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Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School

Kimberly Miles

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Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School

by

Kimberly Miles

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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University of Portland

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by

Kimberly Miles

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to investigate staff perceptions of a shared leadership framework embedded in a school's turnaround improvement intervention model and the factors of that model perceived to contribute to growth in student achievement. Thirty-one staff members participated in this mixed method study by responding to the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS) survey instrument and open-ended written response questions. Focus group interviews were then conducted with randomly selected participants to triangulate evidence around factors of a shared leadership framework perceived to have affected student achievement. Of the 31 responders, 22 or 71% were teachers, and 9 or 29% were instructional support staff.

Analysis of the data revealed teacher and staff support for the purposeful development of reciprocal professional relationships among staff and administration, and the use of instructional best practices by teachers and teacher leaders contributing to a positive school culture and improved student achievement. Findings from the data revealed developing a school culture that empowers teachers to be a part of a shared decision-making process, in both formal and informal leadership roles, for instructional improvement to support student achievement, was an area of success and an area needing continued improvement at the focus school. The research findings could guide other schools in improvement initiatives when they are navigating the systemic changes needed for equitable student growth and improved achievement in their school systems.

Acknowledgment

My dissertation path would not have been possible without the understanding and patience of my husband. He was always my biggest supporter and his belief in my ability to finish this task never faltered. I will be forever grateful for his sacrifice so I could complete this journey. I also want to thank my two sons for their continuous support and love. I hope they are as proud of me as I am of them. Finally, I want to recognize my mother who taught me drive, strength, and love.

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Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not speak of the colleagues who took these steps with me. Each is a dynamic educator, and their contributions in our coursework were heartfelt and passionate. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been on the receiving end of their wisdom, compassion, and knowledge. I will never forget their encouragement and determination to make a lasting difference in those they willingly serve.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the perceptions of participating staff regarding factors of a shared leadership framework that contribute to growth in student achievement for a school implementing a SIG Turnaround Intervention Model. The pseudonym of Pine Street Elementary School (PSES) located in Mountain Park School District (MPSD) is used for the name of the school and district from this point forward. In the first chapter, I position the proposed study within the school improvement initiative of PSES, provide definitions of key concepts of school improvement, and address my involvement in the effort. In the second chapter, I present a review of the literature specific to the research question and discuss concepts that provide a fuller understanding of the context of the study. The third chapter contains a detailed description of the methodology used to investigate the research question. In chapter four, I present the results of the data collected with the survey instrument tool and participant interviews, the findings from the data analysis, and related those findings to the research question. The fifth chapter contains conclusions drawn from the findings and suggestions for possible future research. My positioning of the study begins with one example of a Turnaround Intervention Model in a school system and the role of the school leader responsible for facilitating a school improvement initiative.

Structuring the Research Question

Serving diverse student populations including language learners who are living in high poverty communities continues to be a challenge in many schools across the county. These schools share many similar characteristics and often have a longstanding history of

underperformance. Similarities include the educational experience of staff with many being relatively new to the profession and high teacher and administrative turnover rates (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). Further, instruction aligned to standards is often fragmented due to lack of academic resources and inadequately trained teaching staff (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). School discipline in the form of suspension interrupts student learning frequently (Johnson, Reinhorn, Charner-Laird, Kraft, Ng, & Papay, 2014) in these schools and parent involvement is minimal (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Students attending these struggling schools often do not have access to instructional experiences that lead to equitable outcomes and they continue to fall behind grade level academic benchmarks.

Although dealing with the challenges associated with a history of underperformance continues to be the reality for many high-poverty schools with diverse student populations across the country, there are examples of schools and communities within this categorization that are producing different and more positive academic outcomes for students. Positive outcomes at these schools are not only shaping students' current educational experiences, they are increasing teacher's capacity to improve the trajectory of their students' futures as they transition from early grades to high school, college or career readiness. The system and structure of schools producing positive outcomes still include principals and teachers, but rather than working in isolation or in segregated roles, staff are working collaboratively to be solution-focused problem solvers (Le Floch, O'Day, Birman, Hurlburt, Nayfack, Halloran, & Goff, 2016).

In support of these schools with the aim of changing the trajectory of student achievement in the lowest performing schools across the country, federally funded school improvement grants (SIGs) are distributed to the lowest achieving schools with a long history of academic underperformance. Schools receiving federal dollars with SIG funds are required to implement prescriptive school improvement intervention models that include proven, comprehensive and effective school management systems that are assertive and directive in leading and teaching best practices for administrators and instructional staff (Hurlburt, Therriault, & Le Floch, 2012). In severe circumstances, in order to receive these funds some schools were mandated to replace the school principal and at least half of the instructional staff using a *turnaround* school improvement model. Establishing effective leadership for reform efforts is an essential component of the transformational process of a school (Johnson et al., 2014).

Providing additional funding to restructure school systems may appear to be an overly simple solution to the complex challenge of providing equitable student achievement for all students. New research continues to indicate that a school principal, responding to both the demands of internal transformational school systems and classroom instructional practices needed for student achievement, has better results when the responsibility with staff members is shared (Day et al., 2016). Collectively, the principal and the teachers focus on creating a school culture where staff relationships are built on trust as they adhere to school improvement accountability requirements (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). The principal and teachers engage in an on-going collaborative dialog about evidence-based teaching and learning strategies and work

together to increase student academic achievement. A positive school culture is nourished and developed as the knowledge of teaching and learning is enhanced and builds teachers' sense of self-efficacy for improving student achievement (Johnson et al., 2014).

Central to transformational turnaround approaches is the expectations that principals share leadership responsibilities with teachers and teacher leaders by developing a shared leadership framework. The framework allows all staff involved in the turnaround process to clearly identify their own leadership roles, the roles of others, and opportunities for collaboration within those roles. Principals, teachers, and teacher leaders in turnaround schools follow school, district, and state guidelines, as directed by district and state policies, to facilitate the improvements needed for all students to reach academic achievement goals. The shared framework allows staff to work more effectively as they continue to demonstrate commitment to student achievement by analyzing the needs of their school, including instructional programs, school leadership, and changes in their school's infrastructure (Day, et al., 2016).

The process of shared leadership is described in the literature in some detail (Le Floch, et al., 2016, Johnson et al., 2014). However, it is not clear how teachers who are involved in a shared leadership framework experience the model or how they perceive its effects on student achievement. Understanding whether those involved in shared leadership perceive their efforts to be effective in improving student achievement is critical to assessing its value as a part of a turnaround model. Therefore, the research question that guided this study was: What are the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that are perceived to impact growth in student

achievement? My positioning of the study is an elementary school implementing a Turnaround Intervention Model as the case in a study of a school system facilitating a school improvement initiative with a shared leadership framework.

A Turnaround Intervention Model in a School System

On March 13, 2014, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) was awarding a total of \$95 million through their SIG program. Up to ten states would have an opportunity to continue their efforts to turn around their persistently lowest-achieving schools. At the time of the announcement, Duncan stated:

Turning around our lowest-performing schools is hard work, but it is our responsibility and represents a tremendous opportunity to improve the life chances of children. We owe it to our children, their families, and the broader community. These SIGs are helping some of the lowest-achieving schools provide a better education for students who need it the most. (ED, 2014)

In 2014, Oregon was the recipient of \$5,530.729 of these SIG funds. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) then created a competitive grant application process for Oregon school districts to apply for access to these federal dollars. District applicants were to validate and outline their strong commitment to enhance their school systems to support an increase in student achievement and summarize the necessary funds needed to change the trajectory of their underperforming school for the identified project. The ODE goal was to award up to \$2 million to Oregon's lowest-performing schools and then allow

the selected schools to use the funds to purchase resources in the form of services, materials, and in-school supports to raise student achievement substantially and build positive momentum for sustainable change (Oregon Department of [ODE], 2014b). The Mountain Park School District (MPSD) formed a planning committee to complete the SIG application requirements for Pine Street Elementary School (PSES). Members of the MPSD grant committee included district administrators, PSES teachers, staff, and parents who demonstrated their commitment to serve in this decision-making process.

In determining the suitable school intervention model, MPSD reviewed past achievement results and previous improvement efforts at PSES. Based on the latest student achievement data under No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002), PSES was identified as a school in improvement since 2006. The priority needs identified by MPSD were a weakness in core instruction and limitations in instructional interventions. Over a seven-year period, the district had previously implemented a core reading program, put into place a Response to Intervention model (Harlacher, Potter, & Weber, 2015) in addressing difficulties in reading, initiated a system for instructional data teams, and provided professional development to staff in Common Core State Standards (CCSS). During this seven-year period, PSES had one year where progress was demonstrated, yet despite the increased financial resources and human capital, the school could not sustain achievement gains adequate for meeting annual yearly progress indicators. Based on the school's unacceptable level of achievement evidenced by data on state and district assessments, prioritized divisional needs, and the unsuccessful track record of past school improvement initiatives

implemented, the committee members selected the Turnaround Intervention Model for PSES to implement as they sought to improve achievement outcomes for all of their students (ODE, 2014b).

At the time of the SIG application process, the overall state rating for PSES in 2013–14 was a Level 1 (ODE, 2014a). Oregon state scores for schools from 2011–12 to 2015–16 consisted of five levels that indicated how schools performed as compared to all other schools statewide. Overall rating levels were based on a combination of achievement, growth, student subgroup growth, graduation rates, and student subgroup graduation rates. A school receiving a Level 1 rating was performing in the bottom 5% of all schools in Oregon (ODE, 2014a). The rating criteria are intended to summarize a school's successes and challenges and to provide clear, meaningful, and relevant information to schools, parents, and the community about the school's performance and growth toward the achievement of state academic standards.

The Mountain Park School District SIG committee initiated the PSES application process in 2014. They analyzed the school's instructional programs, school leadership, and school infrastructure using the 34 Comprehensive Achievement Plan (CAP) indicators with the web-based program tool Indistar (ODE, 2015). Schools and districts use this tool developed by the Center for Innovation and Improvement, to gather data meant to inform, monitor, and report on the effectiveness of school improvement actions (Scott, Krasnoff, & Davis, 2014). School improvement teams use Indistar to enhance and guide their schools' systems in creating improved student achievement plans for better outcomes for all students.

After assessing current school performance with the CAP indicators, the SIG committee determined 11 educational priorities for PSES. Using these priorities, the MPSD grant committee, district, and school assessors were able to understand more fully where PSES was and where improvement was needed. Analysis of the CAP indicator data revealed a lack of clear and consistent leadership at PSES over the previous 11 years. Additionally, teacher fidelity to the district-adopted core curriculum and adherence to the district instructional model were viewed to be insufficient, and time and resources dedicated to on-site professional development for staff was deemed inadequate. The CAP indicator data further indicated that consistent classroom high-yield instructional strategies needed improvement among administrators, teachers, and instructional support staff.

The CAP indicator data also revealed that the knowledge of all teaching and support staff on how to support English Language Learners using sheltered instruction was inadequate to meet student needs. There were strong indications of insufficient student engagement and student ownership for their learning coupled with few differentiated instructional techniques and assessments being provided by teachers to create opportunities for that engagement to develop. There was evidence that staff did not believe all students can achieve grade-level standards and their practice reflected these beliefs. Parents were involved very little in school activities, and self-reported parent requests for an understanding of how to assist their children's learning at home was minimal. The MPSD SIG committee also noted that the school culture of

underperformance was longstanding, and the adult instructional practices were not meeting the needs of the students (US DE, 2013).

Personnel changes. Many staff members were veteran teachers at PSES and had worked unsuccessfully through previous school improvement initiatives. The current principal had not received a transformative mandate from the district nor initiated one (US DE, 2013). Given all of the evidence and discussion, the MPSD was determined to commit their time and support toward facilitating an ODE Turnaround Intervention Model for PSES. The Turnaround Intervention Model follows a prescribed model for improving low performing schools and is described in detail in Chapter 2.

The MPSD SIG committee started and completed the selection process for hiring a new principal in April of 2014. The new principal (the researcher) would report directly to the MPSD Superintendent of Teaching and Learning and would receive support as needed from the Director of Elementary Education. The MPSD granted the PSES principal operational flexibility to address the requirements of the ODE Turnaround Intervention Model. This flexibility centered on staffing, instruction, and school systems. The MPSD strategically committed the time and resources of district staff needed to make the turnaround successful. They aligned and leveraged resources including general fund dollars, Title I-A funding, Title II-A district and building funds, and 21st Century Learning grant (ODE, 2014b).

At least half of the existing teaching and support staff at PSES was required to be replaced. Any current PSES staffs choosing to stay for the following academic school year were mandated to go through a screening process with the new turnaround principal

and an appointed district director in May of 2014. The decision to keep existing staff and hire new staff was based on willingness to support the principal's commitment to using evidence-based instructional strategies to improve student learning, and willingness to work in partnership with school improvement national consultants from the Leadership and Learning Center (LLC). The mission of the LLC is to support school improvement work by bridging the critical gap between what the research says, and actions schools can take to meet established goals. The LLC's goal is to ensure system-wide implementation of the changes required of schools and leaders for system sustainability and student achievement in relation to The LLC's Foundational Practices for School Improvement. The process is data-driven and objectively identifies a school's strengths as well as opportunities for improvement (LLC, 2014).

In May of 2014, ODE's SIG Cohort 3 Awards included the MPSD in the amount of \$1,849,038 to serve PSES (ODE, 2014c). The selection of a Turnaround Intervention Model was approved, and the allocated SIG funding was distributed over a three-year period. The district was committed to using these allocated school improvement funds for resources aligned with the interventions outlined in their completed SIG application including the support plan prepared in consultation with the LLC.

The LLC provided PSES with two coaches, each with a distinct purpose. The LLC leadership coach will offer consistent, job-embedded leadership coaching on the data team process developed by LLC to support the principal and the school leadership team. The LLC instructional coach will assist the PSES instructional coach and classroom teachers in incorporating high-impact instructional strategies as identified by

Hattie (2008). The primary goal of the partnership between the school and the LLC is to create systems of improvement where adult actions in the school that contribute in any way to student learning, positively impact students' social and emotional development, and result in measurable and significant gains in students' academic achievement.

Measuring & Monitoring School Improvement Process

LLC offered PSES a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) report, a critical assessment and progress-monitoring tool aligned to the work ahead for PSES. The purpose of the CNA report was to determine the school's level of professional practice in relation to the LLC Nine Foundational Practices for Schools in Improvement. Divided into three broad areas, the nine practices reflect Accountability Practices, Classroom Practices, and School Practices (LLC, 2014). The initial data collected from the LLC, while not part of the data collected during the study, it is data that informed the selection of the survey instrument and provided baseline reference information for the analysis of the study data provided in chapter 5.

To put the Turnaround Intervention Model into context and to understand the nature of the teams guiding the implementation of the process, it is essential to understand how the data was collected. The LLC CNA process, completed prior to the case study is data-driven and objectively identifies a school's strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. The task of the LLC CNA evaluators was to collect evidence from multiple sources to determine performance on the Foundational Practices (LLC, 2014). The LLC evaluators gathered evidence using PSES student, staff, and parent surveys and interviews for confirmation. All classroom and student support

instructional settings observations occurred schoolwide. Datasets provided by the school were added to orientate the evaluators to current practices, procedures, and past and present student performance data. The LLC administered the CNA at the beginning of the contract period, conducted a mid-grant monitoring visit, and provided a culminating administration of the CNA at the end of the three-year partnership contract. The LLC used data collected during the monitoring visits to continue to guide the work within the Turnaround Intervention Model and the improvement practices for PSES.

By utilizing the data collected and applying it to their Foundational Practices for Schools in Improvement rubric outlined in the CNA, LLC was able to assess current PSES performance in the three broad areas of Accountability Practices, Classroom Practices, and School Practices using benchmark criteria of exemplary, proficient, progressing, and not yet. The results and recommendations listed in the report outlined essential directions for PSES, including school and classroom practices that prioritized the initial steps in the school improvement process. The LLC recommendations were intended to be critical components of the PSES school improvement process including planning for classroom practices, implementing school practices, and monitoring for accountability to make the dramatic change required for equitable student achievement. Further, the LLC team articulated a caution of doing too much too quickly and recommended that PSES prioritize only a few initiatives to build sustainability and capacity for change.

Defining the Recommendations and Identifying the Theme

The LLC major findings from the CNA revolved around the capacity for leadership at PSES. In their view, successful schools utilize a leadership team not only to identify the overall school goals but also to assign actions to meet those goals. These steps include defining the role of the leadership team at PSES and the expectations for team members practicing leadership and collaboration in their grade level or content teams (LLC, 2014). The LLC recommendations went on to suggest that to build shared ownership and capacity for sustainability, a member of each grade level or content team must be a member of the leadership team. As a principal, I understand this to mean the leadership team members must demonstrate a commitment to the school improvement process and consistently communicate the schoolwide goals with staff, parents, and students. They must meet regularly to analyze school achievement data, to celebrate success, monitor implementation, and determine next instructional steps for all students to show adequate growth towards their grade-level goals. Similar to the criteria used to retain staff members at PSES, it is essential the leadership team members model their commitment to the school improvement process (LLC, 2014).

The LLC consultants outlined what they believed should be the primary responsibilities of members of the leadership team. First among these duties and under the guidance of the principal, leadership team members were to implement and facilitate the data team process with each of their grade level or content teams. The data team process is a consistent protocol used to assist teachers and leaders in collecting and interpreting evidence-based elements of both the teaching and student learning process.

According to the LLC process members of the new leadership team, when working in their collaborative grade-level teams and focused on school improvement goals, develop and apply an interactive teaching and learning framework. This framework would be followed with fidelity by teacher teams to implement a standards-based curriculum, assess students with a common formative assessment method, and carefully examine student performance data to determine the team's next instructional steps (LLC, 2014, p. 3-4).

In addition to the responsibilities for the leadership team, LLC recommendations about the principal's responsibilities must include the capacity to build shared ownership of these new schoolwide goals and practices. As the lead facilitator of the Turnaround Intervention Model at PSES, it is critical that the principal support teachers and staff emotionally and pedagogically throughout the process. The turnaround principal selected must consistently communicate expectations, procedures, and protocols required for school improvement, as a common language is necessary to build mutual understanding and consensus (ODE, 2014). A clear vision, with transparency around school goals, must be developed decisively and collaboratively with all invested members of the school community (LLC, 2014, p. 3-4). This openness has the potential to establish a culture of trust (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), which takes time and requires the purposeful intentions and actions of the leader. Modeling a sense of urgency with consistent calmness in both actions and words can provide a clear pathway to the right work in a collaborative working environment (Johnson et al., 2014).

Significance of the Study

Shared leadership in schools and how it affects the practice of teachers and the learning of students is of paramount importance to this study because of the positive effect it can have on teacher's instructional practices which can influence student achievement. Shared leadership is often used interchangeably with distributed leadership in the professional conversations within schools, it is important to note the differences between these two terms in relation to this work. Spillane states, "A distributed perspective frames leadership practices in a particular way; leadership practice is viewed as a product of interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" (Spillane, 2005, p. 144). What becomes critical for school improvement and student achievement is not that leadership is being distributed, but how a school leader allows or provides opportunities for shared leadership of responsibilities through interactions of others involved in the process (Spillane, 2005). For this study, I refer to shared leadership as that opportunity for collaboration and professional learning where leadership both exists and emerges. Evidence of schools developing distributed or shared leadership for student improvement occurs when student learning is maximized through capitalizing on teacher and leader's different level of expertise (Elmore, 2000).

The decisions and strategies schools undertake to noticeably improve academic outcomes for all students have received considerable attention in the literature (Elmore, 2000; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012). One such strategy, the development of a shared framework for leadership in support of pedagogical change for increased student achievement, has been found to be a critical component of school improvement and

reform initiatives (Klute, Cherasaro, & Apthorp, 2016). Without shared schoolwide leadership based on trusting relationships and belief in equitable student achievement, a school's culture may impede the momentum for educational reform (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010). A trusting school culture enables the purposeful construction of a strong foundation for collaboration between teachers and school leaders around evidence-based teaching and learning practice that in turn creates school and system reform (O'Donnell & White, 2005). The term school leaders for the balance of this work refers to school principals or school administrators. Sharing the responsibility for leadership is recognized as a sustainable approach for improving student achievement (Hattie, 2008), a catalyst for change (Darling-Hammond, 2004), and a strategy for enhancing the perceived self-efficacy of teachers and principals (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2007).

In 2014 the U.S. DE released *Case Studies of Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants, Findings after the First Year of Implementation* (Le Floch et al, 2014). The Study of School Turnaround (SST) SIG case study from this larger work showed the findings of 25 core sample schools located in diverse state and local contexts that were the recipients of federally funded school improvement grants between 2010 and 2013. These core sample schools had been low performing for a considerable amount of time and were in the bottom 5% of their state's overall performance. They were required to implement one of four prescriptive comprehensive school improvement intervention models that were considered more aggressive than those adopted under prior strategies

(Hurlburt et al., 2012). These intervention models included the Turnaround Model, Restart Model, School Closure, and Transformational Model.

The two essential purposes of the SST study were to investigate the improvement activity of persistently low-performing SIG schools and to identify the leading indicators of school improvement initiatives over time (Le Floch et al., 2014). One key SST finding that surfaced from the year one school improvement report (Le Floch, 2014) was the principal's varied approach to leadership in these schools. SIG schools that produced the most improvements in student achievement were described as having leaders with transformational skills. Principals in these schools created a school culture by engaging and motivating staff around a collaborative school vision and were able to develop teacher leaders to share the responsibility with the specific actions and concrete priorities needed to facilitate change in practice (Le Floch et al., 2014).

In 2016, the U. S. Department of Education released a final SST evaluation report of these 25 core sample schools that received SIG funding (Le Floch et al., 2016). The overview of the SST findings stated that 21 out of 25 core sample SIG schools replaced their principal within the first two years and replaced 50% of the staff within the first three years. Replacement of the principal was a requirement of both the turnaround and transformation school improvement models. Twelve schools, including 9 turnarounds, 2 restarts, and 1 transformation, replaced at least 50% of teaching staff during the first three years. A continuing challenge was the retention of new and existing staff at these schools once selected for the turnaround intervention, which limited the school's ability to build a motivated and skilled staff. The staff who remained, however, characterized this

replacement of existing teachers as a positive indicator of school change because of the energy and enthusiasm new teachers brought to their school community. Most of these SIG schools reported receiving external support from their districts, but also stated shortcomings related to those supports. For example, technology tools provided to teachers were not utilized correctly in the classrooms due to the lack of professional development on how to implement the technology during instruction (Le Floch et al., 2016).

One of the final SST findings explored leadership strategies that could potentially influence efforts to increase the human capital in these lower-performing schools. The majority of teachers surveyed in the SIG schools reported spending a significant portion of their time participating in professional development in reading, math, and learning how to use data for instructional decisions. Principals at most of these core schools felt they could then strategically engage staff in leading further professional development to build the human capital capacity necessary to support the school improvement reform process in their schools. These core SST schools, like the school which is the focus of this work, had many similar processes and indicators from the initial staffing decisions to the creation of positive school culture and focused leadership in support of the turnaround vision (Le Floch et al., 2016).

Conclusion and Link to the Research

As seen in Le Floch's initial 2014 school improvement case study findings, unstable leadership was considered a key feature of schools where the majority of students were underperforming (Le Floch et al., 2014). Even though principals could

recruit and hire the best teachers available to get students access to highly qualified staff, if the teachers are unwilling to examine their practice critically or are not given opportunities to collaborate and build trust, the overall school culture does not improve and thrive (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). In the 2016 school improvement case study final report findings, it was suggested that a principal's purposeful actions could be a catalyst for the change needed to improve the academic outcomes of students. These responses confirmed the work of Darling-Hammond, who found positive effects on student academic outcomes, occurred when a principal purposefully provided teachers meaningful professional development to increase their knowledge and skills in support of the systematic reforms needed to enhance student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

The perspective of this researcher considers the change process needed to improve the achievement of our lowest performing schools continues to be complicated and developing effective policy to enable this process is challenging for policymakers. New policies are often inserted into an already multifaceted teaching and learning system with the assumption that imposed strategies will produce different outcomes for students. When integrating new strategies it is essential to consider the intricacy of the existing educational system and address the multitude of challenges associated with any change process. No single method can be applied with the anticipation that substantial improvement in all areas of teacher practice and student achievement will occur; however, changes in one or more areas within a school system has the potential to influence variations in other functions of the organization (Axelrod & Cohen, 1999). The change process is complex and does not occur with a single change in policy, but in

continued collaboration with those inside and outside of the school community as schools move away from past practices toward sharing the responsibility of new methods (Speck, 1996).

School improvement researchers believe that schools can change with the support of leaders who build human capital by sharing responsibilities with teachers and teacher leaders (Le Floch et al., 2016). This belief, however, is not without caution. School staff must show signs of readiness to change. Growing a school's capacity for leadership responsibilities is multifaceted and particularly problematic in low-performing schools, primarily due to the often-limited expertise and experiences of teachers and principals found in these schools (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2012). Sharing the responsibility for improving academic outcomes for students, alone, does not necessarily correlate with improved student achievement. Teachers and leaders working together to create new organizational structures and systems to transform the school culture over time can contribute to greater satisfaction and higher expectations for students (Spillane, 2008).

Rationale for the study. While reform efforts can vary across schools and districts, in part based on the needs of students and the human and social capital of the instructional staff, the commonality often found in successful school improvement reform is internal school leadership that positively moves student achievement and accountability for improvement forward (ODE, 2015). Although the SST evaluation of data from 25 core sample schools steered school improvement data collection and analyses toward the role that school leaders play in school turnaround reform, the findings are considered to still be at the initial stages and viewed as an exploratory

assumption. At the conclusion of the SST, researchers stated some caution for future studies. The SIG research findings did not provide definite answers but did generate a hypothesis to be explored in further research (Le Floch et al., 2016). It appeared to researchers that the information regarding the efficacy of shared leadership varied in SIG schools, and more information is necessary to understand why. The 2016 SIG final report findings did state that the appearance of building human capital in these schools was more likely to improve the school's capacity for improvement. The SST final report did not investigate whether building capacity for shared leadership could be impactful for growth in student achievement or positively impact school culture. This case study will hopefully shed new light by investigating those aspects.

Definition of Terms

Several terms relevant to the research question are used frequently throughout the literature but may be interpreted in multiple ways. For purpose of this study, I have defined my understanding of their meanings below.

Achievement gap. The achievement gap as defined by the U.S. DE is the difference in achievement between a targeted subgroup within a participating local educational agency or school and the statewide average performance of a comparison group. Historically, the lower-scoring demographic group and the higher-scoring comparison group assessment levels in reading/language arts and mathematics are measured and compared as required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This federal law, passed in 1965, was a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty." Its purpose was to address the national challenge between academic

achievements within subgroups and to demonstrate for every student a commitment to equal opportunity (U.S. DE, 2009).

Collaborative decision-making. In business, important decisions need to be made with careful consideration to achieve positive results. The same protocol can be utilized in schools for collaborative decision-making to positively change the learning trajectory for students (Hoy & Tarter, 2010). To improve the decision-making process, organizations can improve their outcomes by incorporating the following five steps. First, collectively identify critical decisions and rank them in order of priority to accomplish the organization's goal. Then analyze each conclusion to determine who plays a role in making the decision and what information is needed to reach the desired outcome. Next, inclusively design the functions, process, systems, and behaviors required to establish and execute the decision to achieve the goal. Determine which decisions the manager, group, or individual will make and be accountable for, and inform stakeholders about using identified procedures. Finally, analyze the results to determine success and improvements in the decision-making process (Davenport, 2009).

Shared Leadership. School leaders create shared leadership utilizing the same protocol for decision-making (Davenport, 2009), taking into consideration the human and social capital in their schools. Teachers' credentials, experience, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills define their human capital. Teachers' social capital is determined by how frequently they enhance their knowledge and skills, consult with other teachers and leaders within their instructional setting, and share the responsibility for school reform. Social capital can have a multiplier effect on human capital when teachers have frequent

opportunities to make a shared decision on student performance goals to produce stronger student achievement gains (Leana, 2011). Principals who take these characteristics into account can create shared opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional learning around pedagogy and evidence of student learning by maximizing each teacher's capital and creating leadership for student improvement.

Low-performing schools. Schools in the State of Oregon where students' academic performance in reading/language arts and mathematics score in the bottom 10% of the state's performance on required assessments are considered low-performing schools. Schools identified by the state as persistently low-achieving schools that are not demonstrating progress in reading/language arts and mathematics are directed by the state to take the corrective action (DE, 2013).

Turnaround Initiative. In the state of Oregon, a Turnaround Intervention Model follows a prescribed model for improving low-performing schools. The model for school reform replaces the current principal, screens all existing school staff, and retains no more than half of the school staff including both teachers and support personnel. A plan is then developed that focuses on improving school systems, teachers, and leaders' effectiveness, and creating instructional strategies to support student growth and achievement toward grade level standards (ODE, 2014b).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This review examines the literature around school culture, teacher leader, and shared leadership as well as the national and state policy that serves as the guiding literature for school improvement in Oregon schools. This review is intended to inform the major focus of this work around shared leadership as a framework for school improvement rather than be an exhaustive account of the substantial work in these areas.

Literature Search Strategy

School improvement research literature looks at the concept of the school culture to understand the change needed to impact student achievement positively. This research includes the development of teacher leaders to build capacity for schoolwide change and to enhance the use of effective instructional practices. In the context of school improvement, teacher leaders participate in a collaborative decision-making process designed to enable all students to meet grade-level standards. Each of these broad concepts, developing a positive school culture, building capacity of teacher leaders, and collaborative decision-making, is composed of significant procedures and understandings that inform a more in-depth contextual interpretation of a shared leadership framework as proposed for the investigation for in this work.

The purpose of this study was to examine the development of a shared leadership framework specifically in the context of school improvement reform efforts required by schools and districts in Oregon. Many school leaders are beginning this process by developing trust with staff to create a collaborative school culture as the foundation for their school improvement work (Klute et al., 2016). Characteristics of school leaders

building a culture of trust start by looking beyond their leadership capacity to incorporate the expertise of teacher leaders to build instructional sustainability and adaptability as the needs of their students grow (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). A building principal can develop teacher leaders and the school's capacity for improvement by creating a shared leadership framework that supports collaborative decision-making during the change process (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

There is a large body of literature on leadership. For this study, a review of literature relevant to school leadership situated in mandated school improvement reform initiatives was investigated including research about school culture, perceived self-efficacy of teacher leaders, and leadership capacity for sustainable student growth and achievement. This review does not offer a complete account of the plethora of literature in these areas but one that provides additional understanding of these components as they pertain to the topic of a shared leadership framework when in schools to facilitate the change needed for all students to achieve academic standards.

School Culture

Presented in this section are factors that influence a collaborative school culture including system change, mindset, and both personal and organization efficacy. A school undergoing mandated improvement initiatives to create meaningful, sustainable system change requires all participants to possess a shared framework (Saphier, King, & D'Auria, 2006) to promote teachers' self-efficacy and the school's organizational efficacy in making the change. A school's culture becomes a strong predictor of how

ownership and capacity are managed to build sustainability for enhanced student achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

System change. Starting in the late 1970s, educational researchers began examining the systems and components of schools that consistently demonstrated effectiveness as measured by school assessment data (Johnson et al., 2014). These researchers wanted to determine and identify whether there were characteristics in the educational school setting that could explain the organizational structures of schools that were consistently outperforming other schools, rather than solely relying on student achievement data as an indicator of success. What Johnson et al. discovered was that the terms *climate* and *culture* were used in the same context to describe the characteristics of schools, but the concepts yielded major differences (Johnson et al., 2014).

Climate is viewed typically as regarding mutual perceptions; culture is considered to be mutual assumptions, meanings, and beliefs (Field & Abelson, 1982). “Climate researchers measure how organization members perceive the organizational environment, while culture researchers look for what members think and believe about themselves” (Van Houtte, 2005, p. 73). Climate gives us a broader picture of the whole school and includes the relationship between groups and individuals, the physical surroundings, and how groups participate together. The climate of the school community is demonstrated by all individual actions taken collectively. This collective climate (morale), in schools needing improvement, has become a frequent topic of concern due to the high stakes accountability for achievement of their students. Activities designed to improve morale or to create a positive school climate can have a more significant impact if they start with an

initial evaluation of that climate. Rewards for participation are often extrinsic and designed to impact an individual or a group. It is easier to change a school's attitude or climate (what they do) than it is to change a school's culture (why they do what they do) (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Organizational researchers Reichers and Schneider defined organizational culture as "a common set of shared meaning or understandings about the group organization, and its problems, goals and practices" (Reichers & Schneider, 1990, p. 23). Culture is the set of understandings shared by an organization. The school culture is revealed by the individual staff's ownership of their belief in the social system they create for accessible achievement for each of their students (Van Houtte, 2005). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) state that if administrators of a school are looking to change their school culture, they must not only examine their school climate, but also develop an understanding of everything around the school setting that is an artifact of the school culture. Influenced by the reaction to each of these artifacts is the collective belief system and how one responds to these situations. Changing how we teach our students to generate an increase in their achievement requires more than a simple strategy to change our attitude (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). If schools seek clarity on why a new teaching strategy may improve student achievement, school culture could be one indicator of the strategy's likelihood of being effective (Reichers & Schneider, 1990).

Rutter (1979) concludes that the primary differences in student achievement could be explained by examining the school's ethos and his conclusion was later re-examined in 2005 by Van Houtte. Van Houtte's secondary review of the original data was to

identify the specific differences in activities of students, staff, parents, and the community for both the high performing and low performing schools, and to determine whether the normative environmental climate of the school was a factor in student academic outcomes. The perceived normative school and classroom level environmental elements within educational settings include adequate space and curricular activities for learning, students and staff regularly experiencing physical and emotional safety, and positive relationships existing between students and teachers to support quality instruction and student achievement (Hoy, 1990). Van Houtte's findings showed that the schools with a climate rating indicating a constructive, proactive attitude about teaching and learning outperformed lower performing schools with a less progressive mindset in their school structures (Van Houtte, 2005). What students, staff, parents, and families consistently experience within a variety of school settings affects group behaviors. These common perceptions of behavior then become the school climate that influences the culture of the school (Hoy, 1990). Culture is essentially the social training of unrecorded rules or understandings shared by people in a social unit (Rousseau, 1990).

There are significant intrinsic differences between organizational climate and culture (Hoy, 1990). Organizational climate describes *what* members of the school community do, and culture describes *why* schools do what they do. Student and staff expressed perceptions regarding the amount of space, curricular offerings, feelings of safety, and level of achievement in their school community are collectively elements of the school climate. The perceptions and behavior of individuals within a group setting define the school climate but remain the property of individuals (Glisson & James, 2002).

Those observing a school's climate can determine how school staff members perceive their colleagues' beliefs or assumptions by their words and actions (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Research suggests it is more difficult to understand the reasons why staff collectively takes action to change teaching practices to enhance their learning environment and increase student achievement. Relational trust among individuals can alter quickly based on one person's judgment of circumstances, situations, or another person's behavior. Changes in levels of trust impact the organization as organizational culture is constructed when shared expectations with standard circumstances are established on how the work is completed (Glisson & James, 2002). Internalizing shared expectations and valuing the work with deep understanding can guide social action. These socially constructed conditions describe the school culture and the development of collective trust rooted in shared staff beliefs (Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). When measuring a school's culture, staff members need to look inward and reflect on their values and beliefs and record their views and mindsets as evidence (Van Houtte, 2005).

School achievement research has recognized conditions like collective trust among staff as critical resources for increasing student performance toward outcome goals. In 2000, Tschannen-Moran found that collective faculty trust supports the frequent exchange of information that enhances content knowledge, instructional delivery, and student performance. More than a decade later, researchers Adams and Forsyth revisited the effects of a shared faculty trust environment and its impact on student achievement in urban elementary schools. They collected data from 1,039 teachers and 1,648 students in

56 urban elementary schools. Achievement in math and reading was higher in urban schools where principals had purposefully created a shared vision of action for student achievement by cultivating a strong culture of faculty trust to support a student-learning environment (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). School principals who consistently create an instructional setting where goals are clear, collaboratively developed, and are continually shared among all staff for purposes of unity, shared values, and explicit expectations for student learning, have been shown to impact their school culture positively for change (Le Floch et al., 2016).

Positive mindset. Dweck & Yeager (2012) defined mindset as a pathway to success for those who focus on a process with a continued effort that would lead to meaningful learning and increase their abilities. In her research on achievement and success, Dweck determined that making informed decisions in a highly regulated environment could pose a significant dilemma for an individual motivation. Generating the mindset needed to make focused decisions in a school improvement setting requires persistent effort and action of leaders to resolve conflicting perspectives (Dweck, & Yeager 2012). How a school principal approaches these differences of opinion to generate collective knowledge to shape the values and beliefs of the school community becomes critical (Spillane, 2008).

Maintaining a strong academic focus from all teachers' starts with embedding shared beliefs in their students' abilities in an ongoing dialog. Rather than focusing on what students cannot do, conversations evolve about what persistent adult actions are needed for students who are behind grade level. To develop reciprocal and professional

relationships among teachers, a principal must set aside the time needed for a courageous conversation to maximize student learning and to improve the expertise of teachers. Developing and promoting a purposeful organizational culture can support teachers' shared mindset about their students' abilities to learn (Saphier, King, & D'Auria, 2006). Determining how to meet the needs of each of their students with productive professional relationships can become a standard of practice for both principals and teachers and represent how these schools conduct business. Underperforming school ratings become an opportunity for principals and teachers to learn from failure and create a positive mindset on their student's ability to learn (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016) and determine what instructional steps they need to focus on for equitable student achievement (Hattie, 2008).

For a school in improvement that is required to measure and monitor teaching effectiveness through student achievement examining individual staff behaviors can provide insights into the beliefs, assumptions and mindset that staff bring to their work (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Educators can teach the district-adopted curriculum and instructional materials, conduct common assessments, and have schedules and routines in place. However, without the underlying belief of equitable student growth and achievement toward school, district, and state benchmark criteria, attainment of school improvement goals can become problematic (O'Donnell & White, 2005). School improvement activities include both tasks and achievement criteria. Engaging in required instructional routines and strategies is not enough. Achieving success in changing one's teaching practices often depends on the quality of

implementation and is influenced by the mindset beliefs and assumptions of teachers and leaders (Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Klute, Cherasaro, and Apthorp (2016) examined 25 identified studies of schools in improvement, sanctions, or interventions in Colorado, Missouri, and Nebraska. Their research examined the association between state intervention in low-performing schools and student achievement. One of their key findings indicated that a progressive trajectory of change in student achievement was more likely to occur in classrooms and schools with a positive school culture. The learning environment in successful schools from Klute et al.'s examination was defined as a culture where both principals and teachers established clear expectations for their students and held a steady mindset or belief in their students' abilities to meet and or exceed grade-level standards (Klute et al., 2016). Student achievement consistently improved when there was evidence of a clear academic focus, professional relationships were cultivated between principals and teachers, and all staff demonstrated and upheld a conviction of each student's ability to succeed.

Perceived self-efficacy. Bandura (1993) defined perceived self-efficacy as a person's belief in their abilities to produce a selected level of outcome. The result or end performance could then influence upcoming events that affect their lives. An individual with a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy (PSE) approaches a complicated task as a challenge to be mastered rather than a potential risk. They set high goals and remain committed to continued efforts, and when they do experience failure, they attribute it to a lack of knowledge or skills not yet acquired. They move forward quickly with assurance and sustained renewal that they have the control and ability to produce the desired

accomplishments. Those with perceived self-efficacy exercise their agency through choice (Bandura, 1993). Similar to the previously stated understanding of positive mindset effects on student learning (Dweck, 2008; Yeager & Dweck, 2012), this understanding of PSE relates directly to teacher mindset and the positive effects that mindset has on quality of instruction

Kurt's 2016 study of 360 elementary teachers within seven districts aimed to understand teacher leadership and one of the variables studied was a teacher's sense of self-efficacy in relation to teacher leadership. When teachers are given an action to complete, their perceived self-efficacy comes to the forefront and will eventually affect their performance positively or negatively (Kurt, 2016). High levels of perceived self-efficacy for a teacher provide the energy and resiliency needed for the emergence of a higher performance level through ongoing effort and perseverance (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers' beliefs can become pivotal when they resolve to overcome difficulty and challenges and make better student-centered decisions around teaching practices and routines. Teachers' drive to make a difference and obtain more success for their students enhances their perceived self-efficacy as teachers. This drive often motivates teachers to increase their teacher leadership capacity and assume new roles within and outside of the classroom (Kurt, 2016) where they perceive their leadership will make a difference. Principals can support a teacher's self-efficacy by providing specific feedback on the changes in practices teachers are implementing during the school improvement process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

A teacher's association with self-efficacy can significantly influence the school culture and encourage teacher behavior that improves student learning (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Goddard, & Hoy, 2004). For example, the higher a teacher's self-efficacy is, the more humanistic their approach is to student behavior management. If a teacher frequently states their beliefs about students' ability to succeed through hard work and effort, the normative classroom environment will encourage more students to persist and to achieve at higher levels (Claro et al., 2016). This normative classroom environment has the potential to reduce teachers' adverse reactions and alter and enhance their self-belief or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). On the other hand, a barrier to positive classroom and school culture, and to all students learning at high levels, is when teachers believe their actions will have little or no effect on student willingness or motivation to change (Kurt, 2016). This low perceived self-efficacy towards impacting student behavior leads to teachers lowering behavioral and academic standards (Bandura, 1993).

When creating a strong and positive culture in schools, a teacher's perceived self-efficacy to support the school improvement process can be challenged by factors outside of the teacher's control (Bandura, 1993). Schools that are implementing the requirements of a school improvement grant are often located in low-income neighborhoods. In addition to issues of poverty, these schools have students whose families are often highly mobile and a single parent runs the household. Student in these families do not attend school regularly, and they experience a high crime rate in their neighborhood (Le Floch et al., 2014). Changing the narrative requires principals and teachers in these schools to focus their perceived self-efficacy on what they can do to support learning within the

instructional day versus what happens after the student leaves school for the day. They build a caring community for their learners and focus their efforts on what they can control in their classroom and not the challenges students experience away from school that educators have no control over (Claro et al., 2016).

Dinham et al.'s 2008 research on shared leadership and teacher actions showed that a school culture can change when teachers begin to recognize in more detail what they have control over while students are in the classroom or participating in school activities (Dinham et al., 2008). Focusing on what students can do, rather than what they cannot do yet, develops the mindset needed for students to develop their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Claro et al., 2016). This optimistic outlook on student's academic growth toward outcome goals becomes essential to support the change needed in creating and sustaining positive school culture (Dinham et al., 2008). Teachers and principals who perceive their actions led to improvement in student outcomes increase their own perceptions of self-efficacy to impact the process of school improvement and become committed to their school improvement reform efforts. These motivational patterns are consistent with successful organizational change (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012).

Organizational efficacy. As previously stated, a major element of the social cognitive theory is the notion of a person's choice to shape their experiences. At a school level where groups of teachers are collectively working to improve student achievement, the related concept is organizational efficacy (Bandura, 1993). This collective organizational efficacy begins in schools when teachers and principals consider the combination of individual-level perceptions to accomplish their goals. Just as individuals

possess capabilities for learning, self-reflection and self-regulation can be applied to a group dynamic by actively analyzing and reflecting on group behaviors and the environment (Bandura, 1993).

In Le Floch's 2016 research, 16 out of the 25 core sample schools established structures for teacher collaboration across or within grade level bands. This collaboration time was used for planning, professional learning, and development of products to improve each teacher's quality of instruction through collaboration. Sharing the information teachers accumulated through these collaborative experiences increased the school's organizational efficacy for achieving improvement in student outcomes. In addition, they were establishing new systems within the school's organization for sustainability of this improvement in the current year and after schools moved out of the improvement cycle. The Le Floch study concluded that who empower their teachers to be a part of a shared leadership framework through collaborative instructional planning, can provide the evidence needed for teachers to believe their group actions impact growth toward school improvement goals (Le Floch et al., 2016).

The level of agency that schools possess to change practice and the choices teachers are empowered to make influence their attitudes about collective competence and as a result, organization efficacy. Reviews of research have found that schools whose teachers demonstrate elevated levels of collective efficacy and take ownership of school improvement work are more likely to improve the academic outcomes for their students (Goddard, 2001; Goddard & Hoy, 2004). Teachers and principals who perceive improvement in their schools show increased motivation to sustain their school

improvement process (Sebring, et al., 2006). These patterns are consistent with theory on staff motivation as it impacts organizational change (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012).

Providing opportunities for teachers to build collective efficacy, trust, and perceptions of competence about other group members is likely to improve student achievement, as indicated in studies by Rosenholtz (1989) where factors of trust and perceived competence were found to be significantly associated with collective teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

In 2007, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy continued their research on teacher's self-efficacy with a study of 255 teachers ranging from one to 29 years of teaching experience. Using the Teachers Sense of Efficacy Scale, participants were asked to consider their existing aptitudes, means, and opportunity to respond to 24 items related to their own self-efficacy for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement in their current teaching position. While the experienced sample teachers rated themselves higher in their self-efficacy beliefs with regard to instructional strategies and classroom management, there was no difference between the novice and experienced sample teachers in their efficacy ratings for student engagement. The study findings also indicated that the greater the opportunity new teachers had to collaborate with other adults and have more observations with feedback, the more their self-efficacy increased. Through such collaborations, both novice teachers and teachers new to the school were able to see that their motivation and belief in their effectiveness to improve student outcomes increase. These results are applicable to principals and other building teachers

as well and assist in retaining newly hired teachers and developing school practices that contribute to enhanced self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Development of interpersonal relationships is essential for meaningful school improvement to cultivate a schoolwide approach of equitable student achievement (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994). In 2015, Adams, Forsyth, Dollarhide, Miskell, and Ware reviewed the student performance data from 80 elementary and secondary schools in a large southwestern urban district. Teachers and principals in these community schools were dedicated to creating more student-centered learning experiences. Teachers collaboratively planned their instruction to include greater autonomy for students on the selection of tasks and projects to engage and encourage them to become independent thinkers. Teachers taught and held students accountable for their own actions and maintained a belief in each student's ability and competence for making positive choices. The principal's and teachers' positive interactive relationships with students were a priority and they consistently demonstrated shared beliefs in their students. These schools' scores were compared to the scores of schools with staff whose attitudes did not steadily display organization efficacy for their students' ability to succeed and teachers who did not work collaboratively to facilitate learning. Schools where staff consistently presented shared positive mindsets towards students' ability and teacher collaboration had a higher rate of student achievement than those schools that did not (Adams, Forsyth, Dollarhide, Miskell, & Ware, 2015).

A building principal must provide multiple opportunities for teachers to build collective trust and demonstrate mutual respect (Bryk et al., 2010). These reciprocal

professional relationships among staff members have shown to contribute to a positive school culture (Dinham et al., 2008). The purposeful professional conversations around pedagogy can enhance a teacher's perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) and the school's organizational efficacy for school reform (Goddard, 2001). The purposeful shared leadership practices teachers and principals have with each other become an important component in the change process and support the momentum of school improvement initiatives (Hoy & Tarter, 2010).

Teacher Leaders

Research on school improvement includes developing the expertise of teacher leaders to build their school's capacity for reform and sustainability (Le Floch et al., 2016). In this section, I present the work of researchers who have highlighted the efforts of principals who have purposefully developed teachers as leaders in their schools and classrooms. These principals have narrowed their school improvement priorities by providing teachers with targeted ongoing professional development on evidence-based instructional practices that have the most potential to impact student learning consistently.

Targeted development. In a review of the longitudinal study of the Consortium on Chicago Schools from 1990 to 1996, Sebring et al. (2006) further examined the school improvement initiatives of Chicago elementary schools who experienced structural changes due to new policies (Sebring et al., 2006). The review examined the internal and external conditions of 200 elementary schools in different stages of school reform. One-third of these urban schools were actively self-initiating a restructuring of their school

improvement directives, another third were engaged in current school improvement efforts but struggling with implementation, and the final third had no visible signs of reform or change in school practices. The 200 schools had a total of approximately 150,000 students, from diverse Chicago urban communities in terms of socio-economic class and race. The purpose of the research was to determine how some schools were making substantial progress in their school improvement initiatives while other schools were not, and second, based on what they found, to clarify the school improvement efforts needed to increase student achievement over time (Sebring et al., 2006).

Highlighting the Chicago school's research, authors Bryk et al., analyzed specifically the complicated links, school improvement initiatives, and social conditions of two neighboring Chicago elementary schools, Alexander Elementary School and Hancock Elementary School. Both of these schools initially were considered among Chicago's lowest performing schools regarding math and reading achievement. Geographically they were just two miles apart in similar neighborhoods, and both schools' student populations included almost 100% minority students (Bryk et al., 2010). One point of comparison of the study was the degree of leadership preparation and its effects on sustainable improvement. Through their school improvement initiatives, Hancock Elementary student performance showed consistent and steady growth. The principal was able to drive the change and increase academic achievement by purposefully cultivating a collective responsibility for teaching and learning through the development of teacher leaders (Bryk et al., 2010).

Preparing teachers for organizational change through shared leadership became instrumental in the execution of the required school improvement efforts at Hancock Elementary. Teacher leaders led the work of curricular and instructional improvement and used student performance data to analyze the impact of their instructional decisions (Bryk et al., 2010; & Scanlan, 2011). Their instructional focus efforts were not in isolation but in a collaborative learning environment that set the foundation for trust, self-efficacy, and organizational efficacy, and were identified as essential for their school improvement efforts (Sebring et al., 2010). Hancock's principal provided targeted professional development for teachers to support student learning, tools and strategies for working collaboratively, and helped identify instructional strategies students needed for academic achievement (Bryk et al., 2010).

The purpose of professional learning for educators is to heighten a teacher's knowledge and skills to support student academic achievement (Dinham, Aubusson, & Brady, 2008). A principal who utilizes a teacher's area of strength to lead professional development with staff is gaining organization efficacy and enhancing a school's leadership capacity. Principals must appreciate that leadership runs through the school's organization and preparing and allowing teachers to lead school improvement reform can be an asset that helps to increase and influence new school practices (Johnson et al., 2014). School leaders who encourage and purposefully support this process can build the professional capital of teachers and create shared leadership for educational improvement (Dinham et al., 2008).

Schools experiencing mandated transformation must consider providing ongoing, high quality, job-embedded professional development (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2012). This professional learning must align with the school's comprehensive instructional program and is more effective when designed collaboratively with school staff. The goal is to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and can successfully implement school reform strategies (ED, 2010, p. 36). Principals can create communities of practice to improve teacher knowledge, enhance teachers' self-efficacy, and develop a sense of shared purpose through mutual professional development and collaboration (DuFour, 2004)

Outcome impact. A quantitative study by Waters et al. (2004), established a relationship between principal leadership and student outcomes. In 2008, the impact of leadership on student outcomes made by Waters et al. was re-examined by Robinson et al. as part of a meta-analysis of 27 studies comparing the effects of transformational and instructional leadership. The purpose of the meta-analysis was to determine which specific leadership actions consistently implemented in these schools impacted student achievement. The authors hoped their findings would guide current policy and build valid resources for principals on the leadership strategies that have proven to impact student achievement and support school improvement initiatives. Robinson et al.'s findings indicated that the development of teachers as leaders in school improvement reform could also have a positive impact on student achievement. Teacher leaders are developed when a building principal provides professional development on evidence-based instructional

strategies that have proven to be effective and impact student learning (Robinson et al., 2008).

Just as principals can have a positive impact on student achievement, leadership practices can have a marginal or even an undesirable effect. Knowing what to do and where to start is central to improving the school's effectiveness. When implementing change for school improvement, principals must focus on evidence-based practices that correlate with student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). Implementation of these methods must be done with caution. A randomly selected strategy will not necessarily meet the needs of students (Hattie, 2008).

In 2016 the U.S ED released *Case Studies of Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants: Final Report*. The report included 25-core sample schools with principals that were facilitating school improvement initiatives with funding from a school improvement grant. The principals that had reported the most substantial changes in their capacity to improve their organization were the principals that described making continual efforts to change the culture of their school in a positive way. Principals of schools who were purposeful in changing their school culture began by implementing strategies to minimize the impact of less effective staff. These principals focused on building the human capital of teachers who were demonstrating proficiency evident by their use of student performance data and time spent collaborating with colleagues. The principals' goals were to build the momentum of each individual teacher's self-efficacy to impact their use of schoolwide instructional strategies that consistently increased student learning (Le Floch et al., 2016).

Defining impact is more than noticing an increase in student test scores. To provide access to an equitable and viable curriculum for every student, teachers and leaders need to decide together what specific instructional changes they believe will have the most significant impact to support students learning their grade-level standards (Robinson et al., 2012). Teachers and leaders need to prioritize collective ownership and responsibility for achievement of all students to demonstrate adequate growth and progress. These agreements are essential and illustrate the impact teachers have as they learn from one another in ways that can have immediate applications in their schools and classrooms (Riveros, Newton, & Burgess, 2012). Research has indicated that principals who regularly set aside time for teachers to consistently collaborate to determine how to impact student achievement of grade level standards positively have a higher potential to develop a culture of trust and organizational efficacy (DuFour, 2004; Robinson et al., 2012). The time spent together is structured and follows a teaching and learning cycle focused on the impact of their instruction (DuFour & Reeves, 2016).

Evidence-based instruction. The practice of principals and teachers learning evidence-based instructional strategies together has been shown to influence student learning (DuFour & Reeves, 2016; Hattie, 2008). Schools in improvement can continue with the status quo having the principal as the leader or deepen their professional practice by developing teachers as leaders to work together collectively to improve instruction and increase academic achievement for each of their students (Scanlan, 2011). Determining which evidence-based practices will best serve students requires time for teachers to learn collaboratively rather than in isolation. In this way the details for implementation of these

new instructional strategies are routinely clarified and agreed upon in a schoolwide approach (O'Donnell & White, 2005). The school leader monitors practices to ensure that the programs and school improvement strategies are implemented as designed and continues to monitor data to determine their effectiveness (Sebring et al., 2006).

One way for teachers and principals to measure the effectiveness of a particular instructional intervention in an educational setting is with an effect size, a statistical measurement used to determine the effectiveness of a specific intervention. In his meta-analyses research, Hattie (2008) determined that the average student progressing from one year to the next experiences an average effect size for learning of .40. Using an effect size provides educators one way to measure both the effectiveness of the intervention for a student or group of students and the variation in their performances expressed on a standardized scale. When selecting an instructional intervention for a student or group of students who are not yet at grade level, intermediations with a higher effect size of .40 are recommended. Effect sizes are a way of understanding what has the most significant influence on student learning (Frey, Fisher, & Hattie, 2017). For example, a teacher who provides feedback to a student on what they have done well and what to consider for their next steps has an effect size of 1.13, which is substantial. If the teacher gives the student an audio or visual tool to learn the information again, without any feedback, the effect size is .16. This result is considered a small effect size and not the intervention needed for a student who may not be at grade level yet.

Hattie cautions school leaders and teachers, however, not to use the effect size research list as a “menu” of instructional strategies to incorporate during a lesson. The

teaching practices implemented in classrooms and throughout the school should consider the needs of your students and learning community (Hattie, 2008). Interpreting the effect size should be done cautiously, and only as a general guide for a focused investigation into the effectiveness of what teachers do. This measurement provides an indicator for what teaching and educational learning practices we should start, continue, or stop doing. Hattie's work revealed which instructional influences have the greatest impact on student achievement. For those students entering their school year already behind grade level, it becomes critical for teachers and leaders to focus on evidence-based instruction (Hattie, 2008).

Hattie's research concluded that almost every pedagogical practice in education works, but to different degrees. The added value of changing instructional practices comes from what teachers and leaders choose to do or not do (Frey et al., 2016). Some of the essential components of evidence-based instruction include selecting challenging student learning targets with proficiency criteria to maximize student academic outcomes, developing lessons to release the responsibility for learning to the student gradually, and using formative assessments as feedback on student learning (Frey, Fisher, & Hattie, 2017). These are the concrete steps teachers and leaders can do regularly within a shared leadership framework to measure their effectiveness of instruction to increase student learning (DuFour, 2004).

To continuously improve teaching, teacher leaders must collaborate consistently to determine their impact on student learning (DuFour & Reeves, 2016; Riveros et al., 2012). The development of teacher leaders through targeting professional development

opportunities, as mentioned earlier in this work, is a key factor for improving student achievement (Klute et al., 2016). A principal must provide the time needed for teachers to learn and develop evidence-based instructional practices as a shared leadership responsibility rather than in isolation, and as an agreed-upon schoolwide practice to measure the effectiveness of their instruction on student learning (DuFour, 2004).

Shared Leadership

For schools in improvement, managing the required change becomes complicated and unsustainable for one principal. Shared leadership, as defined in chapter one, is a leadership model that occurs when the principal encourages, supports and promotes staff members assume school improvement responsibilities to build leadership capacity for school improvement (Timperley, 2006). Providing teachers the time to make collective decisions needed for school improvement has the potential to be useful for school reform (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). In this section, I discuss the research findings of shared leadership by building and creating leadership capacity, making collective decisions, and effective practices of schools in improvement.

Capacity leadership. Principals are responsible for and play a leading role in implementing school improvement initiatives (Bryk, et al., 2010). Klute et al. research study of school in improvement have suggested that the responsibility of leadership in schools can come from a multitude of sources and be distributed or shared with teachers and staff (Klute, et al., 2016). The principal can create a school leadership team that includes staff serving in many roles and not just classroom teachers (Le Floch et al., 2016). Building leadership capacity in schools can act as a catalyst to generate the

professional role of staff, create a student-focused learning environment, and support the creation of engaging approaches to instruction to teach content standards (Sebring et al., 2006). Shared leadership strategies have the potential to leverage the existing expertise and skills of teachers to enhance their collective understanding and to empower staff to demonstrate ownership of the improvement process required by schools, districts, and states (Timperley, 2005).

Enhancing the leadership capacity of one teacher or leader at a time is time consuming and doing so fails to take advantage of the accrued benefits of the dynamics of group interactions and synergy (Forsyth, 2009). Being accountable for student learning requires that principal and teachers have the capacity to generate strategies needed for school improvement. Building the professional capital for whole school system reform can produce better accountability of action and results now, and as change occurs (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). It is in collaboration, not in isolation, where teachers and school leaders develop leadership capacity in the context of change (Pascale & Sternin, 2005).

There is some caution to be considered when sharing leadership responsibilities among teachers. Increasing teachers' duties in a shared leadership framework is appropriate only if the nature of the leadership opportunity contributes to the school improvement initiatives and assists teachers in providing instruction that meets the academic needs of their students (Timperley, 2006). Creating leadership competence can occur when a building principal promotes and sustains supportive conditions for teacher leaders. This support includes allocating time for professional development on the

competencies needed to change instructional practices, understanding their roles and responsibilities, developing group norms, and enhancing the nature of interactions among team members (Spillane, 2005). A shared leadership framework includes building the capacity of teachers to make the collective decisions required for school improvement (Dinham et al., 2008).

Collective decisions. In 2014, the Institute of Educational Science (IES) reviewed U.S. DE data and released a report assessing the lowest performing schools that received additional federal funding. One of the primary research questions of this review focused on determining specific strategies and actions school leaders should implement to improve teaching and learning. In a survey administered to these schools, the majority of schools reported some improvement toward student outcomes, but the schools where leaders demonstrated shared leadership strategies as part of their transformational process reported greater improvement. These school leaders developed the leadership capacity of existing teachers and staff by motivating and engaging their participation in creating a healthy school vision for improvement (IES, 2014).

There are a variety of standard leadership frameworks for schools in improvement, and there are significant variations in student achievement in these schools. In 2008, Leithwood & Mascall conducted a study aimed to estimate the impact of a shared or collective leadership framework on critical teacher variables with regard to student achievement. Researchers analyzed student achievement occurring over a three-year period using 2,500 teacher responses from 90 schools where at least four teachers from each school responded to the study's survey. Survey results indicated that the type

of school leadership varied, but the principals were found to have the highest level of influence for making decisions. These principals also established collective leadership practices with school staff to support the academic achievement for all students (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

The survey data also indicated that collective leadership played an essential role in the differences in student achievement. The higher achieving schools attributed their student achievement not just to the principal but also to the level of influence their leadership staff had in school decisions. These variations were most significant in the type of leadership experienced in these higher-performing schools. Teachers, teacher teams, parents, and students shared the leadership responsibility (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Principals who share the school improvement decision-making responsibilities with teachers systematically use multiple student performance data to explain the changes in their school systems. This adjustment in schoolwide practices can come from the building principals and also by utilizing teachers as expert resources to influence school achievement (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

In 2010, the ED administration launched a race to the top reform initiative entitled *A Blueprint for Reform*. The blueprint was created to modernize the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and create an outline for a new vision of the federal role in education. Under this initiative, parents, students, educators, and business and community leaders work together with elected officials to strengthen the public education system in the United States. The goal is to provide all students with a well-deserved comprehensive education that will become essential for their future as they

prepare for college or career readiness (United States Department of Education [ED], 2010).

To ensure accountability, building leaders, district leaders, and outside consultants began developing a mandatory implementation of ready-made policies with top-down reform changes and initiatives requirements. The almost immediate shift in practice in response to the national mandate was evidence that ownership of school improvement has the potential to shift from teacher leaders to school, district, and state leaders. Moving accountability for what occurs in the classroom away from teachers and school-based leaders to state officials requires careful consideration of school, district, and state policymakers. The knowledge of collective teacher experience in the classroom applied to student learning has the potential to be overlooked or underutilized. The teachers who facilitate instructional change in our school systems need to be carefully considered as part of the decision-making process for school reform (Kruse et al., 1994).

Teachers who are acquiring new skills and strategies to support student learning together have the potential to build collective leadership capacity in their schools and can become influential in their school's improvement process. In 2016, the DE published the *Case Studies of School's Receiving School Improvement Grants: Final Report*. Seven out of the 25 core sample schools reported creating structures for a shared leadership framework. In six out of these seven schools, teachers said they made decisions that could impact their school improvement process. Some of the teachers responded that they felt validated for their input and the ideas they were able to express were collaboratively evaluated to determine subsequent schoolwide steps for improvement. Other teachers felt

that the improvement process was not a top-down mandate, but part of a shared decision-making process (Le Floch, 2016).

Effective practices. The failure of many schools that serve high-poverty students continues to be a challenge in the U.S. public education system (DE, 2014). Federal accountability requirements are implementing new policies and sanctions to accelerate significant improvement in lower performing schools. In extreme cases, district administrators are required to transform their school by replacing the principal and at least half of the teaching staff within a Turnaround Intervention Model (ODE, 2014). The underlying belief is that effective leadership is necessary to improve the academic outcomes for students. This belief, however, may not hold as how principals effectively lead and engage teachers in the school improvement process may or may not benefit students (Johnson et al., 2014).

Encouraging or requiring teachers to make the shift from past practices to something new or different can have initial momentum, but not necessarily longevity. Teachers experience loss when they stray from traditional teaching practices (Pascale & Sternin, 2005). A principal who is willing to let a teacher experiment with a new practice thereby learning what is more effective for increased student achievement, allows the teacher to alter their own less effective instructional routines. Teacher uncertainty does not mean the principal has lost the authority of instructional expectation; they have simply given ownership of the change to the teacher to increase their efficacy effect positive change in student achievement. A school administrator gets out of the way and gives ownership to the teacher leader as student performance data becomes evidence of

which practices were effective and which former teaching practices should be stopped (DuFour, 2004).

A teacher leader conducts his or her informal research every day on what was effective for students' learning. Informal assessments guide the understanding of what students took away on that day and what standards teachers need to return to on the following day (Frey et al., 2017). The needs of our learners are always evolving and being attuned to those changes is part of the art of being a teacher (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Without teacher's constant gathering formative assessment data and examining that data to make pedagogical changes, improved student achievement is less likely to occur. A principal directs the teachers to use standards to drive instruction, but how teachers facilitate student learning in pursuit of those standards is part of the creative process of teaching (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012). The positive transformation of a school can occur when teachers are given the opportunity to share the responsibility for instructional leadership with like colleagues about which teaching strategies are needed to support student learning in their schools and classrooms (Leithwood, 2004).

As teachers develop the knowledge of teaching and assessment strategies through practice, they discover what approaches work for students and how to determine the standards students still need to master. Sometimes a strategy fails. A building principal who is mindful of teacher impact on school improvement efforts allows teachers to fail but uses these missteps as collaborative opportunities to formulate new ideas and approaches to learning with colleagues (Bryk et al., 2010). Collectively, teachers understand and believe that students are on the pathway to learning but have not achieved

mastery (Leithwood & Mascal, 2008). A principal looking to develop school leadership capacity moves away from dictating and controlling the learning environment and allows teachers to collaborate and be creative on what student learning looks and feels like in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

Moving aside to let teachers lead requires a shift in the past practice of many school principals (Leone et al., 2009). A common assumption is that most teachers sincerely care about their students in their classrooms. The challenge for principals is that this same level of care may not extend beyond a particular classroom and extended to other students in the same grade or content level at the school. For a school leader, facilitating growth requires moving teachers' thinking away from what is inside of the walls of their classroom to a more collaborative conversation with colleagues about what happens within the walls of the school. Bringing the group together to think collectively as a whole, rather than as individual teachers in classrooms, requires the development of a group dynamic where together they share a leadership framework for collective decision-making (Kurt, 2016).

National and State Policy

To improve the quality of education in our cities and states, school improvement initiatives should support learning for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The benchmark criteria of the CCSS outlines what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (National Governors Association, 2010). State, district, and school assessment tools have been designed to measure student growth based on these standards. Accountability measures are documented in school and district improvement plans to

meet and show progress towards these benchmark criteria. School principals are responsible for facilitating these school improvement plans and are held accountable by districts and state departments of education to confirm that each of their students is achieving or showing adequate growth toward their grade level standards (ODE, 2011).

The U. S. DE provides financial assistance to schools with a high percentage of students from low-income families under the Title I, Part A, Program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Federal dollars are provided to give eligible schools and educational agencies financial assistance to ensure that all children have the opportunity to meet the benchmark criteria of the CCSS (ODE, 2011). Schools and districts are required to develop school improvement goals to support academic achievement. They start the goal selection process by thoroughly analyzing student performance data and school support systems (ED, 2015). In Oregon, the administrators of schools identified as eligible for Title I funds are asked to narrow their focus and create a school improvement plan with two to three strategic goals to support the academic achievement of all students. Each new school improvement goal created must be student-centered, specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (ODE, 2011). Tasks are then created for each school improvement goal with specific actions for principals, teacher teams, classroom teachers, and support instructional staff as applicable (ODE, 2015).

A developed school Comprehensive Achievement Plan (CAP) lists each goal and task needed to meet the requirements of the selected school improvement goal. The CAP is an action plan for recording and monitoring the school improvement goals, listing

strategies to achieve these goals, identifying resources needed to accomplish the goals, and providing a timeline for completing each goal. The school, district, and ODE monitor the academic progress of all students and the completion of each school's selected tasks. The tasks must also clarify who will provide leadership for each component of the plan (ODE, 2011). If the needs of the students and staff change, task modifications are made based on student performance data or observational systems data.

For a school identified by their state as needing significant improvement, it can be challenging to select two to three evidence-based school improvement goals. School principals are held responsible for developing, sustaining, and enhancing school improvement plans that will impact learning for each student. Accountability for these priorities can become an overwhelming task for a school principal despite well-intentioned staff members who provide their accounts of instructional practices that they believe to be sufficient in their classrooms to increase student learning. Moving the teachers from what has worked in the past to a consensus approach around what research indicates is effective in facilitating meaningful learning requires shared ownership of the responsibility for these modifications, not merely the principal stating a mandated directive (Wilhelm, 2013).

It has traditionally been the sole responsibility of a school principal to initiate the change needed to implement a school improvement plan that provides equal access for each student to meet or exceed their grade level achievement goals toward required standards. New leadership patterns are emerging in schools needing to shift from past teaching practices to student learning strategies (Dinham, Aubusson, & Brady, 2008).

The school principal is moving out of a managerial role in the office to facilitating learning in classrooms. Principals of schools in mandated improvement are navigating change and accountability to serve and support teachers better with practices designed to serve an increasingly diverse student population (Leone, Warnimont, & Zimmerman, 2009). The review of the literature indicates that a shared framework for leadership is emerging in schools to support all students demonstrating growth and achievement toward accountability standards. The purpose of this research was to determine the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that impacts growth in student achievement.

Summary

My review of the literature suggests that the development of a shared leadership framework in the context of supporting change for student achievement is a critical component of improvement for low-performing schools. For all students to demonstrate growth and progress toward accountability standards, a shared leadership framework starts with the development of a school culture as the foundation for school improvement work (Klute et al., 2016).

A trusting school culture can generate and foster a common belief among all staff on the capacity for growth of each of their students and the importance and value of providing equitable outcomes (O'Donnell & White, 2005). A principal managing this change addresses challenges by implementing a shared leadership framework that allows principals and teachers to recognize the need to challenge existing ineffective systems, and simultaneously develop an effective, evidence-based learning environment. Schools

with school climate ratings that indicate a constructive, positive mindset about teaching and learning outperform lower performing schools that demonstrated a narrow, stagnant mindset in their school structures (Van Houtte, 2011). A trusting school culture enables the development of a teacher's self-efficacy as they learn to navigate new instructional practices and routines. A school culture built on positive school relationships between the principal and teachers becomes the foundation for collaboration between teachers and school leaders to create sound, evidence-based teaching and student learning practices (O'Donnell & White, 2005).

Principals working within a shared leadership framework look beyond their capacity to the expertise of other teacher leaders to build sustainability and adaptability as the needs of their learning community grow and transform (Robinson et al., 2008). Principals and teachers in successful schools who participate together in targeted professional development opportunities build the capacity of what is needed to change the learning trajectory for their students and schools. Teachers who implement these new effective teaching practices collaborate with colleagues and support staff and focus on the impact their instruction had on student learning. Determining what was effective for student learning, and deciding on the next steps needed for improvement, research clearly demonstrates is more effectively done as a group process (Kurt, 2016). Collaborative conversations can determine teacher practices that are impactful and serve to enhance student learning (Hattie, 2008).

A principal develops the capacity for shared leadership by creating a culture of trust that supports risk-taking and distributed decision-making in the midst of the

innovation needed for our 21st-century learners and targeted instruction improvement required in low performing schools. With the development of trust, and staff participation in evidence-based professional development around teaching and learning practices, decisions can be made collectively and more effectively about school improvement work mandated by states and districts. Providing principals and teachers with the opportunity to make collective decisions needed for school improvement has the potential to effect school improvement mandates (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Previous researchers have documented that shared leadership is believed positively impact student achievement for schools in improvement. This study proposed to clarify the factors of a shared leadership framework that teachers believe impact student achievement in a school facilitating improvement in a Turnaround Intervention Model.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology and research design used to determine the factors of a shared leadership framework that are perceived to impact growth in student achievement in an elementary school facilitating a school improvement Turnaround Intervention Model. A case study approach (Creswell, 2015) utilizing mixed-method data collection was used to determine participant perceptions regarding the research question. This chapter contains a description of the research question, rationale for methodology, research design, setting, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, role of the researcher and summary of the study.

Research Question

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the perceptions of participating staff at PSES regarding factors of a shared leadership framework that contribute to growth in student achievement for a school implementing a SIG Turnaround Intervention Model. Based in Elmore's (2000) findings on consistent leadership practices of school and administrative staff, associated with leading school improvement and student achievement the research question that guided the study was, "What are the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that are perceived to impact growth in student achievement?"

Rationale for Methodology

This study utilized a single case study (Creswell, 2015) with a mixed-method approach to learning more about the relationship between a shared leadership framework and student achievement at PSES. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative

responses in the selected and open-ended data collection instrument provided an initial comprehensive view of participant perceptions of shared leadership factors at PSES.

Specifically, the data from the Likert scale responses addressed factors of a shared leadership framework that were perceived to impact school improvement practices associated with growth in student achievement at PSES. The school improvement readiness practices identified as characteristic of shared leadership and as evidence in student achievement include leadership practices; mission, vision, and goals; school culture; and shared responsibility (Elmore, 2000). The open-ended responses provided participants an opportunity to specify their insights as to why they feel these factors did or did not affect growth in student achievement at PSES.

Interviews were conducted with two groups of participants as identified in the minimal demographic information collected on the DLRS instrument. The purpose of the group interviews was to clarify further with participants what factors of a shared leadership framework they perceived to have affected student achievement in a school facilitating a school improvement Turnaround Intervention Model.

Research Design

The research instrument identified for this case study utilized the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS) instrument developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to assess a school's readiness and commitment in shared leadership practices (Gordon, 2005). As part of Connecticut's State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP), the CSDE applied initial measures to ensure

validity and reliability of the instrument with piloting and refinement of the DLRS instrument. Designers of the instrument assigned allocation of number values.

Face Validity. The preliminary study of the DRLS instrument was used in Connecticut schools to evaluate dimensions of shared leadership in elementary, middle, and high schools to develop leadership profiles of high performing versus low-performing schools. The CSDE selected a committee of educators and assigned each item to one of the original five distributed leadership dimensions based on the work of Elmore's (2000). Each group was asked to verify whether each aspect in the DLRS instrument was measuring what it was intended to measure, including mission, vision, and goals; school culture; shared decision-making; evaluation and professional development; and leadership practices.

Construct validity. To test for construct validity, the developers of the DRLS examined the instrument using a known groups approach to investigate their hypothesis that schools who consistently demonstrate essential dispersed leadership have a higher rate of student academic achievement than conventionally structured schools that do not. The preliminary study used two sample groups. The first sample group consisted of four schools in northeastern Connecticut; two schools were high performing, and two schools were schools in transition. Using the DLRS instrument, researchers collected 150 responses from administrators, teachers, and support teachers. The second sample group was more substantial and included 1,931 responses from administrators, teachers, and support teachers in 36 schools in Connecticut. A study of the results showed "a direct

relationship between the distributed leadership dimension in the high performing and transition schools” (Gordon, 2005, p. 47).

A full factor analysis was used to measure the relationship of the DLRS instrument items to allow for further investigation on each of the selected and open-ended response items from both groups, (Gordon, 2005). The factor analysis was used to determine which of the original five dimension of distributed leadership category for each item used on the DLRS survey was being used. After the final analysis, Gordon concluded that three of the dimensions were measuring their projected purposes: mission, vision, and goals; school culture; and leadership practices. Gordon combined the final two dimensions, decision-making and professional development into shared responsibility. The open-ended responses were then modified from the original DRLS instrument to connect to the primary themes identified in the review to align the research question.

The DLRS used in this research had four dimensions. Table 1 shows the itemization of each DLRS item by dimensions (Gordon, 2005).

Table 1

Items of the DLRS Mapped by Dimension

Dimension	Item Number
Mission, vision and goals	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Shared Responsibility	9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
School culture	13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33
Leadership practices	25, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40

The DLRS has been utilized in current research to evaluate a school's or district's effect of leadership and student achievement. The DLRS was utilized in 2005 to identify critical distributed leadership dimension to help schools build capacity to transform their schools into high-performing schools (Connecticut Department of Education, 2004). One study investigated the relationship between distributed leadership dimensions and student achievement at the elementary level in two urban school districts (Terrell, 2010). Another study in a middle school setting used the DLRS as a tool to examine staff attitudes and perceptions on the effect distributed leadership had on student growth and collaborative decision-making (Bariexca, 2014).

Setting

Pine Street Elementary School (PSES) is a Title I school in the Mountain Park School District (MPSD), in northern Oregon. Based on the 2013-14 *Oregon Report Card*, a state summary report of student achievement against curricular objectives, 449 students were enrolled at PSES, and 82% of the student population was economically

disadvantaged. Of the enrolled students, 38% were English Language Learners, with five different spoken languages. Seventeen percent of students were receiving special education services, and 89.2% of students were attending 90% or more of enrolled days (ODE, 2014a). The PSES state report card rating was a Level 1 compared to all schools statewide in 2013-14. A Level 1 school is at the bottom 5% of all schools in Oregon based on the published standards. The PSES rating was below average compared to elementary schools with similar student demographics in 2013-14, (ODE, 2015).

In May of 2014, PSES was one of three schools in Oregon to receive a portion of the ODE-awarded school improvement funds (ODE, 2014). PSES was the largest school recipient of the Oregon portion of these grants funds. PSES received an allocated amount of \$1.85 million federal turnaround SIG from the ODE. The awarded funds were to be utilized to facilitate a Turnaround Intervention Model to support student academic achieve for this longstanding underperforming school. One requirement of the federally funded SIG was to replace at least half of the existing teachers and support staff and to replace the current building principal. The grant funds were to pay for staff development as well as student support programs and services.

Participants

The participants represented a convenience sample based upon their self-selected degree of participation. Participants were categorized into two distinct subgroups as identified in the minimal demographic information collected on the survey instrument. The participant pool ($n=31$) consisted of two groups of both current and former staff members at PSES. Group A consisted of PSES teachers who provided instruction for

students on a daily basis and included: classroom teachers ($n=15$), certified specialists including a music teacher ($n=1$), physical education teachers ($n=1$), a Title I teacher ($n=1$), special education teachers ($n=1$), language teachers ($n=2$), and a newcomer teacher ($n=1$). Group B was composed of MPSD instructional support staff and national school improvement consultants and included: instructional coaches ($n=2$), a behavior support teacher ($n=1$), the PSES State School Improvement Coach designated to support the implementation of the school improvement grant ($n=1$), MPSD directors ($n=3$), and national consultants from the former LLC now affiliated with International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE) ($n=2$).

The MPSD participants invited to complete the survey were notified by email on Friday, September 1, 2017 (see Appendix C). The invitation asked all members of the identified sample to participate in a dissertation research project entitled “Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School.” The email invitation as possible benefits that the study may provide in helping refine shared leadership practices in PSES and potentially other schools and districts. Also, the invitation stated that demographic information collected on the survey included total years in education, total years in this school, and primary area of responsibility. The invitation emphasized that participating was voluntary. The invitation stated that the risk to participants was minimal, as all data remains anonymous.

Participant names were withheld and not used at any point in the collection or reporting of data, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participant answers remain anonymous, and the data will be maintained by me, securely stored for

three years after the completion of the research, and then destroyed. Participants could also decline to participate in the survey or not respond to any of the survey questions that they felt uncomfortable answering. Response items were not categorized by participant groups or job description and consequently were anonymous. Finally, considering my authority position as the school principal, it was essential for me to continue to restate that the summary of results would not be used for evaluative purposes, but to build capacity for shared understanding of our next steps for facilitating our school improvement achievement efforts.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study was the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS) (see Appendix D). It was developed by the CSDE to assess a school's readiness and commitment to shared leadership practices (Gordon, 2005). This instrument was selected because it is a tool for schools and districts to use to evaluate their staff's perceptions of shared leadership and to identify school leadership's areas of strengths and weakness. When results are analyzed, the scale will produce profiles by which professional staff may compare their school's leadership practices across the dimensions of leadership identified in the DLRS survey instrument. On July 14, 2017, Matthew Falconer of the CSDE granted permission to use the DLRS (see Appendix A).

The survey instrument contains 40 items from the DLRS developed to measure the four dimensions of distributed leadership: mission, vision, and goals; school culture; shared responsibility; and leadership practices. There are eight to 13 questions developed around each of these themes. Each DSLR item response used a flipped 5-point Likert

scale representing a continuum of continually (A-1), frequently (B-2), sometimes (C-3), rarely/never (D-4), and insufficient (E-5) information. Participants were asked to select a response for each item based on how regularly the statements apply and to not skip any statements in order to provide a complete and accurate school profile. Participants were encouraged to be as candid as possible when completing the DLRS survey and confirmed all individual responses are recorded anonymously to offset any potential bias of the researcher. Finally, the survey presented four open-ended questions related to the four DLRS leadership dimensions, and therefore aligned with the Likert scale. Assigning numerical value on the Likert scale (1) continually through (5) insufficient was done in the design of the instrument by the Connecticut Department of Education. Number values was assigned by designers of the instrument.

Table 2 provides examples of the categories and sample questions.

Table 2

Example Survey Items Mapped to Leadership Dimensions

Leadership dimension	Number of items	Example survey item
Mission, vision, and goals	8	The school uses a school improvement plan as a basis to evaluate the progress it is making in attaining its goals.
Shared responsibility	13	Teachers and administrators have high expectations for students' academic performance.
School culture	10	There is a formal structure in place in the school (e.g., curriculum committee) to provide teachers and professional staff opportunities to participate in school level instructional decision-making.
Leadership practices	9	The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.

Data Collection

The first stage of data collection intended to assemble and analyze the qualitative and quantitative data from the DLRS survey. Results were reported separately on the analysis of each type of data. The results of the analyses of the qualitative and quantitative database were then merged using a convergent design to explain the results in more detail. A convergent design provides a dual perspective of the question, and because both the qualitative and quantitative data offer different insights, the combination can contribute to viewing the problem from a variety of perceptions (Creswell, 2015). After the results of the data were merged, a side-by-side comparison of the data was

reviewed to assess to what extent the qualitative data confirmed or disproved the quantitative data (or vice versa). Both sets of data displayed results, but the combination provided additional insights and a complete understanding that might not have been comprehensive with one database alone (Creswell, 2015). Included in the data analysis were explanations for possible similarities or differences.

After the selected and open-ended response data from the DRLS survey was collected, aggregated, and analyzed, the next step was to interview focus group participants. Interviews included a purposive random sample of members for Group A and B. With such small numbers a random sample may have skewed the responses toward a particular instructional level or to support positions outside of the school. Even though teachers represented a proportionally larger percentage of overall participation in the study, it was felt that five members would adequately represent that group. Given the diverse job descriptions of Group B it was felt five members were needed to accomplish that same level of representation. While five members were secured for each group initially, developed questions for the focus groups came from the aggregate data from the DLRS instrument and the research findings of this study. Each focus group interview lasted 30–45 minutes. A neutral party with no connection to the school or school division was selected to conduct the interviews due to their educational experiences as a teacher and familiarity of the educational terms used in the interview. The discussions were recorded and transcribed by a neutral party to remove any indicators between specific responses and participants (see Appendix E).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed with a mixed-method design, using an explanatory convergent design process. Results were reported separately for the analysis of each type of data, following the quantitative results with the qualitative data to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings. A mixed-method design provides a dual perspective of the question, and because both the qualitative and quantitative data provided different insights, the combination contributed to viewing the participant perspectives from a variety of perceptions (Creswell, 2015).

Quantitative survey. To conduct the explanatory convergent design mixed-method survey, the quantitative data was analyzed in the first phase using the research survey software Qualtrics. Qualtrics based on when the survey was completed assigned each participant a response number randomly. An individual's response was reported horizontally and the numeric codes for each variable selected were placed in vertical columns. The data was calculated and summarized using descriptive statistics to explain the characteristics of the numerical sample data. Qualtrics automatically generated the types of descriptive statistic and included frequency counts for each variable and the measure of central tendency with the mean as standard scoring procedures. To compare one item score to another, the standard deviation measures of variability were added to determine the standardized results or how to spread out a group of results is (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). Independent sample *t*-tests and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to disaggregate data by demographic subgroups, such as total years in education and primary responsibility.

Qualitative responses. In the second phase, the qualitative data was processed and prepared by the researcher approaching the data with a focus on coding to determine possible themes, relationships to the theoretical framework, and patterns. This initial qualitative data collection process is often referred to as First Cycle coding. This approach is more than a technical collection tool; it is a strategy used to prepare the researcher for insightful reflection and “deep analysis and interpretations of the data’s meaning” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 72). Participant written responses were manually compiled into a word, phrases, or sentences that captured the essence or attributed to a portion of a participant’s understanding of the question. The words and phrases that were used repeatedly acted as the “code” or points of regularity to identify initial thought configurations in the written responses. This qualitative coding utilized doing NVivo Coding method utilized the researcher-generated labels or codes to a section of the data as a way to primarily review segments of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2013). Next, implementation of the Second Cycle qualitative coding occurred. This method of a qualitative pattern of coding allows a researcher to group the word, phrases, or sentence outlines into smaller classifications or topics. The pattern coding is a way of grouping similarities or summaries into smaller subsets, themes, or constructs. It provided a method that allowed the researcher to focus more clearly and weave developing integrated themes, structures, and explanation of the data together.

As explanatory convergent design dictates in the first phase of the data collection process, examination of the quantitative data was used to determine what results would need further exploration. In phase two, the qualitative data was analyzed to help explain

or draw inferences from the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, the quantitative data from the Likert scale responses addressed factors of the shared leadership framework while the open-ended qualitative reactions provided participants an opportunity to provide insights on why they felt these factors did or did not influence growth in student achievement at PSES.

The challenge to conduct the explanatory convergent mixed method design was the difficulty required to analyze four dimensions of shared leadership while simultaneously exploring multiple participant perspectives. A second problem was determining which quantitative and qualitative results needed further explanation from participants in the two group interviews. The potential for other concerns occurs with this mixed-method design when the novice researcher may be unable to resolve discrepancies between the quantitative and qualitative findings. Being mindful of these possible threats to the validity of the survey results was an essential component of the data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct this research was approved by the University of Portland Institutional Review Board on August 18, 2017 (see Appendix B). The written invitation to participate in the study indicated that the risk to the respondents was minimal, as all data remained anonymous. Names of participants were not used at any point in the collection or reporting of data. Participant answers remain anonymous, and the data collected will be maintained by the researcher and securely stored for three years after the completion of the study and then be destroyed. Participants' identities will not be published. The survey asked participants their total years in education, total years in this

school, and their primary responsibility, which was aggregated for statistical analysis and summarized for reporting, protecting the confidentiality of participants in all cases.

Consent to participate in the study occurred separately from the instrument, and my contact information was listed on an introductory letter in order to answer questions and to request the results of the survey.

Role of the Researcher

As the principal of PSES and facilitator of the SIG initiative, I am greatly interested in the answer to the research question, “What are the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that are perceived to impact growth in student achievement?” As the sole researcher, I investigated what specific shared-leadership actions are perceived to be most impactful for growth in student achievement by the teachers and leaders who took those actions. The information learned could also be essential for enhancing the academic achievement level of each of our students. As the researcher in this study, it was important for me to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data systematically without demonstrating potential biases in weighing the participant demographic information: total years in education, total years in this school, and primary responsibility. It was essential to remember that the data could be used as an indicator not only to inform my next steps as a building principal, but also for others who choose to use the research to modify their school practices. Additional considerations I included as the researcher when analyzing the data were to bring others supporting me in this work to look carefully for other factors not yet realized and to frequently reevaluate responses of participants and challenge any preexisting hypotheses or assumptions.

As the principal of this school and the researcher for this study it was also necessary for me to avoid the temptation of bias and carefully adhere to research ethics because my role as principal is a key part of the “case” under study. For example, the leadership experiences I have had up to this point have given me indicators of what leadership factors are needed to create a shared responsibility between the principal, staff, and students. The credibility of the study was of the essence to the research, and every caution was undertaken to ensure that adequate checks were in place to safeguard against the bias I may have had in my leadership experiences including sharing my initial findings with other researchers to support assistance in underlining possibilities of bias.

This study was not intended to validate my actions as the principal of PSES. Although I do understand my position as the principal of the school under study could possibly impact participants responses and comments they choose to make. My intent with this case study was to identify the school improvement initiatives that staff perceived to impact student growth and achievement significantly and what they perceived that impact to be. The research findings could guide other SIG schools when they are navigating the systemic changes needed for equitable student growth and achievement in their school systems.

Summary

Chapter Three described the methodology and research design used to conduct this case study at Pine Street Elementary School, a turnaround school in Northern, Oregon. The purpose of this study was to answer the following research question: What are the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that are perceived

to impact growth in student achievement?” This study utilized a single case study (Creswell, 2015) with a mixed-method approach to learn more about the relationship between a shared leadership framework and student achievement at PSES. The DLRS included leadership dimensions based on the effective school’s research of Elmore’s model of distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000). The primary goals were to investigate to what degree the shared leadership dimensions were utilized at Pine Street Elementary School to impact student achievement.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the perceptions of participating staff at Pine Street Elementary School regarding factors of a shared leadership framework that contribute to growth in student achievement for a school implementing a SIG Turnaround Intervention Model. The participant pool consisted of two groups including both current and former staff members at PSES as well as MPSD instructional support staff and national school improvement consultants from LLC. For the purpose of this data analysis, the term *staff* is interpreted to mean members of both demographic groups. The term *principal* is reference to the participant-researcher in the case study. This chapter provides a description and analysis of the three sets of data collected using the DLRS and focus-group interviews with both groups. The chapter includes the data on return rate, research question, data addressing, and a summary of the findings.

Return Rate

Potential participants in this study were categorized into two distinct subgroups as identified in the demographic information collected on the survey instrument. Group A consisted of PSES teachers who provided instruction for students on a daily basis, and Group B was composed of MPSD instructional support staff, an ODE School Improvement coach, and national school improvement consultants. A total of 38 participants, both current and former teachers and instructional support staff who were initially a part of the implementation of the SIG, were invited to complete the DLRS survey. Thirty participants completed the survey and one participant partial completed the survey for a participation rate of 79%. Three additional former PSES certified

teachers not included in the total 38 participants were eligible to participate but could not be located at the time of the survey.

Willingness to participate in the focus groups was a question asked during the call for participation of the study interviews was indicated in the submission of the DLRS survey. Fifteen of the 31 participants volunteered to participate in the interviews; 9 were listed on the demographic information as teachers and 6 were recorded as instructional support staff. Based on participant's willingness, five representatives were randomly selected for a focus Group A (teachers) interviews, and five representatives were randomly selected for focus Group B (instructional support) interviews. Focus group interviews were conducted at the end of the school day, outside of participants required contract time.

At the time the focus group interviews were conducted, due to personal circumstances on the day of the interview, only four of the five members participated in each of the two focus groups sessions. Five of the other participants who had indicated a willingness to participate in the focus group interviews were then invited to participate in the focus group interviews but declined due to the short notice and other individual and family obligations. Of those who attended the focus groups, 100% participated. The average time to complete the interview was 19 minutes.

Selected Response Items

There were three sources of data with two different instruments used to gather data on the factors of a shared leadership framework that were perceived to impact growth in student achievement in a turnaround school. The data was collected and

analyzed in three parts and then coded for patterns and themes. The selected responses on the DLRS survey were used to identify the perceived factors of a shared leadership framework for each demographic group and provided a profile of the school readiness and engagement in leadership practices at PSES. The first two sections of the DLRS survey collected demographic data and 40 selected response items with a 5-point Likert scale. A copy of the DLRS survey instrument is located in Appendix D.

Demographics. Three demographic questions were asked of the participants to determine the number of years each respondent has worked in the education sector, the number of years each respondent has worked at PSES, and each respondent's primary area of responsibility at PSES. Table 3 shows the DSLR demographic data.

Table 3

Demographics of Respondents

Demographic	Number (%) of participants
<u>Total years in education</u>	
1-3	4 (13%)
4-6	8 (26%)
7 or more	19 (61%)
<u>Total years in this school</u>	
1-3	13 (42%)
4-6	12 (39%)
7 or more	5 (19%)
<u>Primary responsibility</u>	
Teacher	22 (71%)
Instructional support	9 (29%)

Selected Responses. The DLRS survey (see Appendix D) provided 40 selected response items designed to identify perceived factors of a shared leadership framework and respondent perceptions on school readiness and engagement in leadership practices. The mean and standard deviation for responses to each item of the DLRS were calculated for each item. Each DSLR item response used a flipped 5-point Likert scale representing a continuum of continually (A-1), frequently (B-2), sometimes (C-3), rarely/never (D-4), and insufficient (E-5) information. A total mean for all the items on the DLRS survey

was calculated. The total mean for this DLRS survey was 1.81 indicating most participant reoccurring responses were recorded as continually or frequently. Any of the DLRS survey items with a higher mean than the total average mean of 1.81 was considered high and any means with a score lower than the average mean was considered low. The average mean was also used when analyzing demographic information on the DLRS survey items with the Likert scale continuum of continually (A-1), frequently (B-2), sometimes (C-3), rarely/never (D-4), and insufficient (E-5) information. The mean and standard deviation was calculated to explore the dimensions of leadership in the school.

The standard deviation demonstrates the distribution of participants' responses from the average or means for each of the DLRS survey items. The standard deviation was calculated for each of the items on the DLRS surveyed. The average standard deviation for each of the DLRS survey items was 0.67. The DLRS survey items with a higher standard deviation than the total standard deviation indicate that the responses are further apart from the average or mean response. A low standard deviation indicates that most of the responses are close to the average or mean. There were 24 items with a low standard deviation on this survey, one item at the established standard deviation, and 15 items with a higher standard deviation. The values for the individual standard deviation ranged from 0.34 to 1.21. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the items on the DLRS survey.

Table 4

Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale Items Means and Standard Deviations

Item	DLRS Item	Mean	SD
1	The school has clearly written vision and mission statements.	1.55	0.61
2	Teachers and administrators understand and support a common mission for the school and can describe it.	1.74	0.72
3	If parents are asked to describe the school's mission, most would be able to describe the mission clearly.	3.06	0.76
4	If students are asked to describe the school's mission, most would be able to describe the mission generally.	2.90	0.89
5	School goals are aligned with its mission statement.	1.48	0.56
6	The school uses a school improvement plan as a basis to evaluate the progress.	1.23	0.55
7	Teachers and administrators collectively establish school goals and revise goals annually.	1.39	0.61
8	The school's curriculum is aligned with the state's academic standards.	1.26	0.44
9	Teachers and administrators have high expectations for students' academic performance.	1.52	0.56
10	Teachers and administrators share accountability for students' academic performance.	1.55	0.56
11	School and district resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most.	1.97	0.65
12	The school is a learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both successes and failures.	1.52	0.56
13	There is a high level of mutual respect and trust among the teachers and other professional staff in the school.	1.61	0.55
14	There is mutual respect and trust between the school administration and the professional staff.	1.74	0.67

15	The school administrator(s) welcome professional staff member's input on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and improving student performance.	1.61	0.66
16	The school supports using new instructional ideas and innovations.	1.61	0.49
17	The school's daily and weekly schedules provide time for teachers to collaborate on instructional issues.	1.61	0.66
18	School professionals and parents agree on the most effective roles parents can play as partners in their child's education.	2.58	0.75
19	The school clearly communicates the 'chain of contact' between home and school, so parents know whom to contact when they have questions and concerns.	1.94	0.72
20	The school makes available a variety of data (e.g., student performance) for teachers to use to improve student achievement.	1.26	0.44
21	Decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data.	1.77	0.83
22	There is a formal structure in place in the school (e.g., curriculum committee) to provide teachers and professional staff opportunities to participate in school-level instructional decision-making.	2.14	0.86
23	The principal actively encourages teachers and other staff members to participate in instructional decision-making.	1.58	0.61
24	Professional staff members in the school have the responsibility to make a decision that affects meeting school goals.	1.84	0.63
25	The school provides teachers with professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals.	1.83	0.64
26	Administrators participate alongside teachers in the school's professional development activities.	1.45	0.66
27	The principal actively participates in his/her own professional development activities to improve leadership in the school.	1.26	0.52
28	My supervisor and I jointly develop my annual professional development plan.	1.81	0.82

29	My professional development plan includes activities that are based on my individual professional needs and school needs.	1.55	0.66
35	The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.	1.87	0.79
28	My supervisor and I jointly develop my annual professional development plan.	1.81	0.82
29	My professional development plan includes activities that are based on my individual professional needs and school needs.	1.55	0.66
30	Teachers actively participate in instructional decision-making.	1.90	0.73
31	Central office and school administrators work together to determine the professional development activities.	2.58	1.21
32	The principal is knowledgeable about current instructional issues.	1.13	0.34
33	My principal's practices are consistent with his/her words.	1.32	0.47
34	Informal school leaders play an important role in the school in improving the performance of professionals and the achievement of students.	2.03	1.00
35	The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.	1.87	0.79
36	Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient school time to permit them to make meaningful contributions to the school.	2.19	1.03
37	Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient resources to be able to make meaningful contributions to the school.	2.10	0.96
38	Veteran teachers fill most leadership roles in the school.	2.61	0.55
39	New teachers are provided opportunities to fill some school leadership roles.	2.23	0.71
40	Teachers are interested in participating in school leadership roles.	2.10	0.59

Total	1.81	0.67
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As illustrated in Table 4 the values for the individual means ranged from 1.13 to 3.06. There were 18 items with a higher mean of 1.81, one item at the mean average of 1.81, and 21 items with a lower mean of 1.81. The range of possible responses was 1 through 5; therefore, the overall mean of 1.81 suggests that the prevalent response with regard to the leadership behaviors were recorded as continually or frequently.

The means and standard deviation were calculated for each of the four dimensions of the DLRS survey; mission, vision, and goals; school culture; shared responsibility; and leadership practices. The total mean for the DLRS was 1.81 and was used to group the dimension needs. Any of the four dimensions with a higher mean of 1.81 was considered a high mean and any of the four dimensions with a mean lower than 1.81 was considered a low mean. A high mean demonstrates a higher disposition or readiness for distributed leadership with the leadership dimensions in the DLRS survey. The standard deviation demonstrates the distribution of the responses for all items with the dimensions. The smaller the standard deviation, the closer the responses were to the mean. Each of the dimensions had a standard deviation less than 0.22 and demonstrated the low distribution of responses. Table 5 lists the four distributed leadership dimensions of the survey, the number of the survey items in each dimension, and the mean and standard deviation for each DLRS dimension.

Table 5

Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale Dimensions with Mean and Item Numbers (n=40)

DLRS dimensions item numbers	Mean	Standard deviation
Mission, vision, and goals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)	1.82	0.14
School culture (13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33)	1.57	0.13
Shared responsibility (9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22)	1.76	0.13
Leadership practices (25, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40)	2.17	0.22

Independent Sample *t*-Test and ANOVA. An independent sample *t*-test was calculated for each of the four DLRS dimensions to determine possible evidence of a significant difference between the two participant groups means. In Group A 22 participants recorded their primary responsibility as a teacher, and in Group B 9 participants recorded their primary responsibility as instructional support. The only DLRS dimension demonstrating a significant variation in means was mission, vision, and goals. Table 6 displays the comparison for the mission, vision, and goals dimension means and standard deviations for teachers and instructional support staff.

Table 6

Comparison DLRS Dimension Means for each Participant Group

Mission, vision, and goals means	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers	22	1.72	0.38
Instructional support	9	2.08*	0.48
School Culture	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers	22	1.50	0.39
Instructional support	9	1.74	0.35
Shared Responsibility	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers	22	1.74	.38
Instructional support	9	1.84	.38
Leadership Practices	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers	22	2.17	0.52
Instructional support	9	2.15	0.44

Note. * $p < .05$

An independent sample t-test revealed a mean difference of 0.36 with a t-score of 2.24 and a p-value ($p = .03$). This demonstrates a significant difference in responses for teachers and instructional support staff in the DLRS dimensions mission, vision, and goals.

The mean scores and standard deviations for the four DLRS dimensions were applied to determine if there were any significant differences between each DLRS

dimension and participants' total years in this school and total years in education. The first demographic question used in this analysis was total years in this school. The second demographic question used in this analysis was total years in education. An ANOVA table was used with both demographic subgroups to determine if there were any significant differences between multiple group means. A $p \leq .05$ was used to determine statistically significant findings

For each demographic question, the null hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis, and the ANOVA table are presented. Each table shows the DLRS dimensions, the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (*df*), the *F* statistic (*F*), and the significance. All three of these were used in the calculations to determine the significance level between the participant groups. The sum of squares shows the dispersion of data points between groups; *df* is the number of values in the final calculation of a statistic that are free to vary, and the *F* statistic is the ratio directly related to the group means and standard deviations. The larger the *F* value, the more likely it is to be statistically significant.

The null hypothesis for the DLRS dimensions and total years in this school was: H₀: There is not a significant difference between total years in this school and the scores on the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff. The alternate hypothesis for the DLRS dimensions and total years in this school was: H₀: There is a significant difference between total years in this school and the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff. Table 7 presents the ANOVA findings for the DLRS dimensions and total years in this school.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for DLRS Dimensions and Total Years in this School

DLRS dimensions items	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance*
Mission, vision, and goals	0.51	2	.13	.88
Shared Responsibility	0.79	2	.270	.77
School Culture	0.04	2	.130	.88
Leadership Practices	0.33	2	.669	.52

Note. * $p < .05$

The ANOVA results showed the null hypothesis to be accepted and the alternative hypothesis to be rejected. The findings showed there is not a significant difference between total years in this school and the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff participants on all four of the DLRS dimensions.

The null hypothesis for the DLRS dimensions and total years in education was:

H₀: There is not a significant difference between total years in education and the scores on the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff. The alternate hypothesis for the DLRS dimensions and total years in education was: H₀: There is a significant difference between total years in education and the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff. Table 8 presents the ANOVA findings for the DLRS dimensions and total years in education.

Table 8

ANOVA Results for DLRS Dimensions and Total Years in Education

DLRS dimensions items	Sum of Squares	<i>d</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance*
Mission, vision, and goals	0.19	2	.49	.62
Shared responsibility	0.05	2	.16	.85
School culture	0.11	2	.34	.72
Leadership practices	0.07	2	.04	.87

Note. * $p < .05$

The ANOVA results showed the null hypothesis to be accepted and the alternative hypothesis to be rejected. The findings showed there is not a significant difference between total years in education and the DLRS dimensions of teachers and instructional support staff participants on all four of the DLRS dimensions.

Written Response

The written response questions in part B of the DLRS survey instrument were questions informed by the literature on school culture, organizational efficacy, and shared leadership. These questions I designed to provide a point of triangulation for the data received from the selected response items.

The first question sought to determine participants' perspective on their role within the turnaround model with specific reference to leadership and asked participants, "Do you believe you are/were in a formal or an informal leadership role in the school? Explain why or why not." The second question was in two parts and sought participants'

responses to what they perceived had improved most in the school and what currently needed improvement. The questions asked, “In your opinion, what has improved most in the school? How do you know?” and “What currently needs the most improvement? How do you know?” In the third question, respondents were asked to consider the school and instruction environment during implementation of the turnaround model and identify changes to school improvement. The third question asked, “Consider the school and instructional environment. What changes have been made to address needed improvements? In the fourth question, respondents were asked to reflect on the school and instructional environment during implementation of the turnaround model and describe barriers to school improvement. The fourth question asked, “Describe aspects of the school and instructional environment that are the largest barriers to school improvement.”

The topic of the fifth question required the participants to provide a response regarding decision-making processes and their effect on student achievement at PSES. The fifth question asked, “Identify the formal and informal decision-making processes in the school. Do you believe these decision-making processes have affected student achievement in our school? Explain.” Finally, participants were asked to rank order their perception of the most impactful foundational practices and processes as recommended by the LLC in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (LLC, 2014). The sixth question asked, “Consider the nine foundational practices and processes (as recommended by the LLC) to improve the school and student achievement (listed below). Choose the three you consider most impactful in improving student achievement and rank order them with

the most impactful ranked as 1, the second most impactful as 2 and the third most impactful as 3.”

Leadership. There were 30 respondents to the first written response question, “Do you believe you are/were in a formal or informal leadership role? Explain why or why not.” Sixteen responders (53.3%) answered with a formal role, nine responders (30.0%) answered with an informal role, four responders (13.3%) answered with both, and one responder (3.3%) answered with neither formal nor informal. In response to the why or why not portion of the question, several recurring participant responses included the terms *leadership team*, *leadership committee*, *member*, and *decisions*. Participants defined their roles and positions, listed their leadership actions, and stated their reactions on what they felt or believed about what constituted leadership.

Of the 16 participants who responded with a perspective that they were in a formal leadership role, six used the word *member* to identify that they were part of the school’s leadership team or leadership committee. Participant (P04) used the word *member* and stated,

“I was in a formal role as a member of the Leadership Team and a Data Team Leader. I would consider this a formal role with fluidity. I know if I felt like I did not want the responsibility, my administrator would be understanding. I was able to be on the leadership team as a new classroom teacher, which gave me a vote of confidence and made me feel like my input was valued.”

Participant (P18) used the word *member* and specified:

Yes. Formally I serve as a member of the school's leadership team. The leadership team is comprised of teachers, administrators, and a state coach. The team works collaboratively with a focus on both the academic and social needs of the school.

Participant (P23) commented on their role as a member of the leadership team, "I am in a formal leadership role as I am a member of the leadership committee and am the appointed team leader for my grade." Participant (P24)'s response acknowledged they were formerly in the leadership and their decision-making role: "I was in a formal leadership role in the school as a member of the leadership team. The team met biweekly to examine data and make decisions." Participant (P25)'s statement indicates their role as a supporting staff member on the leadership team:

Yes, I have a leadership role in our school. I am a member of the school leadership team. I am also a new teacher mentor and a leader in grade level PLT work. I provide professional development to teachers in the building.

Finally, participant (P26) stated, "Yes. I am a member of the leadership team, and I love it!"

Nine participants responded with a perspective that they were in an informal leadership role. One of these participants used the word *member* to identify the informal role of the school's leadership team or leadership committee. These responders indicated their informal leadership role was due to "being in the building half of the year," "work at district level," "in the school as an advisor," "played an informal role," and "participated

in a committee.” Participant (P15) self-identified as having an informal leadership role, also commented with the word *member* about the school leadership team, and stated:

I believe that we have worked together to all informally take on a certain level of leadership in the school, working together as a team and bringing knowledge to your team based upon the committees you are on. However, I do feel that there is a hierarchy of leadership within level teams based on being a designated leadership member.

Participant (P06) recognized their role as informal, commented on the school leadership team, and stated, “I was not in a formal leadership role as I was not on the Leadership Team. I believe that I was by default then I am in [an] informal leadership role.”

Four participants responded with the perspective that they held both a formal and an informal leadership role at PSES. Three out of the four responses used the term *member* to describe their role. Participant (P13) shared their leadership responsibility as a leadership team member and as a member of their grade-level team and said, “Both. Formal, because I am a member of the leadership team, and informal because my teammates look to me for guidance/planning.” Participant (P17) and (P21) specified every staff member’s responsibility. Participant (P17) commented, “Each staff member is a member of at least one of the committees at Pine Street Elementary School so everyone is involved to some degree.” Finally, participant (P21) stated, “I feel all teachers are leaders in their own right, modeling positive examples for students and peers.”

Only one (P28) of the 30 participants who responded to this question stated they did not believe they held a formal or informal role in the school.

I do not believe I was in a formal or an informal leadership role in the school. Leadership roles were limited to who was on the Leadership Team. Three people seemed to make a great majority of decisions in the school, regardless of the Leadership Team, even reversing decisions made by other teams.

The fact that the word *member* was not used in this response implies that the respondent perceives lack of membership in a formal or informal team at PSES.

Improvements. The second written response question was in two parts and required participants to respond to what they perceived had improved most in the school and what needed to be improved. There were 30 respondents to part A and part B of question 2. All 30 responses included a reflection of improvement made with students, staff, and school systems. The reflections were stated considering students, staff, and school systems together, rather than independently.

In responding to the first part of question 2 about what, in their opinion, has improved most in the school, 14 participants (47%) included reflections on student improvement, 26 participants (87%) included reflections on staff improvements, and 17 participants (57%) included reflections on school systems improvements. In responding to the second part of question 2, on what needs improvement, 12 participants (40%) included reflections on needs for student improvement, 26 participants (60%) included reflections on improvements needed with staff, and 17 participants (47%) included

reflections on school improvements needed with systems. Recurring participant responses identified improvement with student academic achievement, belief in students' ability to show improvement, staff individual and collective self-efficacy to effectively utilize instructional practices that support student learning, and ways the school system supports a culture of communication and collaboration at PSES.

Student Improvement. Fourteen out of 30 participants included reflection on student improvements they believe have occurred during the implementation of the turnaround model. Seven of the 14 reflections identified improvement as an increase in student's "test scores," "reading," "DIBELS" (Dynamic Indicators Basic Early Literacy Skills) scores, "state testing," "performance scores," or more generally as "growth in academics." For example, participant (P18) stated:

There has been a marked improvement in two areas. The first, reading has been consistent improvement over the last three years. We have seen a school-wide increase in our DIBELS scores, as well as growth in our state testing scores.

Participant (30) specified, "Beginning reading skills have improved quite significantly in the school over the past three years (DIBELS data). Student growth is beginning to accelerate on the SBAC."

Other student areas identified as improving referenced students' outlook or mindset toward their learning. Five of the 14 reflections identified as improvements in students to include when they are "actively learning," "involved in their learning," have a "more positive outlook," "growth mindset," and when "students are learning what it

looks like for them to be successful.” Participant (P01) stated, “Not only can one observe and hear students actively learning in more classrooms, but the students are involved in their learning and don’t even notice when others have entered the room.”

Also identified by participants, as student improvement was student behavior. Four of the 14 comments identified that students’ conduct was improving. Reflections included remarks on “behavior,” “respect,” and “decrease in referrals and suspensions.” Participant (P12) stated, “Students are learning to respect and appreciate peers.” Participant (P02) summarized the improvements that have occurred with student behavior and how this change in conduct has led, in the participant’s view, to a change in academics. “We also have daily meetings in our classroom to promote a sense of a sense of classroom community. This has helped tremendously with behavior and therefore academics.” While it is not clear if the participant meant academic instruction, achievement or both, it is clear he or she felt behavior change had a positive effect on either one or both. Participant (P18) further commented on improvement with student behavior and an increase in attendance rates, “The measurable indicators of this growth would be the increase in our attendance rates, coupled with a dramatic decrease in referrals and suspensions.”

Staff Improvements. Twenty-six out of 30 participants included reflections on improvements made by staff. Eight of these 26 reflections identified staff improvements with instructional practices including “data-driven instruction,” “plan and access instruction,” “commitment to become better instructors,” “knowledge of what good instruction looks like,” “how to adjust instruction,” “collaborating on strong, purposeful

instruction,” and “instructional expectations.” Participant (P29) summarized the improvement with instructional practices by stating, “Our instruction across the board. We are making our reading, math, language, and writing purposeful to our students.”

Participant (P22) stated:

Commitment to excellence. Knowledge of what good instruction looks like, how to adjust instruction to meet the needs of the students. I know this because you can hear it and see it in the building. Once Pine Street got systems in place, teachers were freed up to collaborate on strong, purposeful instruction.

This participant statement also addresses another improvement for staff regarding collaboration.

Six of the 29 comments defined improvements with instructional practices as improvement in staff collaboration. Participant remarks included, “learning collaborative structures,” “collaborative grade-level teams,” and “collaborate on strong, purposeful instruction.” Participant (P14) shared what he or she does during collaboration, remarking, “I believe the collaboration between grade team members has improved greatly over the last four years. I know this because our team regularly collaborates to plan and organize lessons.” Participant (P17) stated how collaboration is used during professional development. “I think collaboration is something that has improved in our school. Participation in PLT’s has been huge, as well as [the] professional development [program] which implement real-life collaboration [about] curriculum between colleagues.”

Nine of the 30 comments identified staff improvements defined as improvement in the staffs approach to developing a positive school culture. Participant (P08) observed a change in the sense of belongingness for students and staff, “The school is now an exciting, welcoming, and supportive place to be. It is a place students, parents, and teachers want to be a part of.” Participant (P02) commented on their perceived change with the collective approach of staff to support students: “Our school culture has improved the most in our school. We really have a sense of ‘our kids’ and not ‘my kids.’ We strive to meet all of our students’ needs no matter what class they are in.” Participant (P01) also shared the change they have noticed in the school’s culture with a difference in the staff’s perceptions on their self-efficacy with instruction. “The school culture is moving toward a more active collective efficacy. People have gained greater confidence in the practices that help student learning.”

There were 13 out of 26 participant responses that spoke further on staff improvement specifically regarding self-efficacy and organizational efficacy previously defined in this research as essential to school improvement reform efforts. Reflections about students and teachers believing in themselves (self) and together as a school (organization) believing they can accomplish goals. Participant (P16) stated:

The level of trust and commitment to become better instructors is what makes this school so great. I cannot count the number of times I had instructional leaders come into my classroom to offer support and suggestions on ways I could improve my practice...Our PLC creates

specific goals to help support all students, and we review the data in depth at the end of each unit to determine ways we could improve next time.

Participant (P10) compared their viewpoint on the difference of staff's past mindset to their perceived sense of increased self-efficacy. "Culture, it has gone from a low morale, low expectations for learning to high expectations that kids will learn and teachers will do what it takes to get them to grade level and achieving." Participant (12) made a similar comment, but also included their thoughts on the change they have observed with students and the school's organizational-efficacy towards a shared purpose. Participant (P12)'s response included, "School culture is strong; teachers support each other, teachers support their students, and students are learning to respect and appreciate peers. Where once there was confusion and apathy, there is now focus and purposeful action toward shared goals and student success."

School Systems. In responding to what has improved most in the school, participants identified 17 systems in terms of the school's operational structures, practices, and infrastructure improvements. Ten of 17 participant responses included improved systems for instructional support at PSES. Intentionally developed and implemented systems for staff to support student learning involved "classroom observations," "common planning time," and "attendance protocols." Participant (P16) commented, "My team met often to review video of ourselves teaching the same lesson to find ways we could improve our teaching." Participant (P20) stated, "There is a common academic language that includes a continual focus on student success. This has

occurred over time through all of the common planning time and school improvement work.”

Participants also responded with system improvements based on how decisions were being communicated within the school. There were three out of 17 comments that focused on improvements made through shared decisions. Participant (P12) commented on the change in the structure of shared decision-making with members of staff who now include representatives from the entire school:

Where there was once a ‘leadership team,’ in name only, there is now a fully functioning Leadership Team made up of representatives from every grade level and specialist who make critical decisions together for the benefit of students.

Indicative of the change in decision-making, participant (P13) stated, “A few years ago, the administrator and a few select people made most instructional decisions. Now, those decisions are shared with most staff. Others’ opinions are welcomed and considered.” In response to what informs decision, participant (P11) commented, “The focus on data-driven instruction; it is the cornerstone of the work we do at East.”

Addressing the organization’s new level of efficacy, participant (P15) stated, “I feel that the community of teacher is much stronger, we are all on the same team, all caring for all of the students in the school and being an advocate for them.” Participant (P12)’s final comments summarized past system practices to current systems focused on self-efficacy and organizational efficacy. “Where there was once a fractured staff, all in ‘private

practice,' there are now collaborative grade-level teams that work to plan and assess instruction.”

Needs Improvement. The second part of question 2 asked, “What currently needs the most improvement? How do you know?” There were 30 responders to part B of question 2, and all 30 responses included a reflection of improvements needed in reference to the same categories as for where improvements had been made—namely, students, staff, and school systems. As with the previous responses to the first part of the question, reflections to part two were stated in combining students, staff, and school systems rather than each in isolation.

Student Improvements Needed. Twelve out of 30 participants included comments and recommendations for improvements needed for students. Each identified at least one area where an increase in student academic achievement was necessary, including “interactive learning,” “writing and written comprehension,” “improve their math abilities,” and continue with focusing on reading “as we have not yet hit our goal.” Participant (P07) mentioned specific content area students needed to improve in and also identified a subgroup of students that needed the most improvement in this area. “Students need to improve their math abilities. I know this because our math scores were lower than our Language Arts scores. English Language Learners especially seem to struggle with math concepts.” Student growth in reading is still an identified area of improvement as illustrated by these reflections from Participant (P25) who stated, “Many of our students involved in interventions have not made the growth expected.” Participant (P18)’s perspective included academic achievement for students in all core content areas

needed to demonstrate growth: “While we have closed the gap in reading, we are consistently behind the state average in math. Writing is also an area of need.”

Five of 12 student improvement comments identified student behavior as an area for development. Recommendations suggested the need for “changes of student rules-expectations,” “techniques to self-regulate,” and to develop a plan for the “students that disrupt.” Participant (P06) stated, “These kids need a different approach to [help] them make better choices and engage in academics.” Participant (P06) shared a need for “A more effective response to chronic behavior (top 5%) than Restorative Justice.” Participant (P20) recommended providing support for students with methods to regulate their behavior: “Children need to learn more techniques to self-regulate there moments of extreme emotion. There are still a large number of students who do not have the skills to control their own behavior impulses and mood swings.”

Staff Improvements Needed. Eighteen out of 30 participants included reflections on improvements needed for staff. Eight of these 18 comments identified teaching staff instructional practices that need further development. The practices address direct instruction, supports for students, staff communication and assessment of instruction indicated by comments including: “rigor of instruction,” “improve the way we provide intervention to students,” “a collaboration between grade level teams,” and the need for staff to use “evidence-based decisions for student achievement” Beyond simply meeting “how” and “when” teachers collaborate was also a recommendation for improvement as indicated by the comment from participant (P14): “While grade level teams are collaborating together, what I think needs to improve is the collaboration between

different grade level teams. We should be collaborating with each team above and below our grade level.” Participant (P01), summarized perceptions of improvements needed by staff:

Continue the work of collective efficacy, growth mindset for adults and students, collecting valid and reliable evidence of learning and instructional practices that are 80/20—student interactive learning to teacher direct instruction. The [work of] collective efficacy [and] collaborative work yields high student achievement. A growth mindset for adults and students... is what builds the culture. Finding the root cause inside student learning evidence comes from effective teacher learning teams. Finally improving student learning is a direct result of improved instructional practices.

Staff communication, specifically with parents, was identified in four of the 12 staff improvement comments citing the need for staff to partner with families to support their students academically and socially. Participant (P29) stated, “We need to reach out to families more often and show them the data. Many of our students are not at grade level; we need to help parents help their child at home by giving them reading strategies/tips.” Participant (P26) commented on their recommendations to making families feel valued and how to support their students. “Our families need to know they are valued, and we need to teach them how to support their students.” Participant (P19) also proposed the need to communicate with families and the need to work with parents to develop an academic mindset in their students. “We need to improve our

communication with our families. We need to instill more of an academic drive in our students, and families must adapt this type of [growth] mindset too.” Finally, participant (P12) also suggested that communication needed to be two-way. “The area I see as needing the most improvement is a classroom to home communication, and possibly a home to classroom loop back to the teacher.”

Improved communication between staff in varying roles was also cited as an area in need of improvement. As an example, participant (P09) stated that the interaction between the administrators and others with different roles within the school needed improvement. Two of the 12 staff improvements specified:

Some staff are uncomfortable with [the principal’s] leadership and are scared of her. They have seen other staff members being singled out and targeted by [her] and they are afraid that they will be next. There are not many opportunities for others to show leadership except for [the principal]. The trust and respect is not mutual.

A second statement from participant (P28) indicated that communication between staff members needs improvement and he or she identified barriers existing within a hierarchical power structure: “Improved communication between different roles within the school hierarchy would be beneficial to decrease mixed messages to students and parents (and staff).”

System Improvements Needed. Fourteen of 30 participants included perceptions on improvements needed for school organization systems and aspects of day-to-day operation that influence school culture. Eight of the 14 comments identified the need for

improved systems to develop a sense of belongingness for students, staff, and families, communication, and structures to support consistent behavioral expectations for students. These systems and structures contribute to school culture, including developing “collaborative structures,” “guidelines for shared decision-making” and “systems in place to support student academic needs.” and “effective response to chronic behavior.”

In seven of the 14 comments, participants included their perspective on improvement needed with communication. Participant (P13) mentioned the need for a home to school involvement: “Very few families participate in leadership or decision-making, and more should be involved in the processes.” Participant (P12) shared how this belongingness could occur with more consistent communication with families and stated, “Parents have expressed the desire to have more information about what is happening in their student's classrooms on a regular basis. They also want to know what they can do at home to help.”

Written responses also included recommendations for systematic improvements for how information is communicated to staff as part of the school improvement process. Participant (P17) stated, “I think communication could be improved. Information is often disseminated, but the information is often changing. Sometimes it is difficult to always know what is expected and how to implement those expectations.” How information is shared was perceived to be important by participants. Participant (P10) recommended starting with communicating a vision for PSES and said, “Developing a strong mission and vision that is articulated to all. What guides the school and all decision making needs

to be established, similar to decision rules but guidelines that guide the how and why for Pine [Street].”

A school system to support positive behavior outcomes for students and the learning environment for students and staff was also in five of the 14 school system improvement responses. Participant (P21) stated, “Behavioral supports are a major area in need of improvement. A lot of time, energy, and personnel resources were utilized last year in order to support students' emotional and behavioral needs.” Participant (P23) also mentioned the need to invest in a schoolwide system to support staff’s approach to chronic behavior:

The mindset towards students and their behaviors, I feel like there are a lot of staff members who will instantly write off a “problem” student instead of investing time into the student to gain a better understanding of what they need in order to be successful in the school community.

The topic of the DSLR second question was in two parts and gave the participants an opportunity to respond to what they perceived had improved most in the school and what needed to be improved in the school. All 30 responses included a reflection of improvement made with students, staff, and school systems. Table 9 summarizes the participants’ most frequent reoccurring responses on identified improvements and needs improvements with student, staff, and school systems.

Table 9

Identified Improvements and Needs Improvement with Students, Staff, & School Systems

Participant	Improvements	Needs improvement
Students	Academics (reading) Growth mindset Behavior	Academics (math & writing) Behavior
Staff	Instructional practices Collaboration Culture Self-efficacy	Instructional practices Collaboration Communication Collective-efficacy
School systems	Instructional supports Shared decisions Student behavior	Communication Sense of belonging Student behavior

Analysis of the data also showed participant perceptions of what has improved most in the school, the greatest number of improvements that were perceived by participants had occurred with staff, followed by school systems, and finally improvements from students. When analyzing the data on what currently needs the most improvement, the same pattern emerged. Among participant perceptions of what *needed the most improvement* within the school, the greatest number of improvements needed that were perceived by participants were directed at staff, followed by school improvements systems needed, and finally improvement needed for students.

Environmental Improvements. Write-in questions 3 and 4 were developed to obtain the participant perspective of the school and instructional environment. Thirty participants responded to both questions 3 and 4.

Question 3 asked participants to “Consider the school and instructional environment. What changes have been made to address needed improvements?” Six participants (20%) reflected only on school environment improvements. Ten participants (33%) reflected only on instructional environment improvements. Fourteen participants (47%) reflected on both school and instructional environmental improvements. Participant responses included their perceptions on modifications made to the building’s overall “aesthetics work” and the increased use of “effective instructional practices” including “teacher collaboration” to provide the infrastructure needed for school improvement. Participants provided examples of how these changes influenced both the school environment and the instructional environment in the school’s turnaround improvement efforts. Thirty participants responded to both parts of question 3.

Six of the 30 participants considered the changes that were made to the physical attributes of the school environment. These participants shared modifications made to enhance the appearance of the school building. Participant (P01) stated, “The physical environment got new bright paint, clutter was removed, new bulletin boards were installed to display student work and the names of each hallway ties to learning.” This reference to the overall visual look of the school environment was also shared by participant (P08), who noted how “the aesthetic work [including] paint, bulletin boards, carpets” changed the overall building appearance for students and staff. Adding technology was also listed as a component of the changes made to the school’s physical environment. Participant (P17) stated, “The purchase of new technology [including]

Chromebook carts [and] smart boards will also improve our ability to make technology more accessible for all students.”

Ten of the 30 participants identified changes and modifications that were made to the school’s infrastructure and school systems at the beginning of the school improvement initiative. At the beginning of the turnaround process, there were several grade-level teachers with classrooms located in different hallways. Participant (P08) shared, “classrooms were strategically moved” or relocated to allow grade-level classrooms to be in closer in proximity to each other. Grade-level teams were now located nearer to each other and often in the same hallway. Participant (P06) stated how relocating classrooms “support[ed] traffic flow” of students. Other school environment changes that were addressed by participants included operational system changes to improve day-to-day functioning of students and staff. Participant (25) indicated, “Staff has been given a clear master schedule with block time for all core subject areas.” Participant (P10) noted how “creating schedules allowed [time] for teacher collaboration.”

Participant responses for changes in the school’s systems also included an adjustment in student support services in Special Education and the adoption of Restorative Justice practices to support schoolwide behavior. Student support services modified their systems to assist students with Individual Educational Plans. Participant (P21) stated, “The special education department has completely changed its organization, and a behavioral support team has been created.” Participant (P04) noted a change in how

student's behavior was addressed schoolwide with "behavior expectations training, and implementation of Restorative Justice and community circles."

Eighteen out of the 30 responses reflected on the instructional changes made during the school improvement process. New curriculum resources were listed for both early reading and most recent math adoption. Participant (P18) identified how this change would benefit students' academic growth, "We have a new math adoption that will help address the needs of our students and should close the current gap over time." One participant also shared their perception on not just about what teachers understand regarding instructional practices, but how they implement those instructional practices. Participant (P27) responded, "Teachers of each grade level have aligned their instruction, so we provide an equitable educational experience for all students. Participant (P29) clarified their perspective on the importance of implementation of effective instruction and stated, "We continue to have discussions and PD's [professional development] about what's working [for students] and what's not. We also differentiate instruction for all our students to meet their learning needs." The use of utilizing student performance data to modify their instruction as a consistent practice used by teachers and teams was shared by participant (P12), who stated, "Changes made to address needed school improvement have included the development of assessments literacy, especially in the of data to inform instruction." Participants also reflected how these instructional changes were implemented collaboratively rather than individually to support learning for all students. Participant (P11) defined this modification of instructional practice by stating, "We have

focused on school culture, the data team process, and the layout of learning progression/success criteria to ensure that the learning is visible.”

Participants’ reflections also included examples of changes with specific instructional strategies from past teaching practices that are now implemented regularly. Participant statements often were not what they were doing individually in their classrooms but as a collective group of teachers. Participant (P05) stated, “[Teachers are] focusing on learning targets, goals and outcomes and how things are taught.” Reflections on how school improvement changes were made together to engage their students included a response from participant (P02) who stated, “We [teachers] have also talked extensively on depth of knowledge questions and how to instill deeper understanding in math and reading. Many teachers have implemented asking more meaningful questions so that students may start transferring their knowledge.” Participant (P04) also summarized their response not just by sharing an individual change in instructional practices, but also by expressing thoughts on how facility at PSES will continue to improve. “With more practice and coaching, educators will keep improving their instruction and student outcomes.” Two participants (P14) mentioned how those instructional strategies would continue to be implemented with “consistency in our teaching practices and routines” and participant (P10) said by “establishing clear and high expectations.”

Five out of the 18 participants referenced collaboration as an instructional change in practice implemented during the school improvement process to address student achievement. Participants’ responses included how teachers “implement collaboration” in

“grade level team” to support new instructional practices utilized during the school improvement process. (P12) commented on collaboration as a change in practice with the “creation of collaborative professional learning teams at all grade levels.” Participant (P25) was specific about the type of instructional practices occurring in these grade-level team collaboration sessions, saying, “Extra time has been set aside weekly for teachers to meet in grade level teams to plan standards-based units, analyze data and design interventions.” Time for the newly established leadership team to regularly meet together was also stated as a change in practice during the school improvement process.

Participant (P01) shared, “In the last three years school and instructional environment has been the main focus. Each school improvement plan, data teams, leadership team meetings spent time in these areas.” The leadership team role in the school improvement process referenced by participant (P22) was to set “clear expectations from leadership.”

Eight out of the 18 participant responses listed professional development as a change to both school and instructional practices during the school improvement process. Participants referenced professional development as “relevant,” “directly related to the needs of the building” and “designed around teacher needs. Participant (P04) mentioned how the delivery of how the “relevant professional development” was delivered with “coaching” support and with “necessary and beneficial resources” for teachers. A similar comment regarding professional development with the appropriate resources for delivery of new instructional practices was stated by participant (P12) who said, “Changes made to address needed school improvement have included... new curriculum and a lot of professional development,” and further clarified, “PD, PD and more PD.” Participant

(P25) indicated the type of professional development staff received: “Professional development has been designed around teacher needs.”

Environmental Barriers. Question 4 asked participants to “Describe aspects of the school and instructional environment that in your view are the largest barriers to school improvement.” Seventeen participants (57%) reflected on school environment improvement barriers. Seven participants (23%) reflected on instructional environment improvement barriers. Six participants (20%) reflected on both school and instructional environment improvement barriers. Participants reoccurring responses included their perceptions of the “physical barriers of the school,” “life experiences” students experience outside of the instructional day, and the “fixed mindset by some staff.” Participants provided examples of how these changes hindered learning for students and instruction for teachers in the school’s turnaround improvement efforts.

Four out of 30 participants listed that the physical structure of the school was a barrier to the school improvement efforts of staff. The school was built in 1950 and originally designed as a middle school. Participant (P08) stated, “The building is very old, and the layout does not support collaboration for students or teams [and there is] no creative space.” Participant (P05) also stated their opinion on the structure of the school building but appeared to be more optimistic for future changes due to the passage of the MPSD bond that will allow PSES funding for a new building, saying, “I also believe that the physical structure of the school impedes the progress of our students. Luckily that will be fixed in the next couple of years.”

Time was also stated by 7 of the 30 participants as a barrier to school improvement. Participant (P29) shared the lack of flexibility in the schedule for more time to building relationship with their students, “[There is] not enough time to build relationships with our kids. Our schedule isn't flexible, and I feel like I don't have time to connect with all my students because I need to stay on schedule.” Participant (P24) also listed what they would do with this time, not in isolation, but with colleagues “more time [was needed] for teachers to collaborate.” Participants also shared what took up too much of their time and recommended changes for school improvement. Participant (P14) stated how student behavior was interfering with the limited instructional minutes they had with students. “The amount of time that is lost dealing with behavior issues of a few students. With our class sizes routinely in the high twenties or low thirties, we all are constantly losing valuable instructional minutes dealing with behavioral problems.”

Thirteen of the 30 participants listed environmental factors students experience outside of the instructional day as barriers to the school improvement process. Examples of these environmental barriers included student’s high mobility rate, second language spoken in the home, high poverty, childhood trauma, and lack of parent involvement. Participant (02) shared their perspective of the barriers students at PSES experience outside of school, stating:

I feel as if the largest barrier in our school improvement is our student movement. We have a high population of move ins and move outs. Our intact students have a firm grasp on what school expectations are. They understand what is expected of them and are familiar to the routines and

practices that are in place. Because we have such high movement, we are constantly teaching (or re-teaching which is sometimes the case) students these routines and expectations, which can sometimes stall learning.

The majority of the student population experiencing poverty and a second language spoken in the home was also indicated as a barrier for students and their families. Participant (P19) stated, “Our student population is perhaps the largest barrier [with] high poverty, language and cultural barriers [being] the most difficult to overcome.” Another participant commented on their perspective of the difficulty of communication due to the language difference between home and school. Participant (P27) shared, “The biggest barrier I face is communication with parents that speak a language other than English. It's important for parents and teachers to communicate, but the language barrier often makes this difficult or impossible to achieve.”

Other environmental factors students experience outside of the instructional day that participants perceived as a barrier to school improvement was a parent's lack of involvement in school activities and the lack of communication between home and school. Participants shared the attempts that were made to connect with families, but still experience a disconnection between home and school. Participant (P18) specified, “Despite several attempts through a variety of avenues, we struggled with parent involvement.” Participants identified their repeated efforts to continue to reach out to parents but still found it difficult. Participant (P04) shared, “Connecting to the families has always been a challenge. Continually finding more ways to include family participation and parent involvement would be helpful; however, many people in the

community population struggle to prioritize involvement in their child's school.”

Connecting home to school was shared in this research as way to support positive change in the school culture. Participant (P26) referenced unifying home with school and stated, “Families and educators need to work as teams.” One participant’s perceived barrier to this home to school connection was the family’s home language. Participant (P27) shared, “The biggest barrier I face is communication with parents that speak a language other than English. It's important for parents and teachers to communicate, but the language barrier often makes this difficult or impossible to achieve.”

Participant (P16) summarized the school environmental barriers students experience outside of the instructional day, which they perceived impedes learning.

Some of our students have gone through some pretty traumatic life experiences. Last year I had students who had parents pass away, parents they (students) were no longer in contact with because of domestic abuse, foster situations, homelessness, and multiple moves in one year due to lack of affordable housing. Many have parents working multiple jobs to try ‘to make ends meet,’[sic] so students are asked to keep an eye on younger siblings and don't always have an adult to read to each night. Different stresses from home can make concentrating in school difficult. This is not to say they can't do it, but it does have an impact on their learning.

The staff's mindset on their student's ability to achieve was also listed as a school improvement barrier, stated by six of the 30 participants. Participant (P23)'s noted a possible reason for this disconnect and stated,

In my opinion the largest barrier to school improvement is people—if one person is not on board or develops a negative attitude about something, then it taints the entire school. As the faculty, it starts with us and the attitudes and efforts we put towards the improvement—and if we are not willing, then it will not happen.

All of the participant's reflections on mindset in question 4 referenced the perceived mindset of other staff rather than their own beliefs. Participant (P10) stated, "Some staff members not truly believing all kids can and will learn." Participant (12) identified this mindset as being set or fixed. They indicated that a barrier to improvement was, "[A] fixed mindset by some staff members who may not believe that all students can learn and excel. Participant (P12) further explained, "While we are working on this, it is difficult adaptive change, which can sometimes take more time than we would like." This mindset was defined by (P13) as a shared-buy in. They specified, "A shared buy-in of ALL staff towards our common goal, or a growth mindset. I believe most staff do believe in our students, but all of us have some work to do (and always will)."

The third and fourth written response questions gave the participants an opportunity to respond on their perspectives of the school and instructional environment. Table 10 summarizes the participants' most frequent reoccurring responses on identified changes and barriers in improvements for the school and instructional environment.

Table 10

Identified Changes/Barriers in Improvement of the School and Instructional Environment

Environment	Improvement changes	Improvement barriers
School	Building aesthetics School schedule Behavior supports	Building aesthetics Time
Instructional	Instructional practices Collaboration Professional development	Student life experiences Fixed mindset of staff

Decision-Making. Question 5 asked respondents to identify the decision-making processes both formal and informal and determine if they perceived these processes affected student achievement in the school. Of the 30 responders, 10 participants (33.3%) identified formal decision-making examples. Eleven participants (36.6%) identified informal decision-making examples. The remaining 9 participants (30.01%) did not specify whether the examples they provided were formal or informal, and therefore may need to be considered separately or assigned to one of the categories based on similarity to other examples that were classified.

Formal decision-making. Participants perceived formal decision-making processes in the school to include those undertaken by identified teams. Participants felt that an effect on student achievement depended on what decisions these teams made, and what priorities were identified for the school. Eight of the 10 participants referenced deliberations by the leadership team as a formal process for decision-making. Both

formal and informal decision-making was referenced by participants as being a team activity rather than one conducted in isolation.

The leadership team's functions were perceived to include, "decision-making across the building," acting as data team teachers," and the group that "prioritizes student outcomes," look[s] over data," and "make[s] decisions that affect students." Participant (P01) summarized identified functions of the leadership team and other acting decision-making bodies stating, "Formally there are the Leadership Team, PBIS [team], grade-level teams, acting also as data team teachers in their classrooms, and the attendance team functioning in decision-making [roles] across the building." Participant (P16) identified some processes the leadership team and other school-based decision-making teams implement that are perceived to affect student achievement, remarking:

Formal decision-making processes that affect student achievement include; PLC units, team planning to create equitable classrooms, filming ELA lessons to review instructional routines as a team and creating end of year goals based on the benchmark scores.

Participants also referenced the formal role of the principal with the leadership team for shared decision-making. Participant statements were made indicating the decisions were collaboratively developed with the principal and the leadership, as shared by participant (P22):

[The] principal has established a framework of how the school works. Teachers work within that framework, often with their team, to make instructional decisions. Many guiding issues are worked through the

leadership group. The organization, systems, and clear guidelines have all contributed greatly to the steady improvement in student achievement.

Formally the school administrator consistently enlists the help of the leadership team, as well as the SWPRD (PBIS) team when making decisions that impact the school when appropriate.

There was a different perspective from another participant who indicated that these decisions were made together with the principal and the leadership team, but then the final approval for these decisions came from the principal. Participant (P05)'s written response indicated, "From my viewpoint, the decision-making processes are usually made from/by the different committees that we have established and then approved by the Principal."

Informal Decision-Making. Participants perceived informal decision-making processes in the school to include staff that contributes informally as individual staff members to the decision-making process through their actions, when and how they occur, and through individual decision-making in their classrooms. Eleven (36.6%) of the 30 participants referenced a variety of contributors in the school's informal decision-making process that they felt affect student achievement. These contributions include "all levels of administration, faculty, and support staff," "members of the PLC's," "classroom communities," and "behavior and attendance" team members.

In the view of some participants, informal decision-making includes daily formative "decisions based on current data about student outcomes," and "working with our teams to make small adjustments to our instruction." These decisions can and do

occur as indicated in a comment from (P01): “Informally conversations are had on a daily basis that impact student achievement during book studies, hallway chats, observation debriefing times and feedback between students and student with teachers.” These informal decisions can also occur during planning and data team time as perceived by participant (P04): “Instructors make informal [decision] during data team and planning time, although they have most success when working together in a thoughtful, systematic way. Participant (P05) observed that the school’s informal decision-making structure had a positive impact:

I believe that the informal process is done by the staff approaching the committee members with certain ideas and information they gather from day to day observances and practices. It appears to have a direct effect. Problems/difficulties arise, a plan of action is decided upon, that plan is put into place, and then data is gathered to see if the action is working or not.

The fifth written response question gave the participants an opportunity to respond on their perspectives about the formal and informal decision-making processes in the school. Table 11 summarizes the participants’ most frequent reoccurring responses on identified decision-making processes that have affected student achievement at Pine Street Elementary School.

Table 11

Identified Formal & Informal Decisions Effecting Student Achievement

Process	Formal Decisions	Informal Decisions
Roles	Identified leadership teams	Teachers and support staff
Responsibilities	School improvement planning	Curriculum design & lesson study
	Analyzing school performance data	Analyzing student performance data
	Determining school academic goals	Determining student academic goals

Foundational Practices. The sixth written response question referenced the nine Foundational Practices as recommended by the LLC to improve school systems to support academic achievement and determine the school professional practice of performance. These nine Foundational Practices are divided into three broad areas including accountability practices, classroom practices, and school practices and are listed in the LLC Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). The Foundational Practices were utilized by teachers and instructional support staff as a benchmark tool to determine how the school was performing at the beginning, middle, and end of three-year contract with LLC from the fall of 2014 to the spring of 2017. Scores reported by LLC in the CNA ranged from exemplary, proficient, progressing, and not yet for each of the nine Foundational Practices and their subcategories.

Participants reviewed the Foundational Practices data semi-annually as recorded in the CNA reported by LLC to support the development of yearly school improvement goals. The sixth written questions asked participants to consider the nine foundational

practices and choose the three they consider most impactful in improving student achievement. The responses to the question are detailed in Table 12.

Table 12

LLC Foundational Practices Perceived to Improve Student Achievement in Rank Order

	Ranked	Ranked	Ranked
Foundational practices for school improvement	1	2	3
Accountability practices			
Planning, building, implementing, and monitoring Leadership teams	1	1	1
Decision-making for results and Instructional data teams	6	6	7
Classroom practices			
Standards-based curriculum	2	2	1
Research-based instruction	3	5	6
Formative assessment	0	4	2
Literacy across the content areas	2	4	4
School practice			
Learning environment and school culture	15	4	4
Professional learning	0	3	1
Student, parent, and community engagement	1	1	4
Total	30	30	30

Participants ranked the learning environment and school culture categorized under school practice 15 times out of 30 most often as the number one Foundational Practice they consider most impactful in improving student achievement. Participants ranked decision-making for results and instructional data teams categorized under accountability

practices 6 times out of 30 most often as the number two and 7 times out of 30 most often as the number three Foundational Practice they consider most impactful in improving student achievement.

Interviewed Responses

Part C of the data collection process included formal interviews with two focus groups. Each focus group contained four members from the two demographic categories listed on the DLRS survey who indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up focus group discussions. Group A consisted of PSES teachers (kindergarten teacher, fourth grade teacher, fifth grade teacher, and an English language teacher) and Group B was composed of MPSD instructional support staff (ODE instructional coach, MPSD Title I Director, behavior support teacher, and the school instructional coach). When responding to the interview questions participants identified themselves as participant one, participant two, participant three, and participant four. It is not known by the researcher for this study the official role of the participant responding in either Group A and Group B other than the general demographic information as categorized on the DLRS survey instrument, teacher or instructional support.

Questions for the interview focus groups were informed by Parts A and Parts B of the DLRS aggregate survey data. The interview questions were designed to clarify the perceptions of participating staff regarding “What are the factors of a shared leadership framework of a turnaround school that is perceived to impact growth in student achievement?” Interview participants were invited to respond to six prompts:

1. The importance of membership in determining their roles as a leader.

2. School improvement practices that influenced professional learning.
3. School-level factors perceived to have influenced student achievement.
4. The value teachers place on parent's efficacy for their children to achieve and the importance of similar expectations for children at home and at school.
5. The culture at PSES.
6. The culture of decision-making at PSES.

For the purposes of presenting the focus group data, responses to these prompts by both focus groups were considered together with difference between focus groups identified as needed.

Membership. Seven of the eight interview participants (87.5%) responded to the first interview question. One participant in Group B did not respond. The first question started with this statement, "Many of the Distributed Leadership Readiness Survey participants responded to the survey stating the importance of membership in a formal leadership group at PSES in determining their role as a leader." Following the statement, interview participants were asked, "Can you be an instructional leader without being a member of a formal team at Pine Street Elementary School? And if so, how?" The interviewed participants stated their agreement or disagreement followed by their perspective of instructional leadership in the school.

All of the seven interviewed participants who responded agreed that various staff members could be instructional leaders without officially being members of a formal team. Participants identified specific examples of instructional leadership at PSES as evidence of their belief. One participant from Group A stated, "I absolutely think you can

be an instructional leader without being on a formal team. For example, we did not have a representation of a first-grade teacher on the leadership team last year but they [first grade teachers] within themselves there was leadership, so they demonstrated that it was doable without being part of a formal team.” A participant from Group B shared:

I feel like at least in my team in my hallway I feel like we do have that. I feel like even though one of us is on a formal team, it does not necessarily mean that that person is always the leader in what we decide to go with it or in our grade level

Other instructional leadership examples that focus group participants mentioned were identified by role, such as the school counselor, Title I teacher, language teachers, and our instructional education assistants. One participant from Group A stated, “I think the previous and the present (school) counselor have both integrated systems in the school in terms of recognition for students that show leadership.” Another interviewed participant from Group A shared their perspective on the current Title I teacher, stating:

I believe she is not a member of the leadership team. She brings a great wealth of knowledge and information and is not afraid to share it, and I think the culture around here allows her to feel that she can.

The same participant went on to say, “I have also noticed that both of the ELD teachers [are] acting in instructional leadership roles even though they both are not represented on the team.” Non-certified staff members, specifically educational assistants (EAs) who provide small group instruction daily to students needing additional support in reading, were also identified as instructional leaders. A participant in Group B specified:

I think back to when we just had our Tier Two meetings, and it included not just the teachers but the EA's from Title and the Title I teacher which was new to us this year having EA's in there. And so I think that there are those opportunities to have some instructional input across school levels.

Focus group participants identified detailed actions performed by instructional leaders both in grade level teams and in schoolwide activities. A participant in Group A shared, "During Wednesday's PLT [Professional Learning Teams] meeting they are giving instructional suggestions or input on students or helping analyze data." One participant in Group B stated, "[Everyone has] an opportunity to contribute to your grade level team and beyond. Like when we have our staff meetings in the morning we do share-outs." Finally, one interviewed participant in Group A shared a nonacademic leadership role reference:

I know that there is one teacher who does a lot with social in and out of school with staff. I think that person is on a team, but I think that there are just a lot of people that step forward to make those kinds of things work.

In addition to the informal roles mentioned above, two focus group members did make reference during question 1 to formal leadership roles and how they contribute to informal leadership roles. In reference to school culture, roles and responsibilities were also mentioned during the discussion on question 1. An interviewed participant in Group A shared, "I do think, however, that it is empowering to be a member of a formal team and that can even increase your leadership abilities and that you can learn from your formal teammates and bring that back to the school culture." A Group B participant

shared some confusion with the role and responsibility of a leadership team member in their grade level team meetings stating, “In [grade-level] leadership [meetings] a lot of time I get the question [from other grade-level team members] what are we [going to] do today? What do we need from team members?” Group B stated further other members of the grade level team were looking to them as a member of the leadership team for direction on the content of their team meeting and they did not understand why. “I do not know if they are doing that because they feel like they need to do that because it recommends me as a formal member of the leadership team or if they truly are unaware of what we should be doing in our data team.”

Improvement Practices. All eight interviewed participants responded to the second interview question, for a 100% participation rate. The second question asked focus group participants, “Can you specify school improvement practices that we included in the turnaround model at Pine Street Elementary School that have influenced professional learning for teachers and staff? How are those practices managed?” Multiple interview responses referenced the development and management of school improvement systems to support the new instructional knowledge acquired in professional learning opportunities for teachers and staff and perceptions on how those systems were managed. By “school improvement system,” I understood focus group participants to mean developing a culture of trust and instructional practices that influenced professional learning.

A participant from Group A referenced school improvement systems that staff had developed to support the new instructional practices at PSES, including starting with

“building culture and trust.” One interviewed participant in Group A shared, “One of the school improvement practices that we included that was first to occur in the timeframe was looking at school culture and climate. That was critical at Pine Street Elementary School.” During the discussion on question 2, a participant in Group A returned to the topic of trust and culture and stated how it continues to be a focus at PSES.

I want to go back to building trust and culture because it still is our top priority. We always have to identify three priorities for the state being a SIG school and culture has been number one since the beginning, and it is still number one.

The same participant from Group A clarified further the importance of continuing to develop this school improvement practice of creating a culture of trust at PSES. “We just worked on that yesterday, and even though I think the culture is really outstanding here now, it is something this administrator and staff has not taken for granted.” There were similar comments in Group A and it is perceived that the majority of participants agree the development of creating a culture of trust was a school improvement practice that influenced professional learning for staff.

Other instructional practices that influenced professional learning for staff at Pine Street Elementary School were referenced in both focus groups. One of the reoccurring comments from both focus groups centered on professional learning teams and the use of making data driven decisions in these meetings. A participant in Group A responded, “We have had a lot of professional development around our professional learning teams and analyzing data and using data to drive our instruction and developing highly

collaborative teams in our building.” An interviewed participant in Group B shared, “I think one major way it [instructional practices] has influenced our professional learning is that it is specifically data driven. Data really does drive where we take our instruction.” Another Group B participant offered a perspective on the improvement of professional learning of staff and commented:

I see we are able to take more ownership, and with us being able to take more ownership I feel like the influences and practices are improving the results of what we're trying to improve because we've got the ownership of it [student learning].

Providing instructional staff the professional development needed to support student learning was a school improvement practice that participants observed as influencing a change in their teaching practices.

How the school improvement practices at PSES are managed was also discussed in both focus groups. One Group A participant remarked:

A system of collaboration for grade level teams was established. Data team process and PLC process is extremely well developed here and functioning. Just the master schedule alone, ninety minutes of non-negotiable language arts time was established and has been managed by the administrator through the instructional coaches and TOSA and through teachers' teams.

Another interviewed participant in Group B shared their perspective on how systems at PSES are managed specifically through leadership teams. “There is [a] very

high functioning leadership team at this school, and most decisions are funneled through that body” and “The leadership team and the PBIS team, which meets at a different time, are two of the ways that those decisions are made.” Both groups believe that the school systems developed to support the time for teachers to regularly meet together for decision-making was another school improvement practice that had changed.

Leadership was referenced in the discussion with Group B and discussing both student leadership and moving beyond the school walls with community leadership opportunities. One Group B participant stated that students were given an opportunity to learn to lead and commented, “We are to the level now where there is a real push to help students become part of that leadership, and so [now] there is a student leadership team.” The same participant in Group B also shared leadership practices that were occurring with groups outside of school and how they have supported PSES through the school improvement process and stated, “We have not even talked about that, but there is a great school community partnership with Grace Community Church. They supported the school in a lot of the turnaround efforts too.” It was professed by focus group participants that students and community members were also included in the change of instructional practices as more ownership for decision-making besides just teachers and school leaders.

School-level factors. Seven of the eight interviewed participants responded to the third interview question, for an 87.5% response rate. The third question asked focus group participants to define school-level factors that teachers and leaders have potential influence over that explain the growth in student achievement shown in current academic results for students at the school. Additionally, they were asked whether these factors are

regularly implemented at PSES. Reoccurring participant responses from both focus groups included schoolwide literacy practices, effective instructional strategies, and collaboration.

There were several school-level factors mentioned by participants in both focus groups that they perceived to have influenced the growth in student achievement primarily in reading. An interviewed participant in Group A commented, “I think another factor that has influenced our student growth is the fidelity of at least in the primary hall of ECRI (Enhanced Core Reading Instruction).” The same interview participant clarified their reasoning and continued, “I think because we do use it with [the] fidelity that has really changed our primary growth in reading.” An interview participant in Group B had a similar comment:

When we started the SIG Grant three years ago, the [spring 2014] data showed only 24% of students in this school were reading at or above grade level. One of the biggest things that I think the principal did was to take a team of teachers including participant three and four to ECRI Training Enhanced Core Reading Instruction and helped the Primary Teach learn how to teach reading on a very basic level.

The same participant in Group A further clarified:

I have heard from teachers that it was the first time that they really, really, understood what it was to teach reading and so now as we begin 2017 that number 24% is up to 48% so in three years that is slow but steady growth, and we will take it.

I interpret this comment to mean reading was perceived by participants to be an early professional development focus for all of the primary grade teachers in order to strategically teach students early reading foundational skills.

An instructional strategy referenced by more than one interviewed participant in both groups was the use of formative assessments and how the data is used to increase student achievement. One interviewed participant in Group A stated, “Since the beginning of the SIG grant three years ago, the administrator initially, and then the leadership team and teachers have instituted some formative assessments and a variety of assessments that weren’t here before to monitor student growth.” The same interview participant clarified further with examples of formative assessments and stated, “One example is the phonics screener that the principal brought to this school the first year and uncovered incredible [early literacy] holes in every grade level.” An interviewed participant in Group B summarized their perceptions on how the data is discussed: “I think our focus is on the students. When we sit down and have those conversations, it is about the individual students, and those are open conversations.” This same participant in Group B commented on how assessments are used to support student learning. They clarified, “I know we have had teachers in the past that have not agreed with the placement of some students and they had the opportunity to have a voice and explain why. The focus was on student achievement.” The use of formative assessments and the data they produce was perceived by both focus group participants to have been school level factors that influenced growth in student achievement.

Two interviewed participants in Group A spoke of how grade level teams collaborate, and why it is essential for the school community. The first shared:

I think one of the most powerful ways that teachers have influenced over the growth of student achievement is through collaboration. Our teachers plan together; they prepare together, they present similar lessons. Of course, they have a unique spin because each presenter is different, but all grade levels are on the same page, and they support each other and work through the challenges and celebrate the successes as teams.

Another interviewed participant from Group A continued the discussion on the collaboration that occurs in a PLT and how it can affect the school community.

We have [on] our schedule weekly [time] to meet in grade level teams and then also with our grades below and above us too to look at data and really own our students. We really know; teachers know their students and the whole grade level and not just the ones in their classroom.

Several focus group participants mentioned how staff members frequently collaborate to discuss students' growth as a school level factor that was a change in practice that influenced student achievement.

Parent Efficacy. Seven out of the eight focus group participants responded to the fourth interview question self-identified by their self-identified participant number for a response rate of 87.5%. The fourth question asked interviewed participants, "What value do teachers place on parent's efficacy for their children to achieve at Pine Street Elementary School? How important is it that parents set the bar at the same level as the

teacher?” Several interviewed participants from both groups declared this an area needing improvement at PSES, providing examples concerning communication and connecting with families. Specifically, focus group participants questioned how we are reaching out to help our families understand the importance of setting the standards for achievement at a higher level than it has been in the past.

In terms of PSES relationships with parents, a participant from Group A identified parents’ efficacy as an area for improvement:

I think this is an important area of growth for us. I think this is perhaps a still a “not yet” for our school. We are still learning how to build the bridge between the school and families and how to help families help their children.

Another participant from Group A agreed parent-efficacy was a practice-needing improvement and commented, “I think it [communication with parents] is an area of growth we need to continue to work on.” A participant in the same Group A discussion specified:

This is one I think we all hope for and dream that the parents will, but that is not really where a lot of our parents are able to be right now to set that bar the same level as the teacher.

A participant in Group A suggested why this was a struggle for parents and responded, “Absolutely we would love to see that parents in the home have the same expectations that we do at school academically, but we understand that the demands of life are real, and the routines of life are demanding.” The perception of parent’s ability to

support their student's academic needs at home was perceived by focus group participants to still be difficult for families possibly due to lack of connection between home and school.

Two interviewed participants in Group B also discussed parent efficacy as a practice that is valued but not yet connected to current practice. One stated, "I think sometimes there is a disconnect in some of our parents that they do not understand that importance and [we are] trying to educate them [parent] along with their child." This interviewed participant in Group B clarified their perception further by continuing. "I think it [education] is valued here and I think it's something that we are attempting to communicate out." Another Group B participant shared their perspective on the struggle staff has with parent-efficacy and stated:

I think it has improved immensely, but I think it [parent-efficacy] is still a struggle. I think it is because parents do not understand. It just depends on the family...the expectation is that they are involved whether or not that happens yet, family by family.

The perceived value an education can have for their child was an area identified by interviewed participants needing improvement at PSES.

School Culture. All eight participants responded to the fifth interview question, for a 100% participation rate. Interview question 5 started by defining climate and culture. "For this study school climate is defined as what members of your school community do; school culture answers the question why schools do what they do." The Group participants were then asked to "Describe the school culture at East. Why do the

teachers here do what they do?” Both focus groups gave examples of what students and staff are doing differently to adjust the climate and gave reasons why the change in school culture is essential for staff, students, and families.

Participants from both Group A and Group B identified their perception of the changes to what had been done at PSES in previous focus group response questions. Responses from Group A participants in this question focused on why these changes were important to them, including examples of why they made the school welcoming for students, why reading was important, and why teachers’ mindsets had to be changed. Group B focused more on why they enjoy working harder than previous practice, why they believe students can be successful, and why they wanted to teach at PSES.

The majority of responses from both groups identified why the school culture at PSES is of importance to them, to the students, and to the students’ families. An interviewed participant in Group A summarized their perceptions and said:

In order for students to really become successful learners, they have to feel safe, comfortable, valued. They have to be challenged. All of that has to do with how the adults in the building feel about them. The culture is all tied up in a growth mindset which we have worked on very hard for three years...The why is because we really believe they can do it and I do not think we have 100% of the adults in the building who believe that, but we have a good percentage and we are getting there.

Another interviewed participant in Group A responded, “We just believe our kids deserve the chance to be successful. They deserve to make a change in their families’

history and past.” Both focus group participants stated that the work of school improvement is important to them, and this change in mindset has the ability to change the learning trajectory for their students.

Reactions from Group B regarding school culture were similar to Group A but also included specific comments about how the staff’s mindset on their students’ ability to learn had changed. One interviewed participant from Group B referenced the history of students who attended EGEG and staff members who taught there.

It is really interesting is how the culture has changed considerably over the last few years. This [PSES] was not a school where people wanted to teach. It was that neighborhood school the kids had to go unless they could find a way to transfer their students somewhere else.

This same interviewed participant clarified these perceptions further and said:

And I think that there was at some point three years ago there was an internal shift for us in our approach to it and the staff’s belief that the students could do it. And it really had an outward effect on our interactions with one another and our interactions with the students.

A final statement from an interviewed participant in Group B affirmed the change in mindset and spoke about leadership in adding, “. . .and the right bus driver. I have been here ten years, and I have had the opportunity to finally see that every kid is capable. Prior, there was not a lot of hope.” Changes to the school culture at PSES included not just what had occurred that it was different from past practices but why it was important

to staff. It was perceived from participant responses that these changes in school culture were important to staff because they believed their students could be successful.

Decision-making. All of the eight interviewed participants responded to the final interview question, for a 100% participant rate. The sixth question elaborated on one aspect of school culture, asking focus group participants, “What is the culture around decision-making or teacher initiative at Pine Street Elementary School? The responses from focus Group A centered around the decision-making process in the leadership team. There were strong reactions from several participants. The discussion in Group B focused on the approaches for decision-making in collaboration with the principal.

The conversation in Group A began with one participant stating their perspective on how decisions are made, the role of the leadership team in school decisions, and how a teacher can contribute to decision-making at PSES. They stated:

We would like to say that it is a shared leadership model here at East and we hear those words a lot, but I think if you were to ask teachers and assistants here if they really do have a voice in decision-making, I think you would hear not so much right now. We just had a thing recently where teachers’ leadership team stood up and didn’t agree with a decision and shared it. They took a chance and stood up and they did not get anywhere with it, and it was not listened to so it was kind of frustrating.

Another interview participant in Group A respond to the comment regarding shared-decision making and said:

We do understand that there are different levels of decision-making.

Some simply have to be made by our principal, by our administrator, and sometimes that is hard to swallow, but that is just the hard-cold fact. Just like in your classroom, sometimes the teacher needs to make the decision. Sometimes the children can participate and add their voices, but hard decisions have to be made at times, so I think there is definitely an effort for it to be participant-focused.

There was disagreement between these two participants in focus Group A on the decision-making process at PSES, with one participant perceived to not have a voice in the decisions and the other participant sharing why they believed some decisions are not for teachers to make. After the response from this participant, the previous participant did not make a comment on their statement, but continued as an active participant later in the conversation.

As discussion with Group A continued, it shifted to areas that participants felt the leadership team can focus on. A different, not in the above conversation, participant made the point that, "I know through our leadership team this year, one of the things that we are focusing on is trying to find better pathways of communication from the teacher leaders that are on that team out to everyone else." This participant recognized how much decision-making has changed, and then continued, "I think this communication, wise communication, and the way that people feel either heard or not heard need to still be areas we need focus and work on." Another interviewed participant in Group A gave an example of a decision made collaboratively by the leadership team to address a

schoolwide problem. They said, “It came up that some of the classified staff, the paraprofessionals, weren’t feeling like they had their voices heard...and the leadership team did a great job...determining next steps.” Finally, the conversation closed with, “I think that has been one of the beautiful things to see in this process as well is that PSES has really risen in status in the eyes of the rest of the district,” and “I think a lot of that is the teacher initiative.” Participants perceived that the change in culture at PSES included sharing the responsibility for decision-making with decisions the leadership can make to support schoolwide issues that come up to support students and staff.

The exchange in Group B centered on the culture on how decision-making is approached with the principal. One participant started the discussion by stating:

There is an atmosphere here. It is an open-door policy. And so I think she’s very open. Our leader is very open to ideas and decision making from the teachers. But there is an expectation that you know why you are doing it and there needs to be a reason why it cannot just be because it’s fun or you want to do it. There has to be something behind it that is for the kids, and they are learning.

A participant in Group B clarified further regarding whether decisions for teachers are flexible or not in stating, “There are non-negotiables. There are certain things you can do outside of certain periods of the day other periods of the day are...” A third participant in the group finished the sentence, and said, “sacred.” The first participant went on to say, “Sacred and untouchable and what you do during that time is prescribed

in a way.” In final comments to question 6 from participants in Group B, they agreed with previous comments and one added their thoughts by stating:

I would agree because she is very open at hearing and listening to other suggestions that might be counter to what she is thinking, but she is also the type she is open. She knows some decisions are hers that are going to be made and she will be forefront with that and tell you I'm sorry but we're doing this and this is my reason behind it. [At other] times she is like OK I think that is a great idea. I think we need to look and do it that way.

The other final comment from the interviewed participant in Group B stated,

Along with that, when a decision has been made she is flexible in the sense that you can go back in with a team or something that you talked about and she is able to put new eyes on it. And we have had this happen, and they (the team) say wow you know maybe that is the route to take.

The discussion with Group B participants agreed the principal was flexible and could be approached and was supportive to staff, but was not adaptable in other areas that were perceived to disruptive student learning and time allocated to instruction.

Final Comments. In closing, the interviewer asked both groups if there was anything else they wanted to share on how things were going at PSES. There were only three comments after this prompt from both groups, but one participant response summarized all of the comments.

This is my third school I have worked at, and this is by far my favorite place. I think we really do feel like a family here. And we can go and even

if it is just to complain or get something off your chest. I feel like you have that support here. I think that is really important because it is a hard job.

The six questions for the interview focus groups were informed by Parts A and Parts B of the DLRS aggregate survey data. Table 13 summarizes the response themes from interviewed participants in Group A and Group B.

Table 13

Focus Group Response Themes

Theme	Group A	Group B
Membership	Formal/informal Instructional leadership	
Practices	Development of school improvement systems Support the new instructional knowledge Professional learning for teachers and staff	
School-level factors	Schoolwide literacy practices Instructional strategies Collaboration	
Parent efficacy	Area of growth Communication Academic expectations	
School culture	Sense of belongingness Belief mindset Relationships	
Decision-making	Leadership team Communication Inclusion	How to approach the principal Open door with flexibility

Summary of Findings

The presentation of findings for this single case study used the major themes affecting student achievement identified in a review of the literature as a focus for analysis of the results including: school culture, teacher leaders, and shared leadership. The selected response results of the dimensions of leadership in the DLRS survey instrument showed no significant difference in responses for the participants' total years in education or total years in the school. The written response questions developed by the major themes in this study were designed to provide a point of triangulation for the data received from the selected response items, and defined participants' perspectives about school improvements, improvement needed, learning environment, decision-making process, and the school's foundational practices. Reoccurring themes identified from participants' selected and written responses included membership, improvement practices, school factors, school culture, and decision-making. The chapter concluded with a discussion of interviewed participants' perspectives of the reoccurring themes that they perceived influenced growth in student achievement at PSES.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was based on the experiences of participating staff of one elementary school implementing a turnaround school improvement model. The findings, while not generalizable outside the participants, do permit the reader to determine the transferability of the results to their school improvement practices. The findings inform my understanding, as a researcher and a school leader, of the factors of a shared leadership framework in a school implementing a change process to increase student achievement. Findings disclosed on the development of a positive school culture, the use of effective instructional practices, and shared leadership for collaborative decision-making with teacher teams, have the potential to influence and contribute to the research on leadership in schools experiencing a change process for improvement. My hope is that this research will benefit other schools implementing school improvement initiatives to increase student achievement.

Investigating teacher perceptions of the impact a shared leadership framework has on student achievement during a school improvement initiative has been the focus of this work. As part of the investigation within a turnaround model, three sources of data were collected, triangulated, and analyzed to form the results provided earlier in this work. This final chapter includes a summary of overall academic achievement for Pine Street Elementary School, an interpretation of the triangulated results, limitations of the study, recommendations for the field, and implications from the findings for future school improvement leadership practice and research.

Academic Achievement

The PSES state rating was a Level 1 compared to all schools statewide in 2013-14 with 27% percent of third through fifth grade students proficient in math and reading. A Level 1 school is at the bottom 5% of all schools in Oregon based on the published standards. The PSES rating was below average compared to elementary schools with similar student demographics in 2013-14, (ODE, 2015). PSES academic achievement, academic growth, and subgroup growth was a Level 1 with an overall weighted percent of 20.6%. Levels are calculated using the percentage of points earned out of the total points eligible. For schools with data on all indicators, the total points possible are 25 possible points for Academic Achievement, 50 possible for Academic Growth, and 25 for Subgroup Growth. The total score is matched to the state's report card scoring guide to determine the school's rating (ODE, 2015).

The ODE (2017) did not assign an overall state rating for PSES on the 2016-17 report card due to the expiration of Oregon's ESEA flexibility waiver on August 1, 2016 (ODE, 2017). However, the ODE did report individual ratings for academic achievement, academic growth, and student subgroup growth in the report card rating details report. The 2016-17 PSES report card rating detail sheet reported a Level 2 for academic achievement, a Level 4 for academic growth, and a level 3 for student subgroup growth. The 2016-17 report card reflects an increase from 2014-15 of one level for overall academic achievement, an increase of three levels for overall achievement, and an increase of two levels for student subgroup growth. Third through fifth grade overall academic proficiency for math and reading was reported at 39%, an overall proficiency

increase of 12%, which demonstrates steady growth for a school implementing an improvement grant compared to schools with similar demographics (ODE, 2017).

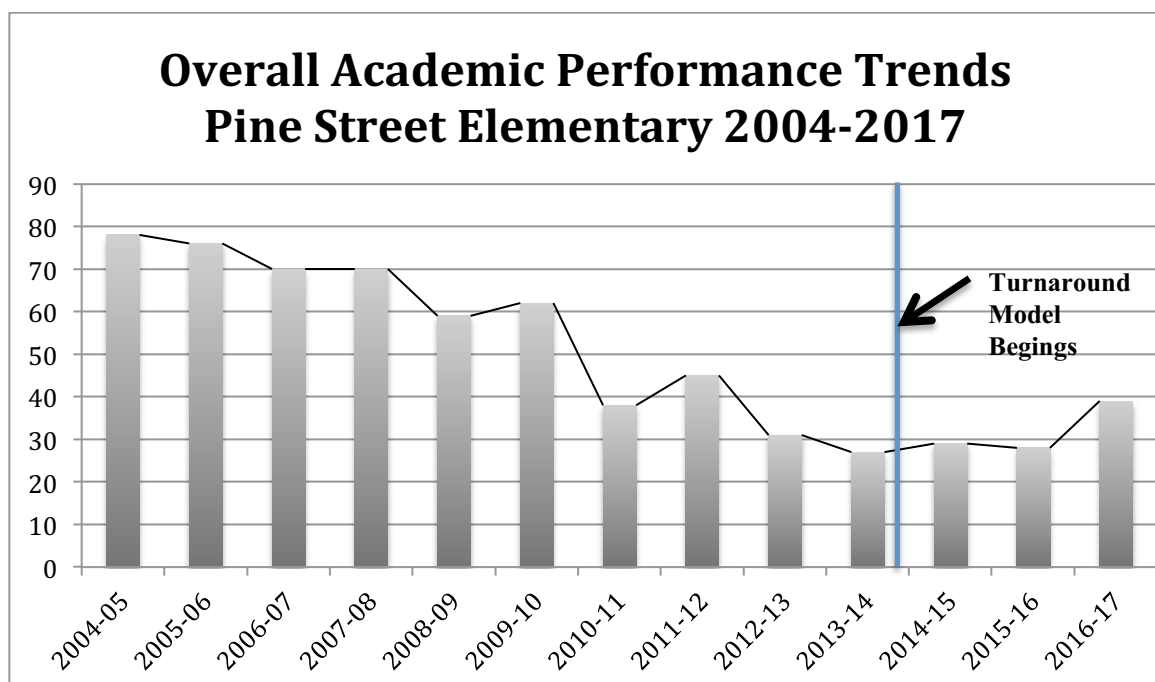


Figure 1. Oregon Department of Education Academic Overall Performance Trends for Pine Street Elementary School from the 2004-2005 to the 2016-17

Interpretation of Findings

Culture and Efficacy. A mandated school improvement initiative to create a meaningful change of a school system requires promoting a culture of teacher self-efficacy and developing structures for a school's organizational efficacy. Bandura defines perceived self-efficacy as a person's belief in their abilities to produce a selected level of outcome and defines organizational efficacy as self-reflection that can be applied to a group dynamic by actively analyzing and reflecting on group behaviors (Bandura, 1993). Schools implementing the requirements of a SIG are often located in low-income

neighborhoods with single-family households that move frequently (Le Floch et al., 2014). Changing the narrative of schools facilitating growth for equitable student achievement requires staff in these schools to create a positive school culture that focuses on the perceived self-efficacy of staff and students.

Bohn (2002) suggests that organizational efficacy “exists as an aggregated judgment of an organization’s members about their (1) sense of collective capacities, (2) sense of mission or purpose, and (3) sense of resilience” (Bohn, 2002 p. 65). Organizational efficacy in the school setting parallels groups of teachers and school leaders actively working together to improve student achievement, trusting in each other’s knowledge and skills, committing to the collective work, and holding confidence in the ability of the group to overcome barriers (Bohn, 2002). A school’s culture becomes a strong predictor of how ownership and capacity are managed to build sustainability for enhanced student achievement (Johnson et al., 2012). Principals, who empower their teachers to be a part of a shared leadership framework for instructional improvement through collaborative planning, can provide the evidence needed for teachers to believe their group actions can impact growth towards school improvement goals (Le Floch et al., 2016). These reciprocal professional relationships among staff members have shown to contribute to a positive school culture (Dinham et al., 2008).

The results of this study suggest that staff at PSES agree that school culture has improved since the implementation of the turnaround initiative and some areas are still in need of improvement. A triangulation with all three-survey instruments found the majority of participant perspectives indicated that an improvement of the reciprocal

professional relationship among staff and students have shown to contribute to a positive school culture. It was also clear in the data from all three-survey instruments that staff's perspective on a school culture that empowers teachers to be a part of a shared decision-making process for instructional improvement, includes staff that has the mindset and belief that students can reach their academic goals. Although my interpretations of five selected responses indicate instructional decision-making was perceived not to be a part of the school improvement practice by those participants, it was identified as a process needing improvement. Further, comments from all participants reinforce the understanding from the literature of the importance of school culture as a foundation for successful and sustained change in practice.

Improvements. The first component of school improvement affirmed through triangulation of data sources collected for school culture, was the reciprocal professional relationship among staff. Participant responses to the 13 School Culture Dimension related items on the DLRS survey had a mean score of 1.57, indicating that the majority of participants felt these behaviors were continually or frequently occurring at PSES, and no participants felt they were not present in some form. Specific responses to questions in this dimension speak to the culture at PSES and the perceived self-efficacy and the organizational efficacy of staff. Question 13 asked participants to reflect on "the level of mutual respect and trust among the teachers and other professional staff in the school." Of the 31 responses, 13 participants stated continually, 17 stated frequently, and one participant stated sometimes. These data clearly indicate to me that participants believe the culture developed at PSES during the implementation of the turnaround process, is

one that values trust and respect between the principal and staff. They view each other as professionals.

Illustrative of this belief among staff is a written statement shared by participant (P12) who commented not only on perceptions of the school culture but also revealed staff's perspective on the reciprocal professional relationship among staff at PSES. "School culture is strong; teachers support each other, teachers support their students, and students are learning to respect and appreciate peers." This comment is consistent with other statements made in regard to culture and with the literature examined for this study, which found that for meaningful school improvement, it is essential to develop positive school relationships built on mutual trust and respect to create a culture of equitable student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Focus group interview question number five defined school climate as "what members of school communities do," and school culture as "why schools do what they do." The question asked focus group participants to think about the school culture at PSES and postulate why the school "does what it does?" In addressing this question, several interviewed participants in both focus groups reflected on the staff's mindset in fulfilling the job they have been asked to do and in their students' ability to learn. One focus Group A participant shared what they have learned about students during the school improvement process:

What I have come to learn deeply...is that for students to become successful learners, they have to feel safe, comfortable [and] valued...The culture is all tied up in a growth mindset which we have worked on very

hard for three years and will continue to work on around what our students are capable of doing... We really believe they can do it.

My interpretation of this and other similar focus group responses speaks to the positive school culture at PSES, also indicated in participant responses on the DLRS, and situates school culture as a critical component of students' growth in academic achievement. These participant's responses are also reflective of the literature reviewed for this study, specifically around mindset. Dweck asserts that a developed mindset on abilities requires concerted effort and persistence. A willingness to extend that effort is supported by comments of participants in the study who spoke to staff's on-going collaboration and belief in student's capacity to learn (Dweck, 2008).

The second component of successful school improvement disclosed through triangulated data collected regarding school culture was that a school culture that empowers teachers to be a part of shared decision-making process for instructional improvement includes a principal who possesses the mindset and belief that staff can collaboratively make instructional decisions to improve student achievement and help students reach their goals. Selected response question 15 in the DLRS survey asked participants to reflect on the principal's mindset of staff's ability for decision-making, stating, "The school administrator(s) welcomes profession staff member's input on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and improving student performance." Of the 31 responses, 15 participants stated continually, 13 participants answered frequently, and three participants stated sometimes. This supports my finding that the school culture at PSES includes opportunities for teachers to have input on decisions that influence student

learning and that the school's principal has the mindset that staff is capable of making meaningful contributions to these decisions. Taken together with the newly implemented shared leadership structures in which input and decisions around instructional practice are made, it is reasonable to conclude that a culture of shared decision-making exists at PSES and staff believe it contributed to the success of the turnaround model.

Participants also reflected on their mindset practices in the school and classroom and the changes that have occurred to shift the culture of learning at PSES. In response to part A of written response question 2 on what had improved most in the school, participant (P19) referenced the mindset staff has toward student's abilities to learn and stated, "We are continually improving how we see our students and have adapted more of a growth mindset toward their capabilities." This and other comments from participants align with the literature that developing and promoting a purposeful organizational culture can support a shared mindset on student's ability to learn (Saphier, King, & D'Auria, 2006).

Participant interview responses also included a change in mindset and belief of teachers and instructional support staff at PSES who believe the current staff is capable and willing to be a part of the school improvement initiative to support student's academic achievement. One interview participant summarized similar responses from both interview groups stating, "We are finally getting to the point where we have the right people in the right seats on the bus to get it going in the right direction." The data provided by the selected, written, and interview responses for this study demonstrates the existence of a school culture with reciprocal professional relationships among staff. More

importantly, that teachers here perceive their mindset and belief that students can reach their goals, and their principal's belief that teachers can and should make the decisions that impact student growth, is critical to success of the improvement initiative overall.

Needs improvement. There were common areas identified as needing improvement within school culture and efficacy at PSES indicated in all three data sources. The thematic areas the data indicated as most in need of greater focus from a school culture perspective were related to areas where success has been noted for some staff as a whole, but enough tension still exists to make it significant and worthy of attention. These themes include staff participation in decision-making that affects instructional practice and the collective mindset staff demonstrates towards the behavioral expectations for students.

Participant selected responses from the School Culture Dimension in the DLRS survey items are worth noting when analyzing PSES staff's perspective of the meaningful participation that occurs with instructional decision-making. For example, question 30 asked participants to provide their perspectives regarding instructional decision-making, stating, "Teachers actively participate in instructional decision-making." The majority of responses were continually (12) and frequently (17). Five participants out the 31 responses listed either sometime or rarely/never to this question. These results indicate that even though some staff perceives they are part of the instructional decision-making process at PSES, five participants perceive that teachers only sometimes or rarely/never do so.

Another School Culture Dimension item, in question 28, revealed an example of a decision participants perceived was theirs to make, but was often predetermined by the principal. The question asked participants to respond to the prompt, “My supervisor and I jointly develop my annual professional development plan.” Twelve of the responses were recorded as continually, 15 responses were recorded as frequently, but four of the 31 responses on question 28 listed either sometime or rarely/never. This response is perceived to mean that not all staff felt like they have ownership in decisions regarding the content of their professional growth plan.

Additional data from this study supports the finding that a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy is important in relation to their demonstration of teacher leadership. When a teacher is given a responsibility to complete an action, their perceived sense of self-efficacy towards instruction is pivotal to resolving or overcoming challenges regarding decisions to impact student growth through changes in instructional practice. Their drive to make a difference and obtain more success for their students enhances their perceived self-efficacy in being effective teachers but without the opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process, a teacher’s self-efficacy in their efforts to make a difference in student learning can lessen (Kurt, 2016). The responses from both question 28 and question 30 in the School Culture Dimension survey indicate that some staff’s perceptions of meaningful participation in decision-making regarding their professional development and opportunities for instructional decision-making are not sufficient and therefore their level of perceived self-efficacy to create positive change may be diminished.

The mindset staff demonstrates towards the behavior expectations of students was also identified as an area of improvement needed for the school culture. Part B of question 2 of the written response questions asked participants, "In your opinion, what needs the most improvement in your school? Participants responded that improvements needed for staff included their attitude toward student behavior. Participant (P28) recommended changes to the school culture and the perceived mindset of staff regarding the expectations for student behavior and stated, "Now is the time to really set [student] rules-expectations and a school culture that the students and parents can understand and explain." Participant (P06) was specific on which group of students needed a "more effective response to chronic behavior" and referenced the "top five percent of students." Participant (P20) was even more specific and spoke to the mindset of this participant on a student's ability to learn responsible behavior and said, "There are still a large number of students who do not have the skills to control their own behavior impulses and mood swings." It is perceived by this researcher that the impact of a teacher's negative beliefs or mindset around student behavior may be a negative impact on student behavior which in turn may negatively influence the culture of the school and possibly later correlate to a lack of student achievement. This is certainly worthy of future study.

Participant responses when asked during focus groups to describe the culture at PSES included how difficult the work of improving student's academic growth was and sharing, "Some days it is completely exhausting." Another participant responded to this comment by acknowledging the challenges and the rewards at the same time, stating, "While you are struggling you know figuring out if you are making any difference there

will be a child that just shows you that you are, and it is worth everything.” One of the purposes for collecting the data gathered for this study included determining what common factors staff, in a school setting, perceive as affecting their instructional and profession behaviors. These common perceptions are reflected in the school climate that in turn influences the culture of the school (Hoy, 1990).

Teacher Leaders. The data of Le Floch (2014; 2016), who conducted case studies of schools receiving school improvement grants, and the longitudinal study of school improvement with the Consortium of Chicago Schools from 1990 to 1996 (Sebring et al., 2006), which were discussed earlier in Chapter 2, were reviewed again to help inform this analysis of data from this study regarding shared leadership. Le Floch’s previous case studies highlighted the efforts of principals who have purposefully shared the responsibility for student achievement by developing teachers as instructional leaders. These teachers actively participate in targeted and ongoing professional development of evidence-based instructional practices that have been deemed to have the most potential to increase student achievement in their schools and classrooms (Le Floch, 2014; 2016).

School principals identified in Le Floch’s review focused on building the human capital of teachers who were demonstrating proficiencies in their use of student performance data and had them spend time collaborating with other teachers (Le Floch et al., 2016). Further research implications suggested in the findings of the Sebring study of Chicago area schools was that principals who were able to implement change for school improvement successfully did so by purposefully cultivating teacher leaders that were responsible for teaching and student learning in collaborative settings (Sebring et al.,

2006). Data from my study confirms the findings of Le Floch et al. and Sebring et al. and while indicating progress has been made in building teacher leadership at PSES, comments from participants suggest there remain needed improvements.

Improvements. The first component of improved teacher leader practices disclosed through data collected around those practices was the identification and use of instructional practices shown to contribute to positive growth in student achievement. Participants' responses to the 10 items related to shared responsibility on the DLRS survey had a mean score of 1.76, indicating that the majority of participants felt these behaviors were continually or frequently occurring at PSES. Individual short answer responses to this dimension worth citing referenced instructional leadership at PSES including the teachers' use of student academic performance data to make instructional decisions and their participation in professional development activities. DLRS question 20 asked participants to reflect on whether the school makes data available for teachers and how the data is utilized to enhance student achievement at PSES, stating: "The school makes available a variety of data (e.g., student performance) for teachers to use to improve student achievement." Of the 31 responses, 23 participants stated continually, and eight responses stated frequently. There were no other recorded responses for sometimes or rarely/never. My interpretation of all data sources from this study is that participants at PSES believe during the school improvement process, school and student data was made available and teachers used this data to advance the academic outcomes of their students.

Question 21 speaks to teachers as instructional leaders at PSES by asking how teachers use student assessment data to determine relevant curriculum and instructional programs. Participants were able to state their views on how the curriculum and program changes were made at PSES by responding to, “Decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data.” Of the 31 responses, 12 participants stated continually, 16 participants answered frequently, and two participants answered sometimes. There was one response recorded as insufficient. This selected response item suggests that during the implementation of the school’s turnaround process PSES teacher leaders use data to inform instructional decisions including the selection of curriculum and instructional programs to increase student achievement. These findings align with the Consortium of Chicago School’s research that showed schools who successfully implement change did so by purposefully cultivating teacher leaders responsible for instructional, data informed decisions that support student achievement (Bryk et al., 2010).

In replying to written response question 3, participants were to consider the physical, organizational and instructional environment and the changes that have been made to address needed improvements. Of the changes noted, several participant responses included the changes to instructional practices of teacher leaders during the turnaround process at PSES as addressing school improvement. Participant (P01) referenced the primary focus for instructional staff during the school improvement process stating, “In the last three years, school and the instructional environment has been the main focus. Each school improvement plan, data teams, leadership team meetings

spent time on these areas.” Participant (P04) also perceived that the effectiveness of instruction will continue to improve to support student achievement by asserting, “With more practice and coaching, educators will keep improving their instruction and student outcomes. Participant (P16) reflected on how teachers at PSES use student data for instructional purposes to support learning for each of their students by stating, “Data drives our instructional decisions...to support the needs of all of our students.” This participant response I would assert, also implies PSES applies an “equity” lens during instruction as it purports to meet the needs of *all* of their students. Participant (P27) shared this perspective during focus group discussion and said; “Teachers of each grade level have aligned their instruction, so we provide an equitable educational experience for all students.” It was clear the data from this study participants deemed teacher’s collective use of evidence-based instructional strategies essential for schools in improvement to increase academic achievement for each of their students. The literature supports this finding (Scanlan, 2011).

Written response question 6 in the DLRS survey asked participants to consider the nine LLC foundational practices to improve the school and student achievement and to identify the foundational practices they considered most impactful in improving student achievement. That “Decision-Making for Results and Instructional Data Team” were ranked second and third most impactful by participants confirmed finding that establishing a school culture where teachers leaders collaboratively engage in evidence-based instructional practices, including the use of student performance data to monitor progress, has a positive impact on student learning. Teacher’s use of evidence-based

instructional strategies together has been shown in the literature to influence student learning (DuFour & Reeves, 2016; Hattie, 2008).

Participants in both focus groups were asked to define school-level factors regularly implemented at PSES that could explain the growth in student achievement. Potential factors would be those practices that teachers and leaders have influence over. A participant in Group A summarized many of the other participants' responses in Group A regarding what teachers regularly implement at PSES stating, "It really brings it back to the PLT's [Professional Learning Teams]." This focus group participant defined what occurs in these PLT meetings including, "We look at data and really own our students... We progress monitor every two weeks... We really look at the data and watch for trends... We use that to inform our next steps with small group instruction." In considering data from all three sources, collaborating together regularly to look at data strategically and determine the effectiveness of their instructional practices is a factor that participants perceived to be among the most important in supporting and improving gains in student achievement. These purposeful actions of collaborating analyzing data and using it to inform decisions around instructional practice confirm existing research that found when teachers are purposeful in their instructional practices student learning can increase (DuFour & Reeves, 2016).

A second component of teacher leader practices disclosed through participant's responses to the survey instrument was the PSES staff's willingness to improve their effectiveness during the turnaround school improvement process by participating in professional learning. New understandings gleaned from these experiences were then

implemented during instruction to improve teaching practices. Specific to staff learning, question 12 in the selected response questions asked participants to reflect on the PSES school community disposition to learn from their mistakes and achievements stating: “The school is a learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both success and failures.” Of the 31 responses, 16 participants stated continually, 14 responses stated frequently, and one participant stated sometimes. This response indicates that participants believe the school is a learning community and that the instructional practice of teachers includes reflection on learning from both achievements and setbacks in terms of student achievement.

Participant written responses also suggested that teachers gained a deeper understanding of instructional practices shown to influence student learning by their participation in professional development. Participants mentioned professional development as a change in practice in the school improvement process. Participant (P02) indicated professional development was provided around “... writing, math and foundational reading skills.” Further participant responses emphasized that use of data and participating in professional development was not done in isolation, but rather in collaborative teacher teams. Participant (P27) commented, “Teachers at each grade level have aligned their instruction so we can provide an equitable educational experience or all students.” As indicated earlier, data from this study also revealed how principals can be purposeful by consistently providing teaching staff opportunities for collaborative professional development on teaching and learning to increase student achievement. Considered together, these findings align with the research literature regarding practices

teachers regularly implement to enhance the academic achievement of students in their classrooms. School leaders can create communities of practice that improve teacher knowledge of best practices in instruction, by enhancing a teacher's self-efficacy and developing their sense of shared purpose through focused professional development and collaboration (DuFour, 2004).

Focus group participants elaborated on the school improvement practices included in the turnaround model at PSES that determined professional learning for staff. The theme of professional development around using data to enhance instruction was repeated in Group A and Group B. A focus group participant from Group A mentioned the professional development they have received on using data to change their instructional practices collaboratively and stated, "We have had lots of professional development around professional learning teams, analyzing data, using data to drive our instruction, and [how] to develop highly collaborative teams." A Focus Group B participant had a very similar response on the value of professional development to change past instructional practices effectively and replied, "I think the one major way it [school improvement practices] has influenced our professional learning is that it is specifically data driven. Data really does drive where we take our instruction." The consensus from interviewed participants indicated that teachers as leaders in schools and classrooms require the professional development of evidence-based instructional practices, including how to use student performance data to influence student achievement.

All data sources for this study articulated that when teacher leaders at PSES are purposefully engaged in professional learning, their use and understanding of

instructional practices supports the academic achievement of students. Schools that provide staff the opportunities to increase their knowledge of teaching and student learning collaboratively can increase the academic outcomes of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Needs improvements. Two thematic areas were identified on the DLRS and short answer questions as needing improvement regarding teacher leaders practices at PSES. The first theme identified developing systems for school-level instructional decision-making, and the second theme spoke to making decisions based on data rather than instincts.

Survey data collected on the Shared Responsibility DLRS Dimension referenced school and district systems needing improvement. Specifically participants were asked to share their perceptions on whether, “There is a formal structure in place in the school to provide teachers and professional staff opportunities to participate in school-level instructional decision making.” Eight of the responses responded continually, 10 responded frequently, 10 responded sometimes, and one participant responded rarely/never. This response is perceived to mean that not all staff felt like there are school systems in place for staff to make school-level instructional decisions. My perception is derived from the data from this study and research on the academic benefits that can occur when teacher leaders work together to determine the specific instructional changes needed for every student to have access to an equitable and viable curriculum (Robinson et al., 2008). According to Hoy (2010), without systems in place for instructional decision-making within teacher teams, the opportunity for shared decision-making

decreases. Participant responses to questions 22 in the Shared Leadership Dimension indicate that the perception of some staff regarding school and district systems for teacher leaders to share in the decision-making process is not in place at PSES.

When asked to “Describe aspects of the school and instructional environment that in your view are the largest barriers to school improvement,” participants referenced the challenges some teachers were experiencing using agreed-upon instructional strategies and using the strength of teacher leaders as a way to support struggling learners.

Participant (P18) commented:

Some teachers still struggle at times using proven and effective strategies during instruction. Learning teams may agree on effective strategies, only to see those strategies abandoned by one or more team members. Some teachers use their gut, rather than the data to direct their instruction. These things make it difficult to have a successful PLT [Professional Learning Team].

This comment speaks to the perceived lack of fidelity to schoolwide initiatives and the effects of that on student achievement as perceived by some survey participants. Participant (P30) appeared to have the same opinion, stating, “Some teachers are slow to change their practice.” Other participant remarks addressed perceptions around the effectiveness or efficacy of staff to implement the new strategies and suggested using more existing teacher strengths and abilities as a method to support student learning.

Participant (P21) stated:

I would say getting to know and utilizing specific teacher strengths would help with school improvement. Not all teachers are alike; making sure teacher's strengths are fully tapped into - either in the curriculum they use or subjects they teach could lead to higher quality instruction.

This lack of implementation fidelity and using teachers' areas of strength as a starting point was also related to the improvement practices of the school principal. Participant (P09) shared their opinion on the structure the principal had created for the school improvement process, and stated, "[Principal] is very structured, which is good in some aspects but can be stifling in others. There needs to be a balance, and the staff needs to be empowered and trusted instead of being scared to help or be creative." The consensus of participants' short answer responses to question 4 is that there was always more staff could consider implementing to be the teacher leaders needed for sustained school improvement. Included too in recommendations for balancing school improvement changes are the practices of the school principal.

Data collected in this work confirm that the principal shares the responsibility for student achievement by building the human capital of teachers as instructional leaders and that this practices was evident at PSES. Teachers who actively participate in targeted and ongoing professional development of evidence-based instructional practices have the most potential to increase student achievement in their schools and classrooms (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). Participants' responses throughout this study suggested that teacher leaders at PSES share the responsibility for students learning in an instructional environment that focuses on foundational practices to increase student achievement.

However, it was also clear from the participants responses that the competency level of teachers, staff, and the school principal, in terms of implementing instructional improvement strategies is not yet proficient as evidenced by the responses of some participants who identified areas of improvement including an individual teacher's ability to implement an instructional strategy successfully or adhering to the agreed upon instructional strategy of the grade level team.

Shared leadership. For this study, the term shared leadership was used to define the manner in which leadership was pursued and distributed during the improvement process. Leadership is a vast topic in school improvement research. My interpretation of the data from this study found that a shared leadership framework has the potential to leverage the existing expertise and skills of teacher leaders to enhance their collective understanding and to empower staff to demonstrate ownership of the improvement process required by schools in improvement (Timperley, 2006). Providing teachers the time to make collaborative decisions needed for schools in improvement has the potential to be useful for school reform (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The results of this case study indicate that the staff at PSES agrees that many areas of shared leadership have improved since the implementation of the SIG turnaround initiative and some areas are still in need of improvement.

The results of this study suggest that staff at PSES agree that leadership practices have improved since the implementation of the turnaround initiative and some areas are still in need of improvement. A triangulation with all three-survey instruments found the majority of participant perceived opportunities for staff to engage in formal and informal

leadership roles in decision-making which have been shown in the literature to contribute to improved leadership practices for school improvement (Hoy & Tarter, 2010) and those practices have improved at PSES. The interpretations of the findings for selected, written, and focus group responses also found implementing leadership practices proved difficult due to lack of time and resources for staff to fulfill these responsibilities and there is a need for more opportunities for leadership to make all staff feel valued.

Improvements. The clear need for more opportunities to engage in formal and informal leadership roles for shared decision-making was evident in all three data sources for this study. Participant responses regarding the availability of Leadership Practices on the DLRS survey had a mean score of 2.17, indicating that the majority of participants felt these behaviors were frequently or sometimes occurring at PSES. Specific responses to questions in this dimension that merit mentioning speak to the shared leadership practices at PSES, including building the capacity for leadership and the opportunities for collaborative decision-making. Question 35 asked participants to reflect on the capacity for leadership at PSES by stating, “The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.” Of the 31 responses, 11 participants stated continually, 14 stated frequently, five stated sometimes, and one response was reported at rarely/never. This selected response indicates that the majority of participants believe the capacity for leadership was developed at PSES during the school turnaround process by providing opportunities for professional staff to have leadership roles.

Question 1 of the written response questions asked participants to identify whether they perceived they were in formal or informal role at PSES. Participant (P10) summarized a reoccurring response from participants, “[I am on a] formal leadership role. As part of the leadership team, this team was defined and seen as the decision-making body for school improvement decisions.” However, the comments from the participants who believed they were assigned informal roles and what they did in these responsibilities often mirrored what formal team members were assigned to do. Participant (P15) responded, “I believe that we have worked together to all informally take on a certain level of leadership in the school, working together as a team and bringing knowledge to your team based upon the committees you are on.” Shared leadership practices at PSES during the turnaround initiative included teachers participating in formal and informal leadership roles for collaborative decision-making to determine professional learning sessions for staff to support student achievement.

Written responses further supported this finding as participants were to identify the formal and informal decision-making processes in the school and say whether these process affected student achievement. The responses from participants referenced teams and their roles and responsibilities for decision-making. Participant (P04)’s response summarized similar statements from participants: “The leadership team serves as a formal decision-making team that prioritizes student outcomes and the well-being of their staff and students.” For this study it is also worth noting the responses of participants who identified an informal decision-making process. The response from Participant (P01) summarized similar written statements from participants who believe the informal

decision-making process is just as important as the formal decision-making process. Participant (P01) commented, “Informally conversations are had on a daily basis that impact student achievement...All of these have affected student achievement.”

Focus group interview question number one 1 asked group participants to consider the importance of membership in determining their role as a leader in the improvement process. The question asked focus group participants, “Can you be an instructional leader without being a member of a formal team at PSES? And if so, how?” Several interviewed participants gave examples of instructional leadership between classroom teachers and building specialists who may or may not be members of a formal team. Interview Group A participant stated, “I absolutely think you can be an instructional leader without being on a formal team.” In Group B, an interview participant responded in agreement that you do not have to be a member of a formal team to demonstrate leadership at PSES, and shared, “[Leadership] is everybody having an opportunity to contribute to your grade level team.” The focus group responses indicate that the capacity for leadership could come from a variety of staff members rather than only those assigned to a formal leadership role. Participants’ responses indicated clearly that teacher leadership responsibilities at PSES have the potential to contribute to the academic growth of students in the classroom, to the effectiveness of grade-level teams, and to a positive school culture.

My interpretation of staff responses identifying their role as formal or informal is that there were different interpretations of “leadership” being applied as to whether teachers were engaged in leadership responsibilities at PSES. Participant responses

included examples of staff with either formal or informal leadership responsibilities that have the opportunity to make shared decisions to increase student achievement. The survey data was clear and spoke to the purposeful building of trusting relationships with and among staff during the school improvement turnaround process to support decision-making at PSES regardless of whether teachers have a formal or informal role of responsibility. The research for this study found, and supported in the literature, that a shared leadership framework includes building the capacity of teachers to make collective decisions required for school improvement (Dinham et al., 2008).

Needs improvements. Leadership practices identified as needing improvement at PSES indicated on the Shared Leadership items on the DLRS survey included more time for teacher leaders to fulfill their leadership responsibilities and the provision of adequate resources to make meaningful contributions to the school improvement process.

Participant responses indicated that teachers who are assigned to leadership roles often lack the amount of additional time needed to fulfill those responsibilities in addition to their existing duties. Question 36 asked participants to respond to the prompt, “Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient school time to permit them to make meaningful contributions to the school.” Thirty-one participants replied to the survey question. Nine of the responses were recorded as continually, 11 responses were recorded as frequently, eight responses were recorded as sometimes, two responses were recorded as rarely/never, and one response was recorded as insufficient or not enough information. These responses I perceive to mean that while some do, not all participants felt that teachers have sufficient amount of time to complete their leadership

responsibilities for school improvement including shared decision-making. An additional resource to fulfill these leadership responsibilities was also identified by participants as a need for their successful participation as teacher leaders. Unfortunately, their responses were not specific with regard to what those “resources” might be. Question 37 asked participants to respond to the statement, “Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient resources to be able to make meaningful contributions to the school.” There were 31 recorded responses and only one participant selected insufficient. All the other responses were evenly recorded as 10 responses for continually, frequently, and sometimes. The participant responses indicated further research is required to determine what type of resources staff perceive are needed for teacher leaders to make meaningful contributions to the school improvement process.

The fifth written response question asked survey participants to identify the formal and informal decision-making process at PSES and state whether these decisions affected achievement in our school. There were two comments in the written responses that were reflective of many participants thoughts around school improvement practices that participants perceived not to be effective in the school improvement turnaround process at PSES. Participant (P09) stated that while formal and informal decisions had positively affected student achievement they were unsure whether these decisions were helping student learning: Participant (P28) also was unclear whether the decision-making process at PSES was making an impact on student achievement and questioned if these decisions included sustainability for school growth. Considering all data sources for this

work, I posit that the staff at EGES is divided in their beliefs on whether leadership practices affect student achievement and if they do, which ones.

Areas of improvement shared by interview participants in both focus groups when answering question 1 revealed the perspective of some staff on what it means to be on a formal team, and provided insight into the lost opportunities for leadership for staff members who do not have this leadership experience. A participant in Focus Group A referenced the importance of membership in determining their roles as leaders and shared, “I do think it is empowering to be a member of a formal team and that it can even increase your leadership abilities.” A participant in focus group B revealed their belief that a staff member can influence instructional decisions even if you are not a member of a formal team cautioning, “Depending on the person.” Both of these responses represent a possible hidden belief or mindset of staff at PSES, including the perception that if you are not on a formal team you do not have opportunities to make instructional decisions to influence student learning. Some staff members might also believe you cannot be a leader capable of decision-making without membership on a formal team.

The data from this study further indicated the need for improvement in the level of communication skills of both members of the leadership team and the principal in the facilitating the decision making process. An interview participant in Group A who perceived this need recommended a possible first step toward a solution: “We are trying to find better pathways of communication from the teacher leaders that are on the [leadership] team to everyone else.” Another interviewed participant in Group A referenced a change of practice needed in order for the leadership team to improve

stakeholder understanding of the school's vision and for greater staff awareness of the decisions that have been made by the leadership team stating, "A greater effort needs to be made to include all voices, or make people feel valued, just as we would with students in the classroom."

Further to this point, participants in Focus Group B discussed the role of the principal in the decision-making process. It was recognized by this group that the principal has an "open-door policy" but she was required to make some of the school improvement decisions independently of staff. One participant in Group B shared, "What I would say...is there are non-negotiables." Another group participant continued the conversation adding, "There are certain things you can do outside of certain periods of the day, other periods are..." Another participant finished the sentence with, "Sacred and untouchable and what you do during that time is prescribed in a way...but again our leader is willing to listen...as long as you come prepared, it usually goes well." It is not known if all staff agreed and certainly the power dynamic illuminate in the limitations to follow, may have influenced responses here, but nonetheless, the perspective of interviewed participants was that some decisions need to be made by the principal to facilitate the school improvement decisions and initiatives.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perspectives of participating staff on the shared leadership practices that were utilized during the school improvement process that positively impacted student achievement at PSES. Participant responses on the selected, written, and focus group interviews in the shared leadership portion of this study suggested that opportunities for leadership were shared with PSES staff both in

formal and informal leadership roles. Members of the formal PSES leadership team make decisions to support school improvement, but many outside of a formal leadership role including classroom teachers, specialists, and educational assistants, also have opportunities to make instructional decisions. The culture around decision-making was purposeful at PSES during the school improvement turnaround initiative and included all staff members in the process through frequent and on-going opportunities for collaboration. Not all staff members responses indicated agreement with what can be described as the majority view on shared leadership practices. To increase the trustworthiness and generalizability of this work, further research is recommended on the perceptions of staff facilitating a school improvement initiative and the systems needed for shared decision-making to improve student achievement.

Limitations

As the author of this study, I acknowledge that there were limitations. To address the research question of identifying what shared leadership practices were perceived by participants to impact student achievement, both quantitative and qualitative measures were used in this case study. Each method has strengths and weaknesses, but the combination of both gives the researcher different perspectives from which triangulation can occur. The mixed-methods research approach was designed to consider how the strength of one measurement method could support the weakness of the other (Rossman & Wilson, 1985), and in response to the observed limitations of both (Caruth, 2013). However, because of the use of an explanatory mixed method study, for validity purposes

consideration was given to “whether the qualitative central phenomena and quantitative variables or constructs are parallel (Creswell, 2015, p. 19).”

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study that are not within the control of the researcher, while delimitations are characteristics that define the boundaries of the study and are in the control of the researcher. Regardless of the method or design of a study, there will be limitations and potential impacts on future use. Communicating the findings of this case study has the potential to influence other schools experiencing mandated change, but these findings are the interpretations of one researcher based on my assumptions, beliefs, and values. The intent is to inform the reader to apply the findings to their school setting to change the trajectory of learning positively for students in their community. The following limitations of this study are noted:

- A case study design is typically limited and not generalizable, due to the small sample size.
- The findings from the study were collected from one elementary school implementing a state-mandated school improvement initiative.
- The DLRS survey tool used to collect data for this research and measure the dimensions of distributed leadership was developed in 2000. New dimensions of leadership may have emerged from current research.
- The interview survey questions were designed by this researcher and could include unintended positive or negative hidden bias.
- A total of 38 participants that worked at PSES during the three-year school improvement process and 31 participants contributed to the research findings. The

7 participants who did not participate were potentially due to their lack of availability (3), movement to another school or district (3), or lack of interest (1).

- The data collected was self-reported and limited by the fact that it can be incongruent with the data from other research findings.
- There is little research on elementary schools that are mandated to initiate a school improvement mandate with a turnaround intervention model that can be referenced to add to the foundation on literature on school improvement.
- My role as the building principal of the elementary school whose responsibilities include implementing the mandated school improvement initiative with a turnaround model has the potential to influence my analysis of the data.
- My roles as the building principal for the turnaround initiative and as the researcher for this study may impact the responses of the people I supervise.
- The situational authority of my role as the building principal and supervisor of some of the participants may impact the answers and responses the participants choose to make.
- My current and past experiences as a teacher, instructional coach, and principal could affect my assumptions and analysis of the study.
- At the time of the study, the school included was the only school in the state of Oregon implementing a turnaround school improvement model.

The initial limitation of this study was that the population sample was limited to participating staff in one elementary school implementing a turnaround intervention model over a three-year period. The delimitations of the study included the decision not

to collect comparison data of leadership practices on a similar demographic elementary school. The decision was purposeful due to possible differences in leadership perspectives, both in theory and in application of other school leaders. Due to the nature and implications of Title I designation and the funding support provided for schools so designated, it would be difficult to find a comparable school with an equivalent plan of support developed under similar context and staffing guidelines.

Recommendations

Implementing a mandated improvement reform initiative for a school is an extremely complex process. Expectations of the public through their elected representative imply a sense of urgency to change the trajectory of learning for struggling students to enable them to acquire the skills needed to successfully transition to high school, graduate, and be prepared for college or a career. The recommendations for schools facilitating a school improvement turnaround initiative to change the academic outcome of our lowest performing students includes prioritizing the development of a positive school culture, creating teachers as leaders for collaborative decision-making, and sharing the responsibility of school leadership to teachers, teams, students, and families.

School culture. The purposeful development of a positive school culture, including cultivating the belief mindset needed by participating staff that all students have the potential for growth and achievement, has been clearly stated in the findings of this study. I would highly suggest acknowledging the efficacy of teachers and teacher leaders as co-facilitators of the change process, with principals and vice principals, as a

relevant and vital component of school improvement to support the adjustments needed for equitable student achievement. Including parents and families in the turnaround process, through meaningful and ongoing communication on how they can support their children at home is also strongly recommended.

I recommend that further study is needed for schools in improvement on how building school culture can be purposefully shared and developed with parents and families. The behavior and academic mindset of parents was perceived by some participants in this work to indicate they may not have the same intensity or drive that teachers have for their students to succeed academically. The required changes in systems and structures of school improvement mandates are frequently reflective of what students and staff experience during the instructional school day. How parents experience school improvement through their children may also influence the changes needed. More studies are needed on how parents and families can be included in school culture shifts toward a collective mindset with teachers and administration on how best to support their child's ability to continue learning outside the school day.

Teacher leaders. The research and findings for this study included the importance of effective instruction to enhance student learning. A principal who utilizes a teacher's area of expertise by empowering them to lead these professional development sessions with school staff has the potential to gain momentum for systematic school improvement and enhance a school's leadership capacity. In this study we saw teachers empowered to analyze student academic performance data to make collaborative decisions. Their comments and achievement data reinforced the positive effect this had

on student achievement. Principals can recognize teacher capacity for leadership through the school's decision-making and leadership structures allowing teachers to lead the school improvement reform initiative to increase and influence new school practices (Johnson et al., 2014).

Further research and study examining how teacher leaders purposefully engage in professional development that supports a change in instructional practices for equitable academic outcomes of all students would inform the literature on schools in improvement and staff development initiatives in general. Initial participation in professional development can become more relevant to teachers and teacher leaders when student performance data is first carefully analyzed to determine what instructional practices are needed to facilitate the change in student growth. Understanding why past instructional practices were ineffective and new learning is needed for teachers to facilitate instruction to meet the students' academic needs is often overlooked at the initial stage of school improvement and in determining the focus of professional development activities. The collaborative conversations that can occur as teachers and teacher leaders engage in new instructional practices can support the capacity for sustainability of school improvement reform initiatives.

Data-informed decision-making that informs and improves teacher practice and, as a natural consequence, student achievement, has been clearly evident in the findings of this study as a perceived improvement directed and facilitated by trained and knowledgeable school leaders. Teacher-leaders in all schools, I would strongly suggest, should seek to find the data to support this approach to improve pedagogy through

improved teacher practice and then support their teachers in interpreting and analyzing the data to make decisions.

Shared Leadership

The research and findings for this study found that a shared leadership framework has the potential to leverage the existing expertise and skills of teacher leaders to enhance their collective understanding and to empower staff to demonstrate ownership of the improvement process required by schools in improvement (Timperley, 2005). Providing teachers the time to make collaborative decisions needed for schools in improvement has the potential to be useful for school reform (Leithwood & Mascal, 2008). The results of this case study suggest that staff at PSES agree that many areas of shared leadership have improved since the implementation of the SIG turnaround initiative and some areas are still in need of improvement. Selected responses indicate that the majority of survey participants believe the capacity for leadership was developed at PSES during the school turnaround process by providing opportunities for staff to have leadership roles. These findings clearly show that teacher leaders are being developed at PSES to build capacity for shared leadership.

The findings of this study have also shown that teachers and teacher leaders were given opportunities for collective decisions of school improvement reform initiatives. This belief is underscored by Participant (P04)'s comment, "The leadership team serves as a formal decision-making team that prioritizes student outcomes and the well-being of their staff and students." Recommendations for further study for schools in improvement would include how the collective decisions of teachers and teacher leaders affect the use

of effective instructional practices that have been shown to positively impact student achievement. Finally, I would also strongly recommend the development of school systems that provide time for continued collaborative conversations on school and student performance data in order to make informed collective decisions on equitable student achievement. Participants in this work, while not specific in terms of the nature of resources required, were clear on the value and importance of dedicated time for this valuable work.

Conclusion

The findings of this work can inform the literature around school improvement in a turnaround model specifically and I believe school improvement for all public schools generally. Teachers and teacher leaders together with all members of the school community create a culture that, if facilitated using a model of shared leadership, can have a positive impact on student achievement for all learners and especially those who struggle for reasons not wholly attributable to the school environment.

The results of this study demonstrate that sharing the responsibility for leadership in the school improvement process allows schools to become strong organizations that support student growth. The participant responders saw the value of developing a culture of trust at PSES where teacher leaders' strengths and knowledge are honored and recognized as they collectively develop ownership of school improvement in teams and groups. The results show that the role of teachers as leaders in this process is enhanced when they increase their understanding of teaching and learning by engaging in professional development on effective evidence-based teaching and student learning

strategies. The results also show that principals can (and in my view must) support teacher leaders by providing time for collaboration and planning using data in a shared leadership framework to guide their instructional decisions in support of school improvement and improved student achievement.

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Appendix A: Connecticut State Department of Education Permission

From: **Falconer, Matthew** <Matthew.Falconer@ct.gov>

Sent: Fri 7/14, 9:11 AM

To: Miles, Kimberly

Subject: DLRS Permission Request

Dear Ms. Miles,

Thank you for your request to use the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS) in your dissertation research.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is pleased to grant permission for this purpose. Please note that permission is granted for noncommercial use only.

While some districts in Connecticut still use DLRS, the Department does not use it for any particular program or initiative. We are unable to provide a link to the original document; however, I have attached two files that you may find useful.

Sincerely,

Matthew Falconer
State of Connecticut
Department of Education
Communications Office
450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 608
Hartford, CT 06103
860-713-6585
matthew.falconer@ct.gov

Appendix B: IRB Approval of University of Portland

Memorandum

To: Kimberly Miles
From: Laretta Frederking, Ph.D.
Date: August 18, 2017

RE: IRB Approval of University of Portland Project # 2017109

Dear Kimberly Miles:

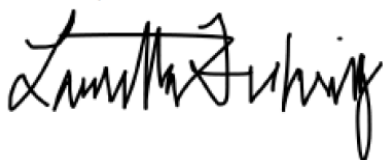
On behalf of the University of Portland's federally registered Institutional Review Board (IRB00006544), a member of the committee has reviewed your research proposal, titled "Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School." The IRB concludes that the project satisfies all IRB-related issues involving human subjects research under the "Expedited" classification. A printout of this memorandum should serve as written authorization from IRB to proceed with your research.

The expiration date for this approval is 8/17/2018. If the study is expected to go beyond that date, you must submit a Continued Review Form (located on the IRB website) for continuing review. I recommend that this form be submitted to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the expiration date.

Please note that you are required to abide by all requirements as outlined by the IRB Committee.

A copy of this memorandum, along with your Request for Review and its documentation, will be stored in the IRB Committee files for three years from the completion of your project, as mandated by federal law. Thank you, and good luck with your project.

Yours truly,



Laretta Frederking, Ph.D.
Associate Provost
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Political Science

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate

Dear Educator,

I would like to invite you to participate in a dissertation research project entitled “Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School” as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Portland. The risk is minimal, as all data remains anonymous. Names of participants will not be used at any point in the collection or reporting of data. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participant answers will remain anonymous, and once collected the data will be maintained by me and securely stored for three years past after the completion of the study and then be destroyed. Participants may also decline to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering.

The purpose of this study will be to investigate the perceptions of participating staff regarding factors of a shared leadership framework that impact growth in student achievement within the turnaround model at Pine Street Elementary School. This study will use the major themes affecting student achievement identified in a review of the literature as a focus for analysis of the results including: school culture, teacher leadership, and shared leadership. The results of this study are intended to inform on-going turnaround efforts at Pine Street Elementary School and may inform other similar efforts in other schools within the state of Oregon.

Participants will be categorized in two distinct groupings as identified in the minimal demographic information collected on the survey instrument. Group A will consist of Pine Street Elementary School teachers (Classroom, Music, PE, Title I, Special Education, Language) and Group B is composed of Mountain Park School District instructional support staff (Instructional Coach, Counselor, Behavior Support, School Coach, LLC Consultant, District Director). Teachers who are no longer working at Pine Street Elementary School, but were participants of the School Improvement Grant over the last three years will also be included in the invitation to participate.

Each participant will be asked to complete an anonymous survey with 40 items on a five-point selected response scale and 6 open-ended written responses. The selected responses were obtained from the Distributed Readiness Leadership Scale (DRLS) survey developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The open-ended responses were modified from the DRLS to connect to the major themes identified in the literature review and to better address the research question.

After the selected and open-ended response data from the DRLS survey has been collected and aggregated, will be conducted with randomly selected members representing both Group A and B. Each focus group will contain up to five (5) members from those who indicated willingness to participate in follow up focus group discussions.

Questions for the focus groups will be informed by the aggregate data from the survey instrument and data obtained by the Leadership and Learning Center as reported in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment document previously given to the school. Each focus group is expected to last between 45 – 75 minutes in duration. A neutral party will conduct it with no connection to the school or school division. The discussions will be recorded and transcribed to remove any indicators between specific responses and participants.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Portland has preauthorized this research. If you have questions regarding the survey you can contact me by phone at 503-806-3996 or email @ miles16@gresham.k12.or.us. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Randy Hetherington at 503-943-7867 or hetherin@up.edu . Please print a copy of this letter and indicate your willingness to participate in a) the initial survey and b) the focus group discussions on the bottom of this invitation, scan and return it to me via email. The link to the on-line survey will be emailed to willing participants in a password-protected file. I appreciate your consideration of participation in this research project.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Miles, Doctoral Candidate
University of Portland

Indication of Informed Consent

Study title - Shared Leadership Perceptions in a Turnaround Elementary School

I, _____, hereby consent to take part in the research study stated above. My participation will include the initial survey to all participants.

I also **consent / do not consent** to being considered for the focus group discussions.
(circle one)

I understand that:

1. I may withdraw from the research at any time prior to submission of the final draft without penalty;
 2. All information gathered will be anonymous;
 3. Any information that identifies me will be destroyed upon completion of the study;
 4. I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research;
 5. The results of this research will be used to inform the work at Pine Street Elementary School Elementary school, other schools facilitating school improvement initiatives.
-

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix D: Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS)

Introduction

The following self-evaluation scale has been designed to provide a profile of your school's readiness and engagement in shared leadership practices. The scale is based on current research on school leadership designed to improve public school capacity to increase student academic achievement (i.e. *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, Richard Elmore (2000)).

The Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS) is organized into five key dimensions of instructional leadership: Mission, Vision and Goals; School Culture; Decision-Making; Evaluation and Professional Development; and Leadership Practices.

Who should complete the scale?

Since no one individual possesses complete information into all facets of district/school leadership roles and responsibilities, this scale may be completed by a variety of individuals including teachers and instructional support staff.

Teachers: (Classroom, Music, PE, Title I, Special Education, Language)

Instructional Support: (Instructional Coach, Counselor, Behavior Support, School Coach, LLC Consultant, District Director)

How will the results of the DLRS be used?

Once results are analyzed, the scale will produce profiles by which the professional staff may compare their school's distributed leadership practices across the five dimensions.

How to use the DLRS Scale:

Participants are encouraged to be as candid as possible when completing the scale. All individual responses will remain strictly confidential. To insure that the DLRS provides a complete and accurate school profile, do not skip any statements.

Response Options:

A = Continually - the particular practice is well-established as a "standard operating procedure"

in the school

B = Frequently - this practice is often observed in the school.

C = Sometimes - this practice is intermittently observed in the school.

D = Rarely/Never - this practice has rarely or never been observed in the school.

E = Insufficient Information – insufficient information to respond to the statement

Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale

Demographic Information: Thank you for your participation. All responses will be held strictly confidential.

A. Total years in education:

1 = less than 1

2 = 1 - 3

3 = 4 – 6

4 = 7 or more

B. Total years in this school:

1 = less than 1

2 = 1 - 3

3 = 4 – 6

4 = 7 or more

C. Primary Responsibility

1 = Teacher (Classroom, Music, PE, Title I, Special Education, Language)

2 = Instructional Support (Instructional Coach, Counselor, Behavior Support, School Coach, LLC Consultant, District Director)

Section A: Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale Selected Responses

<p>Section A -Directions: Record your responses in the first four columns of the General Purpose Data Sheet. Use the five point scale from ‘Continually’ (A) to ‘Rarely/Never’ (D) to describe how regularly the following statements apply to you and your school. Select ‘E’ if you do not have sufficient information to respond to the statement.</p>	<p>C O N T I N U A L L Y</p>	<p>F R E Q U E N T L Y</p>	<p>S O M E T I M E S</p>	<p>R A R E L Y O R N E V E R</p>	<p>I N S U F F I C I E N T</p>
1. The school has clearly written vision and mission statements.	A	B	C	D	E
2. Teachers and administrators understand and support a common mission for the school and can describe it clearly.	A	B	C	D	E
3. If parents are asked to describe the school’s mission, most would be able to describe the mission clearly.	A	B	C	D	E
4. If students are asked to describe the school’s mission, most would be able to describe the mission generally.	A	B	C	D	E
5. School goals are aligned with its mission statement.	A	B	C	D	E
6. The school uses a school improvement plan as a basis to evaluate the progress	A	B	C	D	E
7. Teachers and administrators collectively establish school goals and revise goals annually.	A	B	C	D	E
8. The school’s curriculum is aligned with the state’s academic standards.	A	B	C	D	E
9. Teachers and administrators have high expectations for students’ academic performance.	A	B	C	D	E
10. Teachers and administrators share accountability for students’ academic performance.	A	B	C	D	E
11. School and district resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most.	A	B	C	D	E

12. The school is a learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both successes and failures.	A	B	C	D	E
13. There is a high level of mutual respect and trust among the teachers and other professional staff in the school.	A	B	C	D	E
14. There is mutual respect and trust between the school administration and the professional staff.	A	B	C	D	E
15. The school administrator(s) welcome professional staff members input on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and improving student performance.	A	B	C	D	E
16. The school supports using new instructional ideas and innovations.	A	B	C	D	E
17. The school's daily and weekly schedules provide time for teachers to collaborate on instructional issues	A	B	C	D	E
18. School professionals and parents agree on the most effective roles parents can play as partners in their child's education.	A	B	C	D	E
19. The school clearly communicates the 'chain of contact' between home and school so parents know who to contact when they have questions and concerns.	A	B	C	D	E
20. The school makes available a variety of data (e.g. student performance) for teachers to use to improve student achievement.	A	B	C	D	E
21. Decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data.	A	B	C	D	E
22. There is a formal structure in place in the school (e.g. curriculum committee) to provide teachers and professional staff opportunities to participate in school-level instructional decision-making.	A	B	C	D	E
23. The principal actively encourages teachers and other staff members to participate in instructional decision-making.	A	B	C	D	E
24. Professional staff members in the school have the responsibility to make decisions that affect meeting school goals.	A	B	C	D	E

25. The school provides teachers with professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals.	A	B	C	D	E
26. Administrators participate along side teachers in the school's professional development activities.	A	B	C	D	E
27. The principal actively participates in his/her own professional development activities to improve leadership in the school.	A	B	C	D	E
28. My supervisor and I jointly develop my annual professional development plan.	A	B	C	D	E
29. My professional development plan includes activities that are based on my individual professional needs and school needs.	A	B	C	D	E
30. Teachers actively participate in instructional decision-making.	A	B	C	D	E
31. Central office and school administrators work together to determine the professional development activities.	A	B	C	D	E
32. The principal is knowledgeable about current instructional issues.	A	B	C	D	E
33. My principal's practices are consistent with his/her words.	A	B	C	D	E
34. Informal school leaders play an important role in the school in improving the performance of professionals and the achievement of students.	A	B	C	D	E
35. The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.	A	B	C	D	E
36. Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient school time to permit them to make meaningful contributions to the school.	A	B	C	D	E
37. Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient resources to be able to make meaningful contributions to the school.	A	B	C	D	E
38. Veteran teachers fill most leadership roles in the school.	A	B	C	D	E

39. New teachers are provided opportunities to fill some school leadership roles.	A	B	C	D	E
40. Teachers are interested in participating in school leadership roles.	A	B	C	D	E

Section B: Open-ended questions. Please respond to each of the following questions briefly in the designated ‘Write-In Area’.

Write-In Area 1: Do you believe you are/were in a **formal or an informal** leadership role in the school? Explain why.

Write-In Area 2: Part A. In your opinion, what has improved most in the **school**? How do you know? Part B. What currently needs the most **improvement**? How do you know?

Write-In Area 3: Consider the school and instructional environment. What changes have been made to address needed improvements?

Write-In Area 4: Describe aspects of the school and **instructional environment** that are the largest barriers to school improvement?

Write-In Area 5: Identify the formal and informal **decision-making** processes in the school. Do you believe these decision-making processes have affected student achievement in our school? Explain.

Write-In Area 6: Consider the nine foundational practices and process (as recommended by the LLC) to improve the school and student achievement (listed below). Choose the three you consider most impactful in improving student achievement and rank order them with the most impactful ranked as 1, the second most impactful as 2 and the third most impactful as 3.

Planning, building, Implementing, and Monitoring Leadership Teams
 Decision-Making for Results and Instructional Data Teams
 Standards-Based Curriculum
 Research-Based Instruction

Formative Assessment
Literacy Across the Content Areas
Learning Environment and School Culture
Professional Learning
Student, Parent, and Community Engagement

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

Appendix E: Group A & Group B Interview Questions

Here are the questions for the discussion. The group will have approximately nine minutes to respond to each question. Thank you in advance for your participation. Karen Apgar, who is a doctoral student at the University of Portland in my office, will conduct the interview.

1. Many of the Distributed Leadership Readiness Survey participants responded to the survey on the importance of **membership** in determining their role as a leader. Can you be an instructional leader without being a member of a formal team at Pine Street Elementary School? How?
2. Can you specify school improvement **practices we** included in the turnaround model at Pine Street Elementary School that have influenced professional **learning for teachers and staff**? How are those practices managed?
3. Define **school-level factors** which teacher and leaders have potential influence over that explain the growth in **student achievement**? Are these factors regularly implemented at Pine Street Elementary School?
4. What value do teachers place on **parent's efficacy** for their children to achieve at Pine Street Elementary School? How important is it that parents set the bar at the **same level** as the teacher?
5. For this study, **school climate** is defined as what members of your school community do, and **school culture** answers the question why schools do what they do. Describe the school culture at Pine Street Elementary School.
6. What is the culture around **decision-making** or teacher initiative at Pine Street Elementary School?