Towards an Understanding of Dynamics Surrounding Professional Development in a School Reform Designed and Facilitated by Teacher Leaders

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Motivation

Over the last three decades a great deal of professional development planning, implementation, and evaluation has moved towards the classroom (Garet et al., 2008). A major shift in the format of professional development occurred in the 1980s when educators began acknowledging teacher leadership as a legitimate way to improve teaching and learning via collaboration among teachers (e.g. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Rosenholtz, 2989). In large part it seems this legitimacy rests on the assumptions that there is contextually specific knowledge one can only gain by engaging in the act of teaching in a given context, problems only practicing teachers in a given context will recognize, and many educational ills can only be solved using context-specific solutions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In short, the relevance of external consultants in solving problems of practice to improve student learning came to be complemented, and in some instances substituted, by professional development planned, implemented, and evaluated by teacher leaders (TLPD).

For the purposes of this analysis, TLPD refers to a process implemented by teachers (identified as teacher leaders with respect to this particular development work) with the aim of improving student behaviors by transforming the practices, knowledge, and beliefs of teacher leaders and their teacher colleagues. However, there is little agreement among those who research teacher leadership about what it is (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Silins & Mulford, 2004). The definitional ambiguity of “teacher leadership” permits researchers to examine very different phenomena within this research topic, leading to a proliferation of teacher leadership conceptual frameworks. While there are differences among each framework, these theories essentially posit that: the nature of the development work; interpersonal capacities of teachers and teacher leaders; school culture and resources; and power structures among teachers, teacher
leaders, and administrators all influence TLPD (e.g. Frost & Durrant, 2002; Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Once researchers began identifying the elements of TLPD they soon began investigating the skills, knowledge, and contexts teacher leaders needed to effectively facilitate TLPD. Again, there is no shortage of research concerning this topic across academic or practitioner journals; while each contribution is somewhat unique, themes have emerged. For example, in a practitioner-oriented article, Mangin and Stoelinga (2011) argue that teacher leaders must possess expertise regarding the development work, be able to facilitate teacher learning processes, and successfully negotiate teacher-teacher social interactions. Given that teacher leaders are often still recognized as teachers many prior works find that a teacher leader should lead their colleagues’ professional learning and still be an active participant in implementing changes called for by the TLPD (e.g. Muijs & Harris, 2006). One unique aspect of teacher leadership is that teacher leaders with little formal power usually pull or persuade their colleagues through changes by using extant bonds of trust between themselves and their teacher colleagues instead of pushing or coercing teachers to change as leaders with formal authority may do (e.g. Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Researchers and practitioners use similar logics concerning the role of trust in TLPD: as a teacher, a teacher leader can better relate to the ways teachers interpret the aims, legitimacy, constraints, and solutions accompanying development work (Byrne, 1971; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Thus, the role of trust between teachers and teacher leaders is paramount to the success of a TLPD. Further, if teacher leadership emerges in a school where authority has historically rested within administrators, teacher leaders must also hold the trust of their supervisors, who are taking a risk by sharing their influence with teacher leaders (e.g. Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Another theme that has emerged in the teacher
leadership literature is that teacher leaders must be able to manage the change process (e.g. Lieberman & Miller, 2004). However, some of these emergent themes from prior works seem paradoxical.

When a group of teachers is reorganized to accomplish the goal of a TLPD by formally or informally identifying some members as teacher leaders the group will likely move through different phases of development. Psychologists and sociologists describe these phases using different, but similar terminology; Schutz (1966) refers to these stages as inclusion, control, and affection, while Tuckman (1965) calls them forming, storming, norming, and performing. The overarching notion in these, and similar, theories is that when groups form or are reorganized to complete a task (i.e. TLPD) there is an initial phase of formation and inclusion, in which the authority of leaders is largely unquestioned. In this initial phase the allocation of status, tasks, and resources among group members is uncertain; individuals largely follow their leaders unquestioningly, in order to learn more about expectations and how they “fit” into the group task during this unstructured stage (Wheelan, 1994). Following the initial stage members enter a control or storming phase in which roles and expectations are refined (Mills, 1967) and the purpose of the group task and alignment of group and individual values is evaluated, resulting in conflict among subordinates and leaders as they negotiate these tasks (Wheelan, 1994). During the two final stages groups identify and accept the norms needed to complete the task while maintaining group cohesion and then act within these norms to complete the task (Wheelan, 1994).

In the context of TLPD, there are teacher work norms that may inhibit group development. In particular, many researchers have documented the strong egalitarian norms present among teachers, enabling the development of strong bonds of trust among teachers and
teacher leaders that teacher leaders draw upon to push changes forward (de Lima, 2001; Hart, 1995; Smylie, 1995). Yet, the aforementioned group development processes predict that conflict is practically guaranteed to arise among teachers and teacher leaders; since teachers largely determine the legitimacy of teacher leadership (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012; Hart, 1995) these conflicts may lead teachers to distrust teacher leaders calling into question the legitimacy of the TLPD goals. Thus, to maintain trust, teachers and teacher leaders may seek to avoid conflict, yet conflict is a necessary part of group development. It is for this reason prior works find that teacher leaders must be able to manage the change process (e.g. Lieberman & Miller, 2004); additionally, some authors suggest that the boundary between teachers and teacher leaders should be permeable to better preserve egalitarian norms and maintain bonds of trust (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Muijs & Harris, 2006). In theory, it may sound easy enough to distribute leadership among teachers and teacher leaders by keeping perceived social boundaries between these two groups permeable, but in practice this seems very difficult. For instance, prior works find that teacher leaders will downplay their status as experts and avoid providing feedback challenging teachers’ practices, inhibiting the efficient completion of group tasks, in order to preserve collegiality (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011; McKenzie & Locke, 2014; Silins & Mulford, 2004).

We are not the first to consider the potential tensions between teachers and teacher leaders within TLPD. Over a decade ago de Lima (2001) reviewed the extant literature concerning collegiality and conflict within teacher communities, concluding that productive relationships among teachers need not be identified as friendships, but friendly. Friendly relationships, de Lima argues, would permit teachers to challenge one another in ways that would not deviate far from strong norms of collegiality and egalitarianism (2001). Nearly ten
years later two studies further explored these tensions by interviewing teacher leaders responsible for developing expertise with an instructional strategy and then helping their colleagues learn how to implement that strategy (Margolis & Doring, 2012; McKenzie & Locke, 2014). These teacher leaders reported becoming very uncomfortable when trying to change their colleagues’ practices (Margolis & Doring, 2012; McKenzie & Locke, 2014), as previously mentioned works suggested. While the teacher leader perspectives in these two studies reveals the existence of tensions between teachers and teacher leaders, the absence of any teacher perspectives leaves one wondering if teachers viewed these tensions similarly to teacher leaders.

The purpose of this study is to move the literature concerning teacher leadership and TLPD forward by investigating potential tensions arising between teachers and teacher leaders in the context of a TLPD. Unlike works reviewed for this paper, this analysis will draw upon over 150 interviews from teachers, principals, and teacher leaders, that occurred over two rounds of data collection from three different high schools. The number of interviews should yield a more comprehensive, school wide view regarding TLPD tensions, and the inclusion of teacher perspectives provides a voice largely omitted from prior TLPD analyses. Further, the TLPD to be analyzed was structured so that teachers and teacher leaders had complete control over the design and evaluation of the development work. Given that TLPDs are still a popular form of professional development (Alvarez, 2016; Connelly, 2015; Teach to Lead, 2016), this analysis will also help practitioners considering a TLPD learn more about avoidable and unavoidable obstacles; in turn, this analysis could provide those teaching/mentoring teacher leaders with information to improve support mechanisms.

With these purposes in mind, this analysis will answer the following research questions: In what ways do teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators respond to teacher leadership in the
context of school-specific reforms designed and facilitated by teacher leaders? What tensions arise in this context and are these tensions shared by all role groups?

**Context**

Data from this paper comes from a larger research project examining conditions supporting the scaling up of a strategy across three Texas high schools. At the time of the larger study, the district served over 80,000 students where the majority were low-income or traditionally under-served racial/ethnic groups. Teacher leaders from three high schools, Yearwood, Willow, and Evergreen, participated in the initial development process through a collaboration of researchers, program developers, and district personnel. The partnership built buy-in among the local actors and district personnel by using research conducted in the district that identified effective practices (see Smith, Preston, Haynes, & Booker, 2015), building capacity among the district members and teacher leaders, and creating a district-wide innovation that is adapted to local school context (see Cohen-Vogel et al., 2015). The teacher leaders were full time teachers from content areas as well as electives. The majority of these teachers volunteered to be a part of the innovation, and they were paid a small stipend as part of the work. The intervention itself is a set of content-neutral practices aimed at student non-cognitive factors and attitudes to develop student ownership and responsibility for their academic success. The work is comprised of three phases: the initial design phase, the planning and piloting phase, and school-wide implementation phase.

The design phase, phase 1, began with an intensive study of the programs and practices of two low- and two high-valued added high schools in the district. The findings from this initial research established the conceptual design for developing student ownership and responsibility
(SOAR), the focus of subsequent work. A District Innovation Design Team (DIDT) was established and charged with developing an innovation aimed to improve student ownership and responsibility. The DIDT had over twenty members, including two to three representatives from each innovation school, representatives from other high schools, several representatives from the district office, and external researchers. The DIDT was facilitated by an external program-developer organization. Over a seven-month period, the DIDT met monthly for two days to learn about the design challenge, conduct needs analysis, and develop an innovation prototype.

In phase 2, the planning and piloting phase, School Innovation Design Teams (SIDT) were established in each of the three innovation schools, consisting of six to eight teachers and staff members. In our framework, the teacher leaders were the SIDT members who were also teachers as they did the bulk of the work and were the face of the innovation at their school while staff members provided ancillary support. Table 1 provides descriptive information on the three innovation schools and the composition of their SIDT (referred to as teacher leaders from here on out). The teacher leaders engaged in further development, testing, and piloting the prototype at their school. They were also charged with planning for full implementation the following year. During the 2013-14 school year, the teacher leaders and DIDT had six face-to-face meetings that lasted one or two days, four webinars, and two after school meetings. During these times, the teacher leaders and DIDT collaborated and shared their work on developing and piloting of the innovation prototype.

In phase 3, the 2014-2015 school year, each school team implemented SOAR school-wide. Each teacher leader team presented the innovation practices to the school faculty and staff at the beginning of the year in faculty meetings, professional development meetings, and professional learning communities allotted time. Moreover, as part of implementation process,
the teacher leaders engaged in a continuous improvement cycle, specifically the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2015). Throughout the year, they undertook three PDSA cycles where they collected data about the innovation practices, refined them according to the feedback, and made course corrections as needed. During this phase, the teacher leaders also collaborated with the external program developers and researchers through emails and group phone calls every other week. The data for this paper comes mainly from this third phase of the work.

Data and Methods

The data for our analysis come from two field visits in the implementation phase in each of the three high schools. Two four-day field visits occurred in October 2014 and April 2015. Table 2 lists the data sources from these field visits. A qualitative case study design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) allows us to probe how teacher leaders were involved in the design and implementation of a school-wide reform and how different role groups perceived the professional development and subsequent implementation support by the teacher leaders.

Fieldwork data were transcribed and coded by members of the larger research team following each visit using pre-existing categories based on an improvement science framework (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2015). The coding was iterative with researchers comparing their coding to one another to ensure consistency and accuracy (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following the fieldwork coding, the team from the larger project wrote summary memos, summarizing and synthesizing the data for each code; memos were detailed and contained direct quotes. Each memo was reviewed by at least one other member of the research team to confirm that summaries appropriately represented respondents’ views and were credible to study participants.
One of the authors of this paper was a member of the larger research team throughout the data collection, coding, memo writing, and peer debriefing processes just described.

For our paper, we used raw data connected to three *a priori* codes from the improvement science framework: support to the SIDT, SIDT support to teachers, and teacher feedback on implementation and support. Using these raw data, we employed constant comparative analysis and open coding to identify emergent codes and themes. After an initial round of open coding we identified emergent categories then used these new categories to engage in another iterative cycle of coding. During this new iterative cycle both of us coded the data together, using the newly identified categories, to establish trustworthy interpretations based on the experiences and perceptions of study participants, not the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the individual researchers.

**Findings**

**Pre-existing conditions**

The development of SOAR and subsequent PD and implementation support do not happen in a void as some pre-existing local conditions strongly influenced how teacher leaders approached PD and implementation support. We briefly outline some key pre-existing conditions at each school that set the stage for the teacher leaders’ work. These descriptions also supplement the schools’ descriptive information in Table 1.

At Yearwood, many of the teacher leaders were part of a previous teacher-led literacy initiative that successfully implemented a school-wide reading intervention, which was still in place at the time of this study; these teacher leaders had leadership roles throughout the entire process. Consequently, they had more direct knowledge and capacity of leadership, how to
implement a school reform and design and deliver PD. Moreover, the school had an
organizational structure in place that supported reform implementation, and the school
development team members were widely recognized as leaders at their school.

At Willow, there was also a previous literacy initiative but it was led by the
administration. Some of the teacher leaders participated in the initiative but did not lead it. As a
result, they did not have as much experience as the teacher leaders at Yearwood, and there was
not a formal structure in place for implementing SOAR. However, there was an established
culture of trust and support among the faculty. The teacher leaders knew each other personally
and professionally and could rely on each other for support; this culture of trust and support was
highly valued by the teacher leaders. Throughout the work, teacher leaders emphasized the
importance of these social ties and the need to use their relationships to obtain teachers’ input
and cooperation.

In sharp contrast, the teacher leaders at Evergreen had neither the experience of a teacher-
led initiative or a strong culture of trust and support; these teacher leaders were selected because
they were department chairs. Evergreen teacher leaders were often unable to transfer knowledge
gained through their experiences as department chairs into SOAR teacher leadership. The absence
of prior experience and a culture of trust and support greatly influenced the teacher leaders’ work
at Evergreen. In many ways the differences among the three schools concerning the selection of
teacher leaders and experiences with TLPD substantially influenced how the SOAR TLPD was
perceived.

Easing the innovation: Using existing structures and inclusion of teachers in planning
Two challenges common to school reforms, particularly those requiring changes in teacher practices, knowledge, and/or beliefs, are a lack of time and the perceived incompatibility of new practices with teachers’ existing work routines, leading to resistance (Coburn, 2004). Not surprisingly, some teachers at Yearwood and Willow, the two schools where the innovation practices required teachers to teach differently, explicitly talked about the newness of SOAR and the lack of time teachers wanted before they felt comfortable incorporating SOAR practices into their routines and behaviors. Even when teachers felt professional development was done well, some teachers were still unsure about the innovation practices and how to incorporate them into their daily teaching. Having had similar experiences with prior initiatives as teachers themselves, teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow anticipated these challenges and attempted to alleviate some stress and resistance to implementation by forecasting changes months ahead of the formal implementation launch date. Teacher leaders did this by trying to integrate the innovation practices into existing structures and including teachers in the development process; while these strategies were used in both schools, the degree of usage seemed to vary due to each school’s recent school reform history. In contrast, Evergreen teacher leaders had not prior TLPD experiences to draw upon and this forecasting and easing of innovation practices into teacher behaviors and routines did not occur.

At Yearwood, which had recent experience with a previous TLPD literacy initiative, teacher leaders were familiar with the challenges of a school-wide reform. Yearwood teacher leaders were aware that teachers needed to know about the innovation well in advance so that the innovation did not appear to “come out of nowhere.” As such, they forecasted the innovation a full year ahead of implementation. In the fall prior to school-wide implementation, teacher leaders announced to the faculty they were working with other schools, the district, researchers,
and program developers to implement SOAR. In the spring, teacher leaders asked for volunteers to pilot some growth mindset and problem-solving lessons along with the teacher leaders. As a result, the majority of teachers were well aware that the teacher leaders were working on a TLPD and that changes would be expected of them in the near future; further, some teachers piloted SOAR lesson plans and many teachers believed teacher leaders used their feedback to refine subsequent lessons. During the summer prior to formal school wide implementation Yearwood teacher leaders discussed how they would incorporate the innovation into existing school structures so that teachers were not doing something entirely new but rather extending their current practices. Here is how one teacher leader explained the forecasted message to teachers:

“We’re incorporating this with [the previous reading initiative], trying to show teachers that this is not a new thing, this is not something else for them to do, and stress that. This is not something new and different— it’s something that we just need you to kind of incorporate what you’re doing anyway, we’re just trying to change the verbiage.” Furthermore, teacher leaders attempted to provide everything teachers needed to implement the lessons, hoping to make implementation as easy as possible. Here is how one Yearwood teacher leader explained this easing process as a whole:

"We've talked to the faculty. We have a concept. We'll talk to them about SOAR. We've given them bits and pieces of it. We started at the beginning of last year and before we went off for the summer we said this -- when we come back, we're going to be really focusing on SOAR and this is what it means, and this is what it is. And when they came back to school we did this piece on SOAR and this is the lessons that you're going to be talking about on the second day of school, school wide, about having growth mindset… What has worked for us or what people appreciate is that we have the training, we go through it, if there's any questions they're able to ask us, but we've also provided every single resource that they've needed whether it's the PowerPoint -- Here's the PowerPoint. Here are the copies you need. We do everything for them so that they don't feel like they have to. So people are saying of course, why wouldn't we do it? It's all here done for us. You all have done all the -- You all have done the hard work, of course I'm going to teach a great lesson and you provide me the materials."
Unlike the teacher leaders at Yearwood, teacher leaders at Willow did not necessarily have the same kind of prior knowledge and experience about the challenges of a school-wide reform. However, they did have a well-developed social network among themselves and other teachers, as well as a strong desire to include teachers in the innovation. Teacher leaders at Willow consistently talked about how much they valued teacher buy-in and the need for teacher engagement at their school. Willow teacher leaders encouraged buy-in and teacher engagement by forecasting the innovation, including teachers in piloting the initial prototype, and personally inviting teachers to be a part of the development of the school-wide lesson plans. For instance, a Willow teacher leader said the following about easing teachers into the innovation and including them as part of the process:

"We've always taken it to the faculty. We've always got input for the faculty. We do surveys for the faculty. This is before we even began. The fact that we got impact and input from everyone else, more teachers started coming on board, it's like, I want to help. I didn't think that lesson, you know, we can do better than this lesson. Well, well what would you do? Oh, come on and write it. Because we opened it up to them and we asked them their opinions, and I think that is the key that it was presented in we were doing this together as a campus, as opposed to this is what we want to do, you – you do it and don't complain about it. We listened to the positives, we listened to the negatives, and we adjusted.

Teacher leaders purposefully worked to include teachers every step along the way, from the spring before the school-wide year of implementation and all year long during implementation. A Willow teacher leader felt they and their fellow teacher leaders were successful in their attempts to include teachers in the development of SOAR: “We've been trying to incorporate the entire campus from the very beginning, so from August people designed lessons… Our goal was to include – have everybody in the design of at least one thing to create that buy in… If you ask them, they generally want to do it.” Multiple teacher leaders shared this sentiment, indicating that the majority of the faculty had been incorporated into the work.
Yearwood and Willow administrator and teacher perceptions largely mirrored the teacher leaders’ regarding teacher inclusion. A Willow administrator said, “I see teachers collaborating, and I see teachers going to [teacher leaders] and getting more input. So, like we said at the beginning, it's not one person being the holder of all, it's – it really does have to have the whole school on board and the whole school take ownership of it in order for it to keep going and keep lasting.” Willow administrators also indicated that including the majority, if not all, of the teachers in the innovation deepened the buy-in from teachers who were the early adopters and also changing the minds of the “naysayers.” The dean of instruction at Willow commented that this inclusion of teachers was changing people’s minds, and that the skeptics were now participating in the innovation. The principal had this to say:

We had, like, the, you know, kind of late bloomers actually create the lessons and then we straight up asked a bunch of naysayers and late bloomers to facilitate the lesson during PD. So they had to actually do the lesson for their colleagues. I think it's pretty cool when someone who's – who is, like, the biggest naysayer on our campus, his lesson gets rolled out and, like, he's no longer the biggest naysayer. You know? After watching him watch it get rolled out in PD, like, it, you know. He’s acting a little bit different.

Willow teachers agreed that the teacher leaders were inclusive and that teacher input was consistently sought; teachers felt welcomed and their feedback was used to refine practices and lesson plans. Teachers who participated in a summer retreat and those who did not appreciated how teachers were included in the lesson development process. Teacher 1803 had this to say: “I know that there is a team of teachers who volunteer. They volunteered their time this summer to come up with the initial lessons, so different teachers were assigned to different lessons, the ideas for the lessons, they asked all of us, any ideas, what do you think our kids need. So the cool thing about the lessons is that they come from teachers who know our students, what do our students specifically need to work on? And then these teachers who volunteered their time created the PowerPoints, got the information that they needed, et cetera.” Another Willow
teacher shared this message of inclusivity and active participation: “What I liked most about it was the topics were not discussed in a box and then pushed out to the teachers, but we were all invited to meet together as a team and decide what topics would – would most benefit the students, and after that was done, then different instructors were given the opportunity to put together lessons. I thought that was great.” As a result, multiple teachers indicated that they thought the innovation was teacher-run and teacher-directed and not handed down from the administration and that there was high buy-in from all the teachers in the school.

**Teacher leaders’ sensitivity to teachers’ needs, experiences, and constraints**

The easing of the innovation into teachers’ awareness and practices by Yearwood and Willow teacher leaders was strongly connected to the teacher leaders’ sensitivity of teachers’ needs, experiences and constraints. As teachers themselves, teacher leaders were well aware that teachers had limited time and effort they could devote to new practices. To varying degrees, teacher leaders from all three schools thought about teachers’ needs, experiences, and constraints in terms of the initial PD, implementation, and subsequent support. Much of their time was spent thinking about how to make PD more meaningful or how to provide resources in such a way to make implementation “painless and easy.” In particular, the teacher leaders thought creating and disseminating lesson plans, PowerPoints, and copies would lessen the burden of implementation on teachers while increasing buy-in. Unsurprisingly, this level of consideration, sensitivity and support varied by school; teacher leaders from Yearwood and Willow were more thoughtful and considerate than the teacher leaders from Evergreen in terms of implementation support.

Teacher leaders at Yearwood were very clear that they wanted to provide everything teachers needed to implement the innovation practices and preempt pushback from teachers.
When reflecting on what teachers needed to implement SOAR on the second day of school at Yearwood, one teacher leader said that they and their teacher leader colleagues were “trying to be sensitive to [teacher] needs… we're still trying to do all the copies for teachers. We have everything in their boxes ready to go, so with our initiative at least, I feel like teachers know I'm not going to have to do any work. I'm going to have to present it, but I have no pre-work that goes into it.” Multiple teacher leaders expressed the same sentiment. Moreover, after receiving teacher feedback regarding the initial implementation teacher leaders learned teachers wanted more instructions for some lessons and/ or wanted more specificity in the directions; acting on their desire to be perceived as sensitive to teacher needs, teacher leaders provided a half sheet of instructions for teachers containing specific directions and step-by-step processes. Teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow also made themselves available during periods designated for schoolwide SOAR implementation to provide in-the-moment assistance to teachers as needed. Teacher leaders were also well aware of teacher stress during state testing and tried to make sure teachers were not overwhelmed by additional innovation practices before or within the testing window.

While teacher leaders wanted to keep teacher stress low by providing materials and providing in-the-moment assistance, teacher leaders also believed both of these supports would increase teacher buy-in. Teacher leaders believed that teacher buy-in was critical to the success of SOAR, and that they would need to get as many teachers to buy into the innovation as possible. A teacher leader at Yearwood had this to say about implementation support and teacher buy-in: “[Teacher buy-in] is something we've always really wanted to focus on, so we've really focused on providing teachers with all the resources that they need to eliminate confusion, to
eliminate any extra work that they'll have to do, and so I think teacher buy in has been a really big deal for us, and we're really just focusing on getting that kind of 100% teacher buy in.”

In a further effort to increase buy-in teacher leaders invited non-teacher leaders to present SOAR lesson plans, describing how they modified teacher leader provided plans to make them work for their class and their teaching style. A Willow teacher said, “What we did to try to create more teacher buy-in again is we would have it so [regular] teachers would teach that model lesson to the rest of the teachers in that group. [They] were basically kind of like explain it while modeling it to the rest of those teachers. So kind of gives us a little preview of what it should be like, and how we can put our own spin on it.” Encouraging teacher buy-in and participation required extra work on the teacher leaders’ part, oftentimes outside of regular school hours, in order to make it easy for teachers to implement the practices and to make it their own, but teacher leaders felt the work was justified. One teacher leader said that, “the team has stayed late or come in early, and we've made sure that we have done everything that we can to just not put any extra work on the teachers, and that's really encouraged them to follow along and really buy in to what we're doing, which I've really enjoyed seeing.”

In contrast to Yearwood and Willow teacher leaders at Evergreen did not provide as much implementation support in the fall and there was almost no indication in our data that teacher leaders were sensitive to teacher needs and constraints. One teacher leader mentioned making copies of behavioral forms and putting them in teachers’ boxes so teachers did not have to make copies themselves. Additionally, a few of the teacher leaders at Evergreen mentioned teacher engagement and buy-in, but this was not as systematic or in-depth as it was at the other two schools. Further, Evergreen teacher leaders did not realize the importance of including teachers in SOAR development processes until the spring. After getting anecdotal feedback from
teachers that the fall practices and materials were too cookie-cutter, the teacher leaders became slightly more aware of teacher needs, particularly with the need to make the materials work teacher-friendly; however, this awareness of teacher needs was not the same as the sensitivity to teacher needs displayed by the teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow. Below is an illustration of an Evergreen teacher leaders’ awareness of teacher needs:

When we did the [grade reflection] chart and some of the teachers – we didn't realize that they're like, well, you know, this doesn't work for me, and you know, my kids don't understand this language, and so once we tell them, you know, this is just a template – you know, this – we've created it. If you want to change the wording, if you want to take something out – and then I think once they realized, oh, it's not set in stone, I can kind of work the way I want to with it, add something else, then it seemed like they were happier.

In response to Evergreen teachers’ calls for changes in the practices and materials presented in the fall, teacher leaders encouraged teachers to significantly modify the outline of the PowerPoint serving as the primary learning resource for Evergreen SOAR lessons. A teacher leader in Evergreen said, “[PowerPoints were] presented to [teachers] and [they] were given time to revise it and make it their own, so that they can then feel like they had that voice, had some ownership of what we were doing.” However, this effort did not play out as intended since many teachers said they did not have the time or know enough about SOAR to change the outline without undoing the core goals of the SOAR lesson. In the words of an Evergreen teacher:

Yeah. We were – well, we were given – what they said, given a little more autonomy to adapt it. It was given to us kind of in outline and then they kind of said, okay, make it your own. I mean, and that was listening to us saying, you know, we can't teach something that's not our own. At the same time, though, it really wasn't – it wasn't really easy; you know, to – to come up with your own thing, because they didn't really have time to sit down and think about it, because you know, you have the PLC, it was presented to you, ten minutes later your PLC was done and you were supposed to have something that was yours, and I don't exactly have time right now, in the middle of my softball season to go home and think about how am I going to present goal-setting. Well, by the time that I think about it, now we're presenting it.
Comparing Evergreen to Yearwood and Willow, it seems teacher leaders’ sensitivity to teacher needs, and responses to teacher needs, is a function of capacity and pre-existing conditions within the school. Evergreen teacher leaders did not include teachers in the design process during the fall as did teachers at the other two schools, which may have prevented Evergreen teacher resistance. Additionally, the reaction of Evergreen teacher leaders in response to their teachers’ resistance was to tell teachers to revise the Powerpoint themselves, something the Evergreen teachers could not do. The lack of including teachers in the design process and abdication of responsibility for changing materials in response to teacher resistance suggests that Evergreen teacher leaders did not know how to facilitate group development or foster buy-in, knowledge the relatively more experienced teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow seemed to possess due to the recent reform histories in their schools.

Administrators and teachers think teacher leaders are sensitive to teachers’ needs

Administrator and teacher perceptions of teacher leaders’ sensitivity reflected the degree to which teacher leaders were sensitive to teacher needs and constraints at each school. At Yearwood and Willow, both administrators and teachers thought teacher leaders were considerate of how much time teachers have and the support they needed to implement the innovation practices. In particular, teachers were appreciative that the teacher leaders provided lesson plans, PowerPoints, and other needed materials, and, that teacher leaders were available to listen to feedback or provide support when it was needed. In contrast, such feedback was largely absence in Evergreen. Evergreen teachers were aware that teacher leaders provided copies of the behavioral reflection forms, but they did not see this as teacher leaders being sensitive to their needs.
At Yearwood and Willow, the majority of the administrators and teachers were very positive about the teacher leaders’ support and how everything that was needed was always available. One Yearwood teacher had this to say about the teacher leaders and their implementation support to the teachers: “I would say that the committee that's in charge of this has done a fairly good job of that, making sure that we do have the time, making sure that we do have the materials, and..., if they feel like they need help or that they have questions, I'm sure they're pretty comfortable with asking the committee for that help and asking for those directions.” This teacher, along with many other teachers at Yearwood, said they were well prepared to implement the innovation practices due to the teacher leaders’ PD, and, the materials and resources that they provided; many teachers at Willow also expressed this sentiment. Additionally, one teacher explicated how the teacher leaders understood teacher limitations, how they provided everything that was needed, and how they had made the practices approachable:

They understand that we're all busy, because they themselves are very busy, so they try to make it as user friendly as possible, and that's another aspect that I don't think we touched on yet today is any given new way of doing things, any given reform, you want to make it as user friendly as possible, because if it's not -- If a teacher cannot incorporate this into their day to day, they're probably not going to do it. So I think the committee has done a decent job of making sure that it is user friendly, making sure that we do have the materials, that we have one of the local tech experts here at [Yearwood] has been instrumental in putting things online, whether that's video clips, whether it's questionnaires for the kids, whatever it may be, so I believe a -- especially when you consider that they are doing a lot of other things, I think they've done a solid job.

Moreover, teachers were also appreciative of how teacher leaders modeled the lessons for them. This was even more pronounced when the teacher leaders had regular teachers do the modeling and how they would modify it individually. A Willow teacher said, “[The teacher leaders] really do a great job. So they have the PowerPoints where we kind of teach the PowerPoint to one another, … so we get a chance to look at it, and then peers – teaching our peers how to maybe present or give them ideas on how to present it. I think that is amazing
because you might see a different perspective than what you would actually do yourself.”
Corroborating this view an assistant principal at Willow said: “It's having a big positive impact. Because of the collaboration, the teachers do not feel like they are being cheated out of their classroom time, or instructional time. It all actually is coherent to what's going on in the classroom. And so as I said, because of the voice, because of the collaboration, they are happy about it.” To this point, perhaps the most telling response is how some teachers felt about whether the innovation practice was an additional burden. A teacher had this to say about the innovation practice: “This doesn’t feel like this is another thing I have to do. Yes, it’s — it’s another thing, I get it, but at the end of the day, there’s a very specific purpose, and there’s a very specific goal, and it’s for our — it’s for our kids. It’s all student-oriented. It’s all for them. So to me, I don’t feel overwhelmed by it. I feel like yeah, it’s another thing, but it’s an easy thing, it’s just facilitated very well. It’s done very well. So I don’t feel like pressure with it at all.”

Perceived effectiveness of PD

We found that perceptions of SOAR PD effectiveness varied widely across the three schools. At Yearwood and Willow, the majority of the administration and teachers thought highly of the PD, particularly in terms of the delivery and materials. These comments came from new teachers and veterans alike. In Willow specifically, teachers who were involved in the lesson planning voiced strong support for SOAR PD. In contrast, the perceptions of PD effectiveness at Evergreen were mixed. Administrators thought the PDs were very effective, but the teachers voiced varying opinions about the usefulness. In particular, Evergreen teachers thought the purpose of these PDs and rationale for SOAR were unclear.
At Yearwood and Willow, the administrators consistently gave praise to the teacher leaders. An administrator at Yearwood said teacher leaders were wonderful at delivering PD, particularly “[communicating] the information that needs to be communicated in a concise way…to get teachers on board”; moreover, the teacher leaders were well organized and made sure teachers knew the innovation plan ahead of time. Additionally, administrators greatly appreciated teacher leaders modeling SOAR lessons for teachers. An assistant principal at Yearwood said this about the modeling by teacher leaders:

I think that's what made it successful, because teachers felt comfortable teaching the lessons. They had already heard ideas from different presenters. It wasn't just one person, too, so teachers got to see a lot of different teaching styles…We have all types of content represented, so teachers are able to identify with a teacher and their teaching style and kind of mimic them, and I know a lot of teachers said like they're glad we did it and showed examples, because as they were teaching, they were using the same examples.

Corroborating administrators’ perceptions, the majority of the teachers indicated that the teacher leaders had done a great job of communicating what each PD would entail and how it was connected to the innovation. The majority of teachers at Yearwood and Willow thought the PD trainings were effective, purposeful, and specific; teachers were impressed by the clarity of SOAR professional learning goals. Veteran teachers commented that the PDs were some of the best they have seen in their careers and new teachers commented on how thorough and thoughtful the PDs were. Teacher also said having the materials and resources needed to implement the practices available during, or immediately after the PD, was helpful in making the practices concrete.

Moreover, teachers who collaborated in creating the lesson plans over the summer found these PDs even more positive and meaningful than their teacher colleagues. A teacher had this to say about the summer collaboration and PD:
I got to come to some of that this summer and it was a team of people that really care and really want to make a difference and nobody was required or forced, and so the people that were here worked very hard to develop what they thought grade level and age level and academically appropriate based on the school calendar, all those activities – we got to sit down and really do a long-term plan, and then we had a core group of people who refined those things so that we could put it in a binder. I had an opportunity to be a part of preparing them, I had fair warning that it was coming... [The PD] was phenomenal. It's better than anything we've had in the district because usually they just hand you a bunch of stuff and say here, go do this tomorrow, and it gets piled higher and deeper, you know.

At Evergreen, the only innovation practice introduced at the beginning of the year was a behavioral reflection form, and some teachers thought that the PD was adequate in the use of the form. However, many teachers at Evergreen indicated there was a disconnect between PDs and implementation as well as the rationale of innovation practices. One Evergreen teacher said the training was “very surface level in terms of just helping us understand what it is and why it is important.” One teacher explicates the disconnect in this way:

There's not really any ownership to what was happening in the behavior, and there wasn't really any training to kind of talk to students about it. It was kind of like give them a [behavioral] sheet and then bring them back into class. It was more like an emphasis on just cutting down infractions, which was kind of weird to me, because you have to have that conversation, that five-minute conversation with the student about it in order for it to work, and I feel I figured that out on my own. There wasn't really professional development on that. So I know -- I know that that's how the sheet was meant to be just from conversations with other people about it, but I don't think it was really addressed in the professional development.

Another Evergreen teacher said: “It's good that we know what it is, but it's kind of overkill if like, they're teaching it to us, like, we're the students, and then we do it again. It's like, we didn't need that. We just need – like, we needed a few minutes set aside so we could run through it.” Corroborating this view another teacher said that “[teacher leaders] did give us adequate training, but, like, I can't sit – it's just boring to me, because I'm like, why are you giving me these things when I could just – I know how to do it. Like, you – if you have a set way of – with your students, of how you want them to take ownership and all this kind of stuff, I
think you should do it, not have somebody give something to you and because I guess they think that their way works and your way doesn't, and I'm like, no.” Moreover, the training at the beginning of the year was done by an Evergreen administrator who was designated leader of the teacher leader team, leaving teachers uncertain about whether the innovation was teacher-centric. It was difficult to tease out whether it was this misunderstanding over ownership of the TLPD or teachers’ beliefs that the PD was a waste of time since the behavior form was so easy to implement which led Evergreen teachers to develop a radically different perception of PD effectiveness relative to the other two schools.

**The legitimacy of teacher leadership**

Although administrators had to agree that the innovation would be led by teacher leaders prior to their participation in the larger study, there was no guarantee teachers would automatically accept their colleagues as teacher leaders. Instead, teacher acceptance of teacher leadership depended on teachers’ familiarity with the innovation, teacher leaders’ work on the innovation, the degree of support teachers believed teacher leaders provided, and the extent to which teachers believed their feedback was meaningfully incorporated into SOAR.

A precursor to teacher acceptance of their teacher colleagues’ leadership was non-teacher leader familiarity with the innovation. If teachers did not know there was an innovation, or did not know how teacher leaders had contributed to the development of the innovation, teachers did not recognize teacher leaders’ as legitimate leaders. However, teachers who believed teacher leaders were hard-working, serving their school as a leader of the innovation in addition to their regular teaching duties, and seeking input from teachers regarding the innovation largely accepted the leadership of their peers. For example, a teacher in Yearwood said, “I know [one
teacher leader] works her butt off on [SOAR]...I’m next to [her] so I always see how much time and effort, but I can only imagine the other people are doing the same exact thing. I'm grateful for it. I really am.” This idea of the teacher leaders going the extra mile was voiced differently as “service” when teachers were asked what leadership was and what it entailed. Relatedly, teachers in a focus group at Willow described the outreach effort of their teacher leaders as they tried to include more teachers in the design and refinement of SOAR.

T1: The people who initiated it, I believe their, have such a great working relationship with all of us, regardless of where we are, what level we are. They reaching out to everyone was from you know hearing it from those people was easy to say, yes I’ll be part of it.
T2: And they’re constantly, they’re just so supportive.
T3: Hmm hmm.
T1: I mean they’re just there, physically they’re there. I mean they’re just so, the support system is there from those teachers that initiated it all.
T2: Constantly, constantly.
T3: That’s been crazy. I’m out in the furthest portable from here, okay? And somebody pops in my door and says, how are you doing? And I’m going wow.

This conversation illustrates the degree of appreciation teachers held for their teacher leaders when they knew about the leadership work of teacher leaders. However, in these same two schools of Yearwood and Willow, there were teachers who knew little about teacher leaders’ contributions to the innovation; for these teachers the leadership of the SIDT and teacher leaders was viewed as illegitimate.

While only a few teachers in Yearwood and Willow had not yet accepted teacher leadership, many individuals in Evergreen questioned the legitimacy of their teacher leadership. In large part it seems the perceived legitimacy of teacher leaders in Evergreen was influenced by the extent to which study participants believed teachers were actually included in the design and refinement of the innovation. A teacher leader in school Evergreen said they had to convince teachers that the teacher leaders team was “just a group of teachers trying to change the culture…
and not [the research team] telling us how to run our school or anything like that.” Further, Willow and Yearwood teacher leader experience with prior TLPD signalled to their colleagues that they had the skills and knowledge to lead, while the selection of teacher leaders at Evergreen (see Table 2) may have left teachers wondering if a department chair also had the skills needed by someone leading a TLPD.

The role of the administrators

Most teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators in Yearwood and Willow, and just under half of those interviewed in Evergreen, believed the innovation was driven by the teacher leaders and supported by administrators instead of being covertly led by administrators. Many prior studies of teacher leadership find that teachers and/or teacher leaders may not have supportive administrators in a school reform, and thus suggest a major obstacle facing teacher leaders and teachers is gaining the support of their administration (e.g. Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Hart, 1995). However, given that schools agreed to participate in the larger study from which these data came, administrators knew they were agreeing to a research-practice partnership based on a model of teacher leadership. Thus, we expected to find that administrators were largely supportive of innovation-related work, including teacher leadership. While administrators did support the innovation across all schools the types of supports provided by administrators to teacher leaders and teachers, as well as teacher perceptions of administrative support and involvement, varied.

At Yearwood both teacher leaders and teachers thought administrators were supportive of the innovation while not taking charge of it. One teacher leader summed up the sentiments of all teacher leaders in their building:
Our administrators are definitely more involved this year, which has helped tremendously, because other teachers are seeing them on board now. They're seeing them involved in the process, and then when teachers go to them and talk about the initiative, our APs and principal actually know what it is now, and so they can talk about it and answer questions where I think in the past that didn't happen.

Likewise, a teacher in Yearwood said administrators “absolutely” support SOAR. Specifically, administrators in Yearwood said they support SOAR by telling teachers to implement SOAR during advisory periods, but, in the words of an assistant principal, “…did not micromanage them but, you know, I think that I have to be flexible to that, as long as it’s done during that second period time.” Administrators also said they supported SOAR by placing it on faculty meeting agendas and giving teacher leaders extra planning time to prepare for SOAR; teachers corroborated these claims.

Teacher leaders and teachers at Willow had similar perceptions. One teacher leader in Willow said the principal “trusted us” and that “[leadership] from downtown has been incredibly supportive.” Another teacher leader said, “[administrators] are definitely buying in as well, I believe. Honestly [the principal has] been completely supportive.” One teacher leader said administrators supported SOAR by “constantly checking in. With different pieces of information and checking to see what's going on and [making] sure they are on the same page.”

The principal at Willow wanted to make sure that SOAR fit into her vision and long term plans while encouraging teacher leaders to lead the innovation and engage other teachers. Under her leadership, other administrators directly addressed teacher non-compliance with SOAR. For example, one teacher leader said teacher leaders were “just the facilitators. We can’t do any kind of discipline…” in response to teachers skipping TLPD training. In response, the teacher leader said an administrator indicated they would take up teacher absences with teachers. When teachers struggled or refused to implement SOAR an administrator said they would “step in and
support what [the teacher leaders] are doing. But a lot of times [the teacher leaders] handle it first.” Two different teacher leaders welcomed this sort of administrator involvement because they believed teachers should be accountable for implementing SOAR since it was important for students; however, these same two teacher leaders recognized such administrator involvement might lead teachers to perceive SOAR as administrator driven, undermining the core appeal of the TLPD. Across all schools, teacher leaders, teachers, and administrators shared this opinion, to a certain extent.

For example, an administrator at Yearwood said when teachers lead, an initiative is “less likely to come off as a this is just a fad…being forced by the district, the school, whatever.” Another administrator in Yearwood said “with teachers being the ones doing this, you know, everybody’s working together,” prevents teachers from saying “here [the administrators] come again.” Echoing this same opinion, a teacher in Yearwood spoke for many teachers across all schools when they said “It’s got to be in the trenches. Got to be people in the trenches that are going to - There's going to be any meaningful change, it cannot be top down.”

Clearly, nearly all study participants believed that too much administrator involvement would undermine SOAR. However, at Yearwood and Willow where teacher leadership had been in place for a longer period of time than in Evergreen, teacher leaders’ views concerning an appropriate amount of administrator involvement became more nuanced. Essentially, many teacher leaders in these two schools came to believe that unless teachers perceived administrators were involved in the design and implementation of the TLPD teachers would reject or resist incorporating SOAR behaviors into their routines. A teacher leader in Yearwood said it was important administrators were not present during professional development events, but that there still needs to be some “higher level communication” coming from an administrator. This same
teacher leader reiterated how important it was for an administrator to communicate to teachers every few weeks that SOAR was still something that should be implemented, which “helps a lot because it’s not always coming from just the [teacher leaders].” A second teacher leader in Yearwood also noted that when the teacher leaders felt teacher commitment to SOAR was waning, teacher leaders needed to emphasize to teachers that administrators supported the innovation. A teacher leader in Willow expressed internal conflict regarding their emerging perception of appropriate administrator involvement:

    I – one thing I would like is [administrators] to push it a little bit more in – in – the talk about it in meetings and stuff like that, but maybe if there was an administrator that was assigned – what we've done is we've assigned SIDT members to send out the lessons every week. Everybody's trained on the lessons and then they get a refresher every Tuesday or so. We say hey, here's the lesson, go over it again, just so you know, it's been a couple weeks since our training, here it is. I think if that came from an administrator it would – it would maybe be – I don't know. Sometimes I think coming from an administrator would be better and sometimes I think coming from a teacher would be better. It's kind of different for different people.

Unlike Yearwood and Willow, no one interviewed at Evergreen said administrators should become more involved than they already were. Almost half of those interviewed in Evergreen said they believed the administrators were covertly leading the Evergreen initiative. This was partly due to the designation of a new assistant principal as leader of the SIDT. Moreover, the administrators had also introduced other initiatives throughout the year, making it difficult for teachers to determine which initiatives were teacher- or administrator-driven.

    Given the near unanimous sentiment among teachers that administrators should not be involved, the emergent notion among some teacher leaders in Yearwood and Willow that administrators play an important and necessary role in the context of a TLPD is evidence that teachers and teacher leaders may have slightly divergent values or beliefs regarding administrator involvement.
Tensions in the status of teacher leaders

As teachers transitioned into roles of teacher leadership we found evidence that tensions arose between teachers and teacher leaders. The first source of tension was between the preservation of collegiality and the unavoidable conflicts associated with group development; the second tension concerned the perception that teacher leaders were losing part of their identity as teachers and becoming somewhat like an administrator. These tensions were felt in Yearwood and Willow as the teacher leaders had played a much larger role in the innovation, particularly in presenting PD and implementation support; however, these tensions were almost entirely absent at Evergreen.

For example, teacher leaders attempted to cast the design and refinement of SOAR as collaborative when speaking to teachers, reflecting their sensitivity to the importance of democratic decision-making among their colleagues. While they were in charge of the innovation and wanted the innovation to succeed, teacher leaders also wanted to maintain collegiality between themselves and their fellow teachers. This led some teacher leaders to notice some tension between being “just another teacher in the trenches” and a teacher leader who needed to direct other teachers when they did not follow the innovation practice. A teacher leader at Willow discussed this tension:

We make all of their copies. We email them the PowerPoint a couple of days before. We teach them how to teach the lessons. We have people floating around to make sure that they have everything that they need, so really all we need them to do is teach it, but it’s just — there’s just some teachers that feel [resist] — that feel that it’s just one more thing, or okay, I’m going to get through the lessons really quick, and then I’m going to sit at my desk and grade papers, because I have some extra time — because I don’t have to give these kids a grade, so — and so there’s just trying to get everyone — and then some teachers don’t — unfortunately, there are some teachers that don’t know how to build relationships with their kids, the mentoring relationship with their kids, and so that’s...
something we’ve struggled with, too, because how do you teach someone to be a — how do you teach someone to be a mentor? Without offending them?

This teacher leader knew how much time and effort they had put into SOAR and ostensibly believed they had adequately addressed most, if not all, obstacles a teacher would face when implementing SOAR, based on their own experiences as a teacher and member of the Willow teacher community in prior school reforms. This teacher leader’s disappointment in their colleagues was palpable, yet it did not seem they had given up hope that their colleagues would adopt SOAR practices in their classrooms. Instead, this teacher leader was left questioning how they might promote positive change among their colleagues without losing a collegial relationship.

Similarly, a teacher leader at Yearwood said, “I think it's tricky being someone's coworker and at the same time heading up an initiative, because you're like, you're going to do this thing. I'm going to do that thing, too. It's cool. We're all doing it together, right? But you have to listen to me when I talk about it, so I think it's just a tricky position.” Although these teacher leaders expressed sensitivity regarding social ties between teachers and teacher leaders, some teachers in Yearwood and Willow already felt as though these ties were broken, or at least substantially weakened. In some ways, their status of teacher leaders in the innovation made some teachers feel that the teacher leaders were no longer fellow teachers in the trenches, but members of an exclusive group.

For example, a teacher at Yearwood said they would “usually ask somebody else, a colleague rather than somebody who is charged with the execution of whatever” if they needed help, signaling that teacher leaders were no longer colleagues. A second teacher in Yearwood said teacher leaders “just stand up there and present it and we're all sitting there, and there's no questions, there's no involvement from the faculty,” as if the people “standing up there” were not
members of the faculty with full time teaching duties in addition to being teacher leaders.

Another teacher commented that, “I've got friends that are on that committee… but it seems a little to me. I'm not really sure like what -- the group of teachers that are doing that are the group that were left over from [previous initiative], and they were clubby also, kind of people didn't respond well. I think SIDT is a little bit better in terms of how it's being received by the rest of the faculty, but I don't know that we're all very well aware of what they're actually doing.”

Relatedly, teacher leaders were also seen as getting all the credits or being supervisors of other teachers. For instance, at Willow, one teacher in a focus group went so far as to referred to teachers as “worker ants” and called for equality between teachers and teacher leaders though many teachers did not feel that way. Below is an excerpt from the teacher focus group:

T1: I think in the long run it has caused more acrimony than anything else and here’s why. We have a select group of teachers who are getting basically all the credit for what’s going on in the classroom and the teachers who are doing the work are not receiving anything. We have a group of teachers who don’t participate in the program, which is another burden to us with the same group of teachers comes around and knocks on our doors to make certain we’re following their plans.
T2: I don’t know if that’s so much true.
T3: No.
T4: As it is mine, oh, they’re overseeing.
T1: They’re overseeing.
T4: It’s like I feel I got taskmasters. They come in there and they ask me what are you doing, why aren’t you doing this, why aren’t you doing that.

Furthermore, Willow and Yearwood administrators could not deal with every teacher-related conflict while still maintaining the teacher centricity of a TLPD like SOAR. For all of the efforts of teacher leaders and administrators to minimize conflict between teacher leaders and teachers, and, teacher rejection of SOAR behaviors into their routines, conflict remained.

Discussion
Two overarching themes emerged from our analysis: teacher leaders sought to minimize conflicts/storms associated with teacher incorporation of SOAR behaviors into their routines, and, the redistribution of leadership between administrators and teacher leaders changed the status and normative roles of teacher leaders and administrators, within the context of a TLPD.

**Minimizing the storm.** The teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow anticipated the storm phase of a school reform change process and tried to minimize the stress, pressure, and pushback of implementation by forecasting the innovation, incorporating teachers into the development process, providing teachers with materials and resources to implement SOAR to save teachers’ time and effort, and using teacher input to refine SOAR. Teacher leaders accomplished much of this by easing the innovation into teachers’ work lives well ahead of implementation and by being cognizant and sensitive to teachers’ needs and constraints. Willow and Yearwood teacher leaders repeatedly indicated that they wanted to ensure that teachers knew implementation was coming, that it was a teacher-led effort and not driven by the administration, and that they could influence the innovation itself. At Yearwood, teacher leaders relied on their prior knowledge and experience of leading a teacher-led initiative and the existing organizational structure that was a part of the prior initiative. At Willow, teacher leaders relied on the strong culture of trust and support that they had among themselves and with other teachers, leveraging professional and personal social ties to incorporate the majority of the faculty into the development of the innovation.

Additionally, teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow who were full time teachers relied on their knowledge and understanding of the limited time and effort that teachers could realistically devote to new practices given what was provided as part of implementation. These teacher leaders spent a considerable amount of time thinking through how to make PD
meaningful to teachers, what teachers needed to know and learn during PD, and what materials and resources teachers needed to implement SOAR. Teacher leaders provided the lesson plans, PowerPoints, and copies for the teachers so that they could implement them right away without having to prepare the lessons themselves or make copies for all their students. Teacher leaders reasoned that if teachers were going to implement the lessons, teachers needed everything in their hands in order to do so. Moreover, teacher leaders also knew that they needed to provide in-the-moment support to teachers by being available during schoolwide implementation periods and helping teachers through technical difficulties or misunderstandings. Finally, teacher leaders used formal and informal mechanisms to elicit teacher feedback and incorporate teacher suggestions into subsequent SOAR iterations. This gave teachers a way to voice their concerns and to have some influence over the innovation, with the intermediate goal of fostering buy-in.

In many ways, the teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow minimized the storm. Both administrators and teachers at Yearwood and Willow thought teacher leaders were considerate of teacher limitations and greatly appreciative of the materials and support provided by teacher leaders. Moreover, the majority of the administrators and most importantly, the teachers, thought highly of the TLPD overall. Unlike teachers at Evergreen who did not voice appreciation for the copies of behavioral forms provided by the teacher leaders and thought that the purpose and rationale of the innovation were unclear, teachers at Yearwood and Willow generally felt that the innovation served a purpose and that the TLPD would ultimately help their students.

**Distributed Leadership.** When administrators agreed to participate in the research-practice partnership they agreed that teacher leaders should play a key role in the innovation; after teacher leaders piloted the innovation in their own classrooms and rolled it out to their colleagues many administrators acknowledge that teacher leaders had in fact led the innovation.
At Yearwood and Willow, teachers and teacher leaders thought that administrators were supportive of the innovation by providing time and resources for the teacher leaders to deliver PD to the faculty. In these two schools, teachers wanted administrators who were supportive of the teacher-led innovation but without being in charge of the TLPD. Nearly all of the teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators believed that too much administrator involvement would undermine the innovation, but at the same time, teachers needed to perceive that administrators were supportive of the innovation.

The role played by administrators during a TLPD influenced teachers’ perceptions regarding the legitimacy of teacher leadership. Our analysis revealed that teacher acceptance of teacher leadership was not a given, even if administrators recognized teacher leadership as legitimate. Instead, teacher perceptions concerning the legitimacy of teacher leadership seemed to be connected to teacher familiarity with the innovation, teacher leaders’ implementation support, PD provided by the teacher leaders and administrators, and whether teachers felt they themselves could influence the innovation. At Yearwood and Willow, where most teachers knew about the leadership work of their teacher leaders, felt supported, believed teacher leaders were driving the innovation, and largely felt involved, teacher leadership was largely accepted; alternatively, many teachers at Evergreen questioned their teacher leaders’ legitimacy because they were unsure who was really leading the work.

Even within Yearwood and Willow the legitimacy of teacher leadership was not without conflict, as group development theories would predict (Wheelan, 1994). We found two sources of interconnected tensions, one from the teacher leaders themselves and another from the teachers. While teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow wanted to lead their colleagues, they also wanted to maintain collegiality, working within the confines of highly egalitarian workplace
norms. Teacher leaders wanted to maintain the social ties that connected them to other teachers, and leading the innovation brought tensions into that relationship. In some ways, the teacher leaders’ concerns did ring true as some teachers viewed teacher leaders as “clubby” or members of an exclusive group, not quite administrators but not quite teachers either. Therein lies a challenge to distributing leadership: by acquiring power some similarities between teacher leaders and teachers may diverge.

Conclusion

Teacher leadership is an important component of education. In the context of whole school reform, teacher leadership is linked with increased ownership, attention to local context, and implementation uptake (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Supovitz, 2008). Attention to local context is important as adjustments to innovations should be made to fit with wide variations in organizational structure, buy-in, and capacity while the local actors grapple with change and implementation (Cohen et al., 2013; Peurach & Glazer, 2012). As illustrated in our analysis, teacher leaders can play a critical role in designing, adapting, and implementing a school-wide reform. Given their contextual knowledge of their school, their teachers, and their students as well as their role as teachers, teacher leaders can ease the innovation into teachers’ work lives by forecasting the innovation, incorporating teachers in the process, and providing teachers with implementation materials. They know and understand the stress and limitations that teachers deal with on a daily basis and they are able to leverage that knowledge to support teachers in implementation. The more they are able to use this knowledge, the more they will be able to reduce the struggle and pushback from teachers, and the more likely they will be seen as leaders within their school. However, as teacher leaders gain legitimacy and status as leaders, they can
also experience stress in their relationships with their fellow teachers, a source of tensions that must be delicately managed.

In conclusion, our work describes the dynamics that surround professional development designed and facilitated in a teacher-led school reform. We explore the benefits and tensions linked with teacher-led PD, highlighting how teacher leaders can “minimize the storm” and some challenges of distributed leadership.
References


Table 1 – Descriptive Information on Innovation Schools

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yearwood</th>
<th>Willow</th>
<th>Evergreen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment</strong></td>
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<td>&gt;80%</td>
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<td>&lt;20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percent economically disadvantaged</strong></td>
<td>40-60%</td>
<td>&gt;80%</td>
<td>&gt;80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent reform history</strong></td>
<td>Teacher leadership team successfully designed and implemented a school-wide literacy initiative; New principal appointed at the start of Phase 2</td>
<td>School-wide literacy initiative was successfully implemented; New principal appointed at the start of Phase 1</td>
<td>Target of school turnaround efforts a few years prior to participating in this work; New principal appointed at the start of Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIDT representatives</strong></td>
<td>Two teachers selected by the principal who were members of the existing teacher leadership team</td>
<td>One teacher who was identified as a leader during the literacy initiative implementation; One teacher whose subject assignment was considered relevant for SOAR; both selected by principal</td>
<td>One non-classroom teacher selected by principal to minimize instructional disruption; two classroom teachers selected by principal at facilitator encouragement to appoint additional personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher leaders</strong></td>
<td>Six teachers, most of whom were members of the existing teacher leadership team and one assistant principal; recruited by DIDT representatives</td>
<td>Six teachers recruited by DIDT representatives because of perceived interest as early adopters</td>
<td>Eight department chairs selected by principal due to their role on school leadership team</td>
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Source: District administrative data, 2012-2013 school year.
Table 2. Data Sources

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<td>Teacher Focus Group</td>
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