described in Theme 1, were very deferential to each other, and they consciously sought to keep their equality in balance. They believed that collaborative instructional leadership at Parker worked because instructional leaders were equal; thus, they wanted to be “together with” other instructional leaders, neither ahead of nor behind them. Martha consciously worked at “equalizing the playing field” and at making “no division in who we [are].” She believed in the trusting and respectful partnership of professionals in an environment that provides the “opportunity to give back with reciprocity.” In the following comment Martha talked about professionalism and reciprocity as building blocks for mutual trust and respect:

[I give] trust and empowerment and support and reinforcement and road block removal. . . . They give with their work effort, with their professionalism, with their hours in this workplace, with their comments. They inspire me—yet they tell me that I inspire them. . . . That’s where reciprocity comes in.

Martha’s comment is representative of the mindfulness of all instructional leaders regarding the importance of reciprocity of trust and respect.
Interactions among instructional leaders led to relationships among them, and, in turn, relationships led to interactions. As previously discussed in Theme 1, instructional interactions occurred formally and informally. Formal collaborative interactions, in accordance with protocols of respect for the value of every voice, built respect for others’ ideas and for different approaches to instructional issues and problems. Lydia explained that respecting the other professionals at Parker caused her to take note of what they said:

When I . . . listen to other people I respect, when they share something—a belief that they have—it makes me a better teacher when I hear others share what they are doing and share the reason behind it.

Similarly, Michelle described how trust of and respect for others’ opinions could lead to an outcome of expanded thinking: “Just talking with another teacher can help: ‘I didn’t think about it that way.’ You know that’s kind of a paradigm shift.” Moreover, all participants felt that their joint responsibility for and collaboration on decisions and problem solving led to a sense of cohesiveness, which participants described as being “in this together,” and ensured a collective response that represented the best thinking of all.

Informal instructional interactions occurred as a result of chance encounter or as a result of conscious assistance-seeking. Proximity and joint planning time increased both forms of interaction. Through these interactions and the support and assistance that came from them, relationships of trust and respect grew. In other words, the timely response of informal interactions to needs strengthened relationships. As relationships strengthened, instructional leaders more frequently sought interactions.

At Parker, relationships tended to progress through stages. Ten participants explained that their relationships began as professionals working for a system and in the school; their relationships deepened and extended beyond professional relationships to include friendly
relationships as they came to know, trust, and respect each other through their interactions; and five participants felt that, through their continuing collaboration, their relationships had evolved into family-like relationships. Mollie explained the role of respect in that progression, and Martha shared her view that schools built on reciprocal relationships of trust, respect, and professionalism have unlimited potential for improvement:

We have this huge amount of respect for each other. It’s a very professional school working relationship with everyone, but we’re very close to each other. We support each other through everything, including personal tragedies, personal loss, and personal moments of distress—just the pats on the back and just the caring about each other. I’ve really enjoyed working here these past years for just that reason. If you can’t pick your own family, you can pick friends. I picked these as friends because we’re all supportive of each other. (Mollie)

Relationships are to the point of being family-oriented, not employees working for a system. And once you can build a family of professionals, and once you have that trusting relationship and that reciprocal understanding where everyone is valued, then there is no obstacle to moving a school anywhere you want to take it. (Martha)

Instructional leaders believed that the success of Parker was linked to the strength of the trusting and respectful professional relationships that resulted from collaborative instructional interactions.

All participants explained that the culture of Parker was built on a foundation of trust and respect. The framework for the school’s organizational structure—its mission, covenant, and charter—set forth the norms of the school’s culture, and its shared decision-making processes cemented on-going support of mutual trust and respect through that framework. Being part of the community required a commitment to the shared values of the community. Biller made clear the shared values at Parker: “I think people, when they come to this school, get a feel for what we’re about, and they know, if you want to be part of this community, this is what’s important to us.” The following comments exemplify other participants’ views of the trusting and respectful culture in which they worked and learned:
Support is across the board, whether you’re a classroom teacher or a special area teacher or a paraprofessional or a cafeteria worker or a custodian—across the board. Everyone here is respected and, in turn, then, is supported. I think respect and support go hand-in-hand. I believe it’s across the board. (Lucy)

I’ve heard it said before, from principals or people in administrative positions, that you surround yourself with good people, and I think that we are a quality staff. And I feel that, when we are meeting together, there’s a mutual respect among the professional staff and that we all offer quality ideas. All ideas are worthy of being discussed, and I think the climate here provides a wealth of opportunity for growth and development, with many conversations about children’s learning. I think [Martha] surrounds herself with good quality people. And I think that we all thrive in this environment. (Eliza)

In addition to the school culture, each grade level at Parker had its own culture. In other words, each grade level was itself a tightly connected community, as well as being a part of the greater school community. Respect and trust were cornerstones in the grade level community, as the following comments illustrate:

Working all together, cooperating, respecting each other, flexible, willing to give and take, sharing with each other—all of those things make it a community. In my classroom, we call it a family. (Lucy)

I know our grade level works right together. We have absolute respect for each other, we all share ideas, and we all know—if I’m struggling with a particular item—I know who on my grade level is really strong at that. That’s who I would go to with that. (Kelsey)

What I found with my grade level is that we have always, traditionally, have had a really wonderful reputation for working so well together and being professional. (Lisa)

In fact, Lisa had considered changing grade levels to broaden her experience, but she chose not to do so because of the bond she felt with her team.

The sense of community at the grade level was intensified by the frequency and quality of the interactions that occurred at that level, as well as by their shared grade-specific purpose. In other words, emergent teacher leaders most frequently interacted with others at their own grade level. Furthermore, their interactions at the grade level were more on point to their instructional needs. Therefore, their sense of identification with and the depth of their
relationships at the grade level were more pronounced than at the school level. They had more opportunities to interact and engage in grade level instructional activities than in whole school activities; thus, they had greater opportunity to develop and build relationships at the grade level.

As the following comment demonstrates, mutual trust and respect were the adhesives that glued the individuals into a grade-level oneness:

I know they respect me, and they know I work hard. They know I really do enjoy what I do. But I just work with an awesome team. . . . Whenever anyone needs a little bit of help or is having a bad day, the other eight girls are right there. (Elizabeth)

Mutual respect and trust between the emergent teacher leaders and the principal were also strongly evident in the data. All emergent teacher leaders expressed that they felt respected and trusted by the principal, and they all expressed respect and trust for the principal. The foundation of trust and respect led them to have expectations of each other; in other words, they relied on each other to perform to a certain standard. Biller explained the mutual expectation: “She expects you to do what you’re supposed to do, and I expect her to do what she’s supposed to do.”

Lucy explained the mutual expectation and reliance of each on the performance of the other:

I trust her to do what she needs to do to make it possible for me to do what I need to do. It’s a two way street. If it was blocked in either way, one or both of us would suffer in so far as our responsibilities are [concerned]. We wouldn’t be able to do the best job that we could. But when you trust and respect each other’s person and you trust and respect each other’s position, you’re much more successful that way.

Trust and respect also inspired participants, as was discussed by nine instructional leaders. Eliza noted that respect for Martha inspired instructional leaders: “Because I respect her, I’m willing and want to go the extra mile, for not only her, but for our school and our children.” Martha shared her perspective of the mutual respect among instructional leaders at Parker:
I feel very [much] respected here. They use terms with me, such as “light” and “spiritual,” and they tell me I have encouraged them. They use very endearing terms of endorsement. For lack of a better term, it’s almost like a mutual admiration society.

Emergent teacher leaders felt inspired by each other, and they inspired others. Michelle explained that effective instructional practices moved “like wildfire” through the grade level. Brooke noted that she was inspired by another emergent teacher leader and was encouraged to try new things when she saw them work for others. Moreover, enthusiasm motivated others. Michelle explained that enthusiasm is like the “bubble in Coke”; it bubbles over to inspire others. Respect for and trust in the practice of emergent teacher leaders, then, inspired and motivated others.

As discussed and demonstrated in Theme 1, communication channels were open, formally and informally, and were part of the shared governance structure. As a result of the structured communication channels and the organizational efforts to increase the opportunities for communication, communications at Parker were optimized, and participants felt that instructional outcomes were enhanced. Eliza shared her belief that having the opportunity for instructionally related conversations was important: “Whether it’s formally in a meeting or whether it’s in the hallway or just lunch time or wherever, we are all in close proximity to each other, so we can have a lot of important conversations.” Opportunity for interaction allowed emergent teacher leaders to “get answers,” “ask questions,” and “bounce ideas off each other.” Lucy, for example, noted that respect for others led emergent teacher leaders to rely on each other and on the principal as resources:

The people I work with would be personal resources. The principal, for sure, would be a personal resource. This particular principal is very welcoming and very comfortable. . . . I know she’s very respectful of me and of other teachers.
Increased trust and respect of each other were outcomes of the process interactions, leading to trusting and respectful relationships between and among the individuals and their instructional leadership. Michelle and Lydia shared their thoughts:

[Martha will] come in, she’ll just pop in to grade level meetings, and say, “Who needs something? Do you need something?” And, like, “Wow!” It just really shows a lot of respect. It shows that she has a lot of respect for us to ask us and not just take things into her own hands. (Michelle)

What has helped me, I think, is the relationship that I’ve developed, the trust level that I have with other teachers here and the respect I have for other teachers. It really makes me feel good when a 4th grade teacher comes to me and says, “O. K., I need your opinion on this.” (Lydia)

Relationships of trust and respect were evident as outcomes of the instructional focus processes and the improvement processes, as well. As discussed in Theme 1, the principal trusted emergent teacher leaders “to do the right thing” instructionally, she respected their “distinguished professionalism,” and she trusted and respected their knowledge and expertise. As demonstrated by emergent teacher leaders’ comments, they felt the same trust and respect for their co-workers and for the principal. Their mutual trust and respect for each other personally fed directly into mutually trusting and respectful relationships between and among their practices of instructional leadership. The following comments illuminate the relationships of trust and respect in instructional practice at Parker:

A wise leader is one who listens to her masses, appreciates her masses, walks with her masses, and becomes a family member to the masses. In two years I’ve been able to become very close to these people by believing in them. I truly admire them, respect them, and see them as part of my greater family. When I address them, I address them as family—that’s the language that we talk. (Martha)

But when it comes to instruction [Martha] very much trusts the teachers; and, I think, that’s the way it is, that she trusts that we’re doing the job in our classrooms. She listens to us, and she’s very involved. Of course, she’s very involved in the decisions that we make, but she does listen to us, as a staff. (Lydia)
I think that [the administrative team] somehow relate their respect to us and the fact that we’re doing a good job. I think that when we need help and support, they’re there. They’re always asking whether there’s anything they can do to support us. I think the door is always open. I think that we feel like we are supported. I think that’s one of the things that allow us to do our job. But somehow they’re doing the job of letting us know that we’re doing well, we’re doing it right. . . . I just feel like there is such a respect between both that we just know. (Mollie)

All emergent teacher leaders felt that a foundation of trust and respect had been essential to their effectiveness in individually and collectively monitoring and supervising each others’ teaching practice. Lydia explained that she wanted to treat anyone who came to her “in a way that they’re going to want to come back to me the next time”:

And then finding the way to help them without them really realizing that [is what you’re doing]—especially if you thought it was a problem. Like if there’s an area where you think, “Okay, this person is struggling.” To me, a good leader can go in and make that situation better without the person really even knowing that you thought it was a problem to begin with.

Lydia thought the outcome of such treatment was increased trust and respect and the building of a foundation for a lasting relationship. Like other emergent teacher leaders, she felt that being trustworthy and respectful fostered relationships built on that trust and respect.

Relationships of mutual trust and respect were strengthened as a result of instructional leaders’ interactions in all of the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Category 4. Through their interactions, instructional leaders demonstrated professionalism, trust, and respect; repeated demonstrations had led to the development of others’ trust and respect of them and to relationships built thereon. Instructional leaders trusted and respected each other, and they trusted and respected each others’ practice of instructional leadership. Moreover, as a result of their trust of and respect for each other, they relied on each other for instructional support and growth. This outcome contributed to the partnering relationships described in Category 6 and to the positive learning environment described in Category 7.
Category 6: Establishing a Partnering Relationship

Establishing a partnering relationship is a conceptual category that describes the relationship of essentially equal power that exists among instructional leaders at Parker. Through the collaborative instructional leadership strategies in which they engaged, participants developed partnering relationships with other instructional leaders. All thirteen of the participants described those relationships and engaged in them; moreover, they felt that partnering relationships were essential to the practice of instructional leadership. In the following quote, Martha captured the essence of the partnering relationship that existed between herself and emergent teacher leaders at Parker: “The collective minds come together in parallel pathways, and we move simultaneously together. I don’t have to be in front of them; I don’t have to be behind them. We’re together as we go forward.”

There were two types of partnering at Parker: conceptual partnering and specific teaching partnerships. Conceptual partnering was the outcome of the collaborative practice of instructional leadership; in other words, participants worked with equal power for a common cause and became partners in the business of accomplishing that cause. All of the participants discussed conceptual partnering; five emergent teacher leaders also discussed specific teaching partnerships they had with other teachers. Specific teaching partnerships were previously discussed in Category 4; therefore, they are not covered in this category.

All of the participants discussed partnering relationships. Emergent teacher leaders saw themselves as fifty-fifty partners in their relationships with other emergent teacher leaders. They also felt that they were working partners with the principal in the shared instructional leadership cause, but they recognized that there were inherent differences in their jobs. The principal described a partnering relationship with other instructional leaders, as well, but acknowledged
that her title and, specifically, her role as evaluator presented a challenge to total equality in their partnering relationships.

Parker’s shared decision-making processes and the established channels of communication fostered collaborative instructional leadership and facilitated the development of partnering relationships. The school’s shared governance ensured the right of equality in instructional decision-making; the decision-making structures and communication channels guaranteed the opportunities to have equal voice and equal participation; and the agreement to support consensus brought participants together in a united effort. Martha shared her perspective of her responsibility to foster equal voice in the partnering relationship: “I think that as an instruction leader, I cannot be dictatorial—‘Let’s go this way. Come on, everyone, get on board.’—but I’ve got to keep my ear to the ground to the needs of the staff.” Emergent teacher leaders agreed with Martha. Kelsey described the shared decision-making processes at Parker as “very democratic,” noting that “nothing is done from an authoritarian point of view” at the grade level or school level and that, when a decision is made, the staff are equal partners in making it: “Everybody contributed to it.” Because instructional leaders had equal say in instructional decisions and because conscious efforts were made by instructional leaders to maintain relationships of equality, a sense of partnering and partnership existed among the professional staff at Parker. Furthermore, the mission statement specifically required a partnership relationship among stakeholders for the accomplishment of the school’s goals and purpose.

Instructional leaders at Parker worked together to affect quality instruction. As previously discussed, there was a mutual respect of the talents and expertise of all partners in the process. Martha explained her view, capturing the essence of the partnering relationship that existed among instructional leaders: “I could say that my interaction has got to be one of total
collaboration, respect, and keeping that instructional partnership a reciprocal one—never with
demands, but with collaborative appreciation of professional skills.” Instructional leaders at
Parker considered themselves to be professional equals, each of which had unique, but equal,
professional talents. Moreover, they believed that a collaborative effort brought together the best
of all individual minds into an elevated collective mindset. In other words, they believed that the
collective mindset offered greater potential and produced better outcomes than the mere sum of
the individual minds comprising it. Kelsey alluded to the dynamic of synergy that emanated
from collaborative efforts:

> Sometimes as a teacher, I’ll come up with an idea of something to do, and I’ll say, “This
> is a great idea. I want to use this in my classroom!” If it’s just me, then I use that idea and
> it’s fine; but if it’s two teachers or more collaborating, I would say to the other teacher, “I
> found this great idea, and this is what I want to do.” And she’ll say, “That’s great, and we
> can connect that to this.” And it grows. She’ll say that, and it makes me think, “Oh, yeah,
> we can also tie it to something else.” So having another person to bounce it off, the idea
> gets bigger and more refined.

Martha wanted to be perceived by emergent teacher leaders as an equal in the pursuit of
quality instruction: “My dream would be that I could be seen as a parallel partner. I’d much
rather be a parallel partner than a spearhead to efforts.” As she explained in the following
comment, she wanted to be a contributing collaborator with other instructional leaders, but it was
important to her not to dominate in the instructional processes: “I would say my dream role is,
and I’m hoping that I appear to them as, a collaborative contributor to the process of instructional
leadership—not one of dominance, but of equal partnership with them.”

As previously noted, Martha strongly believed that there was a point beyond which she
would “taint the territory.” She felt that she must be ever vigilant of that point. Thus, in her
practice of instructional leadership, she stepped in to collaborate and stepped back when she felt
that deference to her had become an obstacle to others’ equal voice in the collaborative process.

Martha explained her belief:

There comes the point where the building leader can “taint the territory,” can stay too long. . . . Then I’ve got to be wise enough and intuitive enough or receive enough signals that these leaders are fully aware of their dreams, collective dreams, and how they parallel with any dreams that I could possibly have for them, and I back up and let the experts take over.

Just as Martha described a partnering relationship in which the partners were together and moving forward, emergent teacher leaders described the same relationship and the same forward progress toward a shared goal. Kelsey, for instance, noted that at her grade level, instructional leaders were “right together,” and Biller described the coordinated movement of the whole school as “on track, moving in the right direction.”

Not only did the collaborative practice of instructional leadership processes described by emergent teacher leaders foster in-sync partnering relationships, but it also promoted the norms of equality and fairness on which those relationships were built. Clearly, at the grade levels, unwritten share-and-share-alike and turn-about-is-fair-play rules governed the partnering relationships. Lucy shared her thoughts on expectations of fairness and equality in the partnering relationship:

You want to be fair. It is the give and take. Nobody wants to be the giver all of the time and not receive. Reciprocate—you reciprocate by giving, but you don’t always want to be on the giving end because you want to be supported yourself, as well. So I can see that a leader—a successful leader is the same way. You support your work colleagues, and you expect the same in return.

Elizabeth expressed the shared belief among the instructional leaders that they could count on their peers to reciprocate: “You feel like you can take a rest because there are many people to carry the ball with you. You’re not going to carry it alone.”
As has been previously demonstrated, the partnering relationships at Parker were reciprocal in nature. In their instructional practice, the emergent teacher leaders shared what they had and what they knew. Kelsey described the fifty-fifty arrangement in that sharing:

Various people will come up with a solution to a particular problem. I depend on those. If I tried to solve every problem myself, I would never have time, so I would let things slide. But being able to depend on my colleagues—if they’ve figured out a solution, to share it with me—then that saves me time to maybe figure out a solution to something else that they need help with.

Instructional leaders provided many examples of their own sharing of ideas and resources; and, just as consistently, they all noted that their sharing was reciprocated. They felt that instructional leadership at Parker worked because it was based on reciprocated empowerment. For instance, Lisa shared her view that partnering at Parker was about being a “leader among leaders”:

A leader among leaders. I feel that we . . . take turns with different responsibilities and [with] sharing ideas. I know that I try to share what works in my classroom with my teachers, and the next day, they do the exact same thing for me. I feel like we kind of help lead each other.

Lisa’s comment illustrates the shared belief among participants in the study that every instructional leader was a leader in some area and that her leadership was valued by others and was needed for the common good.

In addition to sharing ideas and resources, instructional leaders partnered by sharing leadership opportunities. As previously discussed, they took turns being the leader to give everyone the opportunity to lead, and they equalized the responsibilities of holding positions and of performing functions for the team. In other words, they were equal partners in the rights and responsibilities of instructional leadership at the grade level.

As partners in the instructional process, instructional leaders depended on each other. Each had a job; each felt the responsibility to do her job; and each expected the other to do her job. Biller illustrated those points: 266
Martha has a job, and she does it. I think she knows that we have a job, and she allows us to do it. She counts on us to do what we’re supposed to do, just like we count on her. . . . I know that she takes her job as seriously as I take my job. I don’t think she’s thinking of it like she’s got more to do. I think she thinks we’ve all got a lot to do and everybody has to do their job. I count on her to do her job because she’s counting on me to do mine. I think that goes throughout the school as well. Everybody has a lot to do but does it.

In other words, there was an expectation among the partners that each would “hold up” her end of the partnering responsibility.

As previously discussed, the partnership relationship was more pronounced at the grade level than at the school level. In the following comment, Biller explained that proximity has a decided impact on partnering:

We’re definitely partners on the grade level, and everybody does seem to have a partner—the one, first of all, closest in proximity seems to be your number one person. But then, anytime we have a question, we’re all together on helping each other figure it out. And . . . when we need other grade levels’ input or help or administrative help, we get it. I think there is a partnership between anybody who needs it.

As Biller noted, the partnering relationship existed across the grade levels and at the school level; and it was evident in the data that participants believed that instructional interactions enhanced the sense of partnership between the principal and emergent teacher leaders. Eliza shared her thoughts on the partnership relationship that existed between Martha and emergent teacher leaders:

I think our principal sets up a wonderful example for us, in that she gets right in there and does the work with us. It’s not just telling someone to go do something, but she’s right there with us all the time. For example, when we were doing all of our committee work with No Child Left Behind, she set up the framework that all of our ideas were valued and listened as we spoke, participated one hundred percent in the process with us, and was right there with us.

Biller expressed her thought about the nature of the instructional partnerships at Parker, adding her belief that a collaborative partnership was essential to teaching practice: “Nobody is alone. I don’t think we could do this job if we didn’t all work together.”
Parker’s covenant and charter gave instructional leaders the responsibility for on-going professional growth and development and for participation in continual school renewal. Instructional leaders learned from others, and they taught others; the outcome was a partnership in professional growth. Numerous examples of these partnering relationships were evident in the data, and a number of examples were provided in Theme 1 to illustrate the ways in which instructional leaders used their teaching expertise to aid the growth of others. The primary source of teachers’ professional growth at Parker was, according to the data, teacher-to-teacher teaching. Teacher strengths were used formally and informally to build the capacity of others. For instance, Lydia used her strength in interactive writing to help two teachers, and she regularly offered her class as a site for observations by other teachers; Elizabeth planned and presented staff development programs in her areas of strength.

Ten instructional leaders described their participation in on-going renewal activities at Parker. They used action research at the classroom, grade, and school levels to guide their instructional practice and decision-making. Through their active participation in these research endeavors, they became partners in the process of school renewal. An example of schoolwide action research was the inquiry into spelling and the subsequent implementation of the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model. The fifth grade integration project was another example of a school renewal effort that promoted a sense of partnership among instructional leaders. In both of these examples, instructional leaders, including the principal, worked as partners to solve identified problems in instruction.

As a result of their interactions in the collaborative instructional processes in Theme 1, instructional leaders at Parker developed partnering relationships. Emergent teacher leaders’ partnering relationships with each other were fifty-fifty; they shared rights and responsibilities
equally. The partnering relationship between the principal and emergent teacher leaders had the “cloud of evaluation” over it, and the title was a mental hurdle to equal power. Despite those obstacles to total equality, the principal was successful in being a “collaborating partner.” All instructional leaders collaborated as equals on instructional matters. Instructional leaders were empowered through their interactions in collaborative instructional processes to become partners in instructional leadership at Parker. The partnering relationship outcome contributed to the positive learning environment at Parker.

Category 7: Creating a Positive Learning Environment

Creating a positive learning environment is a conceptual category that describes the positive teaching and learning environment that had been created and nurtured by the instructional processes described in Theme 1. As an outcome of their interactions in collaborative instructional processes, instructional leaders created a positive learning environment for students and staff at Parker. In other words, in accordance with the school’s covenant, they provided a “safe, nurturing, supportive, clean, and orderly environment for all who work and learn” at Parker. Instructional leaders in the study believed that Parker’s academic success was an outcome of their interactions in collaborative instructional processes and of the positive learning environment they had had a hand in creating.

Specifically, participants believed that their interactions in the processes of sharing decision-making, communicating for instructional purposes, focusing on instruction, and focusing on improvement led to positive outcomes, which contributed to the positive learning community at Parker. In this category, specific interaction outcomes described by the participants are described and related to the process actions.
As noted in Category 6, participants in the study felt that they were in partnership with each other in the practice of collaborative instructional leadership, and they believed that they were connected to each other by a common cause. The partnership relationship among instructional leaders had a significant effect on the learning environment. Instructional leaders relied on each other as partners in pursuit of their shared mission. They felt that each partner brought unique talents to the table and that they all shared the benefits of those talents; they also believed that they learned from the sharing of those talents. The participants understood that they had different jobs to perform, and they expected and relied on each other to perform the jobs for which each was responsible. As discussed in Category 5, trust and respect grew as a result of the use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies. The shared belief was that success depended on all parties doing their jobs, on all parties contributing their fair share, and on all parties having equal voice. In other words, working as partners in the collaborative processes of instructional leadership, they believed, had led to Parker’s success. They also believed that Parker’s on-going improvement and renewal depended on collaborative instructional leadership through partnering relationships. Martha summarized the reflective inquiry behind their on-going improvement, illuminating the collaborative partnership integral to it:

How can we plant the right seeds at the right moment, while gathering the seeds of thought from all of the other members of these teams, and place us in a positive agenda five years from now, just as strong as we are today as the number one school in Abel County?

Participants in this study identified a number of positive outcomes of shared decision-making. Emergent teacher leaders felt that shared decision-making allowed them to be partners in instructional leadership and that it contributed to an elevated sense of being equals “on the same team.” Martha referred to their shared decision-making as “inventing the path together.” She believed that, because the path had been invented together at Parker, travel along the path was
coordinated and there was conscious commitment to the chosen path. All other participants also believed that a co-determined path made more sense; for instance, Joy expressed this thought: “It makes much more sense to develop our goals together—what we’re working on—having the teacher input.” Participants believed that shared decision-making helped coordinate efforts across grade levels and overcome teacher isolation and grade level isolation; in other words, they also expressed the belief that shared decision-making fostered a coordinated whole-school and all-children orientation. These beliefs were illustrated in Theme 1.

Participants felt that being involved in decision-making had contributed to a sense of self-worth and value and that it led to their being trusted and respected by others. Kelsey emphasized the support that was offered, even when one’s suggestion was not taken or was not accepted: “Your input has been considered and has been thought about. So you feel like it’s worth your time to bother.” Similarly, hearing the voice of others built trust in and respect for others. Biller, for instance, explained that new teachers often had a surprising grasp of instructional situations and offered new ways to view old issues; Lydia made the point that hearing others’ perspectives often caused one to rethink one’s own position. The collaborative processes of decision-making led to individual and collective reflective thinking.

All participants in the study believed that sharing decision-making had led to increased involvement of teachers. The view at Parker was that decisions belong to everyone because all staff members had a part in making them; as a result, they supported decisions by being involved in carrying them into practice. Kelsey’s comment exemplifies a shared view of the emergent teacher leaders:

Our administrators ask for our input all the time and respect us as professionals and really do value what we say. . . . They want the input. Because it’s respected . . . there’s an increase in teachers who are willing to participate. I enjoy it. I think it’s essential. I think if we’re going to improve education, teachers have to be part of the solution.
Martha believed that leadership capacity was built in instructional leaders through the
decision-making activities in which they engaged. She felt their having classroom autonomy,
their being part of the collaborative process of “Parkerizing” instructional initiatives, and their
participating in instructional decision-making through committees and teams contributed to their
leadership growth. Moreover, she felt that, through their involvement in these processes,
teachers came to own the product of their decision-making, feeling it, and breathing life into it.

Martha shared her view of her role:

You back up, and you let the experts take those seeds, embellish them with even better
seeds of thought that they have, because they’re at the point of impact, of instructional
front-lines. Then my job is to back up, support, reinforce, motivate, provide, remove the
road blocks, and let that team of instructional leaders—expert instructional leaders—
move forward. So that’s my role with them.

From the perspectives of all participants, shared decision-making had contributed to the
positive learning environment that existed at Parker. The following comment from Mollie
exemplifies the shared view of instructional leaders:

I think that [shared decision-making] just makes everything work. I think everybody
wins. I think the kids win. I think the teachers win, because they’re happy in the place
where they are. They never feel like their voice or their opinions or anything is stunted.

Even the four participants who noted negative aspects of shared governance felt that shared
governance had contributed in positive ways to the climate at Parker.

All participants felt that communication channels and structures at Parker supported their
instructional leadership, and they believed that a collaborative practice of instructional leadership
was the outcome of their communicating for instructional purposes. As previously noted,
sharing and collaboration were the two most frequently used terms in the interviews, and both
terms were used by all participants. All participants believed that instructional practice at Parker
was improved because they had engaged in formal instructional communications through
designed structures and because they had increased opportunities to engage in informal instructional interactions. Sharing and collaborating were mutually supportive instructional activities; participants described them as “two-way,” “get-and-give” interactions. As Brooke’s comment illustrates, mutual respect and trust facilitated openness in those interactions:

None of us feel intimidated . . . by the other teachers. Like if someone comes to me and says, “Hey, I’ve got this better idea to do that.” It’s like, “Well, great! That is a neat idea!” There are teachers that have done Opening Eyes for Math, and I haven’t done that—so it’s interesting listening to them and getting some ideas. And then I’ve done Everyday Math, so I can share some ideas on that. I don’t feel intimidated at all. Getting answers, we do that all the time. We’re real quick to ask questions and get solutions. If we can’t get solutions [from each other], we figure out where we can get solutions.

The formal and informal instructional communication systems, as discussed in Category 2, consisted of brainstorming instructional matters and offering ideas and resources that participants believed would translate into improved practice and into enhanced relationships. Collaboration and sharing were reflective activities, and they led to increased reflection. These interactions provided emergent teacher leaders with teaching ideas and resources from which to choose and broadened their instructional thinking. They also allowed teachers to be more productive for each other because they eliminated duplicated work. Eight participants explained that they maximized time through reciprocal collaborative efforts; for instance, Lisa explained the helpfulness of having access to someone else’s ideas and resources:

Without my colleagues, I think that I would spend more time getting and doing the things that they’re doing. To me, that’s a waste of time. Now, what happens is: usually we collaborate, and we give ideas, and then we kind of twist them to make them our own. We kind of adjust them to help them suit our classroom. But I find that just by giving each other resources . . . that’s so helpful. (Lisa)

Mollie felt that teaching would be impossible without sharing and collaboration:

I don’t think teachers could survive without that give and take. I think, as I’ve said many times and I’ve heard other people say many times, there’s really not an original idea. We just share ideas. We bounce things off each other and sometimes just the sharing of ideas,
and then you’ll brainstorm and come up with something totally different, just in conversation.

Instructional leaders at Parker felt strongly that collaboration and sharing had been essential to their effective practice of instructional leadership.

All participants described meeting specific instructional needs and answering specific instructional questions through their instructional communication. Lisa’s comment illustrates that point:

I guess what I appreciate about them most is . . . just our personalities. Everyone seems to have their strength, and everyone seems to have a weakness, but they are not afraid to say what those are. “Oh, my gosh, I don’t know what I’ve done here. Help me!” And there’s always someone there that says, “Well, I’ll tell what I did. I don’t know if it’s going to help, but I’ll share with you my ideas.”

Elizabeth described a specific benefit of collaborative meetings to new teachers on her team:

We meet twice a week as a grade level in the afternoons. And that’s when we’re asked: “Is there anything that you’re having trouble with? Is there anything you need help with?” And [new teachers] may or may not . . . come forward and say they need help with it . . . . They might not know they need help with it, but Carol, my grade leader, will say [to other instructional leaders], “How did you do this?” or “What did you do for this unit?” And just by all of the sharing, they get new information that may help them.

Cheryl, who was a veteran teacher, described benefits of in-house support and shared expertise to all teachers:

I enjoy sharing those ideas with others, and I think that, on our grade level as a whole, it’s something that we do. Somebody has a good idea to share—we may tweak it a little bit, we may work it into how it best suits the way we run our classroom individually—but it’s teaching those objectives in the best way we can for our kids. And it’s a great asset here at our school how someone has the wisdom.

All participants in the study felt that the outcome of the instructional leaders’ focus on instruction was a successful academic program at Parker. The school was the “number one” school in the county, and instructional leaders felt that the academic success of the school was an
outcome of their successful practice of collaborative instructional leadership and of their partnership with the parents and community.

Mutual support and capitalization on the talents, expertise, and experience of each member of the staff were frequently cited by participants as keys to their successful practice of instructional leadership. Martha described the relationship among instructional leaders as “symbiotic,” noting that they “feed each other.” She felt that instructional leaders were coordinated in purpose and unified in their actions, which allowed them to “flow with each other.” She attributed the success of Parker to its collaborative leadership, to the symbiotic relationship, and to the “distinguished professionalism” that exists among the staff. All of the other instructional leaders appreciated Martha’s shared leadership style and the opportunity they had at Parker to be contributing members to its success. Like Martha, they felt that Parker was as much theirs as hers. Michelle explained that Martha made it clear to them that “it’s not just her school; we all make it work.” In other words, instructional leaders shared the common belief that they were “together in this,” had a vested interest in outcomes, and contributed to outcomes.

Kelsey provided an example of the coordinated efforts of instructional staff at Parker to fulfill the mission to “challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential.” The instructional staff worked together to create a special program for high achieving math students. The result was the Special Math Enrichment program (SME), which had been in place for years and continued to meet the needs of students. Kelsey described the implementation of SME:

One of the other programs we have—it’s called special math enrichment, we call it SME—and we have a lot of high achieving math students here. . . . We didn’t believe that [moving high achieving students into the textbooks for the next year] was in the best interest of students, but we needed a way to challenge them. So we got together and came up—this is going back years and years and years ago at this school—but came up with an enrichment plan for those
students, which we call SME. . . . There isn’t a single program that we have in place here that hasn’t been a result of [collaborative] ideas and leadership.

All participants felt that working together to solve identified problems and to provide for specific needs led to the positive environment at Parker. Teachers felt that they were part of effective solutions to problems, and that the students benefited from their efforts.

All participants in the study felt that the on-going improvement and renewal of Parker was dependent on their continual “raising of the bar” of instructional performance. They were committed to their own professional growth and development and to being a resource for the professional growth of others. Additionally, Parker’s charter addressed the school’s “continual mission to develop school renewal activities,” and all instructional leaders who participated in the study felt that renewal activities in the classroom, in the grade, and in the school were essential to the school’s ongoing improvement. As Kelsey’s SME example demonstrates, programs and initiatives at Parker were constantly re-evaluated for improvement.

Another example of Parker’s focus on improvement was the action research related to its LSPI goals. The goals, as previously discussed, were determined by consensus of staff. Through Quality Teams and continuous grade-level monitoring, progress toward goals was evaluated on an on-going basis, and periodic reports of progress were issued. Staff development initiatives in the school were driven by the goals. The outcomes of these processes were staff growth in areas co-determined by the staff to need improvement. An example of a staff development initiative was the training on the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model, which was tied to the school’s literacy goals; Michelle was involved in delivering that staff development.

Martha told a story about the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model that illustrates the way the processes of collaborative instructional leadership came together to create a positive learning environment for students and instructional leaders at Parker. The story illustrates the partnership
between instructional leaders and the trust and respect on which it was built and illuminates positive outcomes of the participants’ collaborative practice of instructional leadership.

Back in the nineteen nineties I had the privilege of bringing a very workable spelling model to Abel County, and, when I came [to Parker], I found that it wasn’t presently used. I was quite surprised. But they were involved in so many other meaningful endeavors instructionally and, my goodness, always the top performing school in the county. So who was I to say? But, then, who was I to say [to them]: where is the spelling model?

As the principal instructional leader, Martha felt that she had to bring the spelling issue into question, despite the school’s academic record: “I needed to bring the seed and raise the question—“Where’s the spelling model?”—but only to the point where the professionalism of the group steps forward.” As she noted, she felt that the professionalism of the teachers would lead them to action research and inquiry into their practice.

Martha felt that her responsibility in the inquiry was to maintain a collaborating partnership, to open their minds by posing a question, and to ply them with information upon which they could make informed decisions through the formal collaborative structures:

And then I realized that there are far more credible people as instructional leaders right here who could receive the training, external to the school, come back, and [present findings] . . . and that I didn’t need to bring my baby and be the deliverer of my baby.

When the decision to implement the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model at Parker was made by teachers, Martha described the dilemma she faced: “I wanted to hold on to my ownership to that. I wanted to create it. I wanted to be the leader. I wanted to be the guide. I wanted to be the staff developer.” However, Martha believed that instructional decisions had to be made by teachers and that teachers had to take ownership of the planning and implementation of new programs. She described that internal battle:

Then one of the hardest jobs I ever had to do was, at their planning meeting, to endorse them, support them, and then, rather than me planning how it ought to be done the way I did it years ago, [to accept] that there’s more than one way to shoe that horse. So I had to
swallow, endorse them, support them, and back up. That way it wasn’t Martha’s spelling model coming to pass; it was the county spelling model being brought to life at Parker. Boy, was that hard! I was holding that baby tight! That was just a seed that had grown into full bloom at my other school and then into the county. But I’m so glad that I did. I had to swallow hard, give up the ownership of how it should be, back up, let my instructional leaders plan how it can be, and differentiate my role as, once again, a resource broker and an opportunist for them. I had to remove those road blocks, and let spelling come to life [through them]. And it has. It has. I can’t say it’s entrenched at this point because they’ve only been working on it since last spring; but we’re well into the role of understanding how that might be in our school.

Martha continued her story, reiterating her belief that the instructional leaders in the school had to lead the instructional initiatives:

There are many roles for a principal in a school, but you’ve got to be wise enough to let the real people with the real credit—the front-line specialist, the instructional leaders—lead the initiatives if you want them to be successful. Otherwise, it would have been the teachers doing the spelling model practices because Martha wants us to, not because it was ingrained in what they thought was best. Now with me backing up and giving it to the right people—the belief of having the right people working on this through the Language Arts Quality Team, the Literacy Team, and our own reading specialist, who come with full credibility—I back up and just smile.

Martha concluded her story by summarizing the positive results of working collaboratively with other instructional leaders to implement new programs:

The real work now, the real acceptance of the spelling philosophy, is moving slowly through the veins of the school. I got my reward; my reward is seeing it work with excellence. They get what they deserve, and that’s the developing and the owning of the philosophy themselves. So all parties are satisfied.

Then she added a corollary to the spelling story. The next step in literacy renewal activities at Parker, when spelling was fully in place, would be an inquiry into the writing process, to answer three questions:

Are we all fully attuned to the writing process at this megaplex that produces outstanding writing scores? Are our children writing in spite of us? Or do we really know that we’re teaching good writing? It’s all a study of best practices.
As Martha’s writing corollary demonstrates, instructional practice at Parker was subjected to continuous monitoring and projecting, to ensure the on-going nurturing of a positive learning environment for children.

Through their collaborative engagement in the instructional leadership strategies identified in Category 4, the participants created a positive learning environment at Parker. The Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model story was illustrative of instructional leadership endeavors at Parker; the school’s instructional leadership was a collaborative practice that resulted in a positive learning environment for the students and the staff. Lucy summed up the environment at Parker this way: “This school is a collaboratively working community.” Indeed, Parker was a community marked by a strong work ethic, and the instructional work at Parker was collaborative. The various factors that had contributed to the positive learning environment aided the participants in overcoming the challenges described in Category 8.

Category 8: Overcoming Challenges

*Overcoming challenges* is a conceptual category that describes participants’ perspectives of the challenges they faced in their practice of instructional leadership and of their efforts to overcome or negotiate around them. Participants believed that the outcomes of their instructional leadership practice had been overwhelmingly positive. However, they identified several challenges to their instructional leadership. Time was the most frequently cited challenge; all participants noted lack of time or limited time as an on-going challenge. Other challenges included stress related to performance and barriers to supervision caused by title/position.

All participants in the study supported the school’s shared governance structure and believed that shared decision-making was an essential part of instructional leadership,
communication, teacher job satisfaction, teacher growth, and school improvement. Concomitant with the positive outcomes of the shared decision-making processes, however, was the increased time required to reach decisions through those. Three teachers described the extra time demand of shared decision-making as frustrating. Lisa’s comment illuminates teachers’ concerns:

Sometimes shared governance equals more meetings, which takes away the very thing that we’re trying to get to: more available time for planning for instruction, which for me directly relates to helping my students... That would be one of the biggest negatives: that we’re given time to create these ideas and plans and policies of our own, but yet sometimes it’s not required. Sometimes I think a policy from the administration would be just fine.

Joy shared a similar concern related to time:

I was just talking to an AP last week, “Sometimes I’m making too many decisions.” Sometimes, like I told her, “I just want you to tell us.” Sometimes we don’t have time—because I want to teach—necessarily to make all these decisions or try to figure it out. And she explained, “But Joy, we’ve got to get them to understand it, and I can’t make these decisions for you.” And I’m like, “But it’s much easier.” Then I realize that it’s true; she can’t. It makes much more sense to develop our goals together, what we are working on—having the teacher input.

All participating emergent teacher leaders shared their thoughts that shared decision-making was more time intensive but that the investment of time had been worthwhile, in that it ensured the continuation of having voice, coordination, and consensus.

As previously discussed, emergent teacher leaders felt that collaboration was essential to quality instruction and to instructional improvement. However, it was evident at the time of the study that the formal collaborative meetings associated with Parker’s implementation of its NCLB Committee had been a source of consternation among teachers. Emergent teacher leaders explained that the structure designed to increase instructional communication and collaboration, specifically the twice-weekly NCLB grade-level meetings, simultaneously deprived teachers of needed planning time. The loss of that planning time, which had previously been time for
discretionary use by teachers, was viewed as a negative and was discussed by eight of the emergent teacher leaders.

Twelve of the participants mentioned time as being the biggest obstacle to their instructional leadership and instruction. In fact, the fifth grade team had engaged in a two-year action research project to address the issue of their limited time; the predictable outcome of their research to find more time in the instructional day was the discovery that, as Lisa described it, “more time . . . . It’s just not going to happen.” However, the fifth grade team’s effort did have a positive result: more integrated and improved curriculum planning and delivery. Brooke expressed a similar time-related concern, the general lack of time to do “everything that you want to do”:

There is always the time factor. There is never enough time to do everything that you want to do. I have so many wonderful ideas of things that you can do that really benefit children, but we’re really limited, especially with the curriculum in fourth grade. It is very jam-packed with material. In order for us to get to what we’re required to get through, I’m afraid some of the creative things and some of the more interesting things for the kids kind of get thrown to the wayside. I try not to do that. I still try to do some of the creative things, but you end up having to put some projects away.

Limited time also affected participants’ professional growth activities. Nine participants noted that other responsibilities often limited participation in professional growth and leadership activities. Lucy wished to engage in more professional growth activities but felt that time limitations, such as “time to go to school, time to go to classes, time to read, time to study,” were a hurdle.

In addition to noting that lack of time affected professional development, Lucy also explained that lack of time influenced participation and involvement in volunteer instructional activities. She felt that teachers, as a general rule, tended to over-extend themselves because they “don’t know how to say ‘no’ to things” and that, they eventually had to draw a line
regarding the level of their involvement. Several participants gave examples of having “pulled back” that year; for instance, Michelle was assisting, rather than leading, the Web Design Club this year.

Like Michelle, Lisa had “pulled back.” She talked about the performance culture at Parker, her enthusiasm for involvement, and her tendency to over-involve herself, which she described as getting on the “yes train.” In the following comment, she expressed her thoughts:

I think we’re in a climate where it’s very, very hard to say “no” because we want to be the best. We want to make sure that we’re servicing our students the best way possible. But sometimes I think we get on the “yes train,” and we just “can do, can do, can do.” I said “no” to Clubs this year because I’m starting to feel that I need to say “no” sometimes, and I’m learning how to do that.

Martha recognized that teachers at Parker held themselves to high standards and that they were sometimes stressed by their own standards and by perceived expectations from her:

What I’ve found about teachers is that we all tend to be perfectionist. And we all tend to assume that at certain times we have to do things to please whoever the boss may be or is perceived to be. That may be by title or just through the culture at the school.

Lisa expressed a similar view regarding teachers’ perfectionism; her view was shared by four other emergent teacher leaders. In the following comment, she shared her view that perfectionism was both positive and negative:

I think we’re trying to do everything right, perfectionist. Perfectionism is a common thread, and I find that quality in myself . . . my personality, but I’m starting to think that maybe I need to reevaluate that because I think we tend, as a faculty, to overdo it. I think we really do. And I don’t know the solution to that. But, I think it’s a positive and a negative both.

Martha believed that their perfectionism and the school’s history of excellence drove instructional leaders to extremely high standards for performance. She referred to this high standard as Parker’s “performance culture.” She and seven other instructional leaders noted that,
while a “performance culture” was desirable, it had sometimes been taken too far, with an outcome of stress.

As noted, instructional leaders at Parker dealt with the tendency to over-involve themselves by “pulling back,” and they also monitored themselves and others for stress related to over-involvement or performance expectations. When emergent teacher leaders felt overwhelmed, they asked for help from peers; and when they saw that their peers were overwhelmed, they stepped in to help carry the load. In addition, the principal encouraged them to take breaks. The following comments illustrate the ways instructional leaders at Parker dealt with over-involvement and stress:

We have two brand new teachers on our grade level and one second-year teacher on our grade level. I have the job of mentoring all three of them, which has been the reason I told you I was overwhelmed this year. I am getting some help though; I did ask for help. (Cheryl)

We watch out for each other. If we know somebody is overwhelmed because they have something else they’re working on, the rest of us will do it for them. (Kelsey)

We have to almost stop ourselves from working hard sometimes. We hear the principal saying. “Take your break. Take your weekend off. Don’t worry about this.” (Biller)

Martha described two hurdles that stood before her instructional leadership: her title/position and her role as the evaluator of performance. She wanted to be and was a collaborating partner in instructional endeavors at Parker; but she explained that, to accomplish that end, she had engaged in a constant and on-going effort to “equalize the playing field.” Martha kept herself involved in instructional efforts but remained on guard to the possibility of undue influence and interference in the instructional processes caused by her title, position, or presence. In other words, she participated in instructional efforts with an equal voice, and she removed herself when she felt her voice was carrying unequal weight or was “tainting the territory.”
One area in which Martha was deeply cognizant of the interference of her title and position was in supervision. Her responsibility for evaluation, she believed, had severely hampered her ability to serve as a clinical supervisor. As previously explained, without removing herself from supervisory responsibilities, Martha had created a full-time clinical supervision position at Parker to support teachers.

Instructional leaders at Parker described several challenges they faced as instructional leaders. The most frequently cited challenge was limited time, which was discussed by all participants. The principal identified a challenge that was unique to her instructional leadership: her title and position. The positive outcomes described in Categories 5, 6, and 7 aided instructional leaders in finding ways to deal with, to overcome, or to work around the challenges they faced. As a result, instructional leaders felt that the outcomes of their instructional leadership were overwhelmingly positive.

In this discussion of Theme 2, the focus has been on how instructional leaders at Parker strengthened their relationships of trust and respect, established partnering relationships, and created a positive learning environment through and as an outcome of their use of the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Theme 1. They also experienced some challenges, which they overcame or worked around. All of the participants felt that the outcomes of their collaborative instructional leadership had been positive. Moreover, they believed that those outcomes led to the positive impacts on classroom instruction described in Theme 3.

**Theme 3: Impacts of Collaborative Instructional Leadership on Classroom Instruction**

This section delineates the principal’s and the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of the impacts of collaborative instructional leadership on classroom instruction. The term, *impacts*
of collaborative instructional leadership on classroom instruction, refers specifically to the impacts identified by the participants and perceived by participants to affect classroom instruction. This theme relates primarily to the fourth research question: How do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership impact classroom instruction?

The data strongly indicate that the collaborative instructional leadership strategies discussed in Theme 1 and the related outcomes of those interactions described in Theme 2 led to the impacts on classroom instruction described in Theme 3. Classroom instruction impacts were discussed by all thirteen participants, and all participants believed that the use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies had triggered those impacts. Specific categories identified by the participants were (a) improved teaching practice, (b) increased leadership capacity, (c) increased ownership, (d) increased job satisfaction and stability, and (e) increased student engagement and achievement. The findings arising from each of the categories identified by the participants are presented in the following sections. Furthermore, each category is defined, described, and illustrated by the words of the participants.

Category 9: Improved Teaching Practice

Improved teaching practice refers to an improvement in classroom instructional practice that resulted from the collaborative processes of instructional leadership. All thirteen of the participants in the study strongly believed that instructional techniques, curriculum knowledge, and curriculum resources had improved as a result of collaborative instructional processes, and they felt that teachers’ abilities to engage students in the learning process had been positively enhanced by collaborative practices. As discussed in Category 4, teacher-to-teacher interaction was the main avenue to teacher growth at Parker; in other words, teachers learned from other teachers, and teaching practice improved as a result of collaborative interactions in each of the
processes discussed in Theme 1. All participants shared the belief that improved teaching practice impacted classroom instruction.

Martha summed up the perspective, shared by all of the instructional leaders at Parker, that the bedrock supporting Parker’s instructionally-related success was the shared decision-making process:

I don’t think that you can have a successful instructional program without [shared decision-making]. It goes back to validating the specialist in the classroom. The county can hand you a collaboratively decided mathematics adoption, but unless we have the foundational training pieces that cross the grade levels, discussion as to best practices, discussions as to tweaking it to make it fit our scenario here . . . the teachers [will not be able] to own it, feel it, and make it come to life.

Brooke supported Martha’s perspective and talked about student participation in shared decision-making, as well:

I think it’s a wonderful concept. It’s a great opportunity for teachers to have input in how the schools are run and how the kids are involved and that kind of thing. We kind of have shared governance a little bit with our student councils, so the kids are even involved.

Elizabeth felt that the collaborative interactions of instructional leaders in the shared decision-making process had led to increased teacher commitment to and motivation for constant improvement of their teaching practice. She explained that teacher commitment was why she originally came to teach at Parker:

I just felt something here. I just felt more teacher commitment to teaching here. Even though I live nine miles away and now it takes me forty minutes to get here—that’s worth it to me—I have no plans of leaving Parker. I like that commitment. I love the people I work with here. They’re very, very dedicated teachers. They’re not putting their time in to get their paycheck. They’re working very hard. . . . I saw more of a commitment to the students here.

The instructional climate created by collaborative instructional leadership was expressed succinctly by Lisa: “I think the climate is: do what you need to do to be the best teacher you can be.”
Instructional collaboration and sharing of ideas, of resources, of learning, and of techniques were the most frequently mentioned reasons for improved classroom teaching practices. All of the participants in the study felt that collaboration led to these improvements. Instructional leaders’ perspectives of the importance of collaboration to their teaching practice are illustrated by the following comments:

It makes me a better teacher when I hear others share what they are doing and share the reason behind it. (Lydia)

Not only was I collaborating with my fifth grade teachers, but I was collaborating with my colleagues as well through the [master’s program]. And I felt that was very, very helpful. I felt that the resources that you have are almost too much—for me to do all at once. I really found out I had to pick and choose. They all were wonderful. (Lisa)

Within your class, you might have one way of instructing that particular group, but then you may have three or four that need it a different way. And instead of having to come up with this particular way on your own or look to a teacher’s manual that may not provide you what you need, your best resource is the people around you. (Eliza)

Kelsey summarized how collaboration impacted the classroom: “I also think [students are] benefitting from the ideas I’ve already gathered from my colleagues. I think they are the beneficiaries of that.”

In addition to collaborating and sharing, all of the participants specifically discussed the importance of teaching each other and learning from each other; collaborating formally and informally and reflecting on practice, they believed, were the cornerstones of improved teacher practice. For example, Elizabeth reflected on her own practice in meeting instructional needs for special needs students in her classroom: “I did what I could and I accommodated my lessons as best I could, but there was more that I could have done.” When she learned, through her master’s degree program, what could be done, Elizabeth planned a training program to improve regular classroom teachers’ instructional practices for special needs students; she explained her reason for taking on the additional responsibility this way: “I want other teachers to get to that
realization that there is more that you can do—that we need to educate each other.” She was supported in this effort by Martha, and the program she developed would be implemented at Parker during the upcoming school year.

The importance of improving teaching practice by learning from others was addressed by all of the participants in this study. Martha actively encouraged emergent teacher leaders at Parker to observe teaching practices of others, not only at Parker, but at other schools, as well. Having the opportunity to observe was important to emergent teacher leaders, as they considered other teachers to be their best resource; collaborating and reflecting with other teachers and observing them were ways in which emergent teacher leaders grew. Joy shared her thoughts on learning from others: “[The key], I definitely feel, to becoming a master teacher is just constantly learning from other people. It never ends. It never ends.”

Mollie illuminated a different approach to improved teaching, learning with others through book study. She and a group of other emergent teacher leaders were reading *The Life of Pi* to learn more about connecting student learning through literature. She described book study learning as “something that is informal, yet can formalize something that we’re doing in our instruction here at school.” Elizabeth attended workshops and applied her learning to improve her classroom practice. She explained, “It keeps me fresh” and that changing her teaching techniques “makes it not only more fun for me, but for the kids.”

While all of the participants identified the role of trust in improving teaching practice, Lydia was the only participant to address directly the impact of trust and respect on the students and parents:

I think the impact that I have on the students is in trust. First of all, they have to trust me as an instructor, and their parents have to trust me. That’s hand-in-hand. And I’ve always felt that if I can win students right off the bat, I’m going to win the parents. I do my part to make sure that my classroom is set up in a way that the children feel comfortable there,
feel safe there, they’re having fun, and they’re learning—and they usually don’t even realize they’re learning.

Other participants indirectly discussed trust in their student and parent relationships. However, it was clear that trust was not only an important outcome of and a foundation for collaborative interactions of instructional leaders, as described in Category 5, but it was also essential in interactions and relationships in the classroom and with parents.

Seven of the participants discussed the role of classroom organization in improving classroom teaching practice. Emergent teacher leaders assisted others with the management of instruction time and collaborated to maximize instructional benefits for students. Michelle felt that teacher organization made teaching more effective, but she also felt that teachers should model and teach organizational skills to their children, as well:

Because in third grade, especially, that’s more than half my job, is to get the kids to understand how to get good work habits and how organization can help you. Because when they move to middle school, it’s imperative—if they don’t have those good study skills, they are going to have a lot more trouble.

Instructional leaders felt that teaching practice improved as an outcome of their use of the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Theme 1. Instructional leaders depended on each other to be the best resource for classroom problem solving and for classroom instructional improvement. They felt that instructional results improved when their classroom teaching practices improved; and all of the participants credited collaborative instructional leadership with those improvements. Moreover, they believed that improved teaching practice had led to increased student engagement, learning, and achievement.

Category 10: Increased Leadership Capacity

*Increased leadership capacity* refers to an increased ability to lead others, in the classroom and outside the classroom, as a result of the processes of collaborative instructional
leadership. All of the participants in this study shared a common view that they had increased their individual capacity to step into formal and informal leadership positions as an outgrowth of their collaborative practice of instructional leadership. They felt that their strengths were maximized and that their weaknesses were shored up as a result of their participation in each of the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Theme 1. All of the participants also believed that increased leadership capacity impacted classroom instruction.

As discussed in Category 4, Martha held herself responsible for staying abreast of the bigger educational picture, for disseminating information to other instructional leaders, for overseeing the bridging process between the present and the future vision of the school, for monitoring the delivery of effective student instruction, and for maintaining a climate that “enabled” emergent teacher leaders to increase their leadership capacity and “grow and become instructional leaders.” Martha felt that the most effective approach to monitoring instructional delivery and to maintaining a climate for growth of emergent teacher leaders was to allow those instructional leaders to lead instructional initiatives and to collaborate with them:

There are many roles for a principal in a school, but you got to be wise enough to let the real people with the real credit—the front-line specialists, the instructional leaders—lead the initiatives if you want them to be successful.

Martha’s “vote of confidence” in the instructional leaders at Parker was well placed. The data gathered by this study strongly indicate that emergent teacher leaders’ leadership capacity had increased as a result of their involvement in all four instructional processes identified in Theme 1. Moreover, the data indicate that increased leadership capacity had a positive impact on classroom instruction.

All emergent teacher leaders felt that Parker’s shared governance structure and Martha’s leadership style promoted their leadership growth. For instance, every participant talked about
the importance of being allowed to lead because it led to leadership-capacity building. Mollie shared her views on being allowed to take the lead on instructional issues and on helping others:

I think leaders, classroom leaders, really thrive in an environment when they’re allowed to lead. . . . We are all in it for the kids, but we are also are in it because it allows us to be good at what we want to be good at. I think that, when people feel free to have those moments where they can be helpful to others . . . to the other teachers who are teaching other children, then I think that just makes everything work.

Eleven participants discussed the role of confidence in capacity building. As emergent teacher leaders became more confident, they took on more instructional leadership roles. Lucy, for instance, felt more self-confident in her second year at Parker and was beginning to take on leadership functions: “This year is so much better. I feel so much more confident and can step into some of those leadership roles.” Confidence of others played a significant role, as well, in encouraging emergent teacher leaders to lead, as Lydia noted:

That’s just something that the administrators do a good job on—giving teachers the confidence that [they] can lead and [communicating] that we need everybody trying to lead. The administrators help us a lot, in so far as giving us the boost that we need.

As previously discussed in Category 3, Joy explained that her first principal had confidence in her ability to lead and was instrumental in encouraging her to take on her first leadership role. Success in that first leadership endeavor gave Joy confidence in her own abilities, which gave her confidence to engage in other leadership activities: “It gave me the confidence to say I could do it.”

Increased capacity to lead and increased confidence in one’s leadership abilities impacted classroom instruction. Lucy explained the positive benefit to children arising from her increased confidence and capacity to lead:

Being a leader, I think you are very confident about what you do, about what your job is, what your task is, and the direction that you need to go to [get] there. I think the children pick up on that, as well.
All of the participants expressed the view that encouragement of others had served to motivate leadership-capacity building and desire for leadership involvement. Lucy, for instance, described Martha as “very supportive of everybody here” and noted that she “makes it very possible to be a leader.” She also felt that Martha’s expression of her appreciation of leadership efforts and work had served to encourage future leadership work: “She’s very appreciative and very aware of the work that’s done here.” Lucy’s view was supported by Biller, who expressed her satisfaction that one could teach and also participate in instructional leadership:

Everybody is always very encouraged to—if you’re interested and want to do something—be a leader in any way. Everybody is helping each other and encouraged to do whatever they feel like they want to do. I’ve always liked the feeling that—through the Teachers as Leaders Program—you can be a teacher, not an administrator, and still be a leader. They encourage that and recognize it and appreciate it.

Mollie endorsed Biller’s perspective of the role encouragement had played in increasing leadership capacity and expanded the sources of encouragement to include other teachers, the students, and the parents:

I think there are a lot of factors that contribute to [taking on leadership roles]. I think it’s the encouragement of the administration. I think it’s the level of commitment of the teachers. I think it’s the fact that these students are leaders in themselves. So many of them in this community are leaders that we just always have to keep one step ahead of them. It helps us practice our leadership roles. I think [that] is part of it. I think the parents are also very encouraging.

All of the emergent teacher leaders felt that they were leaders in their classrooms and that they set a leadership example for the children. Lucy talked about role modeling for children:

“Back to role modeling . . . I am a good role model for the children, organized, calm, patient, but also very productive, with very, very high expectations.” Other emergent teacher leaders discussed involving children in their leadership and capacity building activities. For instance, Michelle noted that she kept her students aware of School Council activities when she had attended those meetings; Eliza talked to her students about her master’s degree courses.
As has been previously discussed, all participants felt that their greatest resource was other instructional leaders. Numerous examples have been provided. Instructional leaders taught each other formally and informally; and they believed that their greatest growth occurred because of those teacher-to-teacher interactions.

Classroom instruction was also impacted by instructional leaders’ performance of monitoring and supervising functions. All participants discussed their involvement in these functions. For instance, Martha explained how she met her direct responsibilities for those functions: “I can be an instructional leader. I can supervise through my seed planting, through my observation, through my encouragement, through my monitoring.” Martha, as mentioned earlier, also met her responsibilities for supervision and monitoring through her collaborative interactions with other instructional leaders. Through those collaborations, Martha allowed emergent teacher leaders to take the initiative for school-wide and grade-level action research and for auto-supervision and self-monitoring of their own classrooms; moreover, they were allowed and empowered to oversee each other’s instructional practices. As previously discussed, at second grade team meetings, instructional successes and failures were openly discussed; and Lisa noted that emergent teacher leaders stepped in with suggestions when they saw others on the team encountering instructional difficulties: “We do help each other in common things that we see.” Eliza described a typical third-grade discussion:

When do we think it’s best and most appropriate to teach this objective, and this objective, and how long are we going to spend on it? We have a new math program this year. We get together and talk about our pacing frequently. What skills are the children having difficulty on? “Mine are having difficulties, but yours aren’t. Then what things are you doing in your classroom to help your children to have a good understanding of this objective?”

Lydia held the belief that good leaders intuitively recognize others’ difficulties and unobtrusively step in to assist. She felt that good leaders are able to take an indirect approach to
monitoring; in other words, they monitor without making it known that they are monitoring. She explained: “Whether it’s how someone’s doing small groups or suggesting something that you do in your classroom—kind of going around a little bit, but yet achieving at the end where you want to go.”

Nine of the participants discussed the impact of reflective thinking on their leadership capacity; they believed that reflection had led to increased leadership capacity. For instance, participants mentioned that reflecting on others’ opinions broadened their own thinking; collaboration gave them the opportunity to hear others’ opinions and ideas. They also felt that reflecting on what they saw modeled led to an increased understanding of leadership and to improved leadership practice when they incorporated what they saw modeled. The following comments illuminate their perspectives:

It’s not written down—how to be a leader—it’s not, really. If you just go by the things that are written down, you’re really not the best leader you can be, because you’re going to go to the meetings and then you’re going to tell everybody what you heard and that’s pretty much it. But there is so much more to it than that. (Michelle)

I think as a far as being a leader—there was a time when I was a young teacher and I certainly remember who my mentors were and watching them and observing them and taking things that I respected of them as leaders. Principals that I’ve had or assistant principals that I’ve had that are—just sitting back and watching and listening and just hoping that you can some way do for others some of the things that people have done for me. So I think it evolved; I think that it evolved probably slowly and gradually. (Lydia)

All of the study participants discussed the role participation played in building capacity for leadership; they felt that leadership capacity had been built by participating. Participants also believed that shared governance increased their opportunities to participate. Joy shared her views and described the role of participating as a means to increased understanding of instructional operations of a school in a shared governance setting:

I guess that helps me become an instructional leader. If we didn’t have shared governance I would not have the opportunity for instructional leadership. Having volunteers to
represent the grade levels, having volunteers to represent the committees or the teams, just leads to understanding what’s going on in the school.

In addition to leadership opportunities available through the school’s organizational structure, emergent teacher leaders at Parker created their own. Morning Clubs was an example. Michelle described Morning Clubs, an enrichment initiative founded, administered, and maintained by emergent teacher leaders of Parker:

All the clubs are enrichment—there are no remediation clubs—like Chess Club, Technology Club, Junior Great Books, Science Fair, Web Design, things like that. It’s an enrichment type of thing. All the leadership has come up from—it’s a grass roots effort. The teachers have said, “I can do that... I can help with that.” That’s how [we] do it.

Michelle noted that teacher involvement in Morning Clubs was voluntary and that Clubs were generally based on teachers’ interests and children’s interests and needs. Michelle felt that participation in Morning Clubs was a good way for teachers to take on leadership roles because they worked with someone else to do something extra for children; she described Clubs as a “win-win situation for teachers and for students.”

Participants in the study felt that their leadership capacity grew because they engaged in the use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies. The emergent teacher leaders believed that the school’s shared governance and Martha’s style of leadership facilitated and promoted their growth by providing opportunities for their engagement in instructional leadership. All of the participants felt that their greatest growth resulted from collaboration; they believed that they had learned to teach and to lead from each other. The participants further believed that their leadership capacity had grown because they were reflective and because they took initiative to lead. Moreover, they strongly believed that their increased leadership capacity positively influenced student engagement and achievement.
Increased ownership refers to a heightened sense of responsibility and interest that results from the use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies. All participants in the study indicated that they felt a heightened sense of ownership of instructional practices and of children’s learning because they participated in the collaborative instructional strategies and processes discussed in Theme 1; furthermore, they believed that their increased ownership impacted classroom instruction. They felt that Parker’s shared decision-making process allowed them to participate as partners and that the school’s shared governance framework held them accountable to and charged them with responsibility for the outcomes of those processes.

In the following comment, Mollie summarized the shared perspective of all participants that taking ownership “is what we do”:

Ownership: I think that’s what we do—everyday. I think that, if there is a problem or if there’s a question, or if there is a new way of delivering the curriculum . . . we just embrace it, and we’re all on board with it. Even though we’re all on board with it, we all have our different styles, but our goal is that our children will be successful within that program. . . . We reach that goal in different ways, but we get there.

As Mollie noted, different emergent teacher leaders had different styles, but they all sought to achieve predetermined common goals. In her comment, she captured the vested interest in outcomes that was shared by instructional leaders at Parker.

As previously discussed in Category 1, instructional leaders at Parker participated in making instructional decisions that affected curriculum and its related instructional delivery. All teachers were encouraged, but none were forced, to participate in that collaborative instructional decision-making process. Regardless of participation, however, all teacher leaders were expected to support consensus and to take ownership of decisions reached by consensus. Mollie’s belief was that ownership of decisions reached by consensus was what made instruction at Parker
“work”: “I think that’s where it all works. I think that we all do take ownership of [the decision made].”

Collaboration and sharing played a major part in taking ownership. When ideas and resources were offered, they were used to support instruction of all children. Every participant felt that they impacted instruction in all classrooms because their ideas and resources had been used and incorporated into others’ classroom instruction. They also shared a common belief that teachers were not abandoned at Parker and did not have to stand alone in the success of the children in their classrooms. Mollie expressed that common belief: “I don’t think that it’s one person standing alone as an island.” In other words, they believed that instructional leaders at Parker supported and empowered each other by providing ideas and resources that facilitated quality instruction for all children and that aided teachers in addressing the needs of specific children.

All participants in the study felt that Parker’s infrastructure and its shared decision-making framework had always supported an all-children orientation, and they felt that teachers at Parker had always worked together for the success of all children. However, every emergent teacher leader mentioned that there had been a greater emphasis on the all-children orientation during the year prior to the study; furthermore, all felt that there was a heightened sense of ownership of all children. They attributed these changes to the establishment of the NCLB Committee and to the implementation of the collaborative grade-level meetings designed to aid the school in achieving the intent of the No Child Left Behind Act. The following comment exemplifies their beliefs that their collaborative work through that committee gave support to teachers and students and resulted in an increase in instructional leaders’ sense of ownership of all children’s education:
I think that our NCLB meetings, our No Child Left Behind meetings, have also incorporated our looking at students who might be struggling, and we’re all taking ownership of that. Not just in our classroom, but in somebody else’s class. We’ll look to whoever is instructionally sound or expert at that—for that particular thing, for those types of answers—to do what we can to meet the needs of our students. I think everybody wins. (Mollie)

Eliza talked about her application of ideas discussed in NCLB meetings, noting that the discussions had led her to be more reflective about her teaching practices in the classroom.

In the following two comments, Joy and Cheryl discussed how the NCLB committee benefited teachers and specific children and aided in an all-children orientation:

The support from the other teachers and part of the whole NCLB thing [taking ownership of all of the children]. . . . When I bring a child and say, “Okay, this child, I’ve tried everything, I’ve tried everything I know.” and that’s really where we’re heading. . . . I think that’s going to be really powerful for me. (Joy)

We’ll sit down and say—whatever objective we’re talking about that we need to work on, especially with kids that are struggling in certain areas and say—“Okay, this is an idea that you can use.” (Cheryl)

All participants shared the belief that teachers who were dealing with struggling students needed the support of their colleagues.

In addition to support of other teachers through collaboration and sharing, emergent teacher leaders took ownership in other ways. They took the initiative to develop staff training programs and to develop special programs for the children. For example, as discussed in Category 4, Elizabeth became concerned about her instruction of special needs children in her classroom. She developed a program, which was supported by Martha and would be implemented during the up-coming school year, to address that issue. The concern that led to her development of that program was her feeling that she, and the other regular classroom teachers, had not taken full ownership of special needs children’s instruction: “I always felt like when this child was in my room, she was in my room but she was Mrs. Ridge’s student. But really she
wasn’t. She was our student, and I didn’t have that feeling last year.” Elizabeth’s subsequent development of the staff development program was a proactive measure to address ownership of all children.

Another example of instructional leaders’ taking ownership of all children was Morning Clubs, which were previously discussed in Category 10. In Morning Clubs, instructional leaders took children from grades other than those they taught and worked with them in academic areas to provide enrichment that was not part of the regular academic program.

All of the emergent teacher leaders felt that administration actively practiced and encouraged taking ownership of all children. The following comments are representative of their thoughts:

Kid Talk—that’s where each teacher went to their assistant principal and sat down [to talk about] their class. We could either talk about our class as a whole, or [individual] students we had concerns about, and it made me feel good, because, at least, my assistant principal knew if there are [any] issues with my children. (Lydia)

I feel like it’s [the principal’s] attitude [towards taking ownership]—every day the things she [reminds us]: “This is a team. We’re in charge of these kids. We’ve got to make this the best place they can be. How are we going to do it?” (Michelle)

In addition to initiatives and efforts designed to increase teachers’ ownership of children’s learning, Parker was also implementing student democratic learning, an initiative emanating from the League of Professional Schools. Nine of the participants discussed this initiative and the school’s efforts to encourage student ownership of their own learning. Martha explained the initiative: “We picked up the concept of looking at quality instruction through student engagement and attaching students’ invitation to learning by participating fully in their classroom.” She expressed her opinion that, “through [student ownership of their own education]...we will get greater [student] achievement.” Lisa expressed the shared goal among all
the instructional leaders of Parker when she stated, “We want to give our students ownership of their education.”

When Martha described instructional programs, instructional direction of the school, and/or success and achievement of students, she often linked the terms *ownership, success of children,* and *passion.* She felt that she had a primary responsibility to build teachers’ passion for and ownership of the success of children because of her belief that “from that passion . . . good things will happen in their classroom.” Shared governance, she believed, was “a critical component of reaching greater heights of understanding,” of promoting ownership, and of building passion, and, thereby, led to school success. Through shared governance Martha wanted to build and use the collective “heights of understanding,” ownership, and passion for success to accomplish her dream for the children of Parker: “My dream as an instructional leader is to get the children to learn that the classroom is equally theirs.”

Participants in the study felt that their ownership of instructional leadership practice and of the children’s education increased as an outcome of their use of the collaborative instructional strategies described in Theme 1. They believed the school’s shared governance structure and the principal’s leadership style encouraged ownership, and they believed that classroom instruction was positively impacted as a result of their increased ownership. Furthermore, they believed that their increased ownership contributed to the increased student engagement and achievement impact.

*Category 12: Increased Job Satisfaction and Stability*

*Increased job satisfaction and stability* refers to a heightened sense of happiness, contentment, and security that emanates from the performance of the job and from the work conditions on the job and that leads to a desire to continue the work arrangement. All
participants in this study reported a heightened feeling of job satisfaction and stability as a result of their participation in the collaborative instructional leadership strategies in Theme 1; and they felt that classroom instruction was impacted by their increased job satisfaction and stability.

Moreover, all participants felt that, by strengthening the relationships of trust and respect, by establishing partnering relationships, and by creating a positive learning environment, they increased their job satisfaction and their job stability.

All participants described a sense of self-worth and sense of validation that emanated from helping others. Kelsey explained how self-worth and validation impacted job satisfaction:

You help the person who needs help for whatever reason at that particular time. There is so much support in that, that . . . you love your job. And [you] love your colleagues. Then you’re willing, actually, to work harder.

Kelsey continued, comparing a previous teaching experience in which there was minimal teacher interaction and collaboration to the collaborative environment at Parker:

If a teacher is really struggling, they might go ask their colleagues. But if they thought they were on the right track, they didn’t know to go ask. Because we collaborate all the time, I know who I can go to. They’ll just mention ideas that enrich my teaching. I can’t even imagine not having that anymore. I don’t think I’d want to teach without having that anymore.

Mollie felt that job satisfaction increased when leadership was allowed and encouraged: “When you allow people to lead in the place where they feel confident, I think that there is less frustration, as far as job satisfaction and things like that.”

Elizabeth added to the thoughts expressed by Kelsey and Mollie, explaining her belief that one was not isolated and did not have to stand alone at Parker:

I just feel that the people I work with make it easier, because, even if I do offer to do an in-service or lead a mini-in-service at my grade level, I can go to anybody at my grade level and say, “I’m going to be talking about this topic. What else do you know?” You’re never alone here. You always have friends you can ask [for help].

There was a shared belief of instructional leaders at Parker that no one was “an island.”
Lucy talked about the complexity of the teaching profession today and shared her belief that survival in it was dependent on collaborative support and on avoiding isolation:

I don’t know that a teacher could do the very best he or she could do, standing all alone any more. I think I could have done it twenty years ago. But now it’s just way, way too difficult to do it all on your own. You really need the support of your colleagues, you really need the support of your administrators, and you really need the support of all of the support areas, as well. It’s just not possible to do the job and do it well standing alone.

Lucy added depth to her previous thought:

I think that, the way education is moving, we need that cohesiveness. We need that camaraderie. We need that working relationship where we trust each other, where we can borrow from each other, and where we can support each other and depend on each other, just because the demands are so much more intense now than they ever have been.

Every participant felt that they had professional support and personal support from their colleagues; in other words, they felt empowered by others, which led to an increase in their job satisfaction. Lisa, in the following comment, echoed Lucy’s observations and noted her own belief that teachers also needed personal support:

You’re not alone. I think that is the important feel or the important message that I get. They help me academically or professionally and also, personally. I think that’s the success of our group.

The sense of being part of a cohesive team was also an important part of job satisfaction at Parker. As has been described and illustrated previously, participants felt that they were “in this together,” and they provided examples that supported their cohesiveness and “teamness.” The caring that cemented the relationships within the team was discussed by all participants. For example, Kelsey, in the following comments, talked about caring, at the team and at the school levels, as a factor in job satisfaction:

I always know that support is there. There is definitely a feeling that we work together as a team. Either [we] sink together, or we swim together. I think that has a lot to do with us being enthusiastic and wanting to work harder.
Martha is so warm, and so supportive of everything we do. And she works hard, and we know how professional she is and how hard she’s working. But she takes time to care about us as individuals, which I think is really important. . . . You’re a human being before you’re a teacher, before you’re a data collector. Taking the time to care about each other first is really important. That’s where the relationship starts. It doesn’t really start from teaching. It starts from being a human being. I think that has a lot to do with [the willingness to be involved], with the school here. At our faculty meetings, no matter how busy they are, we start those meetings with, “Thank you to these people for being on this committee. Here are the people who have a birthday. We’re thinking of these people because their husbands are sick.” or whatever it might be. And I think that has a lot to do with being willing to do whatever you have to do.

Eliza expounded on the subject of teamwork, as well, addressing the satisfaction that had been derived from having a working relationship with the principal:

It’s just nice to have somebody that you feel is really a member of the team and who sets up that idea of team work. . . . I think [Martha] just sets a wonderful example each day of participating with us in everything that we do and giving us a lot of support.

Eliza summarized the perspective offered by all participants, as she continued her reflections on the satisfaction received from collaborative teamwork with her grade-level colleagues:

We are truly a team together, being on a hallway together, and meeting bi-weekly is really good for the . . . collaboration. Again, it just makes us feel like we’re all worthwhile, that we have value, and that all of our input is needed and wanted.

Joy explained that, through their support of each other, team members dealt with added stress, helping each other work through it and find ways to release it:

[Now] we see the purpose. We definitely see the purpose, and we realize how much we have accomplished. [NCLB twice-weekly grade-level meetings are] still just a little bit extra added to our plate. But we are all in it together. We know that the whole school is doing it . . . We have been there for each other. . . . Different teachers on my grade level have been there [for me], and administrators have been there for me and have let me explode or let me just cry or whatever it is, when the pressure has gone up. . . . I don’t have a family at home; I’m single, so I don’t have somebody at home that I can go to and just let it out. So I personally am very, very appreciative to have that moral support within our grade level. [NCLB meetings have] pulled our grade level together.
Biller explained that there was job satisfaction in seeing others contribute their strengths, “I love it. . . . I’m happy when everybody else contributes and shares their strength. We really have some very strong teachers in the second grade. We have them all over the building.”

Mollie talked about the satisfaction that had come from a job well done. She shared her belief that success at Parker came from the collaborative effort and shared ownership:

I think that when somebody celebrates something very special that they’ve done, it really is a collaborative effort from a lot of people. I think it’s the celebration that we’re doing a great job, and those little things that we all put together, that came into this one big package, just worked. I think it works because we all take ownership of it. That’s because we collaborate a lot.

Similarly, Joy explained that sharing played a significant role in job satisfaction:

I feel that at Parker—it’s a wonderful place to share. There is on our grade level—we have developed a community that shares. . . . We definitely have developed an incredible community of sharing—sharing ideas, philosophies, really understanding where the teachers are coming from.

Mollie reinforced Joy’s perspective of the satisfaction of sharing during informal collaborations with other instruction leaders:

I hope what I convey to others is that I love my job. I’m here quite a lot. I stay after school. The day just doesn’t end when the kids walk out the door. Hopefully, that is something that other people might emulate. . . . You’ll find most of the first grade teachers on that hall still after school. That’s an even better time for us to talk about school-related issues or personal issues. That’s when we connect even more . . . having a lot of sharing amongst each other . . . planning with each other.

All participants felt that their job satisfaction positively impacted their classrooms. In the following comment, Kelsey shared her view, which was representative of the views of other emergent teacher leaders:

I think that my students and every student in this school benefits from having a teacher who likes her job. . . . You’re coming every day feeling happy you’re here, grateful you’re here and enthusiastic, and the students can tell that difference. We may not even be aware of it ourselves, but I think our students can. I think the students benefit.
Kelsey’s comment also alluded to teacher stability, in that teachers who are happy tend to stay in their jobs. Ten participants in this study indicated that job satisfaction kept them in their jobs at Parker. As previously discussed, Lisa’s decision to continue to teach fifth grade, rather than to switch grade levels, was due to the closeness she felt to her team; and Elizabeth was driving 40 minutes to get to school but had “no plans of leaving Parker” because she liked the commitment of the staff at Parker and because she loved the working relationships among the instructional leaders at Parker.

Instructional leaders in the study believed that job satisfaction and stability increased as a result of their engagement in the collaborative instructional leadership strategies in Theme 1. They felt that being able to provide and to get help from colleagues, being able to engage in ongoing interactions, and sharing ideas with each other contributed to their job satisfaction and stability. They also felt that being part of a team and feeling that they were contributing to their team and school also led to their increased job satisfaction and stability. All thirteen instructional leaders felt that job satisfaction and stability positively impacted classroom instruction, student engagement, and student achievement.

*Category 13: Increased Student Engagement and Achievement*

*Increased student engagement and achievement* refers to an increased involvement of students in their own learning and to an outcome of increased student learning. All of the participants in the study believed that the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Theme 1 resulted in the positive outcomes described in Theme 2 and in the positive impacts previously described in Theme 3; moreover, they believed that classroom instruction was positively impacted as a result. Biller, whose view was representative of all other participant’s perspectives, shared her belief that instructional leaders’ collaboration led to
improved teaching practice, which, in turn, led to increased student engagement, commitment, and achievement: “The more improved your teaching is, the more student commitment and engagement you have. Learning from each other improves what you’re doing, so that is always going to improve their [students’] engagement and achievement.”

All instructional leaders who participated in the study described ways in which they increased student engagement. They turned ownership over to students, involved students in decision-making, and involved students in other students’ learning and in various forms of service learning. Every participant felt that greater student buy-in to learning resulted when students were involved in these ways in their own instruction and learning.

The League of Professional School’s Student Democratic Learning Model, which guided Parker’s efforts to increase student engagement, was being implemented at Parker at the time of the study. All participants shared positive feelings about the impact of the principles of democratic learning on the engagement and commitment level of students. Martha said that her “dream,” as an instructional leader, was to “get the children to learn that the classroom is equally theirs.” Continuing, she explained the results she anticipated from the implementation of her “dream”:

What are we going for? Student engagement, student ownership of the classroom, student ownership of their work, students engaged . . . that are truly actively involved in meaningful dialogue, meaningful learning, that becomes ingrained in their long-term memory to the point that, if indeed there is an assessment, they know it, they understand it, they own it, they can communicate it, they live it every day. Through the ownership of that, that’s the way we will get greater achievement.

Efforts to increase student engagement and ownership occurred in individual classrooms, across grade levels, and in school-level projects. One example of increased student engagement at the classroom level was Elizabeth’s incorporation last year of student-led conferences, which was discussed in Category 4. In another example, Lisa described a course in her master’s degree
program that was designed to help teachers improve classroom climate and to encourage students
to take ownership of their own learning. She had applied the techniques she learned through that
course to her classroom at Parker, turning ownership and decision-making, under her guidance,
over to her students:

It’s really constructive models, where the students create their own learning, along
guidelines. What I found with the classroom climate was very helpful. . . . I used those
same techniques in my classroom. I found that I was actually letting go as an educator or
was being a facilitator and not the instructor. And it was amazing to me that my students
did just fine without me telling them every little thing. That really surprised me. . . . What
I found was that my students were a little bit [harder] on themselves than I would have
been on them. But I think that’s wonderful. They’re setting their standards high.

She continued her description of the literature circle formed by the students in her class:

Maybe I added something here and there and helped guide them, if they were getting off
track, but basically there was always someone there that could keep them where they
needed to be. And then . . . after they formed their literature circle, I could get feedback
from them: “Well, how did it work? What were some of the problems that you were
facing? Why did it make it hard for you not to follow the guidelines?” And then they
were doing problem solving, too, within their literature circle and using such and such
curriculum. So that truly was integration, I felt like. But even more than integration, it
was the most meaningful work that was going on.

Seven instructional leaders at Parker shared the belief that students should be involved,
when appropriate, in assisting other students’ learning. Martha explained,

We picked up the concept of looking at quality instruction through student engagement
and attaching students’ invitation to learning by participating fully in their classroom, to
caring about learning beyond the classroom and into community audiences. But in an
elementary school, a community audience might be from a fourth grade science class
teaching first grade the concepts of what they were studying in ecosystems.

For instance, instructional leaders collaborated with each other to pair higher grade-level classes
with lower grade-level classes to establish peer tutoring arrangements. Five of the emergent
teacher leaders discussed peer tutoring as a way to increase student engagement. In the
following example, Mollie described the arrangement between her first grade class and a fifth
grade class, and she noted that both classes benefited from the arrangement:
It is pretty much school-wide. I don’t know if everybody does it, but a lot of teachers have teamed up for that. We try to get together at least once a month, but there are special projects, for instance, if my kids are working on something that’s written and they need a little added in peer editing, sometimes it’s better to have the peer be a fifth grader. . . . The fifth-grade teacher finds it interesting because she says that the kids often don’t attend to correct spelling or the mechanics of writing. When they are the ones in charge, it makes them a little more accountable for that. So it really works out well.

In other words, instructional leaders, through peer tutoring arrangements and other student-centered learning activities, carried collaboration a step further. They allowed students to collaborate, and, in doing so, applied to the work of students their belief that “learning from each other improves what you’re doing.”

Brooke provided an example of a large-scale project designed to increase student engagement and authentic learning. At a previous school, Brooke and her students had designed, set up, and operated a school store. She related the success of that program: “We started from scratch and built it into a great learning experience for the kids. We even won an award from Johns Hopkins and were published in a book!” At the time of the study, she and her children at Parker were working on a similar proposal and plan for a student-operated store. She related that, after the children committed to the responsibility of operating a store, they wrote a proposal, supported by a business plan for management of its operations. Their plan included budgets, marketing strategies, and procedures for cash management, inventory control, purchasing, hiring, and training of staff. They submitted their completed proposal to the principal, after which they met with her, an assistant principal, and the school accountant to seek approval for the operation of a store. Brooke’s story, which begins with the approval of the project, provides a picture of increased student engagement and authentic learning in progress at Parker:

I went back to the kids and told them the good news. They were psyched! My next step was to prepare and have the kids fill out job applications. They had to fill in job experience, schooling history, two references, two sentences written by their references
on why they would be good for the job, and an essay on why they thought they would be good for the job.

After receiving the children’s applications and references, applicants for sales and advertising jobs were given qualifying tests. Brooke provided details:

Then we came to the hands-on evaluations. Sales had a written money (making change) quiz to take and a real life store setup where they had to calculate change for a customer. Advertising had a twenty minute quiz where they had to come up with a good school store slogan and create a poster design. These activities were used to weed out some of the candidates for those two very popular jobs. The others were accepted into their jobs without a quiz and trained from there. I plan to change jobs each month this year. Next year, we will begin at the start of the year and will change less often.

Brooke’s example was one of several large projects in the school and was illustrative of the commitment of instructional leaders to value-added instruction and student engagement. The example also illuminates the personal cost assumed by instructional leaders when they went beyond that which had been stipulated by their contracts.

Martha talked about several other authentic service learning projects in which the students had participated last year:

The project-based learning has been tremendous. The projects that the children were involved in last year here were tremendous, everything from providing deer crossing signs in the community and studying the ecosystems around that, to American Cancer Society penny drives and studying the mathematics and making a major contribution to the American Society.

She explained that Parker would be conducting action research in the following year to evaluate the effectiveness of last year’s student engagement projects:

We’re going to be involved in a research program now with the children from last year’s involvement. They’re going to be surveyed now as to their perceptions of being more active participants in setting goals, both individual and class goals, and helping make decisions of how do we study this and how do we learn this in their classroom.

Instructional leaders at Parker believed that increased student engagement led to increased achievement. Thus, they sought ways to increase student engagement in the
classroom, in across-grade level programs, and in school level projects. The League of Professional Schools was instrumental in their implementation of student democratic learning.

All of the participants in this study believed that students’ academic achievement was tied to the practice of collaborative instructional leadership strategies and to the partnership of stakeholders described in Theme 1. Moreover, they felt that collaboration was the key to the improvement of teachers and that the improvement of teachers was the key to increasing student academic achievement. The belief that the instructional leader in the classroom was the key to student achievement was frequently discussed by Martha, who referred to the instructional leader in the classroom as the “critical element.” Martha said, “My purpose has got to be, as a principal, ‘What can I do to guarantee the achievement of those children?’” She continued, “Do I get to be an instructional leader? Yes, by planting seeds, cultivating them, nourishing them, and then getting out of the teacher’s way so that she can take that action to the front lines, to our children.” Additionally, all instructional leaders believed that home environment and parental involvement were critical factors in achievement, and Parker’s mission statement addressed this belief. In accordance with the mission statement, covenant, and charter, an emphasis was placed on high expectations for quality teaching and learning, with all stakeholders partnering and sharing responsibility for student achievement.

Through the partnering relationship among instructional leaders, which was described in Category 6, the principal and emergent teacher leaders worked continuously toward quality teaching and learning. They had a “stellar” academic program, and their achievement record, when compared to records of the county’s other elementary schools, ranked number one. Instructional leaders at Parker did not, however, focus on the past record of student achievement; rather, they continuously looked to the current and future achievement of children.
Every participant believed that they affected student achievement through the instructional decisions they made, including those related to problem solving. Every participant believed that, through their on-going collaboration and communication, they impacted student achievement positively; they brought new and improved ideas and resources to their classrooms as a result of collaboration, and their teaching and leading capacity grew because of collaboration. They positively impacted student achievement, as well, through their involvement in school renewal initiatives, such as the implementation of the Rebecca Sitton Spelling Model. Finally, through their continuous and unblinking focus on instruction, the instructional leaders planned and delivered quality instruction that engaged students in their own learning.

Twelve participants shared their view that expectations of children at Parker were high. From the time children entered kindergarten, they were expected to accept responsibility for their own actions, including their learning. They were viewed as partners in the Parker community. These expectations and responsibilities were reduced to writing and referred to as Parker Norms. Mollie explained Parker Norms:

We have Parker Norms. That whole idea of what’s best for the children really kind of filters and carries through and across all grade levels. . . . The kids know what is expected—what they are responsible for, how they’re supposed to be prepared, how they’re supposed to treat each other with a lot of respect, and that kind of thing. . . . It’s introduced in kindergarten. We have certain norms. At the very beginning of the school year, there is a booklet that we go through. . . . It’s really just that high expectation of—you’re here to learn.

Joy summarized the conviction of instructional leaders at Parker that Parker Norms had played a critical role in the academic success of students:

[Acceptance of responsibility] is an extremely important skill for these children to have and to learn. Through the school, we have the Parker Norms and responsibilities. We establish at the very beginning the ideas of a fantastic program that they have at the school. To have those expectations, set right from the beginning of kindergarten, they know [what is expected of them]. Every year, those same kindnesses and responsibilities and respect are all just instilled in the students and repeated with them.
Ten participants in the study also mentioned in their interviews that parents held students to high standards and supported parental involvement in learning at home. They believed that they were fortunate that the children at Parker came to school ready to learn. Mollie expressed the students’ learning readiness this way: “The kids come ready to learn. They’re ready to fly.”

All participants in this study believed in the value of collaborative interactions. They carried this belief into their classroom practice, as well, allowing students to work independently and cooperatively. Joy talked about discovery learning and cooperative group explorations:

[Collaborative instructional leadership] also impacts my students because I truly make sure that my students are independent learners and also that they take a leadership role, which teaches them about making choices and responsibility. There are a lot of times that I will let the children try to explore it or try to figure it out or mediate through it because I really want them to think through it.

Cross-grade level and whole school instructional leaders’ collaborations were essential to student achievement; according to the data, all participants engaged in these collaborations. For instance, Michelle described general discussions at the end of the year with the grade level above and below to prepare for the next year. She also talked about discussions related to specific students:

You can always talk about specific students and how best to help them. Different teachers have different personalities. If I talk to another teacher about a student, it might be that the teacher has never thought of the student in that way before. Just talking with another teacher can kind of help them, “Oh, I didn’t think about it that way.”

Lydia talked about the collaborative discussions and decisions related to the LSPI goals and about her responsibility to affect achievement by incorporating those goals into her instruction:

Our LSPI goals are tied in with reading and comprehension and the math skills or problem solving. What I basically do, with language arts and with math, is very much tied into those goals. That’s what we chose as a school when we decided, after many discussions, what our goals were going to be. Then it’s my job, as a classroom teacher, to look at standards, the skills of Abel County, make sure that I fit them in, that I cover them all, and that the children exceed.
All participants included in this study believed that collaboration among instructional leaders was of paramount importance in their efforts to increase student achievement. Eliza explained how collaboration led to student achievement:

Mainly our collaboration [is] on looking at timelines or looking at data or looking at weekly objectives that the children are struggling with. How can we improve those? Are we covering our objectives in a timely manner? Are we going to get to certain goals that we want to [achieve] in appropriate time? All of our conversations, all of our looking at data, all of our looking at time lines, curriculum and discussions help my children, hopefully, get to where they need to be by meeting their academic potential and going beyond.

Participants believed that student engagement and achievement increased at Parker as an outcome of their engagement in the collaborative instructional leadership strategies described in Theme 1. Parker’s academic record indicated that increased student achievement was a fact. Instructional leaders chose, however, to focus on the current and future achievement of children, rather than on the past achievement record. The past achievement record and the instructional practices that had produced it were used as a springboard to current and future instructional efforts and served as a measure against which to judge current achievement levels; in that way, the past achievement record inspired current instructional efforts. Instructional leaders felt that collaborative instructional leadership had led to Parker’s student achievement record.

This discussion of Theme 3 has focused on how the collaborative instructional strategies used by the principal and the emergent teacher leaders at Parker led to process interaction outcomes and impacted classroom instruction. Participants identified five impact categories. They believed that their teaching improved, that their leadership capacity inside and outside the classroom increased, and that their ownership of instructional practices and outcomes increased. They felt that their job satisfaction and stability were positively affected by their collaborative instructional practices. They also discussed their belief that student engagement and
achievement increased as a result of their use of the collaborative instructional leadership strategies discussed in Theme 1 and flowed from the positive outcomes discussed in Theme 2.

Some Theoretical Ideas

Analysis of the data indicates four major theoretical ideas. These theoretical ideas are summarized in four tables and are described in the following sub-sections.

Description of Table 3

Theoretically, the data suggest that engagement in the four collaborative instructional leadership strategies identified in Theme 1 positively influenced the four process interaction outcomes identified in Theme 2. Table 3 depicts the relationship between Theme 1 and Theme 2 categories.

Table 3

Relationship between Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Used by the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders (Theme 1) and Process Interaction Outcomes (Theme 2), Categories 5 - 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders (Theme 1) positively influenced:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect (Category 5/Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A partnering relationship (Category 6/Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A positive learning environment (Category 7/Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges (i.e. time) (Category 8/Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Theme 1: Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders includes: Category 1: Sharing instructional decision-making, Category 2: Communicating for instructional purposes, Category 3: Focusing on improvement, and Category 4: Focusing on instruction
As depicted in Table 3, the collaborative instructional leadership strategies identified in Theme 1—sharing instructional decision-making (Category 1/Theme 1), communicating for instructional purposes (Category 2/Theme 1), focusing on improvement (Category 3/Theme 1), and focusing on instruction (Category 4/Theme 1)—positively influenced each of the process interaction outcomes identified in Theme 2—relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect (Category 5/Theme 2), a partnering relationship (Category 6/Theme 2), a positive learning environment (Category 7/Theme 2), and challenges (Category 8/Theme 2). Interestingly, sharing decision-making contributed to time challenges identified in the study; yet, the benefits of sharing decision-making outweighed the time challenges it created.

*Description of Table 4*

The data also indicate that engagement in the Theme 1 collaborative instructional leadership strategies positively influenced classroom instruction identified in Theme 3. Table 4 depicts the relationship between Theme 1 and the categories of Theme 3.

Table 4

*Relationship between Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Used by the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders (Theme 1) and Their Influence on Classroom Instruction*

Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders (Theme 1) positively influenced:

- Teaching practice (Category 9/Theme 3)
- Leadership capacity (Category 10/Theme 3)
- Ownership (Category 11/Theme 3)
- Job satisfaction and stability (Category 12/Theme 3)
Table 4 (continued)

Relationship between Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Used by the Principal and Emergent Teacher Leaders (Theme 1) and Their Influence on Classroom Instruction

Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders (Theme 1) positively influenced:

- Student engagement and achievement (Category 13/Theme 3)

Note. Theme 1: Collaborative instructional leadership strategies used by the principal and emergent teacher leaders includes: Category 1: Sharing instructional decision-making, Category 2: Communicating for instructional purposes, Category 3: Focusing on improvement, and Category 4: Focusing on instruction.

As depicted in Table 4, the collaborative instructional leadership strategies identified in Theme 1—sharing instructional decision-making (Category 1/Theme 1), communicating for instructional purposes (Category 2/Theme 1), focusing on improvement (Category 3/Theme 1), and focusing on instruction (Category 4/Theme 1)—positively influenced classroom instruction—teaching practice (Category 9/Theme 3), leadership capacity (Category 10/Theme 3), ownership (Category 11/Theme 3), job satisfaction and stability (Category 12/Theme 3), and student engagement and achievement (Category 13/Theme 3).

Description of Table 5

Theoretically, the data indicate that the four process interaction outcomes identified in Theme 2 also had positive effects on classroom instruction, as identified in Theme 3. Table 5 depicts the relationship between Theme 2 Process Interaction Outcomes and Theme 3, Categories 9 through 13.
Table 5

*Relationship between Process Interaction Outcomes (Theme 2) and Impacts of Collaborative Instructional Leadership on Classroom Instruction (Theme 3), Categories 9 - 13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process interaction outcomes positively affected:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching practice (Category 9/Theme 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership capacity (Category 10/Theme 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ownership (Category 11/Theme 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job satisfaction and stability (Category 12/Theme 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student engagement and achievement (Category 13/Theme 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Theme 2: Process interaction outcomes includes: Category 5: Strengthening relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect, Category 6: Establishing a partnering relationship, Category 7: Creating a positive learning environment, and Category 8: Overcoming challenges.

As depicted in Table 5, the Theme 2 process interaction outcomes—strengthening relationships built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect (Category 5/Theme 2), establishing a partnering relationship (Category 6/Theme 2), creating a positive learning environment (Category 7/Theme 2), and overcoming challenges (Category 8/Theme 2)—positively affected classroom instruction—teaching practice (Category 9/Theme 3), leadership capacity (Category 10/Theme 3), ownership (Category 11/Theme 3), job satisfaction and stability (Category 12/Theme 3), and student engagement and achievement (Category 13/Theme 3).

*Description of Table 6*

The data also suggest that participation in the collaborative instructional leadership strategies identified in Theme 1 was *positively affected* by the process interaction outcomes.
identified in Theme 2 and by the classroom instruction impacts identified in Theme 3. Table 6 depicts the relationship between Themes 2 and 3 and Theme 1 categories.

Table 6

**Collaborative Instructional Leadership Strategies Positively Affected by Process Interaction Outcomes (Theme 2) and by Classroom Instruction Impacts (Theme 3)**

- Instructional decision-making (Category 1/Theme 1)
- Instructional communication (Category 2/Theme 1)
- Improvement actions (Category 3/Theme 1)
- Instruction actions (Category 4/Theme 1)


Overall, it was apparent that being an instructional leader (i.e. engaging in the strategies identified in Table 3, Theme 1) and experiencing benefits of interactions between and among the emergent teacher leaders and the principal (i.e. outcomes identified in Table 4, Theme 2) had positive effects on classroom instruction (i.e. impacts identified in Table 5, Theme 3). In turn, these successful interactions and positive effects on classroom instruction increased instructional leaders’ willingness to engage in instructional leadership actions (i.e. strategies identified in Table 3, Theme 1).
This discussion has presented some of the theoretical ideas that emerged from the data. Specifically, the data indicate that relationships existed between and among the three themes and among the categories within each theme. Tables were used to summarize the relationships between the themes.

Chapter 4 has presented the findings of this study. Three major themes and thirteen categories, which represent the recurring ideas in the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership at Parker Elementary School, were defined, described, and illustrated. Instructional leaders at Parker used four collaborative instructional leadership strategies. These four strategies led to process interaction outcomes and positively impacted classroom instruction. In the next chapter, the research is summarized, the findings are discussed, and the implications of the research are set forth.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored the perspectives of a principal and twelve emergent teacher leaders of instructional leadership in a shared governance elementary school in Georgia. In this chapter, the research study is summarized, the findings are discussed, and the implications for future research, for practitioners, and for institutions of higher education are presented.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the instructional leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership and to propose theoretical ideas, grounded in the data, to explain their perspectives. The research was guided by four research questions: (a) What is the principal’s perspective of her instructional leadership; (b) what are the emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of their instructional leadership; (c) how do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership relate to and interact with each other; and (d) how do the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership impact classroom instruction? The study was conducted in a shared governance elementary school where emergent teacher leaders’ instructional leadership was facilitated and promoted.

The research design used in the study was grounded theory. Thirteen instructional leaders participated in the study, one principal and twelve emergent teacher leaders. In accordance with grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling was used to select the participants, and in-depth, face-to-face initial and follow-up interviews were conducted with the participants during Fall, 2003. Constant comparative analysis was used to collect, code, and
analyze the data, which included interviews, documents, and researcher’s memos. Recurring concepts in participants’ perspectives were identified and organized into three main themes and thirteen categories, and theoretical ideas grounded in the data emerged from on-going analysis and interpretation of the data.

This study has established that Parker Elementary School, at the time of the study, was a learning community and that instructional leadership was a cooperative and collaborative practice that involved both the principal and emergent teacher leaders. Specifically, the study found that “doing instructional leadership” at Parker Elementary School was about using four collaborative instructional leadership strategies to accomplish the co-determined mission of the school and that collaboration was at the core of each of those strategies. The results of this study show that the school’s shared governance structure and processes, which had been in place for 10 years, were the foundation and support for its collaborative instructional leadership; they ensured equality and opened the doors for the teacher empowerment and collaborative partnership that existed among the instructional leaders at Parker. Furthermore, the school’s shared governance and its collaborative communication processes ensured that instructional decisions were co-determined and that instructional efforts were coordinated toward the co-determined goals and shared purpose.

In the analysis of instructional leadership at Parker process was found to be central, but the processes described were structurally based. The school’s shared governance organizational structure provided the structural framework for the four collaborative instructional leadership strategies that were described by the participants. As a result of collaboration and responsibility assigned through the school’s mission, covenant, and charter, commitments to the four co-determined instructional leadership strategies were continuously renewed, and the strategies
were continuously evaluated and updated through action research and shared decision-making to ensure their on-going effectiveness in accomplishing the mission.

The data in this study demonstrate that instructional leadership at Parker was collaborative instructional leadership. It was a practice that involved four co-determined instructional leadership strategies: (a) sharing instructional decision-making, (b) communicating for instructional purposes, (c) focusing on improvement, and (d) focusing on instruction. The data show that interactions in these instructional processes contributed to relationships built on mutual respect, to partnering relationships, to a positive learning community, and to several challenges to instructional leadership. Specifically, through collaboration, instructional leaders supported, empowered, and motivated each other, and the positive outcomes of the use of those collaborative instructional leadership strategies aided participants in dealing with the identified challenges to instructional leadership. Additionally, the results reveal that use of instructional leadership strategies and the outcomes of their use had led to positive impacts on classroom instruction, including improved teaching practice, increased leadership capacity, increased ownership, increased job satisfaction and stability, and increased student engagement and achievement. Collaboration was the common theme found in all of the categories and sub-categories, and the outcomes of the collaborative instructional leadership at Parker Elementary School were enhanced by two dynamics, synergy and reciprocated empowerment, which were at play in collaborative interactions among the instructional leaders.

Discussion

The findings of this study were presented in Chapter 4 and were reviewed in the preceding section. This section begins with a detailed discussion of the major findings related to collaborative instructional leadership. They are discussed in light of relevant literature on shared
governance, principal instructional leadership, and emergent teacher leadership. In the second section, the theoretical ideas that emerged from the findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

Discussion of Collaborative Instructional Leadership

In a reform era, when the emphasis is on school effectiveness and achievement of every child, an in-depth study of schools that are meeting the reform demands can be beneficial and insightful. At the time of the study, Parker Elementary School was such a school. It was a well-implemented shared governance school and an effective elementary school with an exemplary record of student achievement. Where other schools had failed or accomplished mediocre records, Parker had succeeded. Parker’s record of instructional excellence makes this in-depth study of its model of instructional leadership important and the findings resulting from it significant.

The important question in looking to Parker as a model for study is how its instructional leaders were accomplishing what they were accomplishing. The answer to that question lies in their practice of collaborative instructional leadership and in their effective use of the power of emergent teacher leadership in that practice. The findings of this study indicate that there are four critical strategies or practices associated with collaborative instructional leadership: (a) sharing instructional decision-making, (b) communicating for instructional purposes, (c) focusing on improvement, and (d) focusing on instruction. The practice of these collaborative instructional leadership strategies was found to be effective at Parker; specifically, the use of these strategies by instructional leaders had led to positive process interaction outcomes and to positive impacts on classroom instruction.
The findings of the study show that Parker was a learning community. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) suggest that in such communities teachers “share practices, mutually solve problems, and reflect on and learn from their experiences” (p. 29). The participants in this study—the principal and emergent teacher leaders—interacted in accordance with this description. As a community, Parker also embodied Sergiovanni’s (1994) description of a collection “of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of ‘l’s’ into a collective ‘we.’ As a ‘we,’ members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships” (p. 271). Parker’s success as a learning community was linked to its shared governance philosophy and organizational structure, to the principal’s facilitative-democratic leadership style, to its norm of emergent teacher leadership, and to its effective practice of collaborative instructional leadership.

Instructional leaders, according to the data in this study, were coordinated and unified by the school’s shared governance structure and by collaborative instructional leadership strategies that emphasize teaching and learning. Collaboration and sharing were the terms most frequently used by the participants when they conveyed their perspectives of their instructional leadership. They used the term collaboration to describe the partnering relationship among the members of the community and to identify the vehicle chosen to navigate the road to quality instruction. Kreisberg (1992b) described the “power with” orientation of principals who share their power with teachers; that description is consistent with principal leadership at Parker, and, additionally, it describes the orientation of instructional leaders to each other as they engage in collaborative instructional leadership. In other words, the professional learning community at Parker was found to be a collaboration, or a purposeful joining together, of the administrative leaders and of
the other stakeholders of the school, in which they have aligned themselves cooperatively as partners in their commitment to the mission they co-determined and shared. Moreover, collaboration was the communication strategy that coordinated and sustained the individual members’ alignment with the co-determined mission and supported the “power with” orientation of its instructional leaders.

Consistent with the findings of other researchers (Blase & Blase, 2001; Hart, 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Little, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989), this study found that the professionalization of teachers at Parker through their participation in decision-making and involvement in instructional leadership was a vital part of the school’s culture. Moreover, professional collaborative communication and interaction among instructional leaders, which has been found by numerous researchers to be a powerful internal mechanism for teacher growth and school improvement (a’Campo, 1993; Barth, 1990; Blase & Blase, 1998; Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989), was the basis of Parker’s collaborative instructional leadership. In fact, the practice of collaborative instructional leadership at Parker was found to be consistent with themes discovered by Blase and Blase in their 1998 and 1999 studies of instructional leadership; at Parker talking and reflecting together were integral aspects of the practice of collaborative instructional leadership and contributed to the growth and improvement of instructional leaders.

Connections between and among community members is vital in learning communities. Sergiovanni (1997) noted that “community members are connected to each other for such moral reasons as mutual obligations, shared traditions, and other normative ties” (p. 271) and that “members feel compelled to help each other, and to share with each other, because doing so is right and is part of one’s job” (p. 271). In the interview data, together was a frequently used word, signifying the importance of the connectedness of instructional leaders at Parker. The
learning climate at Parker was found to be one in which the professionals learned together and
led together. Furthermore, the instructional leaders were together in status and together in
purpose. Instructional leaders, in terms of their instructional work at Parker, were equals; they
worked side by side as partners with equal standing, equal voice, and equal opportunity. They
supported each other and the school to accomplish their shared goals, purpose, and mission. The
study also found that together they overcame or worked around obstacles and challenges to their
instructional leadership.

Leadership at Parker had moved beyond conceptualization of leadership as being
embodied in one person. Glickman (1991) argued that “the principal of a successful school is
not the instructional leader but the coordinator of teachers as instructional leaders” (p. 7).
Similarly, Blase and Blase (2001) found that the role of facilitative-democratic leaders in shared
governance schools “becomes primarily that of facilitating collaborative efforts among mutually
supportive, trusting professionals” (p. 145). The leadership of the principal at Parker was
consistent with these two descriptions. As advocated by Lambert (2002), instructional leadership
at Parker was conceptualized as a shared right and responsibility of all. The data in this study
indicate that the instructional leaders at Parker recognized that both the principal and the
emergent teacher leaders played a critical role in school effectiveness. The principal in this study
was herself a strong instructional leader, but she recognized and espoused the belief that school
effectiveness was improved and elevated when the collective mindset was tapped for
instructional purposes. Thus, the concept of school leadership at Parker was consistent with
Lambert’s (1998) description of a “broad concept that is separated from person, role, and a
discrete set of individual behaviors,” “embedded in the school community as a whole,” and
viewed as a “shared responsibility for a shared purpose of community” (p. 5). The key concept
in Lambert’s definition “is that leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively” (p. 5). The collaborative model of instructional leadership at Parker ensured that instructional leaders learned and constructed meaning together.

This study has found that shared governance at Parker provided the framework for shared instructional responsibility and accountability and, thus, for its collaborative instructional leadership. This finding is consistent with the finding of Smylie et al. (1996) that “teacher participation in school-based decision-making is related positively to instructional improvement and to student academic outcomes” (p. 191) and that accountability and organizational learning opportunities are important factors in the relationship between participative decision-making and instructional improvement and student outcomes. Having voice and hearing the voice of others led to reflective thinking about decisions and practice; furthermore, instructional leaders were mutually and reciprocally empowered and supported through collaboration and sharing.

Consistent with findings of Rosenholtz (1989), this study found that the collaboration structures and systems at Parker provided a forum for teacher-to-teacher teaching and growth, and teacher-to-teacher teaching was found to be the main way teachers at Parker grew.

This study has established that collaborative communication was critical to instructional leadership because it coordinated and aligned efforts, provided on-going motivation and commitment to purpose, and facilitated continuous improvement. Furthermore, collaboration led to relationships that bound individuals together into a collective network. At Parker, formal and informal communication systems and structures encouraged and established channels for on-going collaboration and sharing. This study found that collaboration was a reflective and empowering activity based on professional talk; it promoted growth, led to shared purpose, built staff cohesiveness, and promoted improved teaching and other positive impacts on classroom
instruction. Little (1982) identified four critical practices used in effective schools: (a) teacher talk about teaching practice, (b) joint planning, (c) teacher observation and constructive feedback, and (d) teachers teaching teachers. The strategies and processes of collaborative instructional leadership at Parker were consistent with the critical practices identified by Little and were found to enhance norms of collegiality and foster continuous improvement. In addition, the social system at Parker was found to be collaborative, as described by Little (1988), with an emphasis on teachers working openly and publicly with other teachers. In fact, according to the findings of the current study, instructional leaders at Parker had found a balance of privacy and autonomy of teachers in classrooms and of openness for sharing and collaborating outside the classroom. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) argued that teachers’ commitment to collegiality and their passion for instructional growth aid them in overcoming barriers created by the norms of privacy that typify the teaching profession; these characteristics of teacher leaders were also present in teacher leaders at Parker.

This study has established that Parker had a norm of emergent teacher leadership that was based on equality, on the value of every voice, and on respect for teacher professionalism. Emergent teacher leaders empowered others and were empowered by others at Parker. This finding is consistent with research by Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996), who identified a number of characteristics that are evident in schools where teacher leadership is promoted and facilitated: a developmental focus, recognition of contributions, collegiality, autonomy to make improvements, participation in decision-making, open communication, and a positive environment. All of these characteristics identified by Katzenmeyer and Moller are present in the data of the current study, verifying the strong presence of this form of expanded leadership at Parker.
According to this study, instructional leaders at Parker maintained an on-going focus on improvement of themselves and of the school. Their commitment to this focus emanated from the school’s charter, which charged all instructional leaders with responsibility and accountability for on-going teacher growth and school renewal. Rosenholtz (1989) found that the ability of a school to motivate its teaching staff is central to the effectiveness of its performance and that teacher contributions are the most vital. The finding of the current study that teacher-to-teacher teaching is the main way in which instructional leaders at Parker grew is consistent with Rosenholtz’ finding and accounts, in part, for Parker’s effectiveness. Rosenholtz also found that sharing in decision-making, collaborating with other teachers, and having growth opportunities were significant job-enhancing and motivating strategies of teachers; the findings at Parker are also consistent with these Rosenholtz findings.

Consistent with Sergiovanni’s (1994) view that learning communities are characterized by an emphasis on learning and that learning communities change to incorporate their learning, change was an accepted and valued part of the learning community at Parker. As advocated by Glickman (1993), Parker was a self-renewing instructional environment through collaboration, shared decision-making, and action research. According to the findings, instructional leaders at Parker were innovators of change who were committed to improvement, who were empowered to make decisions to change, and who had the autonomy to implement them. Instructional leaders at Parker viewed themselves as collaborating partners in school improvement; because instructional leaders made the decisions and implemented them, they were invested in them and “owned” the outcomes. There was a pride and sense of accomplishment among the instructional leaders at Parker; they felt they had contributed to the positive learning environment and had
positively impacted classroom instruction; and they were dedicated to maintaining and “upping” the school’s record of excellence.

Fullan (1993) warned that collaboration is not always positive, citing groupthink and balkanization as two possible negative outcomes. Yet, at Parker, according to the data collected in this study, these two outcomes had been avoided. The principal provided the following insight, which was shared by other instructional leaders, to explain how they avoided groupthink: “I pride myself on not having to agree with everyone in the building and not wanting them to agree with me. I think some of our best steps forward come from discussions of points that we vary on, with different skills that we come to the table with.” The data show that instructional leaders were strongly connected to the instruction-based culture of the school, as well as to the culture of the team to which they belonged. Each grade level at Parker had its own culture, and instructional leaders within each team were strongly connected to each other because of the frequency of interactions among team members and because of the experience they shared. The all-children and whole-school orientation at Parker strengthened the connection of individuals and teams to the school culture. Through formal and informal communication structures and systems, collaboration was fostered across grade levels and at the whole-school level, allowing instructional leaders at Parker to maintain their connection to the school and to avoid the disconnect between and balkanization of teams that was described by Kruse and Louis (1997) and by Fullan (1993).

Blase and Blase (1998) noted that instructional leadership is “often conceived of as a blend of supervision, staff development, and curriculum development” (p. 11). At Parker these tasks were shared, with instructional leaders “stepping up” to assume responsibility for the tasks. Blase and Blase (2001) identified specific empowering practices (e.g., encouraging autonomy,
asking opinions, modeling, and acknowledging and rewarding good work) used by principals who had been identified by teachers as successful. The current study found that Parker’s principal engaged in the empowering practices described in the Blase and Blase study; more significant, however, is the finding that emergent teacher leaders used some of the same empowering behaviors in their instructional leadership with other teachers at Parker and that the practice of collaborative instructional leadership in a learning community had led to mutual empowerment. Instructional leaders there empowered others and, reciprocally, others empowered them.

Lack of time was identified in this study as a general obstacle to instructional leadership. Specifically, shared governance and collaboration were cited by several instructional leaders as being time-intensive; findings related to the time intensity of shared governance and collaboration have been found by other researchers, as well (Blase & Blase, 1997; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Leonard & Leonard, 1999). In their study of three schools restructuring for collaboration, Leonard and Leonard (1999) found that formal collaborative structures sometimes interfered with informal collaboration, leading to increased teacher frustration. Several instructional leaders in the current study shared the belief that formal collaborative meetings were not as effective as the informal collaboration that tended to spawn from immediate need, and several expressed frustration because of their belief that meetings were not always necessary and were usually time consuming.

Discussion of Theoretical Ideas

Based on the study’s findings, six theoretical ideas emerged. In this section, these theoretical ideas are presented and discussed in relation to relevant research on teacher leadership, shared decision-making, and teacher empowerment.
First, as the results of the study indicate, when teachers are allowed to practice instructional leadership with the principal in a shared governance learning community, they overcome norms of teacher isolation and privacy, replacing them with norms of collaboration and collegiality, and they emerge to become leaders outside the classroom. Results of this study indicate that teachers will overcome norms of isolation and privacy when there is a norm of equality among teachers and other leaders, when all teachers are valued and their voice is respected and heard, and when they are allowed and encouraged to lead in instructional matters and decision-making.

Several researchers have found that the norms of privacy and autonomy that characterize the teaching profession serve as a barrier to teacher leadership, particularly to formal teacher leadership (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie & Denny, 1990). As Fullan (1993) noted, shared governance does not guarantee improved teaching and learning and collaborative instructional work in schools; these conditions are determined by the school’s culture and by the norms and behaviors of the teachers in it.

The instructional leaders at Parker had found a balance between the norms of privacy and autonomy that characterize the teaching profession and the norm of openness that is a necessary part of collaborative instructional leadership. The balance was founded on trust of and respect for equality and professionalism of all parties, respect for the varied talents and expertise of all parties, and on partnership for a common cause, which emanated from the participative decision-making framework and the principal’s shared leadership philosophy. Because they shared a responsibility to the whole, instructional leaders at Parker tended to “step up” to offer what they had and what they knew, and, reciprocally, they were open to others doing the same. Through their balancing of these norms, instructional leaders at Parker had established the collaborative
instructional leadership that marked their learning community and contributed to the school’s instructional success. These findings are consistent with Hart’s (1995) conception of a professionalized communitarian social system for schools, wherein teacher leaders informally emerge to assume responsibilities for the common good; they are also consistent with Little’s (1988) conception of a collaborative school social system in which teacher norms of privacy and autonomy are replaced by norms of more public sharing and openness.

The data in this study are consistent with and add to the literature on learning communities in restructured schools, as well. The data support that, at the time of the study, Parker was a learning community in which the principal was a facilitative-democratic leader and in which instructional leaders, including the principal, were teachers, learners, and leaders together. Describing learning communities with this type of leadership, Blase and Blase (2001) noted that “the role of the principal becomes primarily that of facilitating collaborative efforts among mutually supportive, trusting professionals” (p. 145); the principal’s role at Parker was consistent with this description, and emergent teacher leaders were the “mutually supportive trusting professionals” (p. 145) described by Blase and Blase. In fact, the data indicate that a “power with” orientation, as described by Kreisberg (1992b), was the mindset and the practice at Parker.

Based on a study of teachers’ perspectives of good principal instructional leadership, Blase and Blase (1998) identified instructional leadership strategies for leaders who seek to build learning communities; they suggested that (a) talking with teachers about instruction should be frequent and open; (b) time and organizational features should be structured to facilitate teacher interaction; (c) teachers should be empowered; (d) challenges of change should be faced and embraced; and (e) principals should “balance support and guidance with opportunity and leading
from behind” (p. 167, emphasis in the original). The data from the current study indicate that these instructional leadership strategies were fully and effectively used at Parker by the principal. More importantly, the data show that emergent teacher leaders also actively employed these strategies; they were partners in building the learning community. The strength and effectiveness of Parker’s learning community was found to be linked to the involvement of all of its instructional leaders; and, consistent with Blase and Blase’s TiGeR model of instructional leadership, teaching, growing, and reflecting together were found to be integral aspects of their shared instructional leadership.

Second, it is argued that, when collaborative instructional leadership is practiced, the individual member’s interests and goals align with the co-determined group’s interests and goals, and work efforts stay “on task” and utilize the individual’s strengths to accomplish and serve the common purpose. This study found that individual teacher’s interests and goals were aligned with Parker’s purpose. Teachers determined the school’s purpose together; in other words, the school’s mission was the result of their consensus. The instructional leadership strategies, which were also co-determined, were engaged in collaboratively; this collaborative approach to instructional leadership kept work efforts coordinated and motivated continual efforts. Additionally, the collaborative approach also facilitated and enhanced instructional work because the strengths of individuals were used for the collective good.

Rubin (2002) noted that the effectiveness of collaborative efforts rests on the ability of the collaboration to connect the self interests of the individuals comprising it to the shared interests and purpose of the collaboration. He argued that collaborations “add diversity to the perspectives, broaden our understanding of the problems, and multiply the stakeholders with vested interest in seeing that our mission-driven goals are met” (p. 10). The findings of this
study indicate that individual interests were connected to the learning community’s interests at Parker; this connection was the result of shared decision-making, through which goals were co-determined through consensus.

Lambert (2002) argued that instructional leadership is “everyone’s work” (p. 40) and that “our mistake has been in looking to the principal alone for instructional leadership” (p. 40). She advocated a framework for instructional leadership that links six features of leading and learning into a professional practice: skillful participation, vision, inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and student achievement. The instructional leadership practiced at Parker reflected the validity of Lambert’s argument; at Parker, instructional leadership was shared by all instructional leaders, and all took responsibility for it. Furthermore, in the collaborative instructional leadership practice at Parker, the six features identified by Lambert were evident.

This study also contributes to the limited literature base on emergent teacher leader instructional leadership. Consistent with the findings of Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996), this study has demonstrated that emergent teacher leaders, when allowed to do so, offer their strengths and talents to serve the common purpose of the learning community. The data from this study has also shown that performing instructional leadership functions is more important than who performs them; in other words, the performance of instructional leadership is not limited to or dependent upon a set of hierarchical roles. This finding of the current study is consistent with findings of other studies on emergent teacher leadership. For instance, the Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) study on the potential of professional development schools to foster emergent teacher leadership found that teacher leadership can be linked to functions rather than to formal, hierarchical roles and that teacher leadership can be a normal part of the teaching experience. Similarly, the Heller and Firestone (1995) study found that leadership functions
were more important than leadership roles in instituting change. At Parker instructional leadership was linked to functions, and those functions were open to all, regardless of teaching experience.

A significant contribution of this study to emergent teacher leadership literature is the finding that emergent teacher leaders empower other instructional leaders, and they are reciprocally empowered by other instructional leaders with whom they work. Emergent teacher leadership at Parker was successful because it was allowed by teachers to be successful. The data in this study demonstrate that there were several reasons for this success. First, consistent with findings of Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996), emergent teacher leaders respected each other as knowledgeable professionals with different talents, expertise, and experience; and they trusted each other to perform as professionally responsible individuals and stewards of the group’s mission. Second, confirming Little’s (1990) findings, the findings of this study indicate that emergent teacher leaders were respectful of each other’s equal rights; and third, they respected each other’s autonomy in practice, or each individual’s right to practice in accordance with her own teaching philosophy and style, which was also consistent with Little’s (1990) findings. Fourth, verifying another of Little’s (1990) findings, the study found that emergent teacher leaders at Parker sought to maintain their equality with their peers, rather than to differentiate themselves from their peers. Moreover, they had established normative-based rules for maintaining that equality, including a “turn about is fair play” rule and a “share and share alike” rule.

Krug (1992) argued that effective school leaders “motivate people by creating the conditions under which people want to do what needs to be done” (p. 433). The data show that such conditions existed at Parker and that they were created by all of the school’s leaders. From
their research on teacher empowerment in shared governance schools, Blase and Blase (2001) identified strategic behaviors and practices used by principals to empower teachers. Among the behaviors identified were trusting and building trust, providing resources and being a resource, encouraging autonomy and innovation, modeling, encouraging risk-taking, and acknowledging and rewarding work efforts and accomplishments. The current study found that the principal practiced these empowering behaviors and that emergent teacher leaders used many of these same behaviors in their instructional leadership practice; the result was a learning community in which the instructional leaders motivated and were motivated by others “to do what needs to be done” (Krug, 1992, p. 433).

The findings of this study contribute to extant research on principal instructional leadership, as well. In their definitive work on principal instructional leadership, Blase and Blase (1998) argued that “spoken language has a powerful impact on teachers’ instructional behavior and facilitative, supportive actions by principals as instructional leaders have powerful effects on classroom instruction” (p. 5). From their study of teachers’ perspectives of good principal instructional leadership, Blase and Blase found that three elements characterize the practice of principals who are good instructional leaders; specifically, good principal instructional leaders conduct instructional conferences, provide staff development, and develop teacher reflection. The findings of the current study confirm that the three primary elements of good instructional leadership identified by Blase and Blase were prominent in Parker’s principal’s practice of instructional leadership. Furthermore, the current study has confirmed that instructional leadership by emergent teacher leaders is also characterized by these elements of good instructional leadership. Emergent teacher leaders collaboratively conferred with other teacher leaders on matters of instructional practice; they formally and informally engaged in staff
development activities; and they reflected individually as a result of and reflected collectively through their collaborative communications with each other. In fact, talking, reflecting, and growing were intertwining themes in the four collaborative instructional leadership strategies practiced by instructional leaders at Parker.

Third, it is posited that, when the teachers and the principal co-determine instructional leadership strategies and engage collaboratively in them, more effective strategies are developed and more effective instructional leadership is delivered because the knowledge, experience, and talents of all are focused on the efforts and are multiplied by the dynamics of reciprocated empowerment and synergy. This study found that the use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies at Parker was more effective than traditional principal instructional leadership alone. Expanding leadership and using collaboration multiplied and intensified the effectiveness of efforts; the instructional power of the individuals and of the group was significantly increased by coordinating and aligning individual efforts to the communal purpose, by multiplying and sharing individual talents and expertise, and by brainstorming through collaboration.

Zepeda (1999) noted the synergistic power of collaboration: “Through collaborative efforts, a community of learners creates synergy, a synchronized energy where the power of the group is more profound than that of any one individual” (p. 58). This study has identified two dynamics that enhanced the benefits of collaborative work at Parker: synergy and reciprocated empowerment. In virtually all of the identified instructional strategies used at Parker, instructional leaders were brought together to collaborate. The energy of their combined participation in discussions, brainstorming activities, problem solving, and decision-making fed an enhanced level of thinking, in which the individual thoughts were ramped up or synergized by the more powerful collective thinking. Moreover, empowerment at Parker was reciprocal, for
every instructional leader empowered and was empowered by others; reciprocity was inherent in
the sharing and collaboration that characterized their instructional leadership. The reciprocity of
empowerment led to an enhanced instructional power of all. The result of these two dynamics
was an enhanced effect in each of the instructional strategies and in their outcomes.

Lambert (1998) described synergy as the “wave of energy and purpose that engages and
pulls others into the work of leadership” (p. 5). The descriptions provided by the Parker
participants are consistent with that description. Lambert advocated a broader view of
leadership: “‘Leadership’ is broader than the sum total of its ‘leaders,’ for it also involves an
energy flow or synergy generated by those who choose to lead” (p. 5). This concept of
synergized leadership matches the instructional leadership described by participants at Parker.

Fourth, it is suggested that, when instructional leaders interact collaboratively to perform
instructional functions, relationships built on trust and respect are strengthened, partnering
relationships are established, and a positive learning environment is created. This study has
found that trust and respect are essential to the development of relationships and that interactions
build or destroy trust and respect. Because interactions at Parker were positive and productive,
trust and respect among instructional leaders was built, forming the foundation necessary for
relationships among them. Collaborative instructional work resulted in personal and professional
partnering relationships among instructional leaders, and these relationships contributed to the
positive learning community.

Blase and Blase (2001) asserted that “trust is the foundation for shared governance and
teacher empowerment” (p. 20). Findings of this study are consistent with their claim;
relationships at Parker were built on mutual trust and respect. Trust was a prerequisite for
relationships and encouraged interaction that allowed connections between individuals to
develop. Consistent with Lambert’s (1998) argument that “authentic relationships are fostered by personal conversations, frequent dialogue, shared work and shared responsibilities” (p. 79), this study found that trust and respect grew at Parker among instructional leaders as they engaged collaboratively in instructional leadership activities, forming the basis for on-going relationships.

Block (1993) advocated partnership as the means for balancing responsibility in governance. Partnering relationships, which were consistent with Block’s description, were an outcome of engagement in collaborative instructional leadership at Parker. Instructional leaders were fifty-fifty partners, sharing rights and responsibilities equally. In fact, their partnership was found to be characterized by normative rules of “turn about is fair play” and “share and share alike,” which served to keep the fifty-fifty “give and take” between them in balance.

This study contributes to the literature on shared governance and participatory leadership, confirming findings of previous research that when teachers are allowed by the school’s organizational structure, by the principal’s leadership style, and by the school’s culture to have equal voice and to participate equally in instructional decision-making, they feel valued, respected, and validated (Blase & Blase, 2001; Sabatini, 2002). Fullan (1993) noted that shared governance alone does not ensure teacher collaboration and enhanced teaching and learning; he argued that a culture of teacher empowerment in which teachers allow other teachers to be leaders is the impetus for enhanced teaching and learning through collaboration. At Parker, teachers were empowered by the principal, by the organizational structure, and by each other to be collaborators and leaders in instruction at the school level, grade level, and classroom level. The data demonstrate that every instructional leader and every instructional contribution was valued. The difference in job responsibilities of instructional leaders was acknowledged, and the
diversity of talents and strengths among the individual leaders were recognized and tapped to achieve the common purpose and to shore up the weaknesses in others. Trust was found to be critical, for individual weaknesses were admitted and individuals stepped back to let others take the lead and assume control.

Results of this study verify the finding of Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) that teachers assume leadership roles and functions to have increased involvement in decision-making. Furthermore, the data confirm that the positive feelings emanating from teacher participation in decision-making lead to increased involvement in decision-making activities and to increased participation in the instructional work of the school (Barker, 1998; Blase & Blase, 2001; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). According to this study, while more time consuming, participation in collaborative and shared decision-making can lead to better decisions and to greater implementation of decisions; these findings are consistent with and contribute to the findings of other researchers related to shared decision-making (Blase & Blase, 2001; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Hess, 1991; Sarason, 1990).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) argued that the potential for teacher leadership exists in all schools but that the context of schools and relationships among teachers within them determine whether teacher leadership and collaboration will develop and thrive: “If the context in which teacher leadership takes place is important, then the relationships within that context are pivotal” (p. 60). They suggested that, when teacher leadership is allowed and promoted, teachers’ desire to serve the best interests of children and to fulfill their own passion for growth will overcome the norms of privacy and autonomy that tend to be obstacles to the development of teacher leadership and collaboration. The findings of this study are consistent with Katzenmeyer and Moller’s argument. Instructional leaders at Parker kept their priorities to teach
children and to maintain quality instruction straight; as Michelle noted, “The big picture here is the kids.” They maintained that priority and fulfilled their own need to grow by collaborating with each other; as Mollie explained, instructional leaders at Parker recognized the wealth of instructional talent and experience available within their own ranks and knew that “their greatest resources [were] the people in this building.” In fact, at Parker collaboration was such an integral part of the learning community that instructional leaders felt, as expressed by Kelsey, that teaching without it would be impossible and undesirable: “I don’t think I’d want to teach anymore without having that.”

At Parker, as a result of instructional leaders’ engagement and interactions in collaborative instructional leadership strategies, relationships were strengthened, and a positive learning community was built and sustained. This study found that instructional leaders at Parker motivated and empowered each other through their collaborative instructional work; they taught others, and they were taught by others, as they engaged in the pursuit of their shared goal. This finding is consistent with Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (1996) statement that “motivating colleagues toward improved practice relies on the personal influence of a competent teacher who has positive relationships with other adults in the school” (p. 7).

Fifth, it is put forth that, when instructional leadership is shared and collaborative, instructional leaders experience an increased sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes. This study has found that instructional leaders experience an increased sense of ownership and responsibility when they are granted autonomy and are authentically involved in making decisions. At Parker, instructional leaders co-determined the mission and the collaborative instructional leadership strategies necessary to accomplish it; their involvement and participation in that co-determination gave them ownership. Because they had ownership in the
mission, in instructional strategies, and in instructional decisions, instructional leaders felt increased responsibility for them and had an increased interest in their success. Their increased sense of ownership was, in part, responsible for the school’s academic success.

According to Lambert (1998), when shared decision-making is authentically practiced and leadership is expanded beyond the hands of one and into the hands of many, leadership is not dependent on one person. Lambert argued that “it is this type of leadership we are seeking to build—the capacity to collectively learn ourselves toward purposeful action so that a school community can keep moving when current leaders leave—whether the leaders are two teachers, a principal, or a powerful parent” (p. 8). The data show that the principal’s belief system was in theoretical alignment with Lambert’s argument and that the practice of instructional leadership was consistent with the argument; collaborative instructional leadership at Parker was found to be built on the rights and responsibilities of expanded power. Instructional leaders shared the opportunities to learn and to transfer learning into purposeful action, and they shared the responsibility and accountability for doing so.

The findings in this study indicate that action research and self-monitoring of practice played a significant role in instructional leadership at Parker. At the classroom level, participants engaged in supervision of their own practice, or in “autosupervision,” which Blase and Blase (1999) described as “self-analysis, reflectivity, monitoring their own progress toward goals, and implementing changes based on reflection” (p. 370). Through autosupervision, they continually renewed their own classroom practice, and they simultaneously engaged in other action research at the grade and school levels to improve school effectiveness. Having the right to engage in and feeling the responsibility for these practices increased ownership.
The data show that increased ownership and investment were outcomes of the practice of collaborative instructional leadership at Parker. Instructional leaders were empowered to influence instruction and, thereby, to impact the success of the school. This finding is consistent with assertions by Kouzes and Posner (1990) that the more individuals in an organization feel “a sense of power and influence, the greater the ownership and investment they feel in the success of the organization” (p. 164). This study has found other positive impacts of collaborative instructional leadership: (a) Teaching practice improved; (b) leadership capacity increased; (c) ownership increased; and (d) job satisfaction and stability increased. Moreover, student engagement and achievement increased. These outcomes and impacts, which have also been found by other researchers investigating shared governance and empowerment (Blase & Blase, 2001; Hess, 1991; Rosenholtz, 1985a; Sabatini, 2002), were linked to participants’ use of collaborative instructional leadership strategies. Consistent with Blase and Blase’s (1999) findings, these outcomes and impacts then motivated enhanced engagement in the collaborative instructional leadership strategies.

Sixth, it is maintained that, *when instructional leadership is shared and collaborative, classroom instruction is positively impacted*. This study found that classroom instruction was positively impacted at Parker by the four collaborative instructional leadership strategies that were practiced and by their outcomes. Teaching practice and leadership capacity increased because instructional leaders collaborated, sharing what they had and what they knew. Strengths of the individual were tapped for the common instructional purpose and were also used to buoy weaknesses in other individuals. Ownership increased because individuals made instructional decisions; their ownership ensured the implementation and success of those decisions. The data
indicate that participants were satisfied and stable in their jobs because they were allowed to be collaborating partners in instruction and contributors to the success of students and of the school.

The findings in this study confirm the findings of other researchers (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Sabatini, 2002) related to the importance of emergent teacher leadership as a viable avenue to school improvement. For instance, Sabatini (2002) found that “in an environment in which emergent teacher leadership thrives, teachers form relationships and interact with emergent teacher leaders” (p. 196) and that “they are able to interact in meaningful ways . . . focusing on instructional improvement” (p. 198). Consistent with Sabatini’s findings, this study found that instruction was the central matter around which most interactions between instructional leaders at Parker revolved. In fact, this study found that emergent teacher leaders supported the growth and development of emergent teacher leadership in others.

In her study, Sabatini (2002) found that interactions and relationships among teachers and emergent teacher leaders led to outcomes including “instructional improvement, student benefits, collective ownership, increased leadership capacity, stability, and improved morale” (p. 199). The current study adds to Sabatini’s findings, confirming that emergent teacher leaders, through their engagement in collaborative instructional leadership, strengthened their relationships built on trust and respect, developed partnering relationships, created a positive learning environment at Parker, and impacted classroom instruction. Specifically, instructional leaders at Parker reported that their involvement in collaborative instructional leadership had resulted in improved teaching practice, increased leadership capacity, increased ownership, increased job satisfaction and stability, and increased student engagement and achievement. These findings relate to
findings of Blase and Blase (1999) that teacher collaboration resulted in increased self-esteem, motivation, efficacy, and reflection.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that when schools are restructured as “professional communities,” they are more successful in their efforts to promote student achievement. Describing how such schools become professional communities, Newmann and Wehlage said,

They found a way to channel staff and student efforts toward a clear, commonly shared purpose for student learning; they created opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another achieve the purpose; and teachers in these schools took collective—not just individual—responsibility for student learning. (p. 11)

The professional community at Parker was consistent with this description and was successful in its instructional efforts. Similarly, the findings of this study were consistent with those of Leithwood et al. (1996), who found that transformational leadership is positively related to student learning and collective learning, to a positive school culture, and to job commitment and satisfaction. Moreover, consistent with Smylie et al. (1996) findings, instructional improvement and student outcomes at Parker were related to teacher accountability and opportunity for learning.

Summarizing, this study has contributed new findings to the bodies of existing literature on instructional leadership, emergent teacher leadership, and shared governance. Most notably:

- This study was different from previous studies of instructional leadership, in that it viewed instructional leadership from the perspectives of the principal and emergent teacher leaders in a shared governance school; it produced a robust picture of the role of collaboration in instructional leadership in a professional learning community when it is viewed simultaneously through the lens of principal instructional leadership, emergent teacher leadership, and shared governance.
This study provided new insights into the ways emergent teacher leaders interact as leaders with other teachers; it found that they use strategic instructional behaviors, which have been previously identified with principals, to empower other teachers and to influence improved practice.

This study found that, while time-consuming, shared decision-making, collaboration, and collaborative instructional leadership were, paradoxically, also time efficient and time effective; through their collaborative work participants netted time savings and instructional benefits (i.e. instructional work was divided to eliminate duplication; effective instructional resources and ideas were shared; combined thinking produced better solutions more quickly; etc.) that led to positive instructional outcomes.

In conclusion, the data from this study indicate that the collaborative instructional leadership at Parker ensured that no man is an instructional island, isolated and unto himself. Rather, collaboration ensured interactions and relationships, which facilitated the positive learning community. Engagement in the four collaborative instructional leadership strategies led, as the data demonstrate, to positive outcomes and to positive classroom impacts, which provided the means necessary to overcome the challenges identified by the instructional leaders.

Implications

In this section, the implications of the findings of this study are discussed. First, implications for further research are discussed, which are followed by implications for practitioners and implications for colleges and universities.

Implications for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal’s and emergent teacher leaders’ perspectives of instructional leadership in a shared governance elementary school. Instructional
leadership at Parker Elementary School was a collaborative practice, produced positive outcomes, and impacted classroom instruction in positive ways.

In the current era of reform, further in-depth study of collaborative instructional leadership and of the collaborative strategies used in different school settings is warranted for two reasons. First, NCLB makes the effectiveness of instruction a major concern for every school in the nation. This study has established that the dynamics of synergy and reciprocated empowerment associated with collaboration multiplied and elevated the effectiveness of Parker’s instructional leadership, making further study of collaborative instructional leadership a worthy pursuit. Second, this study has demonstrated that collaboration added an additional level of support for teachers and that collaborative instructional leadership was supportive of and empowering to teachers; with a number of work conditions, including teacher stress, leading to nationwide teacher recruitment and retention problems, this finding supports the need for further study of collaborative instructional leadership. Therefore, in-depth studies of collaborative instructional leadership in high schools, middle schools, and other elementary schools would be fruitful, as would comparative studies at each school level and across school levels. The impacts of collaborative instructional leadership on school effectiveness and on teacher job satisfaction and stability, in particular, warrant further study. Additionally, other methodological approaches to collaborative instructional leadership are warranted; specifically, mixed method and quantitative studies of collaborative instructional leadership at these school levels should be conducted.

Emergent teacher leadership was found to thrive at Parker Elementary School and to be integral in the effective practice of instructional leadership there. In fact, the effectiveness of instructional leadership at Parker was traced to its effective involvement of teachers as informal
leaders of instruction and as collaborative partners in instruction. Because of the potential power of emergent teacher leadership and because of the few challenges associated with it, which are demonstrated by the data in this study, emergent teacher leadership continues to be a topic worthy of continuing study. A growing body of research has found that formal teacher leadership faces numerous obstacles in schools (Smylie, 1992; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wasley, 1991); conversely, the limited research on emergent teacher leadership, including the current study, indicates that, while there are obstacles to this form of teacher leadership, they are minimal when compared to findings related to the obstacles to formal teacher leadership and to the potential positive results of emergent teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Sabatini, 2002). Such findings support continuing research on this type of teacher leadership. Of particular research interest and value for further investigation are the positive outcomes and impacts of emergent teacher leader instructional leadership on classroom instruction. Moreover, reciprocated empowerment and reciprocity, which were found to characterize emergent teacher leaders’ interactions and relationships at Parker, deserve further study, as well.

Student democratic learning was being implemented at Parker Elementary School at the time of this study. Future research should be conducted at this site to explore the implementation of student democratic learning in different classrooms and across grade levels and to investigate the impact of student democratic learning on student engagement and student achievement.

**Implications for Practitioners**

Collaboration, according to this study’s findings, was an effective tool for improving instructional practice; it kept instructional leaders’ actions coordinated to and aligned with the shared purpose to which they were committed. Furthermore, it was a reflective and empowering practice that broadened thinking and led to improved teaching practice. Moreover, it produced
enhanced outcomes as a result of the dynamics of synergy and reciprocated empowerment. The collaborative instructional leadership model at Parker, its outcomes, and its impact on classroom instruction should be reviewed by schools that are restructuring and by principals who wish to capitalize on the “expandability” of power.

The powerful effect of collaboration on classroom practice and school improvement was demonstrated in the 80’s by Little (1982) and Rosenholtz (1989), yet the norms of privacy and autonomy (Hart, 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Little, 1988) still stand as obstacles to collaboration in many schools. The effective use of collaboration at Parker and its model of collaborative instructional leadership can guide others interested in moving their schools to more collaborative forms of instructional practice. However, there is a caveat; Parker’s shared decision-making and collaborative instructional leadership model had been in place for more than 10 years at the time of the study, and, in fact, Parker had been structured since the time of its opening as a shared decision-making school. For practitioners considering the transferability of the Parker model, these two distinctive factors would have to be considered. Moreover, regarding applicability of this school’s model to other situations, those who have worked with and studied restructuring schools offer additional warnings related to transferability and implementation of shared governance. Glickman (1990) warned that the more successful a shared governance school is the less likely its model can be adapted to other situations and other locations; and Blase and Blase (2001) have advised that successful restructuring as a shared governance school requires readiness and preparation.

Several major implications for practice emerge from this study. First, to enhance school effectiveness, schools must recognize the central role of communication and must foster two-way collaborative communication among individuals and across grade levels, particularly if
instructional leadership is to become collaborative. This study found that teacher-to-teacher teaching was the most effective way teachers learned and grew and that both formal and informal communication structures and systems at Parker provided avenues for teacher growth through collaboration. Practitioners should explore ways to enhance collaborative communication structures and systems in their schools and to provide time for peer interactions. Peer coaching, book study groups, reflective discussion groups, and action research groups offer specific ways schools can enhance reflective instructional discussion and, simultaneously, work toward school improvement through collaborative growth opportunities.

Second, to be effective and to sustain their effectiveness, schools must expand their view of leadership and must tap the goldmine available to them through emergent teacher leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). This study has shown that, by sharing decision-making and promoting opportunities for emergent teacher leadership, schools can ensure decision implementation, increase teacher involvement and ownership, and increase student achievement. Practitioners, particularly principals, should explore ways to build emergent teacher leadership in schools and to involve emergent teacher leaders in instructional leadership, thereby building a professional community (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Third, collaboration is a reflective activity, and reflection has been found to be effective in improving instructional practice in schools (Blase & Blase, 1998). This study found that collaboration contributed to school effectiveness at Parker because it promoted teacher reflection and broadened teacher thinking. Thus, practitioners, particularly principals, should engage in reflective talk with other instructional leaders and should create opportunities among instructional leaders for informal and formal collaborative talk about and reflection on teaching and learning. Collaborative instructional leadership effectively combined reflection and
instructional leadership at Parker. Further, this study showed that joint planning and classroom clustering by grade level enhanced opportunities for informal and formal instructional interaction. Principals should explore ways to achieve joint planning and grade level classroom clustering in their schools.

Fourth, a communal mindset for continuous school renewal and change must be developed in schools to meet the needs of children and the demands of reform. According to the data in this study, change for the better was an ingrained part of the culture at Parker. For instance, Parker’s proactive approach to meeting NCLB’s requirements and mandates that “no child be left behind” exemplified an effective school’s continual improvement and renewal in action. As a continually renewing school, Parker implemented twice weekly collaborative grade level meetings for the discussion of specific students who were at risk of being left behind and for the general discussion of instructional matters. The collaborative structure of the meetings was designed to enhance the shared ownership of all children by all teachers, to create a “think tank” for the instructional needs of individual students, and to provide brainstorming opportunities related to the two major curriculum areas. The data from this study indicate that Parker’s NCLB implementation design was successfully achieving its goals and, furthermore, that the design had generated additional unanticipated positive impacts on classroom instruction. Practitioners can possibly use Parker’s NCLB model to generate ideas for the design and implementation of their own models. Moreover, its action research model can serve as a general guide to schools looking to implement action research as a means to school renewal.

A final implication of this study’s investigation of collaborative instructional leadership relates to the psychosocial need of teachers and principals for additional support as their jobs become increasingly difficult. The reform era and societal changes have increased the demands
on school personnel; collaboration provides emotional and instructional support, thereby better equipping instructional leaders to deal with the pressures associated with work in schools and leading to increased job satisfaction. This study found that collaboration provided relief to stress and contributed to positive teacher morale and motivation.

Implications for Universities and Colleges

The findings of this study suggest that institutions of higher learning should incorporate courses teaching the skills necessary for effective collaboration into their programs of study at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Communication is essential to relationships. Group development is essential to a sense of community. Both are critical to collaborative work. Thus, courses designed to teach these skills should be made a part of teacher education programs so that teachers can begin their careers, as Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) suggested, as teacher leaders with the essential skills for effective leadership. Furthermore, both graduate and undergraduate programs of study should emphasize and utilize cooperative and collaborative work designs. In other words, students should learn to work with others cooperatively and collaboratively on joint projects. Of particular benefit would be collaborations between undergraduate teacher education programs and graduate educational leadership programs; courses could be designed to allow pre-service teachers and leadership students to work collaboratively on instructional projects.

Second, programs in educational leadership should be restructured to emphasize the benefits of expanded leadership and collaborative work in schools. Textbooks that present an authoritarian approach to leadership, as discussed by Reitzug (1997), should be replaced with books portraying collaborative and empowering supervision. Furthermore, programs should be
revamped to teach both theory and practice; leadership students must be taught how to harness the power of collaboration for school improvement and effectiveness.

Moreover, courses in action research methods should become part of undergraduate and graduate programs. If schools are to be self-renewing, the individuals in them must be educated in organizational change and must have the skills to practice school renewal. Colleges and universities preparing students to accept and embrace change will be preparing their students to meet reform demands head-on. Universities that teach collaboration skills and the skills for initiating and implementing change will be sending prepared graduates into the field with the tools to contribute to school effectiveness.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, courses teaching the skills of reflective thinking and practice and encouraging various methods for reflection should be offered. For instance, students should be exposed to journaling and keeping portfolios. They should also be engaged in such group activities as book studies, problem solving, inquiry, and action research. As previously noted, collaborative work between undergraduate and graduate students in educational leadership could prove to be mutually beneficial in teaching skills and ingraining habits of mind.

For accountability reasons, it seems feasible and advisable, as well, that universities should teach the skills of clinical supervision to undergraduates, as well as to educational leadership students. Such training would better prepare teachers to autosupervise their own practice (Blase & Blase, 1999). Furthermore, peer coaching, as conceived by Showers and Joyce (1996), has been shown to be effective in improving practice; clinical supervision training and practice would guide students into effective peer coaching practice. The program design for student teaching should be restructured to include a peer coaching component that is designed to
be a mutually beneficial reflective and supportive component for pre-service teachers who are paired for collaboration during student teaching.

This chapter has provided a summary of the study and a detailed discussion of the findings as they relate to relevant literature. Implications of the study’s findings for further research, for practitioners, and for universities and colleges were presented and discussed. Perhaps the most effective way to conclude is to use the words of instructional leaders at Parker in a “found” poem that describes their perspectives of their instructional leadership:

Instructional leaders—

That’s an understanding of who we are.

We collaborate. We are collaborators.

It’s how we operate.

We are a team. We are all together in this.

We invent the path together.

Partners, definitely partners,

Doing whatever needs to be done:

Together,

For children.

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REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INFORMATION FLOW CHART—PARKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Figure 1 depicts the organizational structure for communication at Parker Elementary School and delineates the responsibilities of the various teams within that structure.

Responsibilities for the components of the organizational structure are listed below:

- Administration: Responsible for maintaining an emphasis on teaching and learning with a commitment to a democratic decision-making process
- Instructional Council: Responsible for making schoolwide instructional decisions with the obligation of serving as the first learners
- Leadership Team: Responsible for making schoolwide logistical decisions with the obligation of serving as the first learners
• Community Partnerships: Responsible for advising, assisting, and representing the school / community, including School Council, PTA, and business partners

• SAFE Students Quality Team: Responsible for citizenship, discipline plan, Care Team, Student Council, Safety Patrols, lunchroom program, action research, and staff development

• SAFE Teachers Quality Team: Responsible for Rainbow, Clean & Beautiful, Mentoring, United Way, Hospitality, PTA appreciation, Red Cross, Emergency Preparedness Plan, action research, and staff development

• Language Arts / Social Studies Quality Team: Responsible for reading / writing intervention programs, textbook adoption, action research, and staff development

• Math / Science / Health Quality Team: Responsible for math intervention programs, textbook adoption, PE events, Earth Day, action research, and staff development

• Media / Technology Quality Team: Responsible for gifted instruction, networking, computer labs, GSAMS, technology, media, action research, and schoolwide staff development

• Grade / Areas: Responsible for making instructional and logistical decisions for grade / area or for sending issues up to the Leadership Team
APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDY CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in a research study titled “Principal’s and Emergent Teacher Leaders’ Perspectives of Instructional Leadership” conducted by Dana L. Phillips (xxx-xxx-xxxx), a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership. I understand that the study is being undertaken as a requirement for the doctorate and is under the direction of Dr. Joseph Blase, Ph.D., Department of Educational Leadership, University of Georgia, (xxx-xxx-xxxx). I further understand that the study is being conducted for publication purposes.

I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary, that I do not have to participate in the study, and that I can stop taking part at any time without giving reason and without penalty. I also understand that I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of a principal and of emergent teacher leaders on their instructional leadership.

- There may be some benefit to me for agreeing to take part. I will be given an opportunity to reflect orally on my experiences with emergent teacher leadership and with instructional leadership. This reflection may help me better understand my experiences with emergent teacher leadership and instructional leadership and their impact on classroom instruction.

- There may be some benefit to others resulting from my participation, specifically to school administrators and to faculty members involved in educational
leadership training programs. In addition to adding to the knowledge bases in instructional leadership and emergent teacher leadership, the practical value of shared instructional leadership, as well as of facilitation of emergent teacher leadership, may be illuminated by this study.

- If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things: Participate in an initial interview (approximately 1 hour), in a follow-up interview (approximately 30 - 45 minutes each), and possibly in a final interview (15 - 30 minutes) with the researcher. The interviews will be scheduled at a time and place agreeable to both the researcher and me. During the interview, I will be asked to tell about my perspectives of my instructional leadership, of my perspectives regarding the relationship of and interaction between my instructional leadership and others’ instructional leadership, and of my perspectives on the impact of instructional leadership on classroom instruction. The interviews will be tape-recorded. After the interviews, the tapes will be transcribed and identified with a pseudonym. I can receive a copy of the interview transcripts by requesting a copy. When data analysis is complete, the researcher will share her findings and will ask me to verify, challenge, or comment on her understanding and interpretation of data (approximately 15 - 30 minutes). I understand that the study will be part of a published dissertation. (Total participant time: 2 - 3 hours)

- No discomfort or stress is anticipated during the interview.

- No risks are expected.

- Any information obtained about me as a participant in this study, including my identity, will be held confidential and will not be shared with anyone else in the
school. Specifically, the results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. All data, including audiotapes, will be kept in a secure, limited access location in the researcher’s office for research purposes for three years, after which they will be destroyed by shredding (hardcopy), deleting (computer files), and erasing (tapes).

- The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by e-mail at xxxxx@xxx.com.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of
Participant_________________________________________________Date________________

Signature of
Researcher_________________________________________________Date________________

Dana L. Phillips, Researcher

Researcher contact information: Telephone (xxx) xxx-xxxx; E-mail address: xxxxx@xxx.com

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDY DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

(To be completed by Participant)

Pseudonym: ___________________________

Age: __________

How do you describe yourself?

_______ American Indian or Alaska Native

_______ Asian

_______ Black or African American

_______ Hispanic or Latino

_______ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

_______ White, non-Hispanic, non-Latino

_______ Other

Indicate the applicable degree/s you have earned

Bachelor’s degree: ________________________

Master’s degree: ________________________

Ed. S.: ________________________

Doctorate: ________________________

Other (Specify): ________________________

Length of teaching experience: ________________________

Length of teaching experience at this school: ________________________

Length of administrative experience: ________________________
Length of administrative experience at this school: ________________________

Summary of teaching and/or administrative experience (Beside each school level, indicate your years of experience.):

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle School:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Specify):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate your current grade level: ________________________

Number of teachers at your grade level: ________________________
APPENDIX D

PARKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—MISSION, COVENANT, AND CHARTER

Mission Statement

Parker Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, will challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential.

Covenant

1. We, the staff of Parker Elementary School will embrace school norms and provide a safe, nurturing, supportive, clean, and orderly environment for all who work and learn here.

2. All children will be respected, encouraged, and provided the opportunity for continuous improvement as they progress academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, regardless of their individual differences.

3. We, the staff of Parker Elementary School, will present a rigorous and challenging education to students with a wide range of learning opportunities to reach their individual potential and help prepare them to be responsible, productive citizens.

4. We believe students learn to be such citizens when: They are active in their own learning both as individuals and in groups; seek meaning and understanding beyond simple basic facts; connect their learning across content areas, and apply what they know and are able to do in our community.

5. All children will learn to follow school norms and be responsible for taking a proactive approach toward their education. They will learn to take responsibility for
their actions, understanding that there are consequences for their choices which affect themselves, other people, and the environment.

6. We believe that the role of the home is to meet the physical and emotional needs of the child while supporting the educational system in its academic endeavors and professional decisions/judgment by establishing a positive attitude toward learning, inspiring respect for all people and property, and encouraging self-reliance and responsibility.

7. We believe that the parent and community should support the educational process by providing information and volunteering human and financial resources to enable students to reach their potential.

8. We, the staff of Parker Elementary School, will continue to grow professionally through staff development and continuing education, while providing information and resources for parent education.

Charter

Preamble

It is our shared belief that we maintain an emphasis on teaching and learning. Accountability and responsibility are two key words describing our democratic decision-making process. We strive to be open to new ideas and work through consensus or voting to arrive at decisions. Once group decisions are made, we all are expected to support them. Decisions are reevaluated as necessary and will be based on data. It is our continual mission to develop school renewal activities that meet the needs of all our students, not just for the benefit of a particular group.
Guiding Rules of Our Governance

Everyone is encouraged to be involved in decision making. An individual may choose not to be involved in decision making; however, once decisions are made, everyone will support the decision and implementation.