The Impact of Distributed Leadership on Increasing Collective Efficacy and Creating a Culture of Professional Learning and Innovation in Urban High Schools

by

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The Impact of Distributed Leadership on Increasing Collective Efficacy and
Creating a Culture of Professional Learning and Innovation in Urban High
Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of distributed leadership with respect to both increasing collective efficacy and teacher efficacy across the faculty and whether these changes increase the school’s capacity to function as a professional learning community (PLC). To assist in examining these relationships, a new model for conceptualizing ongoing systemic improvement was presented.

There appears to be a gap in the current research on how distributive leadership reform promotes capacity building in a PLC capable of embracing and sustaining effective school practices. This research project focused on the roles and responsibilities of high school principals and teacher leaders utilizing a distributive leadership model. Collective efficacy and teacher efficacy were also investigated.

The researcher utilized surveys from 199 teachers. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with five principals and 20 teacher leaders, respectively. The data analysis did not reveal evidence of consistent high levels of collective efficacy or teacher efficacy. A revised model for a distributed leadership framework was constructed to address the identified areas lacking in the original model. The elements of the revised model include: a clearly articulated vision, specific organizational structures, capacity building via PLCs, teacher empowerment, collaboration and shared decision making, trust and communication, and accountability. Findings from this study highlight the potential power of how a distributed leadership framework can increase collective efficacy and provide a structure for school-wide continuous improvement, which, in turn, may result in higher student achievement.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act, public schools became increasingly accountable for the quality of education they produce. Spring (2005) indicated that school officials are not only mandated to address dropout rates and achievement gaps, but to maximize efforts at preparing students to compete globally. School and educational leaders are obliged to focus on reaching state and federal achievement standards that, in turn, are measured by standardized test scores (Barth, 2001). Failure to meet these goals could result in school improvement sanctions and a possible mandated restructuring process. These current demands are multifaceted and yet principals are the primary individuals held accountable for student achievement at their schools. The principal’s roles include many responsibilities such as teacher evaluations, student performance, school safety, and the educational climate. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), in a meta-analysis of 69 empirical studies, discovered a correlation of .25 between 21 leadership behaviors of the school principal and student academic achievement. These studies suggested that by improving their leadership practice, effective leaders can positively impact student achievement. However, it appears very unlikely for one individual leader to master all 21 leadership behaviors. A possible solution mentioned by Marzano et al. would be to shift from one leader to a group of leaders. Cross (2004) further supported this concept by sharing that schools lack the human resources needed to fulfill the No Child Left Behind Act requirements under the current instructional models of a single leader. Additionally, he mentioned that
educational leaders were prompted to utilize a leadership model that incorporated shared
decision making to address issues of overseeing comprehensive educational institutions.
Another factor instrumental in student achievement is teacher quality. Tschannen-Moran
and Hoy (2001) suggested that a teacher’s sense of efficacy has a positive influence on
student achievement.

Harris (2004) concluded that the current educational reform places more emphasis
on the relationship between school improvement and leadership. Recent accountability
requirements place increasing pressure on educational leaders to build a collective sense
of responsibility for improved performance.

According to Hatch (1998), school improvement efforts often create controversies
and conflicts that make success difficult. He further suggested that differing theories of
action as embraced by individuals in the organization may be a critical source of these
conflicts. Consensus about how to implement school improvement efforts requires that
each participant embrace a common goal and understand his or her role in reaching it.
The most recent reform initiative, the Common Core State Standards, is in the initial
implementation stage. Districts are currently grappling with developing strategies to
unveil this program at schools. The implementation process for this project will
undoubtedly need all stakeholders’ input and participation. Consequently, in order for
schools to close the achievement gap and meet the state and federal mandates with
decreasing resources, a focus on organizational structure for school leadership appears
necessary. Distributed leadership practices along with the development of teacher leaders
may be a viable way to reach the aforementioned goals and new reform initiatives.
Furthermore, distributive leadership as a reform strategy may also provide collective
efficacy by building leadership capacity. Current research utilizes the terms *distributive leadership* and *shared leadership* interchangeably.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is sufficient empirical evidence to support the interdependence of distributive leadership on student achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The National College for School Leadership (2003) maintained the existence of the crucial role between distributive leadership and learning. While many scholarly researchers have advocated for distributed leadership as a reform strategy to improve student achievement, more data are required to understand how this organizational model supports ongoing program improvement. Clearly, additional studies are needed to provide the appropriate information necessary to assess the effectiveness of a distributed leadership reform model pertaining to student achievement. This is especially prudent with the rise of accountability systems as well as the logical assumption that more human resources are needed to have successful schools. As the new leadership paradigm shift forces us to consider distributive leadership, we must also be cognizant of the need for the changing roles and relationships between the principal and teachers. A next step would be to investigate the interaction between the two. Reeves (2008) indicated that there is a lack of empirical studies that primarily focus on the impact of teacher leadership on school performance at the secondary level.

Ross and Gray (2006) suggested that principals can influence collective efficacy by using a distributive approach for decisions specifically related to teacher concerns. Although evidence exists to support a relationship between student achievement and
individual and collective efficacy (Goddard, 2001), questions remain as to how principals can encourage teacher efficacy.

Site-based management as well as the development of building teacher leaders may assist principals with strategies to introduce and maintain systemic and ongoing school improvement efforts. Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) maintained this view of thinking of leadership in terms of interactions and activities which are distributed among various situations and individuals.

With the new demands of the Common Core State Standards as well as the No Child Left Behind Act, school systems will continue to increase achievement. The infusion of a distributive leadership approach combining building teacher capacity as well as individual and collective efficacy to reach the goal of preparing students to obtain 21st-century skills should be the mission of all educational systems. Understanding the relationship between distributive leadership and increasing collective efficacy and student achievement may advance our theoretical and practical understanding of leading reform efforts over time.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the long-term impact of the distribution of leadership from the principal to the administrative team and instructional staff. In the present study, the impact of distributed leadership was evaluated with respect to increasing both collective efficacy and teacher efficacy across the faculty and whether these leadership changes increase the school’s capacity to function as a professional learning community (PLC), more specifically, a community that is capable of supporting continuous program improvement. To assist in examining these
relationships, a new model for conceptualizing ongoing systemic improvement was presented. Standards for educational leadership development and performance groups (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards, California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, and Educational Leadership Constituent Council) all endorse moving from autocratic to distributive leadership. These practices are considered more likely to respect and engage the expertise, experience, and resources of other stakeholders, which will substantially support the management of school operations and initiatives (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Daly (2009), for example, suggested a positive effect of these entities, including the principal’s leadership style, on English, reading, writing, and mathematics scores. Despite these new standards and findings, research designed to further conceptualize and guide these leadership practices is needed.

The present study was designed to investigate whether effectively distributing leadership facilitates increasing collective efficacy and whether these factors advance the school’s capacity to function as an achievement-oriented learning community. Bandura (1977) defined efficacy as a process whereby an individual’s conviction will allow him or her to perform at a certain level. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) further stated that collective teacher efficacy is a form of self-efficacy in which the organization positively benefits. Teacher efficacy and collective efficacy theories rely on the premise that when there is high efficacy among individuals associated with student learning, students perform at higher levels. By examining whether a school evolves as a learning community as a result of distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy, additional insights for leadership practice may emerge. Although the present study is not designed to specifically measure the interaction of these phenomena on student achievement, the
literature would support that the effective distribution of leadership, the increasing of collective efficacy, and the advancement of a school faculty as a learning community create conditions which should longitudinally promote student achievement.

**Research Questions**

The interrelationship between effective distribution of leadership, the increasing of collective efficacy, and the advancement of a school faculty as a learning community were studied within the parameters of the following questions:

1. What perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of a principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership?
2. Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?
3. Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?

**Summary of Literature**

The term *leadership* has been conceptualized as a result of the increasing demands to meet the ever-changing accountability challenges placed on today’s leaders. In previous studies, leadership traits were examined in various sectors other than education (Yukl, 1998). These earlier studies focused on individuals as sole leaders along with their interactions between others. Later, Yukl (1999) indicated that, in educational circles, the term leadership was transformed from the heroic single leader to one where the essential functions are distributed among various individuals. Fullan
(2001) maintained that this earlier model of a single leader limited the efforts to facilitate and support school-level change. This finding is consistent with recent research which implies that organizations have been searching for creative ways to address change reform for school improvement with distributive leadership practices (Harris, 2002). The new model for leadership promotes a greater focus on teachers, students, and staff support as leaders. Harris and Spillane (2008) further suggested that shared, distributed, and extended practices are increasingly commonplace as schools redefine themselves.

In the existing literature on distributed leadership, interchangeable terms emerged, such as shared, collective, collaborative, and parallel. Therefore, researchers appear to have different conceptions for distributed leadership’s meaning. Gibb (1951) first used the term distributive leadership when he described four leadership environments. The four leadership environments named were autocratic, paternalistic, individualistic, and participative. The titles reveal the nature of the types of leadership each describes. In recent studies, related concepts such as shared leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2009), collective leadership (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), collaborative leadership (Forster, 1997), and parallel leadership (Evans-Pierce, 2009) have received consideration from educators.

Another limitation of the scholarship discussed in the literature on distributed leadership relates to the debate about practical and theoretical understandings. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) viewed distributed leadership from a theoretical perspective, with activities that groups of individuals perform with multiple leaders through social interactions. From a practical perspective, leaders in the field grapple with how distributed leadership impacts school improvement (Harris, 2008).
Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) depicted the emergence and evolution of teacher leaders as occurring in three waves. During the first wave, teachers were assigned duties such as department chairs, master teachers, and union representatives. Silva et al. maintained that these roles were more operational and not instructional. The second wave consisted of teacher expertise being acknowledged; the teachers’ roles consisted of curriculum developers, mentor teachers, and leaders of professional development. The final wave of teacher leadership centered on the structures, goals, and roles related to a school’s culture (Evans, 1996; Silva et al., 2000). This final and new form of teacher leadership was the result of the pressing accountability initiatives, which have spearheaded school reform efforts (Little, 2003). Despite the evolutionary changing roles of teacher leadership, administrative leadership roles are still very different (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Fullan (1993) indicated that the gap between these two roles will lessen when principals support more instructional roles for teachers. He later suggested the need for multiple levels of leadership involvement in order to assist schools in the restructuring process (Fullan, 1995). Lambert (2002) reiterated in his study the shifting emphasis of initiatives to focus on the goals of schooling, instructional strategies for teaching and learning, and the redesign of schools to support this change. Ross and Gray (2006) concluded that schools with higher levels of student achievement and higher levels of teacher efficacy also had greater levels of transformational leadership. Harris and Muijs (2004) indicated that formal teacher leadership roles with the support of professional development for teachers play a critical role in school improvement. Therefore, school districts should glean from research the importance of providing
potential teacher leaders with professional development opportunities to hone their leadership skills.

Recent research reiterates the value of a capacity-building model in the school improvement process. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) postulated that distributive leadership has positive impacts on revamping schools as organizations when linked to teacher leadership. This study also demonstrated that teacher dissatisfaction also decreased as a result of collaboration with others.

Bandura’s (1993) study revealed that individuals with high levels of efficacy deemed they were capable of success. When examining teachers’ influences on student outcomes, the literature clearly reveals the significance of teacher efficacy.

Similar to teacher efficacy, collective teacher efficacy consists of the group’s shared beliefs that working together can produce increased levels of attainment (Bandura, 1977). When examining socioeconomic status (SES), Leithwood et al. (2004) posited that collective teacher efficacy had a greater impact on student achievement than SES. In a later study, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) stated that when teachers have increased opportunities for input in instructionally relevant decisions, there is a perception that the school has a robust collective efficacy.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to examine the distributive leadership practices that contribute to student academic achievement. There appears to be a gap in the current research on how distributive leadership reform supports school-wide capacity building capable of embracing and sustaining effective school practices. Fullan (2009) suggested that while individuals are working, continuous capacity building is a result of continuous
learning. Finding ways to include teachers as leaders from a distributive leadership perspective is a daunting task. This study requires the researcher to identify the conditions of distributive leadership that promote individual teacher efficacy and collective teacher efficacy for capacity building. Therefore, leadership capacity building with a distributive leadership lens may provide the reform model necessary for increasing student achievement. If this is true, using this reform model will provide viable professional development opportunities for principals to increase their knowledge of collective efficacy. Specific professional development training could provide the appropriate positive incentives to overcome the lack of teacher leadership in our schools. For teachers, this study could enhance their understanding of distributive leadership and yield a trusting and collaborative educational setting to practice developing leadership skills.

Finally, this study has significant implications for the growing number of educational reform initiatives that encourage increased teacher capacity and shared decision making. As schools continue to struggle with closing the achievement gap, teacher leadership has surfaced as a valuable support for many school improvement efforts (Durrant & Holden, 2006). Therefore, this research study will complement the existing support for building a PLC in schools capable of ongoing program improvement. Understanding the relationship between distributing leadership, increasing collective efficacy, and building a durable learning community should be useful to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.
Overview of Methodology

The study employed a qualitative collective research design. The survey populations were teachers, teacher leaders, and principals from five urban high school campuses. The five high schools had also participated in the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) which developed the High School Leadership Initiative (HSLI). All teachers and principals in each school were asked to complete the surveys. Teacher and principal interviews were included in this collective case study. Data used to measure student achievement across the schools were collected from the California Department of Education website. The school-wide data were the result of state-mandated tests (California Standards Test) in language arts and mathematics in Grades 9 through 12 over 5 years (2007-2012). The school’s student achievement was represented by the percentages of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency levels on both tests. Distributive leadership was the dependent variable. Teacher and collective efficacy were the independent variables. Using descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and evaluative analysis, the study sought to discover if there was a relationship between teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. Furthermore, the study investigated the possible influence of teacher efficacy and collective efficacy on the sustainability of distributive leadership. The strategy of inquiry was used throughout this multiple case study.

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations in this study. The first was bias due to the researcher’s self-selection of the schools and participants in the study. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005) indicated that information received from surveys is influenced by overrepresentation and underrepresentation. A second limitation was the study was
performed in urban schools in the southwestern portion of the United States and the findings may not be generalized to rural schools or schools in different geographical areas. Another limitation was having only high school teachers, vice principals, and principals respond in the study, thereby excluding other valuable data from middle and elementary school participants. Finally, schools differed in various ways and many of those variables were not included in this study. For example, the variable of the SES of a student’s family was not taken into account. This SES variable may provide another important dimension when investigating the relationship between school-wide data and teacher efficacy and collective teacher efficacy.
CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature examines research related to the organizational elements of school leadership and their impact on student achievement. More specifically, the review examines research on distributive, collaborative, and shared leadership practices (Crawford, 2012; Evans-Pierce, 2009; Foley & Lewis, 1999; Harris, 2004; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Schechter, 2012; Spillane et al., 2001). Relevant themes include building teacher capacity, teacher leadership, and collective learning on behalf of improved student achievement (Fink, 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008); building instructional leadership capacity through continuous, job-embedded professional development (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Evans-Pierce, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Youngs & King, 2002); and developing leadership behaviors that impact student achievement (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Kaniuka, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). The plethora of recent research on distributed leadership practices clearly demonstrates that organizations are searching for new ways to address change reform for school improvement (Harris, 2002).

Future research might look at the sustainability of distributive leadership as well as implementing systematic school structures that positively improve student outcomes. For example, one goal may include the successful implementation of the new Common Core State Standards. These standards embody a paradigm shift in the approach to instruction in public schools. The implementation of these standards, as well as other new initiatives, may require more than the top-down hierarchical approach used in some past reform efforts. This is especially important when leadership turnover is increasingly prevalent and damaging to school improvement efforts.
Leadership—A Definition

In this era of educational reform, along with declining resources to implement changes, it appears that educational institutions are searching for ways to develop effective schools. As a result, exploring the organizational elements of school leadership has gained attention on the educational research agenda. Harris (2004) shared that the term leadership has gained increased significance in all areas, including education. Mumford, Campion, and Morgeson (2007) indicated that there are four distinct leadership skills: cognitive, interpersonal, business, and strategic skills. Even though these distinct leadership skills are important, Fullan (2001) suggested that when the term leadership is used solely in reference to the distinct skills of one individual, this could restrict school-level change. Fullan (2001) maintained that earlier periods of leadership focused on the interactions of individuals with one person. He further stated that one person’s ability to generate lasting change in a school setting is limited. Finally, Fullan (2009) suggested that the leadership model principals utilize is contingent on the functioning status of the school. Therefore, the term leadership is complicated and difficult to precisely describe. Bass (1990) noted some challenges associated with the term leadership: (a) the difficulty of designing leadership training, (b) the situational nature of leadership, and (c) the lack of a uniform definition by researchers. Current researchers have surmised that the leader’s ability to gather individuals to work collaboratively while developing partnerships appears to be redefining leadership. Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) concluded that leadership should be available to any school member capable of performing leadership roles and expertise in specific
areas. Consequently, styles of effective leadership have emerged that encourage leaders to share responsibility and authority (Spillane, 2006).

**Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership practice is one current style that has been widely examined and conceptualized (Spillane, 2006). School leaders are faced with many complex challenges and distributive leadership is a survival tactic in addition to a smart managerial strategy (Supovitz & Turner, 2000). Spillane et al. (2001) are prominent researchers in field of distributive leadership. In a 4-year longitudinal study in Chicago, they investigated 13 elementary schools. They examined how distributive leadership was delegated at these schools. The methods used to gather data were structured interviews, surveys, and videotaping observations. In this multiphase study, they were able to obtain data involving 50 to 70 days of intensive observations at eight schools for 1 year. The researchers observed various school-related meetings, such as professional development activities and faculty meetings. Their goal was to focus on the leader’s primary responsibilities and agenda in an authentic setting. The study revealed the importance of interactions among participants when developing leadership practices. Spillane et al. (2004) later surmised that a distributive leadership viewpoint is a discrete tool—not conveying that one form of leading is preferable to another. Spillane and Diamond (2007) further suggested that there are two facets of a distributive perspective: (a) multiple individuals assume leadership roles or a leader-plus aspect and (b) leadership practice is based on interactions of individuals with regard to specific duties. Therefore, the two distributive leadership perspectives demonstrated the interconnectedness and importance of providing both lenses when discussing distributive leadership. Harris and
Spillane (2008) determined that there are three crucial rationales for the current prevalence of distributed leadership. First, it has normative influence and imitates recent changes in leadership practice. The new model for leadership promotes a greater focus on teachers, students, and staff support as leaders. Second, as a result of the increased pressures on schools, distributed leadership is an alternative approach to meeting newer external demands. They further suggested that shared, distributed, and extended practices are increasingly commonplace as schools redefine themselves. Finally, Harris and Spillane (2008) maintained, “There is increasing evidence that distributed leadership makes a positive difference to organizational outcomes and student learning” (p. 32).

Harris and Spillane (2008) indicated that the different terms and definitions created conceptual confusion and conceptual overlap. For example, Spillane (2006) defined distributive leadership as collaboration among various stakeholders to lead school development. Similar to Spillane, Forster (1997) stated, “Collaboration is increasingly being viewed not only as an important function of leadership, but also as a key element in developing a school as a community of lifelong learners” (p. 87). Evans-Pierce (2009) expressed that shared leadership is parallel leadership. She further defined parallel leadership as principals’ and teachers’ engagement in collaborative action to build capacity as a result of the powerful understanding of shared leadership. Additionally, a democratic point of view appears to be associated with distributed leadership. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) indicated that the distributed leadership theory, if adopted by schools with a democratic and collective vision, purports that every person can demonstrate leadership in one way or another. Evans-Pierce also expressed that shared leadership values democracy, honesty, and ethics as individuals pursue a common
purpose. The researchers’ various definitions and concepts of distributed leadership create confusion and may be seen as a catchall term to describe any kind of shared leadership (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

**The Impact of Distributed Forms of School Leadership on Student Outcomes**

Heck and Hallinger (2009) examined the influence of shared leadership on school improvement and student learning. The longitudinal study involved the participation of 195 elementary schools over a 4-year period. The proposed research model investigated four changes: changes in distributed leadership, changes in school academic capacity, changes in sociocultural organization, and changes in math achievement. The findings demonstrated significant direct effects of distributed leadership on change in the school’s academic capacity and indirect effects on the student growth rates in math. Finding ways to connect leadership practices to student success continue to be paramount in educational settings. In a study by Leithwood and Mascall (2008), the effects of collective leadership on student achievement were measured. This 3-year qualitative research project was a subset of a larger mixed-methods study that also utilized surveys. The project took place in nine states, 45 districts, and 180 elementary and secondary schools. Data from 2,570 teacher and the student responses were analyzed using path-analytic techniques. While previous research studies on distributed leadership often focused on teachers’ involvement, omitting the district as a source of leadership, this study considered both as a source of leadership instrumental in supporting student achievement. This is important because the district is a commonly overlooked component. District support can be an untapped valuable resource in supporting schools and student success. Fullan (2009) indicated that systems’ embedded learning not only
includes district-level support, but should also require district engagement in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention practices when addressing the leadership of these core functions. Additionally, such district-level support involvement demonstrates the commitment of the organization in the collective leadership process. In Fullan’s (2009) study, capacity was determined to be skills and knowledge to do a task by the teacher. Collective leadership was defined as a narrow preoccupation with all sources and their effects or differences. The main findings from this study revealed that collective leadership had a direct significant influence on all teacher variables. Finally, the findings suggested that variations in student achievement across schools could be explained by the presence or absence of collective leadership (Goddard et al., 2000).

**Distributed Instructional Leadership**

Principals have the responsibilities of being the leader of the school and of being accountable for the academic success of the school. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) examined the relationship between students’ academic achievement and a principal’s leadership style. The researchers performed an analysis of 27 published studies on leadership styles. They revealed that the utilization of a transformational leadership style had less impact on student achievement compared to principals who implemented an instructional focus. Therefore, it is important to understand how principals’ behaviors lead to academic success. Elmore (2000) suggested that strong instructional leadership is in short supply in most schools, largely, because the typical principal’s working day is consumed by managerial tasks having little or no direct bearing on the improvement of curriculum and instruction. Leadership roles in most schools include the oversight of two distinctive conceptual areas of responsibilities: the instructional and the operational
programs. Harris (2002) indicated that the skills associated with leadership practice have focused on the functioning of the school rather than on the instructional programs. Harris further mentioned that although the operational programs are vital to the support of the overall performance of the school, successful implementation of an instructional program may demonstrate a positive link to improving student outcomes. In a later study, Harris (2004) suggested that the positive outcomes are the result of the principal’s selection of how the shared responsibilities and authority are delegated in the distributive leadership model. Spillane (2006) further concluded that it is not just the distribution of responsibilities, but the productive interactions between the leaders and followers that are most important.

According to Neumerski (2013), the term instructional leadership has its roots dated to the 1970’s effective schools movement. During this era, schools were categorized either as effective or ineffective schools. Effective schools were deemed as schools able to educate all students (Lezotte, 2001). Unfortunately, when the comparisons were made between the two types of schools, delineations between what principals did in the effective schools were not clear. Despite this finding, what emerged was that effective school principals were considered instructional leaders (Neumerski, 2013). Effective principals provided the opportunities for their staff members to obtain the necessary skills required to increase student achievement. Additionally, characteristics of effective schools were: an orderly school environment, high teacher expectations, a focus on basic skills, evaluation of student assessments, and strong principal leadership (Edmonds, 1979). Under these circumstances, schools may become effective agents in the change process.
Early research on instructional leadership focused on the personal characteristics of principals, while later studies included the basic behaviors of principals. These behaviors included classroom observations to investigate instructional practices along with assessing student success (Edmonds, 1981). The development of a tool, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale, was used to assist with measuring principal instructional leadership (Hallinger, 1990). This tool included 50 specific principal behaviors that could be examined in addition to listing three dimensions of instructional leadership. The three dimensions of instructional leadership were: (a) delineating the mission of the school, (b) overseeing the instructional program, and (c) nurturing a positive school climate. As a consequence of Hallinger’s (1990) tool, a framework for principal standards was later developed to be used by 43 states (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). Despite the standards and tools, which include the various behaviors that are exhibited by administrators, there is still a lack of clarity about what, how, and why things should be done (Neumerski, 2013).

One component that impacts sustainability for student academic achievement is principal longevity. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) suggested that leaders should be in place for 5 to 7 years to counter the negative effects of turnover. In fact, Louis et al. claimed that leadership turnover negatively impacts the school culture, curriculum and instruction, and eventually student outcomes. Henceforth, school improvement efforts may wane with the departure of a principal. Compounding this issue of principals leaving the profession, the departure of superintendents and other higher district-level personnel also negatively affect student outcomes. A distributive leadership model has the potential to alleviate such attrition. Elmore (2004) suggested a
distributed leadership model that provides a system with sustained teacher leadership opportunities may be a safeguard to leadership turnover and lead to continued school improvement. As a result, student academic achievement may not be negatively disrupted by the winds of organizational change.

A plethora of evidence exists that indicates student success is influenced by instructional practices (Donaldson, 2006; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) determined that shared decisions surfaced as important in choosing instructional practices. Furthermore, gains in student academic outcomes, along with the development of academic capacity, appeared to be influenced by the distributed leadership model (Camburn et al., 2003; Harris, 2004; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Harris (2002) claimed that schools lack models of leaderships that foster instructional improvement and facilitate student improvement. Ross and Gray (2006) maintained that factors such as the principal’s leadership and the SES of the school have an effect in raising student achievement. Although SES was omitted in their analysis, Mulford and Silins (2011) examined the role of school principalship in improving student outcomes using a three-leveled model. The study was a mixed-methods design executed across 5 years of study. The three-leveled model investigated the similarities and differences of three principals for the following outcomes: student academic achievement, student social development, and student empowerment. The evidence revealed that when the principal and staff used the collaboration model, student outcomes were improved, especially when the teachers perceived both capacity building and systems of accountability as school characteristics. Fullan (2001) maintained that the past role of the principal as the lone instructional leader is no longer effective in influencing successful school improvement and school reform.
Mulford and Silins (2011) also observed a positive influence on change in school capacity. Fullan (2009) and Heck and Hallinger (2009) not only supported these findings, but they also asserted that stability in the principal’s position had an effect on changes in distributed leadership.

**CAPP**

Acknowledging that principals need support to lead schools in an era of increasing accountability and the need for effective leadership, CAPP developed the HSLI. This 5-year program was designed to develop and support 11 California high school principals to develop leadership capacity. Principals used this support to implement best practices to improve student achievement and advance educational equity. One of the three main goals of CAPP was to strengthen the leadership of principals and leadership teams focused on student learning. The summary of the results for the first 4 years of this study were mixed. Although the HSLI schools performed lower than the state on some indicators, they did have a higher graduation rate and made progress with closing the achievement gap on the Algebra II test of the California Standards Test and the California High School Exit Exam.

The final phases of the study are in the process of being finalized. More findings are anticipated. What has not been addressed by the CAPP study is whether the moderate gains made can be sustained using the leadership strategies implemented at the HSLI schools once funding ceases. Schools are not challenged to simply organize themselves to initiate reform, they are challenged to sustain and enhance that reform effort. Some outcomes, trends, and benchmarks can be measured in the short term, but real change,
and a commitment to maintain a climate to sustain it, is more likely to be reflected in a school’s 5-year plan.

**Teacher Leadership**

The development of teacher leaders may provide the needed instructional support for principals and the school community to increase student academic performance. Barth (2001) indicated, “All teachers can lead! Most teachers want to lead. And schools badly need their ideas, invention, energy, and leadership” (p. 449). Danielson (2007) suggested that teachers become leaders due to their desire to improve instruction. This movement towards increased teacher leadership roles may have been the result of the comprehensive school reform models (Smylie, Wenzel, & Fendt, 2003). In the comprehensive school reform models, content administrators, resource teachers, department chairs, and other staff members were designated additional roles to provide instructional support to the principal. Similar to the principal leadership literature, teacher leadership appears to also focus primarily on teacher characteristics (Neumerski, 2013). Despite this trend of individual attributes, teacher behaviors such as collaboration, building trust, and communicating are emerging as components that could improve instruction in schools (Lord, Cress, & Miller, 2008). Mangin (2007) maintained that teachers being viewed as forces to school improvement was the result of the dissolution of the decision-making process from earlier school reform from the 1970s to 1980s. Principals are expected to perform additional duties with fewer resources due to the declining financial support from the federal and state governments. Could the increase of principals’ responsibilities and the added weight of school accountability be factors in teachers increasingly being encouraged to take leadership roles? The strategic integration
of qualified teacher leaders may lessen the impact of the limited resources while at the same time provide support to improving student academic achievement. Several concerns related to the inclusion of teachers as leaders to a school could revolve around the organizational structures. For example, how will the teacher leaders be viewed among their peers when the roles between the administrators and teacher leaders become blurred? Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) maintained that instruction is positively influenced when the power structures between the principals and teachers are minimal. Another concern that could become problematic for the teacher leader is the potential loss of trust between teachers as a result of the perception that teacher leaders are allies with the administrators. Peterson and Valli (1994) examined this phenomenon of power structure shifts in schools by addressing prevailing beliefs and traditions of power in organizations. It is important for the organizational climates and structures in schools to be fully investigated and roles delineated to create a supportive environment where teacher leadership can flourish.

Kaniuka (2012) examined teacher capacity and the relationship between educational leadership and school improvement. This case study, in a racially diverse underperforming school, provided insight into the perceptions that teachers had regarding their own teaching, expectations, and student achievement. The context for the study was the implementation of a reading program. Teacher capacity was defined as the ability to make effective decisions in school reform (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002). Kaniuka (2012) discussed the importance of teachers using current and accurate information for school improvement. Not only is timely data important, but understanding the data and the implications for student interventions are necessary for
next steps. Otherwise, outdated information may have minimal, if any, positive impact on student achievement. Not surprising, Ross and Gray (2006) maintained that true school reform should have the elements of effective leadership and a desire to increase teacher capacity.

**Shared Leadership**

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) examined shared leadership in order to determine the impact on classroom instruction. They explored the relationships between the principal and teachers as well as between the teachers themselves. Teachers from 14 schools in a suburban district in Minnesota completed surveys designed to measure organizational trust, professional community, and instructional practices. The findings suggested that trust was more beneficial than shared leadership in efforts to improve instruction. The authors concluded that more nonadministrators needed to be included in the decision-making process. The descriptive data from this study also illuminated the importance of certain teacher characteristics and years of experience, which impacted instructional practices. Louis (2006) indicated that teacher-to-teacher interactions were important to improve instructional practices. When teachers worked collaboratively and focused on instruction, students’ learning opportunities increased. Ballock (2007) concluded that school cultures can influence creating a culture of community and collaboration, which could result in positive student achievement.

Evans-Pierce (2009) discussed the evolution of major waves of educational reform related to building shared instructional leadership. She examined how the roles and relationships of teacher leaders changed during the reforms. The study was framed by the factors that contributed to the results from the following: support, mutual respect,
job performance, and district-level expectations. Highlighted throughout this qualitative multiple-case study was the need for school leaders to be engaged in collaborative alliances focused on desired student outcomes. Collaborative leadership is focused leadership that facilitates continuous improvement and teacher professional development (Senge et al., 2002). Professional development should be an integral component for developing leadership skills and improving student outcomes. However, most teachers are not provided leadership training in their educational programs (Buckner & McDowell, 2000). Lambert (2002) emphasized that leadership is enclosed in patterns of relationships and extends beyond any individual’s specific role. Evans-Pierce (2009) indicated that enhanced student performance is a result of regular interaction across substantive relationships involving specific activities. She postulated that principals and teachers must forge new roles beyond the traditional ones in order for the distributed leadership model to thrive as an essential reform. Further research from a mixed-methods study of 24 nationally selected restructured schools emphasized that both teachers and principals play a part in forging an effective leadership relationship (Marks & Printy, 2003). The survey responses revealed the following: (a) transformational leadership was necessary but insufficient for instructional leadership and (b) when transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership coexisted in the integral form of leadership, the influence on student academic achievement was substantial. This study clearly documented the need for collaboration of different stakeholders to obtain the multifaceted endeavor of increasing student academic achievement (Fink, 2011; Lambert, 2002).
Collective Teacher Efficacy

A leadership concept that appears to be a vital ingredient in the distributive leadership model is collective teacher efficacy. Similar to teacher efficacy, collective teacher efficacy consists of the group’s shared beliefs that working together can produce increased levels of attainment (Bandura, 1977). In a study examining SES, Goddard et al. (2000) measured collective teacher efficacy by averaging teacher responses to questions. Compiling the responses together as averages can be a limitation as a result of not being able to clearly view the distribution range of the teacher responses. Despite this, the findings indicated that strong collective efficacy: (a) creates an environment that enhances teacher commitment to a school, (b) promotes teacher-parent relationships, (c) improves student outcomes, and (d) decreases the adverse effects of low SES. Goddard and Skrla (2006), in a later study with 1,981 K-8 teachers, concluded that the school’s SES, the experience level of the staff, and the students’ prior academic performance accounted for less than half of the differences in collective 006) among schools. The findings of these two studies (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard & Skrla, 2006) are significant because they clearly state that other necessary components are involved in building collective efficacy. Ross and Gray (2006) further concluded that principals can positively influence collective efficacy by: (a) providing teachers with opportunities to collaborate, (b) including teachers in the decision-making processes, (c) analyzing data and providing teacher performance feedback, and (d) enhancing instructional skills and knowledge. Expanding on the collective efficacy concept could provide leaders with a purposeful tool to create collaborative learning environments. Consequently, the infusion
of a collective efficacy framework could prove to be an invaluable means to transform schools into high achieving organizations.

Effective leadership is vital to school improvement. Researchers have shared the importance of the principal’s role in determining the level of a school’s success (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2004) suggested that considering all school-related factors, leadership is second solely to teaching in affecting student learning. Despite this information, there is a sense that there is a problem with attracting and preparing leaders (Murphy, 1992). Unfortunately, this dilemma is occurring at a time when quality leaders are desperately needed during this intense era of school accountability.

**Summary and Implications of Literature Review**

What emerges from the literature review is the need to look closer at the possible relationship between effective distribution of leadership and building collective efficacy, as well as whether that efficacy is a factor that maintains and enhances ongoing reform. The literature maintains that implementing distributive leadership in this manner will result in increased academic achievement. What also has emerged from this review is the next concern. How will reforms be maintained and advanced and how will new initiatives be developed and supported? The answer might be to increase the collective efficacy of staff; it is hypothesized that collective efficacy may increase as achievement promoted by distributive leadership is realized. In order to maximize student achievement, principals would want to consider which components of the distributive leadership model can be sustained over time. In this current study, a proposed model was provided, illustrating systemic ongoing reform that conceptualizes the relationship
between distributed leadership and collective efficacy (see Figure 1). Studying CAPP schools that have demonstrated some degree of success using a distributive leadership model may provide next steps for identifying the elements for sustaining student academic achievement. Once these elements are identified, a dynamic program improvement model can emerge.

*Figure 1.* Distributive leadership conceptual model.

The model consists of three phases (see Figure 1). In the first phase, distributed leadership would be implemented with the three critical components identified in the literature (building instructional capacity, building leadership skills, and developing a learning community climate focusing on effective instructional practice). The literature would suggest that this activity would result in some impact on student achievement. In the second phase, it is reasonable to hypothesize that collective efficacy in conjunction with the three critical components results in initial gains in student achievement from the first phase, resulting in increased collective efficacy. Finally, as depicted in the conceptual model, the third phase proposes as collective efficacy continues to improve,
student achievement will increase and the three critical components of distributive leadership will be integrated into the school’s culture. This model, as proposed, is cyclical in nature, with the potential to create ongoing gains in student academic achievement. Additionally, it safeguards the educational system against leadership attrition, which has proven to impede sustainability of continuous school improvement. If the assumption of this model can be further substantiated, it may provide school leaders with both a theoretical and practical way to manage ongoing systemic reform. This study was designed to further examine this conceptual model and its components.

**Research Questions**

A conceptual model has been proposed as a means of studying possible linear and cyclical relationships, implied in the review of literature, between distributive leadership, collective efficacy, and enhancing the capacity of the school as a PLC. The review of literature poses some important questions.

Question 1. What perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of a principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership?

1a. What lessons have been learned?

1b. What themes emerge?

However, schools are not challenged to simply organize themselves to initiate reform; they are challenged to sustain and enhance that reform effort (Taylor, 2005).
Question 2. Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?

2a. Have schools that have made distributive leadership a focus of their reform initiative increased collective efficacy?

Question 3. Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?

3a. What evidence exists in the school culture that is likely to promote a dynamic process to continually build instructional capacity and increase academic achievement?

3b. What themes emerge regarding the relationship between increasing teacher and collective efficacy and building capacity for sustaining a culture that supports ongoing school improvement?
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to investigate the long-term impact of the distribution of leadership from the principal to the administrative team and instructional staff. Additionally, the study was designed to explore principals’ leadership skills and dispositions in a distributed leadership model. A collective case study approach is useful when the researcher wants to investigate a contemporary observable occurrence within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). This study pertained to multiple cases that will be described and compared to provide insight into the distributive leadership model.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of a principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership?

2. Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?

3. Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?

Research Design

This mixed-methods study involved teacher surveys, teacher leader focus groups, and principal interviews. It involved separate 1-hour semi-structured interviews with five high school principals and five teacher leader focus groups from each of the five schools.
Additionally, teacher and collective efficacy surveys were distributed to all teachers in each of the five different high schools. Two of the participating urban high schools were located in Northern California and the remaining three were located in Southern California.

Data Sources and Collection

Participants

Schools. The study was conducted in five urban high schools in the state of California. Schools were determined to be urban if they resided in a demographic area of more than 100,000 people. The researcher purposely selected five schools from a group of 17 that participated in CAPP, which developed the HSLI. These schools were selected due to their similar population size and demographics along with having a distributive leadership model. As Creswell (2009) noted, purposeful selection enhances the researcher’s ability to understand the research question because those with the answers are directly accessed. The five urban schools’ populations consisted of a combined total of more than 10,000 students.

Principals. The principals who volunteered to participate in the study represented a wide range of experiences. There were a total of five principals who participated in the study. The principals’ genders were four males and one female. Two principals had 3 years of experience as site principals. The other three principals had at least 4 to 9 years as high school principals. Altogether, the five principals had 24 years of experience as site principals and 11 years of experience as vice principals. Only one of the principals did not serve as a classroom teacher. All five principals combined for 100 years of educational experience.
**Teacher leaders.** The teacher leaders who volunteered to participate in the study also exhibited long histories of educational experiences. There were a total of 20 teachers who participated in focus group interviews. Sixteen of the teachers were females. The lowest level of teacher experience was 4 years, while the highest was 32 years. The total combined educational experience for all 20 teachers was 313 years. All core subjects—math, social studies, science, and English language arts—were represented. Physical education and special education subjects were also represented.

**Survey participants.** Teacher efficacy and collective efficacy surveys were distributed to 455 teachers at the five high schools. One hundred and ninety-nine were completed for a 43.7% return rate.

**Data Collection**

All of the participants signed a research agreement which detailed the terms of their participation, ensured their confidentiality, and provided an opportunity for accepting or rejecting the offer to be involved in the research. (See Appendix A for the Letter of Consent)

**Instruments and Procedures**

**Principal Interviews**

Each principal was interviewed after or during the school day, with questions focusing on the impact that distributed leadership has had on sustaining the efforts originally funded by CAPP, which developed the HSLI. Questions for this semi-structured interview can be found in Appendix B. The interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for the principal and lasted 45 minutes. The interviews were digitally audio recorded and later transcribed.
**Teacher Leader Focus Groups**

Each focus group was scheduled during the school day while teachers were on prep. Questions for the focus groups can be found in Appendix C. The focus groups lasted 45 minutes. The interviews were digitally audio recorded and later transcribed.

**Teacher Efficacy Scale**

Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) examined teacher efficacy by reviewing major measures to create an instrument that would capture the construct. Based on their 20 years of teacher efficacy research, a promising teacher efficacy scale was created. The 24-item Teacher Efficacy Scale has been instrumental in measuring teacher behaviors such as persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behaviors. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) suggested that either the 24-item Teacher Efficacy Scale or the 12-item Teacher Efficacy Scale proved reasonably valid and reliable for exploring the construct of teacher efficacy. As a result of the consistency between the two scales for measuring teacher efficacy, the 12-item scale was used in this research study.

**Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale**

Collective teacher efficacy was measured using the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale developed by Goddard et al. (2000). This instrument consists of a 6-point Likert scale with 12 items. The scale ranges from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. This survey has a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .96. This survey was administered at the same time, and in the same way, as the Teacher Efficacy Scale.
Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

For the analysis of the teacher efficacy survey and the collective teacher efficacy survey, questions for each construct were recorded and averaged. Statistical analyses were used to examine the data for statistical significance. Quantitative data came from participant responses to the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). The Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale has 12 statement items, each scored on a 1-to-6 scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Teacher Efficacy Scale has 12 question items regarding what a teacher can do, each scored on a 1-to-5 scale, ranging from nothing to a great deal. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha internal reliability was .79 for the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale and .90 for the Teacher Efficacy Scale, indicating acceptable reliability for survey research (Nunnally, 1978; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Qualitative Analysis

For the analysis of the interviews and focus groups, the researcher coded the transcripts using a constant comparative method (Creswell, 2012). Once the interview data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed, a draft of the findings was produced.

Summary

Understanding the complex nature of distributive leadership as a model for reform initiatives required an in-depth research study using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The richness of this mixed-methods study generated some quantitative evidence further supported by qualitative evidence to deepen understanding of the
findings. Data were collected via surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups. The surveys allowed the researcher to examine teachers’ perceptions about collective efficacy and teacher efficacy. The personal interview and focus group data added to the body of knowledge by engaging the principals and teacher leaders regarding their roles in the distributive leadership model. The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the long-term impact of the distribution of leadership from the principal to the administrative team and instructional staff as well as to determine whether school initiatives for distributing leadership were related to increasing collective and teacher efficacy and building PLCs. This is important because increased efficacy and promoting PLCs have been reported to be positively correlated with improved school performance (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

This chapter reports the results from this mixed-methods study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from five California high schools that each participated in CAPP, which developed the HSLI. These subject schools were selected for study since their collaborative work centered around each using distributed leadership as an organizational basis for their site-based reform strategy. This strategic focus made these schools ideal subjects for the present study.

The quantitative section included using two efficacy scales (collective and teacher) completed by 199 teachers at the five schools who had been in a coordinated effort to utilize distributed leadership as a means to accelerate their reform efforts. The qualitative section of the study included interviews with the five principals of these schools and focus sessions held with teacher leaders at each of the five schools.

Quantitative Analysis

The Collective Teacher and Teacher Efficacy Scales: Scoring and Reliability

The Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) were completed by 199 teachers
from the five study schools. The Cronbach’s alpha internal reliability was measured to be .79 for the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale and .90 for the Teacher Efficacy Scale in the present study, indicating acceptable reliability for survey research (Nunnally, 1978; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale includes 12 items, using a 1-to-6 Likert response interface ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6), with half of the items reverse scored such that lower scores indicated greater collective efficacy. The Teacher Efficacy Scale includes 12 items, using a 1-to-5 Likert response interface ranging from nothing (1) to a great deal (5), encompassing classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies. For all teacher efficacy items, low scores indicate low efficacy. The Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale (after reverse scoring half of the items) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale (and the Classroom Management, Student Engagement, and Instructional Strategies Subscales) were normed using the formulae of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. By using these normed scores, the efficacy scores of the present sample can be compared to the normed sample. Normed scores can be expressed as percentiles, with 500 representing the 50th percentile of the normed sample, with scores greater than 500 indicating above average efficacy, and with scores less than 500 indicating below average efficacy compared to the normative sample.

**Correlation Between Collective Efficacy and Teacher Efficacy**

There was a positive, statistically significant correlation between collective efficacy and overall teacher efficacy ($r = .34, p < .00001$). The $r^2$ of .11 indicated that 11% of the variance in teacher efficacy could be accounted for by collective efficacy.
Collective efficacy was also correlated with classroom management ($r = .26, r^2 = .07, p < .00001$), student engagement ($r = .35, r^2 = .12, p < .0002$), and instructional strategies ($r = .23, r^2 = .05, p < .001$). These findings indicate modest but statistically significant correlations between collective efficacy and teacher efficacy. The significant relationship between the two scales shows that the concepts of teacher efficacy and collective efficacy are related to each other.

**Collective Efficacy Findings**

The normed Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale score was 474, the 40th percentile. This indicated somewhat below average collective efficacy for the five schools in the sample, which were chosen because they participated in a distributed leadership initiative. Table 1 shows the descriptives for each Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale item, including the mean and standard deviation ($SD$), the number of participant responses ($N$), and the minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) scores of participants. Figure 2 displays the mean scores for each Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale item, sorted from highest to lowest scores, with error bars showing the standard error of the mean. Note that the gray bars in Figure 2 are reversed scored because disagreeing with these items indicated greater collective efficacy.

**Items with high collective efficacy scores.** Of the 12 collective efficacy items, eight were high in collective efficacy, defined as being significantly different in the direction of higher efficacy compared to the midpoint of the 1-to-6 Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale, using $t$ tests at the .05 threshold for statistical significance. Note that three of these items (Question [Q] 1, Q2, and Q5) were scored such that higher values
indicated greater collective efficacy, while five of these items (Q3, Q4, Q8, Q9, and Q11) were reverse scored such that lower values indicated greater collective efficacy.

**Q1: Difficult students.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Teachers in the school are able to get through to the most difficult students.” Participants averaged 3.8 ($SD = 1.2$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to *somewhat agree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = 4.1, p < .0001$. The most common response was *somewhat agree* (85 of 199; 43%), followed by *agree* (42 of 199; 21%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q1 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q2: Motivate students.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Teachers here are confident that they will be able to motivate their students.” Participants averaged 4.6 ($SD = 1.0$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to *somewhat agree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = 10.3, p < .0001$. The most common responses were *somewhat agree* (76 of 199; 38%) and *agree* (77 of 199; 38%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q2 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q3: Giving up on students.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “If a child doesn’t want to learn, teachers here give up.” Participants averaged 2.4 ($SD = 1.1$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly midway between *disagree* and *somewhat disagree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = -13.6, p < .0001$, for this reverse-scored item. The most common response was *disagree* (78 of 199; 39%), followed by *somewhat disagree* (43 of 199; 22%) and
strongly disagree (42 of 199; 21%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q3 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q4: Lacking skills.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Teachers here don’t have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.” Participants averaged 1.9 (SD = 0.9, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to disagree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = -25.0, p < .0001$, for this reverse-scored item. The most common response was disagree (83 of 199; 42%), followed by strongly disagree (81 of 199; 41%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q4 are provided in Appendix D.

Table 1

**Collective Efficacy Descriptives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
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Figure 2. Collective efficacy sorted by average score. Bar lengths indicate average values; error bars reflect standard error of the mean; and gray bars indicate reverse-scored items, with lower scores indicating higher collective efficacy.

**Q5: Belief in every child.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.” Participants averaged 4.8 (SD = 1.1, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to agree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, t(198) = 17.0, p < .0001. The most common response was agree (89 of 199; 45%), followed by strongly agree (51 of 199; 26%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q5 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q8: Unmotivated students.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Students here just aren’t motivated to learn.” Participants averaged 2.9 (SD = 1.0, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to somewhat agree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, t(198) = -8.0, p < .0001.
The most common response was disagree (68 of 199; 34%), followed by agree (56 of 199; 28%) and somewhat agree (54 of 199; 27%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q8 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q9: Disciplinary skill.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.” Participants averaged 2.7 ($SD = 1.1$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to disagree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = -9.9, p < .0001$, for this reverse-scored item. The most common response was disagree (87 of 199; 44%), followed by agree (44 of 199; 22%) and somewhat agree (36 of 199; 18%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q9 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q11: Safety.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Learning is difficult in this school because students are worried about their safety.” Participants averaged 2.6 ($SD = 1.1$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly midway between disagree and somewhat disagree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = 10.1, p < .0001$, for this reverse-scored item. The most common response was disagree (77 of 199; 39%), followed by somewhat agree (41 of 199; 21%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q11 are provided in Appendix D.

**Items with moderate collective efficacy scores.** Of the 12 collective efficacy items, two (Q6 and Q12) were moderate in collective efficacy, defined as being not significantly different than the midpoint of the 1-to-6 Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale, using $t$ tests at the .05 threshold for statistical significance. Note that one of these items (Q12) was reverse scored, such that lower values indicated greater collective efficacy.
**Q6: Students come ready.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “These students come to school to learn.” Participants averaged 3.4 ($SD = 1.1$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly midway between *somewhat agree* and *agree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = -1.4, p = .16$. The most common response was *agree* (76 of 199; 38%), followed by *somewhat agree* (52 of 199; 26%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q6 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q12: Drugs and alcohol.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.” Participants averaged 3.5 ($SD = 1.2$, range: 1-6) on this item, midway between *somewhat disagree* and *somewhat agree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale, $t(198) = -.02, p = .84$. The most common response was *somewhat agree* (78 of 199; 39%), followed by *disagree* (41 of 199; 21%) and *agree* (35 of 199; 18%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q12 are provided in Appendix D.

**Items with low collective efficacy scores.** Of the 12 collective efficacy items, two (Q7 and Q10) were low in collective efficacy, defined as being significantly lower than the midpoint of the 1-to-6 Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale, using $t$ tests at the .05 threshold for statistical significance.

**Q7: Home life.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Home life provides so many advantage that students here are bound to learn.” Participants averaged 2.2 ($SD = 1.2$, range: 1-6) on this item, roughly corresponding to *disagree* (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(196) = -15.1, p$
The most common response was strongly disagree (77 of 199; 39%), followed by disagree (56 of 199; 28%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q7 are provided in Appendix D.

**Q10: Community opportunities.** Participants were asked to rate the statement, “Opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.” Participants averaged 3.0 (SD = 1.2, range: 1-6) on this item, corresponding to somewhat disagree (Table 1 and Figure 2), which was significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(194) = -5.7, p < .0001 \). The most common responses were somewhat disagree (54 of 199; 27%) and disagree (54 of 199; 27%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q10 are provided in Appendix D.

**Summary of Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale results.** The normed mean score for the total five schools was 474, placing them in the 40% percentile. This represents somewhat below average collective efficacy compared to the normative sample. Responses to specific items were analyzed to provide perspectives on the overall normed value. Items significantly above and below the scale midpoint were delineated. These findings will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

There is evidence that high collective efficacy was apparent in items associated with teaching difficult students (Q1), motivating students (Q2), not giving up (Q3), not lacking skills (Q4), belief in every child (Q5), teaching unmotivated students (Q8), disciplinary skill (Q9), and safety (Q11). Teachers, on average, neither agreed nor disagreed with items regarding students coming ready to learn (Q7) and drug and alcohol abuse (Q12), indicating moderate collective efficacy in these areas. Low collective
efficacy was found for items associated with home life (Q7) and community opportunities (Q10).

**Teacher Efficacy Scale Results**

The following data were derived from the results of the Teacher Efficacy Scale distributed and completed by 199 respondents from five schools. The overall teacher efficacy normed score for the subject schools was 496, the 48th percentile. This indicated average performance in teacher efficacy for the five schools in the sample, which were chosen because they participated in a distributed leadership initiative.

The Teacher Efficacy Scale of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) included Classroom Management, Student Engagement, and Instructional Strategies Subscales, which are detailed below. Descriptive data for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies items are displayed in Table 2.

**Classroom management findings.** Classroom management includes controlling disruptive behavior, getting students to believe, getting children to follow classroom rules, and establishing a classroom management system (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Classroom management findings are summarized in Figure 3 and Table 2.

**Q13: Controlling disruptive behavior.** Participants were asked, “How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?” Participants averaged 4.2 (SD = 0.7, range: 3-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 3), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(195) = 4.1, p < .0001 \). The most common response was *quite a bit* (92 of 199; 46%), followed by *a great deal* (74 of 199; 37%). Zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q13 are provided in Appendix E.
**Q15: Getting students to believe.** Participants were asked, “How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?” Participants averaged 3.8 ($SD = 0.7$, range: 2-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 3), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(191) = 15.0, p < .0001$. The most common response was *quite a bit* (83 of 199; 42%), followed by *some influence* (72 of 199; 36%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q15 are provided in Appendix E.

*Figure 3.* Teacher efficacy: Classroom management. Bar lengths indicate average values; error bars reflect standard error of the mean; and the gray bar indicates the average of the classroom management items.
Table 2

*Teacher Efficacy Descriptives*

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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</table>
**Q18: Following classroom rules.** Participants were asked, “How much can you get children to follow classroom rules?” Participants averaged 4.1 (SD = 0.6, range: 3-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 3), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(191) = 25.1, p < .0001$. The most common response was *quite a bit* (112 of 199; 56%), followed by *a great deal* (54 of 199; 27%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q18 are provided in Appendix E.

**Q20: Classroom management system.** Participants were asked, “How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?” Participants averaged 4.1 (SD = 0.7, range: 3-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 3), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(191) = 22.3, p < .0001$. The most common response was *quite a bit* (97 of 199; 49%), followed by *a great deal* (59 of 199; 30%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q20 are provided in Appendix E.

**Summary of classroom management.** Overall, classroom management scores averaged 4.07, which indicated that participating teachers had *quite a bit* of teacher efficacy in the category of classroom management. When this value was converted to a normed score ($M = 500$, $SD = 100$) based on the formula of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), the normed value of 567 corresponded to the 75th percentile. This indicated a high level of classroom management for the participating schools.
Student engagement findings. Student engagement includes motivating students, getting students to believe they can do well in school work, using a variety of assessment strategies, and assisting families in helping their children do well in school (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Student engagement findings are summarized in Figure 4 and Table 2.

Q14: Motivating the low-interest students. Participants were asked, “How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?” Participants averaged 3.7 ($SD = 0.7$, range: 2-5) on this question, closer to quite a bit than to some influence (Table 2 and Figure 4), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(191) = 12.4, p < .0001$. The most common response was some influence (84 of 199; 42%), followed by quite a bit (78 of 199; 39%). Note that zero participants responded nothing to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q14 are provided in Appendix E.

Q16: Helping students value learning. Participants were asked, “How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?” Participants averaged 3.8 ($SD = 0.7$, range: 2-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to quite a bit (Table 2 and Figure 4), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, $t(191) = 14.5, p < .0001$. The most common response was quite a bit (85 of 199; 43%), followed by some influence (70 of 199; 35%). Note that zero participants responded nothing to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q16 are provided in Appendix E.
Figure 4. Teacher efficacy: Student engagement. Bar lengths indicate average values; error bars reflect standard error of the mean; and the gray bar indicates the average of the teacher efficacy items.

**Q19: Calming disruptive students.** Participants were asked, “How much can you get children to follow classroom rules?” Participants averaged 3.9 (SD = 0.7, range: 2-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to quite a bit (Table 2 and Figure 4), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, t(191) = 19.0, p < .0001. The most common response was quite a bit (105 of 199; 53%), followed by some influence (48 of 199; 24%). Note that zero participants responded nothing to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q19 are provided in Appendix E.

**Q23: Assist families.** Participants were asked, “How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?” Participants averaged 3.2 (SD = 0.7, range: 1-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to some influence (Table 2 and Figure 4), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, t(194) = 3.8, p <
The most common response was *some influence* (115 of 199; 58%), followed by *quite a bit* (53 of 199; 27%). Response frequencies and percentages for Q23 are in Appendix E.

**Summary of student engagement.** Overall, student engagement scores averaged 3.62, which indicated that participating teachers had between *some influence* and *quite a bit* of teacher efficacy in the category of student engagement. When this value was converted to a normed score \( (M = 500, SD = 100) \) based on the formula of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), the normed value of 432 corresponded to the 25th percentile. This indicated a low level of student engagement for the participating schools.

**Instructional strategies findings.** Instructional strategies include crafting good questions; calming disruptive students; providing an alternative explanation, for example, when students are confused; and implementing alternative strategies in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Instructional strategies findings are summarized in Figure 5 and Table 2.

**Q17: Crafting good questions.** Participants were asked, “To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?” Participants averaged 4.1 \( (SD = 0.6, \text{ range: 3-5}) \) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 5), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(190) = 23.5, p < .0001 \). The most common response was *quite a bit* (109 of 199; 55%), followed by *a great deal* (51 of 199; 26%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q17 are provided in Appendix E.

**Q21: Assessment strategies.** Participants were asked, “How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?” Participants averaged 4.0 \( (SD = 0.7, \text{ range: 2-5}) \) on
this question, corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 5), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(193) = 19.5, p < .0001 \). The most common response was *quite a bit* (99 of 199; 50%), followed by *a great deal* (48 of 199; 24%) and *some influence* (46 of 199; 23%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q21 are provided in Appendix E.

**Q22: Alternative examples.** Participants were asked, “To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation, for example, when students are confused?” Participants averaged 4.3 (\( SD = 0.6 \), range: 3-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 5), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(193) = 27.1, p < .0001 \). The most common response was *quite a bit* (101 of 199; 51%), followed by *a great deal* (72 of 199; 36%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q22 are provided in Appendix E.

**Q24: Alternative strategies.** Participants were asked, “How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?” Participants averaged 3.9 (\( SD = 0.7 \), range: 3-5) on this question, roughly corresponding to *quite a bit* (Table 2 and Figure 5), which was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, \( t(194) = 18.9, p < .0001 \). The most common response was *quite a bit* (109 of 199; 55%), followed by *some influence* (54 of 199; 27%). Note that zero participants responded *nothing* or *very little* to this question. Response frequencies and percentages for Q24 are provided in Appendix E.
Figure 5. Teacher efficacy: Instructional strategies. Bar lengths indicate average values; error bars reflect standard error of the mean; and the gray bar indicates the average of the instructional strategies items.

Summary of instructional strategies. Overall, instructional strategies scores averaged 4.06, which indicated that participating teachers had between some influence and quite a bit of teacher efficacy in the category of instructional strategies. When this value was converted to a normed score ($M = 500$, $SD = 100$) based on the formula of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), the normed value of 488 corresponded to the 46th percentile. This indicated an average level of instructional strategies for the participating schools compared to the normative sample of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001).

Summary of teacher efficacy scale results. While the overall teacher efficacy normed score of 496 reflected the 48th percentile of the normative sample of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), indicating roughly average teacher efficacy, teacher efficacy subscales varied greatly. The highest scores were obtained for classroom management...
(75th percentile) and the lowest scores were obtained for student engagement (25th percentile), while instructional strategies (46th percentile) scores were near the average of the normative sample of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy. In Chapter 5, these emerging trends from the quantitative findings are triangulated with the findings from the qualitative interview data detailed below.

**Findings From Qualitative Data**

This section presents qualitative data obtained from five principal interviews and five teacher leader focus group interviews. The data provided represents feedback from a total of 25 participants. Principals responded to principal protocol questions (Appendix B) and focus groups responded to teacher protocol questions (Appendix C). Finally, the responses from both interview types were synthesized and used to answer the three research questions.

During the principal interviews, all five principals shared that the purposeful implementation of the distributive leadership model was the result of their schools participating in CAPP. The distributive leadership practice was one component of the organizational structure promoted and supported by CAPP.

The implementation of distributive leadership practices appeared to be a viable solution to schools grappling with new reform initiatives. As a result, CAPP provided the five schools with strategic professional development and support with utilizing the distributive leadership model. None of the current five principals interviewed for this study was a principal at the time of the 5-year CAPP. However, four of the five principals were staff members at their current schools. Three participants were vice principals and one was a teacher leader. The current principal and former teacher leader
shared her initial CAPP experience. “CAPP for me was pretty life changing because I was a teacher when CAPP started so I benefited from the idea of teacher leadership.” The other participant was a principal at a middle school in the same district. Therefore, all of the principals inherited and/or received some professional development training using the distributive leadership model.

Eight main themes emerged from the principal interviews: distributive leadership principal roles, vision, challenges, organizational structures, empowerment, collective efficacy, PLCs, and shared decision making. Nine themes emerged from the teacher focus group interviews: relationships, building capacity, vision, trust, empowerment, professional development, PLCs, organizational structures, and shared decision making. All of these themes fell under the larger umbrella of four main topics: teacher efficacy, collective efficacy, distributing leadership, and PLCs. In the following section, the principal responses and teacher leader focus group responses are used to answer the original three research questions.

Principal Interviews

Research Question 1: Principal interviews. The first research question examined what perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of the principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership.

1a. What lessons have been learned?

All five principals shared their many insights on the importance and value of creating school environments that build teacher leadership capacity. They further
emphasized how distributing leadership responsibilities and empowering teachers to take ownership are ways to overcome principal burnout.

**Principal's role.** Four of the five principals conveyed how their roles have changed as leaders under the distributive leadership structure. One principal summed up his role as a principal of using the distributive leadership model:

> I think my role as principal is to create principals. My administrative team should all be future principals. They all lead their own departments, so each of them have a core department—English, science, social science, math, special education, athletics, AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination]. We all split up the duties so you’re pretty much the principal of your department. Delegate. Really empowering people that you trust them to do the work. That’s reality in a school like ours; the principal cannot be the one doing all the work.

Another principal shared his role on the leadership team:

> In the instructional leadership team, I play less of a role. I’m there just as a member. I don’t facilitate it. There is a vice principal and a teacher-in-charge, who is also in charge of the new CAPP grant. They’re in charge of the instructional leadership team, and they facilitate it. I’m just a member.

**Vision.** All five principals mentioned during the interviews how critical it was for them as leaders to clearly articulate the vision and mission of the school to all stakeholders. They shared that it is the roadmap to their destination. One principal stated, “If you don’t know where you are going, then how will you lead people to get to their destinations.” This comment from this veteran principal demonstrated his insightful knowledge of one of the key components of leadership. This principal also discussed the importance of
acquiring leadership training. Another principal discussed her role in the CAPP leadership training conferences:

My role is to make sure that the leadership is distributed throughout the organization so that we have teacher leaders that see the vision, understand where the school is going, and see why we have certain processes in place. They have to be educated about those processes so there has to be professional development that happens.

Four of the five principals expounded on the importance of ensuring that the instructional leadership team and faculty believed and supported the school’s vision. Although not as experienced as the other principals, this same female principal also shared her belief about the role of teachers supporting the vision: “Their role is to believe in this vision and everything they do and they say; hopefully, they could spout this vision because they believe in it and they know it’s good for our kids. They truly believe in it.”

**Challenges.** Teachers taking ownership and being accountable for programs and activities can be problematic. According to the five principals interviewed, many teachers feel empowered to take risks and responsibilities for programs, but they don’t want to be associated with the programs if they are not successful.

During the course of the interviews, one veteran male principal elaborated. “The initial challenge was to get everybody on the same page.” His quote succinctly echoed the sentiment of four of the five principals when describing an obstacle to leading a school.

Principals are expected to perform specific duties when distributing leadership over time. A veteran principal shared a coaching experience story with inferences to
leading a school. The story emphasized that as a coach, you teach while also physically demonstrating the skills needed for players to perform. His analogy suggested that successful principals work alongside teachers to improve their practice. This provides players and teachers with opportunities to develop trusting relationships. As a result, all individuals are learning together, which develops teamwork and trust. This principal echoed the coaching philosophy, which was very similar to four of the principals interviewed. He explained how he leads staff:

Leading is to coach. Not only my APs [assistant principals] but to coach teachers in their instruction. Not their content but their instruction because something that I have, I think maybe not really unique, is that I’ve been a teacher. And going into classrooms all the time, you get to see what works, what’s effective, and what’s questionable, and what’s downright ineffective. So if I can coach them and I have their trust that I’m not trying to get them, I believe it allows them to grow and take risks. What I want them to do is take risks. So my role is primarily as a coach for the entire staff.

The instructional and operational programs are vital to a school’s overall success. The five principals continued to allude to how the two programs are integrated. Additionally, comprehensive high schools have many extracurricular activities and sports programs. As a result, long hours of supervision of these extra programs can diminish principals’ stamina. Therefore, time management is extremely valuable to overcoming these additional responsibilities. Finding key staff members to support these extra duties can be critical to meeting the instructional and operational demands of a high school. When asked about this dilemma, one principal discussed his approach.
I’m not quite sure what word to use, but ensuring the quality of education at the school in all facets is my main priority. So the classroom—obviously the instructional piece and helping to lead that with a team, but putting the team together and kind of working with them to set the mission for that team of instructional leaders, and then acting as a resource for them once they get started. Also, facilitating the other pieces of high school, so the extracurricular activities and making sure that the school is providing a full range of high school experiences for our students and a good quality high school experience. Kind of providing—identifying people, supporting them, giving them resources, and giving the freedom to make decisions. For the most part, most of the items are brought up by admin team or me, or whatever.

A veteran principal mirrored the comments of three of the five principals with his views on the complexities of delegating distributive leadership:

With the delegation of responsibility, the instructional leader is the most important role and then also the management part is a big part of it. If there is no accountability, then you’re going to have your school spin out of control. There is a very delicate balance between those two things—between the accountability, instructional leader, and keeping the morale up in the school. All those things you are constantly dealing with as well as whatever is going on at the district office. It’s all a balancing act. Every moment is a balance. It’s constantly changing.
The above principal’s comments illuminate the constant pressures principals face while leading comprehensive high schools.

**Organizational structure.** All five schools had similar traditional leadership team structures with varying degrees of flexibility within them. The leadership teams at the schools usually consisted of the principals, vice principals, counselors, department chairs, and teacher leaders. The teacher leaders were informal as well as formal leaders. In all five schools, the formal teacher leaders received financial stipends. The duties of the leadership teams included both working in the instructional and operational programs. One principal shared his role in the leadership structure. “My job, as I saw it, was I’m going to create the structure, put these people in place, and then let them lead and see how each one differentiated themselves.” This same principal shared the importance of scheduling dedicated planning to strategically discuss an action plan for the school. Therefore, all five principals expressed that previous summer retreats with the leadership teams have been the most beneficial to building leadership capacity.

Due to distributing leadership practices implemented by the majority of the principals, most of their leadership teams are quite large. For example, one principal conveyed that “between the delta action team leaders and my leadership team, that’s 20 of our 60 teachers.” He continued by saying it was difficult to be intimately involved in the depth of the work with a large leadership group. Three of the five school principals mentioned addressing this concern by holding more frequent meetings with smaller numbers of teachers. To accommodate the teachers’ long school hours, some meetings would occur during lunchtime as a potluck gathering. Therefore, teachers could meet and not extend their school day beyond their regular contracted hours. Their meetings would
be held in the staff professional development rooms on campus. These rooms contained instructional resources and materials to deepen the conversations around increasing student performance.

Research Question 2: Principal interviews. Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?

Empowerment and support for teachers. In examining the principal interviews, the distribution of leadership practices by the five principals appeared to contain some elements of increasing collective efficacy. Empowering and supporting teachers may be two elements to increase collective efficacy in high schools. Several of the interviewed principals alluded to the power of teacher inclusiveness when guiding a school. One principal with 3 years of experience in his position shared a possible outcome as a result of supporting teachers:

My philosophy is, if you have people in place that can do the job, then they will probably be here longer than the high school principal himself, then they’ll sustain and they’ll have the energy to do that as long as you continue to provide them the resources they need to do their job.

The above statement maintains the importance of having a collaborative process in place necessary to increase collective efficacy. Additionally, it provides the principal’s perspective that, as a group, teachers may be able to sustain programs long after the principal leaves the school. The majority of the principals interviewed also expressed their appreciation for having teachers share the responsibility of overseeing school programs. Another principal expressed his viewpoint of empowering teachers:
And then those teachers have to be placed in those key positions so that you are moving your school forward. Your school will not move forward without teacher leadership. You cannot do it alone. And allowing teachers to be creative, having some standardization but allowing your teachers to be creative in what they’re doing. If you do too much lock step, it’s not going to go anywhere. You have to let your teachers be creative.

Collective efficacy. All five principals claimed that teachers need designated time to further develop as a cohesive team. The principals discussed that it takes time for teachers to develop group norms, rules, and goals in order to be successful. One principal explained his process of collaboration and teamwork with teachers:

I run every single big decision through them, and that’s how I’ve been able to gain support here because they see that everything that I do as far as impacting instruction, impacting our budget, our categorical monies, it all goes through them and they’ve been supportive with my ideas, my vision. And, again, as a team, we worked together and came up with our own initiatives and I’ve been supportive of them 100% because they’re good initiatives. It’s all about instruction. It’s all about doing the right things, and they’ve been very, very supportive of it.

Research Question 3: Principal interviews. Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?

PLCs. The five high school principals interviewed for this study have developed similar instructional programs to create a school culture that promotes continuous instructional capacity. In four of the five schools that participated in this study, these
instructional structures and/or programs are called PLCs. Furthermore, these PLCs are primarily focused on increasing student academic achievement. One characteristic of all of the PLCs was that they constantly reviewed student data to drive instruction. One principal reflected on his school’s PLC:

This is actually a recognized PLC. It’s a model school for PLCs. We have been for about eight years now. Our core subject areas—math, English, social studies, and science—those are the four areas we have in what are called same subject teacher meetings. We get the teachers to identify the essential standards that had to be taught in each unit. It must be a team effort where we are looking at best practices in those classes where the best results were coming from. They came up with our pacing guide and they came up with a common assessment so they can assess that the students had learned that material.

All of the PLCs have different structures. Each school used them as a means to evaluate and assess curriculum and instructional practices. The implementation of the Common Core State Standards was the key topic in all of the schools. Each school found unique ways to create instructional minute calendars in order to support the PLC structures within the school day. The days and times of the PLC meetings varied per school. However, all of PLCs had a clear purpose on instruction and student interventions to improve academic achievement. One veteran principal described in detail how his PLC functions at his school:

The PLC is our curriculum team, so every core subject area, every subject area, has one. They’re most developed in the core subject areas. The initial process for the PLC was to develop a common calendar of instruction, and then, within that
common calendar, develop some formative assessments and some common assessments, and then take those formative assessments and gather data from them. So there are teams of teachers anywhere from the small team of two, like in econ, to a team of four or five in ninth-grade English. And so they work together. The challenge, the initial challenge, was that, even for some teams, it was hard to get everybody on the same page. Sometimes, it was difficult to find leaders because you have to have a PLC leader and sometimes the people didn’t want to step up to be the PLC leader, so you had to provide them some support.

**Shared decision making.** All five principals explained the importance of having collaboration and shared decision-making processes in the PLC structures. Four of the five principals indicated that several positive consequences of the shared decision-making processes were the stakeholders’ belief that the work being done at the school was transparent and inclusive. Consequently, they referenced collaboration and the shared decision-making processes as vital to developing teacher capacity and increasing staff morale. One principal shared her belief about the staff’s attitude and school morale, “So we’re getting them to change processes. Ours is, I mean, we’re fighters. It’s really easy to be a principal of this school in that respect. They’re going to fight for what’s right for kids.” She further touted about her teachers’ impact on student success:

They’re doing an amazing job on supporting kids to apply to college, 4-year universities, their college essays, all of that. Just last year, we had our biggest jump in 4-year university matriculation rate. It went from 32 to 39. I think we’ll get up close to 50% this year in kids going directly to a 4-year university.
All of the principals succinctly shared their perspectives on distributive leadership practices as a model. They elaborated on teacher efficacy, with examples of how teachers feel empowered to actively participate in PLCs for continuous school improvement strategies. Additional examples of collaboration and shared decision-making processes further provided a lens for viewing teacher collective efficacy.

**Principal interviews summary.** The overall findings from the principal interviews highlighted some key elements of distributive leadership, collective efficacy, and teacher efficacy. There were some notable themes and trends that emerged from the five separate principal interviews.

The first finding from the principals’ interviews was that their roles changed under the framework of a distributive leadership model. Instead of being the sole leader of the school, they became coaches to encourage and build teacher leadership capacity at their respective schools. All five principals emphasized the importance of empowering and supporting teachers to take leadership roles. Professional development was one means to facilitate continued teacher leadership development. As a result, they shared their perspectives that teacher efficacy and collective efficacy increased in their schools. A second element that became apparent throughout the interviews was that all principals believed that the future teacher leaders must understand and embrace the school’s vision. Thirdly, a consistent theme that emerged from all principals was having an organizational structure that supports continuous school improvement efforts to increase student academic achievement. All five principals shared that PLCs were the main components to support their organizational structures. Within these PLCs, collaboration and shared decision making were group norms. Additionally, in all of the
schools, there was a clear focus on using data to drive instructional practices in order to increase student achievement.

**Teacher Leader Focus Group Interviews**

**Research Question 1: Teacher leader focus groups.** What perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of a principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership?

1a. What lessons have been learned?

1b. What themes emerge?

According to the consensus of the five different focus group teacher leaders, there was an expectation that after CAPP ended, the administrative structure would default back to an authoritarian model. They indicated that they were very appreciative of their principals’ decision to continue with the distributive leadership model. One veteran male focus group teacher reflected back to a previous CAPP experience:

Having camaraderie with the teachers. Being able to address issues professionally with most of our colleagues . . . with CAPP as we brought in a group to do training on equity and institutionalized racism. What it really did was kind of help us build relationships within staff, and break down the way we judge the staff members initially, and just know them a little bit more as people.

His colleague added, “If the teachers could learn to be nonjudgmental of one another, then perhaps they could also become more accepting of the different cultures and values of our school’s diverse student population.” The above teachers’ comments suggest that a necessary ingredient to building teacher leadership is encouraging positive relationships
throughout the school. Regardless of the teacher groups, building positive relationships is an expectation of successful leadership teams. Another female teacher leader offered:

I think that relationship building has come across in all the work we’ve done. The staff DAT [data] team has actually done the fun Fridays, which has really changed the staff morale and campus atmosphere. One of our student achievement DAT teams, for instance, was doing these teacher rings that gave teachers strategies for different things they can use in their classroom to build relationships. It was just like going over some ice breakers.

**Relationships.** Involvement in relationship-building activities allows teachers to reflect on their own personal biases. As a result, collaboration and understanding of another person’s point of view could be instrumental in developing respectful group dynamics. This socialization component along with a focus on continuous school improvement may lead to positive student outcomes.

All focus group teacher leaders commented that collaboration needs to be encouraged and facilitated by the principal. The teachers further shared that collaboration builds teacher involvement and teamwork. One female teacher also indicated that the support teachers get from each other and the principal builds confidence. Principals’ support is warranted in other areas as well. One teacher leader stated:

But also with the professional learning opportunities, too, that we’ve had in the last year and a half that have really been supported by administration. You could find an area that interests you and you could attend a workshop, a conference, or do book studies, so really kind of creating a culture of our staff that it’s not just,
hey, you want to be a leader. Good luck with all of that. Here’s some ways and resources to be able to help support that and grow in capacity.

This focus group member’s comment succinctly describes the support provided by the principal for teachers to become leaders. Teachers are expected to take the initiative to develop as professionals. Contrary to this teacher’s experience, in another school’s focus group interview, a male teacher leader shared:

I think my experience with it was a little different just because I was asked to be a leader of a group that wasn’t necessarily something I wanted. It wasn’t something I didn’t want; it just wasn’t the thing I was super gung ho about. And so my group, when I was leading it, didn’t do so great and so I had to switch to a different role, and now that group is really flourishing and they’re doing wonderful.

Teachers changing roles is very common in the distributive leadership process in this research study. Some teachers were very cautious about having leadership roles without formal authority. An informal teacher leader expressed additional concerns related to distributing leadership roles:

I think it’s still very leadership based, so whoever decides to lead that group—has been the tough thing. It hasn’t been all rainbows and kittens. The leaders in the group carry a lot of the weight and then trying to distribute some of the projects that go on in those groups, does kind of say, okay, who’s going to take this on? Is it the leader again to carry that load of that DAT group? Who is going to research it? So kind of disseminating it to the rest of the group has been the challenge, but it’s still the leaders who decide and go to someone and say, “Hey, I need
something for you to do.” A lot of it still falls on the leader’s shoulders. While the leaders make decisions about designating projects to groups, the finished product continues to be the responsibility of the leader. However, most teachers believe in the distributive leadership process. For example, another focus group teacher summed up a consistent belief when he stated:

I think in the group distribution process—there are so many hands in the pot that you can ask so many different people that it’s not just the administrators. You’re not just counting on teachers for professional learning, counting on them for Common Core, pretty much everything. That it’s not just them. Now, it’s a whole group of teachers you can turn to because everyone is knee deep in it.

This comment resonated with all five focus groups, especially about relying on each other when they are entrenched in projects. Despite the support for teachers, three focus groups echoed similar thoughts about overextending themselves with responsibilities. One English department chair in one of the focus groups added:

Quite a few teachers on this campus get burned out because they’re givers and “Yes, of course” and “Yes, of course.” Then I get really protective of them; that’s it! Yes, of course the work needs to get done, and, yes, you’re passionate about it, and of course you’re not going to take a stipend because there’s no money. But there has to be a boundary that can be set and that’s where it’s really incumbent upon people who haven’t taken leadership roles to empower them to say, “Look, you can’t just have 20% of people doing 100% of the work.”

The above teacher’s comment expressed the views of many of the veteran teacher leaders. Therefore, this demonstrates the necessity of soliciting and empowering more
teachers to get involved in leadership roles. In this research study, the successful schools that used distributive leadership models found ways to increase teacher involvement. Four of the five teacher focus groups expressed that including staff input in the selection of school-wide goals is one way to gain teacher involvement. When asked how they became involved in their leadership roles, 15 of the 20 teachers indicated that their principals encouraged them to do so.

Teachers perceived that the initial teacher leaders at their schools were chosen by the past principals because of the similar ideologies they shared with the principals. One math teacher characterized this experience by sharing:

The first principal to get us involved with CAPP purposely selected teachers that could build rapport or try to build rapport within the departments. The teachers agreed with the principal’s vision of all students could learn, so the leadership group didn’t really have a lot of the negative personalities.

While all 20 teachers interviewed were able to acknowledge their beliefs of all students could learn, they also gave examples of conversations with other teachers who shared opposing views. These teachers indicated that they were confident in their ability to teach a diverse population of students.

**Building capacity.** Building leadership capacity within a school is essential to developing school leaders. For example, every vice principal at all of the participating schools were former teachers at the same school. The teacher leaders from all of the focus groups were also first regular teachers at their respective schools. This pipeline to leadership within a school has many advantages. One teacher leader explained that she gets solutions to problems faster because her administrators already have personal
experiences with understanding the underlying issues of the school’s environment. One teacher leader became a department chair after being encouraged by her former colleague in the same department who is currently her vice principal. She mentioned:

I never thought of myself as a leader, and he saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself, and I liked that he inspired me, and I like that certain people now are being inspired to take on more of a role because they bring in new energy. And I like that that’s happening now through the instructional leadership team because it’s a new group of people. And so I think that when we move outside of the department chairs and we get other people to take on these roles, that’s really, really empowering.

Vision. One theme that consistently emerged from all of the focus group interviews is having a clearly articulated vision for the school. The teachers shared that despite the administrator allowing collaboration and flexibility, there is still a need for a clearly delineated focus for the school. One male science department chair explained his views of a leader with a vision:

The principal has to set the tone, communicate the vision, and make teachers accountable and follow through. And I think it’s up to the teachers to get on board with that, and teacher leadership helps support that, support the vision.

Another member from the same focus group shared about a leader’s vision:

A vision. Have a vision, a very clearly communicated vision that inspires your teachers. I think that it’s hard to have a passive leader and, for me, to get excited about—we work in a really hard school and I think you have to have sort of an impassioned leader who is very clear about where he or she wants to go and how
we’re possibly going to get there. I think that’s really important. And to recognize that with the way that you lead you can inspire others to follow you, and people that you may not—look for leadership and look for supporters in places that you don’t normally. I think that’s really important as a good leader. Other focus group teacher leaders shared the same sentiments as this teacher of what constitutes effective leadership within a school.

**Trust.** Teachers in the focus groups repeatedly commented that their leadership teams must continue to develop trust. An informal leader in one of the focus groups explained:

Our administration really trusts the teachers and trusts the teacher leadership to move forward. If you want to do something as a teacher or as a teacher group, that opportunity is there. And if you want to take charge of it, go ahead. It’s embraced.

Another member from the same focus group conveyed, “There are many highly educated staff members on campus. Leaders who listen and have open minds can truly empower teachers by allowing them to pursue their collective ideas.” It is important to point out that four of the five focus groups commented that support from the school’s leadership promotes risk taking by teachers to find creative student interventions. One male math teacher explained:

Success, I think we have had a lot of support systems that have been put in place. There have been a lot of targeted support systems with math, with writing, with afterschool interventions. There are targeted interventions that are not perfect, but they’re there and they’re more than we’ve ever had before. I think that’s been a
success—we’re telling teachers we’ve got to be accountable for our kids’ learning, and there has been—as best as they have been able to. It’s not perfect, but the administration has kind of put their money where their mouth is.

**Research Question 2: Teacher leader focus groups.** Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?

2a. Have schools that have made distributive leadership a focus of their reform initiative increased collective efficacy?

**Empowerment.** All of the teachers interviewed in the five focus groups shared examples of teacher empowerment facilitated by their school’s administration team. The teachers provided stories of opportunities presented to them by the principals to make key decisions within their departments and PLCs. For example, one female special education teacher shared her experience:

I think, for our department—I’m speaking for two departments because I’m with math and SPED [special education]. In SPED, we’re able to talk a lot about issues that are within our department and how we can better help the students, and what strategies. What can we do, what interventions, how can we support, how can we bring those kids in? That’s what we do in SPED. Now, in math, we do the same thing. A lot of our focus is how you are going to deliver the new instruction because it’s new for us. The new curriculum and everything with the Common Core is new to us, so we’re having to work together as a team to try to figure out what strategies we could use, what are we going to do for those kids that don’t get it, and then we talk about interventions and testing, and all of that.
So during our PLC meetings, that’s what we do a lot of. We look at a lot of the data.

Teacher empowerment and collaborative decision making emerged in all five focus groups as themes in the distributive leadership model. Teacher efficacy surfaced from the interview conversations when the teachers were asked about their ability to make a positive difference at their schools. Many teacher leaders expressed pride when sharing the positive outcomes of some of their decisions. A male who is considered a teacher-in-charge in the same focus group shared his perspective of the decision-making process:

I think one of the things that I really like is teacher empowerment. There’s a math person that also is in that capacity. I was in that capacity as English, but I’m still a teacher even though I’m teacher-in-charge, so some of those come to me—some decisions that can be made almost without any administrative input, at least in terms of CAPP funding.

A counterpart in another school echoed a different perspective of the decision-making process but with the same outcome of teachers feeling empowered:

I think people feel empowered to bring their concerns to the administration, and the administration is open—if teachers are willing to offer solutions, he is willing to look at that when you can demonstrate that it’s going to be something good for the kids.

All five of the teacher leader focus groups suggested other ways teachers feel empowered at their schools. An example was site teachers are included in the hiring process for new teachers at the school. This committee-based interview panel consists of the leadership team along with formal and informal teacher leaders. Teachers appreciated being on an
interview committee that could hire staff who would support their school-wide efforts to increase student academic performance.

Each of the five different focus groups leaders recognized and valued the input the informal leaders provided in the decision-making processes. The teacher leaders shared the important roles the informal leaders played in communicating decisions to all stakeholders in the school. One informal teacher leader shared her experience:

I jumped into the PLC leadership because I wanted to see what I could do to help the rest of my colleagues. Maybe they’re not getting the information from the PLC leader. I wanted to see what was going on. I wanted to do it for my own personal reasons and then bring it back to share with my colleagues.

**Professional development.** Professional development activities are vehicles to drive continuous school improvement. Teachers are expected to learn new knowledge for the instructional shifts due to the new Common Core State Standards. Professional development provides opportunities not only for teachers to increase their knowledge, but also to demonstrate their ability to become instructional leaders. Several of the teacher leader focus groups intimated how the school benefits from teachers attending professional development training. One teacher characterized his experience:

The professional learning opportunities that we were talking about last year, the teachers had to come back and present and then in a minimum day we synthesized all that information because they had to chart about what they heard. We synthesized the information and then the whole staff got to try it, if you will, and pick what two things that you want to focus on for school and what are things you may have missed that you want to include.
**PLCs.** The PLCs are school-wide venues to develop teacher leadership and build instructional capacity. Teachers’ perceptions of the leadership structure in the PLCs varied from school to school. One focus group teacher announced:

We have PLCs, and each PLC has a teacher leader. So, for example, in the science department, we have science and agriculture work together, and we function as separate PLCs and each one has a different teacher leader, and none of those leaders are department chairs, so they have their own rule.

This teacher’s comment highlights the challenges associated with leadership role variability within PLCs at the same school. Another veteran female teacher in the same focus group conveyed:

I would say that the original structure of PLCs was one teacher leader and one administrator leading each one so there were two leaders per PLC team originally. I think we’re still pretty close to that. I think that has continued because this is an organic thing. I think that might have changed slightly here and there, but, for the most part, each team is led by a teacher and somebody who is on the administrative team. And so what that means is you’re collaborating and communicating directly with the different leadership teams.

This female teacher further explained:

I’ve never felt, at least in the last couple of years, that this was a top-down school. I always felt that the departments have some autonomy. That isn’t to say that they’re not accountable. There’s the leadership team—we have department people in there. They go back to their departments, they talk to the department heads, and then they talk to the heads of PLCs. When I was in the classroom, I
always felt that we had a lot of power as teachers. In terms of the CAPP grant, the teachers are driving the CAPP grant. The administration really has nothing to do with the CAPP grant at all. The teachers generate the funding requests; the teachers obviously do the work. They implement it. It’s teacher driven, and we control the money. The administration can’t dictate how that money is spent. They can suggest, but . . .

The teacher leader comments above suggested evidence of a high level of teacher efficacy. The female teacher shared the perspective of teachers feeling empowered at this school. Additionally, the CAPP experience provided the opportunities for teachers to collaborate and communicate amongst other leadership teams. As a result, collaboration among the leadership groups has created an educational environment that appears to have higher levels of collective efficacy.

**Research Question 3: Teacher leader focus groups.** *Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?*

3a. *What evidence exists in the school culture that is likely to promote a dynamic process to continually build instructional capacity and increase academic achievement?*

3b. *What themes emerge regarding the relationship between increasing teacher and collective efficacy and building capacity for sustaining a culture that supports ongoing school improvement?*

**Organizational structure.** All of the teacher leader focus groups in this study articulated the significance of having an organizational structure that supports PLCs. Teachers are encouraged to voluntarily participate in professional development activities
to garner leadership skills and learn new instructional strategies. One male science teacher offered his experience:

We have been able to choose what PLC we are able to attend. We’ve been able to choose a lot of things we’re doing and they’re not being forced on us and I think it provides an extra motivational piece because of that autonomy that you wouldn’t get if we went to all of the same workshops.

His counterpart from another school explained:

It’s about the joy of learning. Like we got to go enjoy a professional learning opportunity and now I’m happier about my experience because that’s what I wanted to do and now I do want to infuse it into my lessons. And I became a better teacher because I was happy about what I was doing. It’s connecting that happiness of why we do this job with learning.

Professional development. From the teachers’ perspectives, having the opportunity to choose their professional development needs demonstrated to them that their principals displayed confidence in their decision-making processes. In this study, the principals’ support encouraged teachers to reflect on their own instructional practices. As a result, teachers used this autonomy to seek ways to better provide differentiated instruction for students. Despite this freedom to choose professional development support, there are other times when principals solicited and strongly encouraged teachers to attend specific trainings. For example, one teacher responded, “Well, our principal sends us to many trainings. Whenever there is something coming up, we go to it if he thinks it’s of value to us or the school. Paid or unpaid, we go.” As a result, teachers
believe that they are integral parts of a school system that values creativity and personal growth. Another teacher leader discussed his training experience:

Well, yes, our training, it’s been ongoing. This is my first year of being in leadership so I’m just kind of learning as I go. This is a new position so this is something that the district came up with because they did away with centralized district PD [professional development] for the most part, and so this was kind of their solution to still have professional development. And so these positions are kind of being designed as we go along, and revised as well.

The most prevalent structure to accommodate school-wide interventions at the schools is in the PLCs. Teachers are able to evaluate data and seek interventions for school-wide improvement. According to the teacher leaders in all five focus groups, one major goal of PLCs is to search for ways and opportunities to improve student outcomes. One female teacher leader succinctly provided an example of the kinds of activities taking place in grade-level PLCs:

When we would be in those grade-level groups, we were able to discuss specific students because we all shared them. So the students’ schedules were set up so that they had a lot of the same teachers and then we’d get to meet. And so as far as student achievement is concerned, I think we were able to discuss particular students, maybe if it’s behavior or it’s just academic progress in the class and maybe develop assignments that could benefit them to be more involved and do better in class or just having that open conversation with another teacher about the same student that you share.

One of her counterparts at another site shared her perspective of PLC work:
Well, certainly the PLCs are designed to do that. The basic function of the PLC is to look at common assessments and discuss those in the PLC group, and then use those to help inform instruction; so that’s directly related to student achievement. Also, as part of the current CAPP grant, and the implementation of Common Core, we’re hoping it will ultimately result in positive student achievement on the SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium] and things such as that.

Four small learning communities and three academies developed in two of the five schools. They were the result of creative collaborative discussions in the PLC meetings. School stakeholders investigated the student data and community needs at their neighborhood schools. A medical academy; a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academy; and a business academy were created from reviewing the school data, student data, and teacher strengths. One teacher leader boasted about the small learning community and academies:

Another group that deserves mention, potentially, is our small learning community based here, our academy is based in most parts, and we’ve got three partnership academies as well as some other community of learners. I think they focus on achievement for their cadre of students and their cohort, both accumulating data, looking at anecdotal as well as achievement data, and tracking that, and providing those supports within those programs. I think that’s made a difference on achievement and taking students that are identified at risk and raising the bar for them. I think that that’s been real positive.

He further stated:

All the leaders in the academy are on the leadership team. All the department
chairs are on the leadership team. All of the intervention coordinators are on the leadership team. There are representatives from every group—one union person, one clerical staff person who is classified. We’ve had a teacher rep and one general education teacher.

Other topics of discussion during the PLCs have been centered on the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) visitations. All teachers in the school are members of one of five WASC focus groups. Collaboration and consensus building are expectations for the self-study evaluation process. When asked how leadership intersects with WASC requirements, a focus group teacher leader added:

I think the first thing that comes to mind is that effective leadership from the administration is them being, like we mentioned, accessible. Also, the administration has been open about their goals for the school. A lot of the goals that we have in our school have been a collaborative process. Just a year ago, we were going through our WASC accreditation and a big part of the report and the formation of the WASC report was teacher based along with the administration. So effective leadership on both ends is not just collaboration amongst teachers, but with administrators as well.

A veteran female English department chair continued with the collaboration topic and boasted:

There is such a sense of collaboration in this school that I think has gotten stronger over the years. Our school has always been a very strong school in the sense of people always being willing to share. And it just feels like in the last 5 years or so there’s been greater efforts to allow teachers to collaborate even when
it comes to department meetings. They’ve started giving the teachers more say in what the meetings will look like and then meeting on our own time. I think people are just generally more open having flexibility.

*Shared decision making.* Every school in the study relied upon a decision-making process that included the collective input from teachers in all programs. Teachers constantly intimated no matter what group they belonged to, their voices were heard. For example, one seasoned teacher leader commented:

> All of our school-wide committees, including our steering, our instructional leadership, our technology, and our school environment are open enrollment, and those staff members attend with a department chairperson or staff members in general, and it works on a consensus basis in which everybody is an equal participant and has an equal voice, and is also encouraged to attend and encouraged to keep up to date with the decisions being made.

A member of the same focus group added:

> And there’s a great deal of professional consideration when you sit down within meetings with other departments. Also working together and coming to a consensus on issues and seeing all sides and how it affects every program, every student, every person on this campus. I think that speaks to building teacher leadership.

Instructional rounds, a process to address problems of practice, was evident at three of the five schools. The other two schools had peer observations within their core departments. All of the schools involved in the study demonstrated various models of the learning cycles for the intervention plan for continuous school improvement. They were not
satisfied with the academic student gains of their respective schools. One teacher leader shared her participation in the instructional rounds process:

We have a core team in the instructional rounds group. It’s open to having other teachers observe, to come in and observe the process. We go in and we look. We have a problem of practice, and we go in and take data surrounding that problem of practice. The problem has evolved over the years and we’ll go in as a team of three into the beginning half of the teacher’s class, and then another group will come in and see the second half. Then we’ll discuss what happened throughout the entire period and see what strategies the teacher used to sort of tackle the problem of practice and what the kids were doing. Then we talk about it and figure out what kind of professional development may need to be offered to the site.

Another female teacher leader from a different school provided her perspective of the impact of instructional rounds:

Instructional rounds kind of drives the professional learning. Well, it drives professional learning, but also kind of the culture of how we teach and what we expect of our kids. Our first problem of practice was our kids were answering questions with yes, noes, or grunts, whatever, and now we’re getting really good, complete sentences, and the higher levels of answering questions. They’re all not complete sentences, but the levels of answering are improving because we are learning from instructional rounds. The professional learning that comes from that is teaching us how to become better teachers.
Building teacher capacity. Building teacher capacity is prevalent at all of the five schools included in this study. A culture of inclusiveness permeates throughout the campuses. Teachers report a higher level of trust and ownership due to this culture change. Leadership training occurs at the district level and the teachers get to implement those strategies at their schools. One teacher expressed, “We have professional development meetings with people from the district about three times a school year.” As a result of the district training, teachers and staff members feel more confident to facilitate professional development in their PLCs and department meetings. When asked if teacher involvement at her school is increasing, one informal teacher leader shared:

It is. And more than two thirds of our staff got involved in the professional learning opportunities and the people who didn’t travel to trainings—we had two book studies that had 25 participants in it. So we really had almost 100% of our staff participate in something about what they were interested in professionally learning. This is unheard of for our school.

One new teacher leader shared his perspective on district training, “The district is providing support at the school level instead of centrally located district training. This helps new teachers because we are able to see the strategies in action on school campus with real students.”

All five teacher leader focus groups from each school shared the importance of receiving insightful feedback from their peers and the administrators. This necessary component in the instructional improvement cycle provided the school with a tool to enhance teacher practice. Teachers learned from sharing their skills and classroom experiences. Opportunities to provide information and feedback about instruction have
been implemented differently at each school. For example, one teacher explained how they share instructional feedback:

We have monthly meetings to check in with each other to see how our DAT teams are going and what we’ve been doing. It’s like a little summary session, like this is what our team is working on, this is where we hope to go during preservice this year or in June, I guess. We calendared out which teams needed to have time with the staff and present information to continue their work. But it’s those monthly meetings where we get what we need.

Another social science teacher leader at a different school discussed their daytime meetings:

We have lunchtime meetings even though it’s limited with time. I know the math department does lunchtime meetings. In social studies, we do afterschool meetings on Thursdays, again, because of the hectic nature of the school day. A lot of our common planning is done when students are not around so we have quiet and peace of mind and we can really dive into it. And then the focus is obviously on how to support the students in terms of if the ninth grade teachers are talking, the English teachers are going to talk to the math teachers if they are having difficulties with a particular student or noticing a change in another student, they are able to talk in a meaningful way.

Teacher leader focus groups summary. The teacher leader focus groups findings revealed many positive experiences related to distributive leadership, collective efficacy, and teacher efficacy. Collaboration and relationship building emerged numerous times throughout the interviews. There were many references to the teacher leaders’ principals
providing them with support to develop as individuals and as leaders. As a result, building leadership capacity was a consistent theme with all five of the focus groups. There was evidence in the focus groups of teacher leaders’ belief that school leaders should openly share their vision and goals with the staff. Trust emerged across all focus groups as a key topic during the discussions as a valuable element in the distributive leadership model. All five focus groups commented on teacher empowerment and collaborative decision-making processes as vital to developing effective PLCs. The majority of the teacher leaders provided positive examples as evidence to support increased teacher and collective efficacy as a result of participating in their PLCs. Professional development opportunities and the autonomy to choose their trainings emerged as next steps in the school-wide professional plan as a result of the teacher leaders’ interviews.

**Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings, Including Emerging Themes**

Quantitative findings of note included the teachers’ perceptions that they could positively influence student outcomes in areas that they had a direct impact. For example, they felt that they could motivate the unmotivated students and that they possessed the appropriate instructional tools to provide students with meaningful learning. The teachers did not believe they could positively influence student outcomes outside of the school’s physical environment. Home life and drug and alcohol abuse in the community are examples of domains teachers felt they lacked the abilities to positively support students.

Qualitative findings from the principal interviews included eight themes. The themes were principal roles, a vision, challenges, organizational structures,
empowerment, collective efficacy, PLCs, and shared decision making. The principals emphasized the importance of using collaboration and shared decision-making processes to create school cultures of continuous school improvement using data to drive instruction. Qualitative findings from the teacher leader interviews consisted of nine themes. The themes included relations, building capacity, a vision, trust, empowerment, professional development, PLCs, organizational structure, and shared decision making.

The teacher leaders consistently reiterated, in over 10 hours of interviews, the value of trust in developing school-wide relationships that support learning for all students. Each of the quantitative and qualitative data sources provided findings to addressing the project’s three research questions and five subquestions. The findings have been presented in this chapter. However, analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data as a whole provides more comprehensive means of addressing the research questions.

In Chapter 5, the study findings will be presented and discussed using evidence from all of the quantitative and qualitative data sources. The richness of this mixed-methods study is to generate some quantitative evidence further supported by qualitative evidence to deepen understanding of the findings.
CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings, implications, and future directions of the present study. This chapter begins with a summary of the study, including an overview of the problem, the study purpose and research questions, a review of the methodology, and a summary of findings. Following the summary, results are then reviewed in the context of the research questions and in the context of published literature. Based on the study results, the discussion progresses to a reassessment and refinement of the distributed leadership conceptual model proposed in Chapter 2. The chapter conclusion includes implications, limitations, areas for future research, and a final summary.

Summary of Study

Overview of Problem

School principals have the responsibility to lead and organize school reform initiatives designed to build a school’s capacity to facilitate school improvement efforts. The literature supports the value of school principals redistributing leadership among teachers and other stakeholders as a strategic means for implementing the principals’ reform initiatives.

While the school principal may be ultimately responsible for the success of a school, the review of literature on operationalizing reform responsibility suggests a need for teachers to assume leadership responsibilities as well. Specifically, the literature supports the need for school principals to build the capacity of their schools by distributing their leadership to teachers (Camburn et al., 2003; Cross, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2004). CAPP developed the HSLI, a 5-year program designed to develop and support
California high school principals in developing the leadership capacity of schools towards fostering student learning. As one of the primary selected practices, CAPP focused on distributed leadership in each participating school. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) concluded schools with a distributive leadership framework provide more meaningful and effective professional development than non-distributed-leadership schools.

According to the theory of Bandura (1977), achievement requires efficacy. That is, having the belief that achievement is possible is necessary for that achievement to occur. In the present study, the researcher argued for the need to examine possible relationships between building teacher and collective efficacy in a school and the school’s efforts to distribute leadership. It was hypothesized that such a relationship could foster a school’s achievement. Prior to the present study, while CAPP schools focused on distributed leadership, there had not been attention directed to concurrent increased efficacy. This study was designed to assess how effective CAPP schools have been in promoting distributed leadership as well as in building leadership capacity, collective efficacy, and teacher efficacy. While these relationships may improve understanding and planning reform initiatives, there is a paucity of research examining relationships between these elements. The present study was designed to begin to fill this important gap in the published literature.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The study was designed to assess distributed leadership at five large urban high schools in California that participated in CAPP, which developed the HSLI. Principal and teacher leader focus group interviews were used to assess distributed leadership.
Surveys were used to measure collective efficacy and teacher efficacy from the perspectives of teachers. The distributed leadership model in these five high schools was assessed in the context of the questions of the study:

1. What perceptions exist among high school leadership teams and faculty as a result of a principal’s purposeful attempt over an extended period of time to distribute leadership?

2. Can high schools expect to see an increase in collective efficacy as a result of purposefully distributing leadership over an extended period of time?

3. Is there evidence of a correlation between distributing leadership and increasing collective efficacy with a school’s function as a learning community capable of continually advancing its practice?

Review of Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design, which included both quantitative survey data and qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, all gathered from five urban CAPP high schools. Quantitative survey data came from 199 teachers, while qualitative data included five focus groups and interviews with 20 teacher leaders and the principals of the five schools. Following the presentation of the quantitative and qualitative results, all data were then triangulated using the lens of the research questions. Common themes were identified, indicating the interconnections of distributed leadership concepts across data sources acquired from the five participating schools.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the present study are discussed below in the context of the research questions and the published literature. Common themes from surveys and
interviews regarding collective efficacy and teacher efficacy included empowerment, organizational structures, clearly articulated vision, shared decision making, and PLCs. This section is followed by a broader discussion of the elements of distributed leadership that emerged from the interview and focus group data, triangulated with quantitative findings.

**Review of Findings Related to the Literature**

The major findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data related to collective efficacy and teacher efficacy are discussed below in the context of theory and existing literature on distributive leadership. A strong significant relationship was found to exist between teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. Based on the survey instruments used, the five schools, as a group, did not have a better than average overall level of collective efficacy. Certain items showed significantly strong levels of efficacy, which may indicate either that efficacy is developing in specific areas of the schools or that certain areas of efficacy emerge before others. It may be that these areas of efficacy were strong in the schools prior to the distributive leadership initiative, but, as will be discussed further, the qualitative results from this study go beyond that assumption. Thus, strong and weak areas of efficacy, as indicated by the survey results, may indicate that areas of efficacy are developing in these schools faster or prior to other areas. It may also indicate that the distributive leadership reform agenda being pursued by the schools is impacting some aspects of the schools’ overall efficacy and neglecting others. Such findings, as discussed in this chapter, may have implications for leaders to build and adjust their distributive leadership reform agenda. Finally, as discussed as a limitation of this study, the fact that the schools were treated as a homogeneous group might have
particular school(s) masking more significant overall efficacy scores of others. This could indicate that some schools’ distributive leadership reform agendas are being implemented more effectively than others. Understanding those differences would also be instructive for leaders and researchers but are beyond the scope of the present study.

**Collective Efficacy**

Collective efficacy is an important component of distributed leadership (Goddard et al., 2000, 2004; Harris, 2004; Ross & Gray, 2006). While self-efficacy is the belief that one can perform at a certain level (Bandura, 1977), collective efficacy is the belief among individuals that an organization can be successful (Goddard et al., 2000, 2004). In the context of the present study, collective efficacy is the belief among teachers that they can effectively teach students (Goddard et al., 2000, 2004; Goddard & Skrla, 2006; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Distributed leadership from school principals can increase the collective efficacy of teachers (Ross & Gray, 2006). Published evidence suggests that the distributed leadership of principals and the collective efficacy of teachers can have a positive impact on student achievement (Daly, 2009; Goddard et al., 2000).

In the present study, collective efficacy results were mixed. The overall quantitative collective efficacy scores were at the 40th percentile compared to the norms of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Thus, overall, the collective efficacy assessed across the five schools was underwhelming. However, domains were identified in which differentiated scores provided further insights. For example, participants scored above average in the belief that every child can learn. These teachers generally agreed that they can motivate students and get through to difficult students. Further, participating teachers
generally disagreed with items regarding lacking the skill needed for producing meaningful student learning and giving up on students who do not want to learn. In contrast, collective efficacy in the areas of home life and community opportunities were low in the present study. It may be that these differentiated results reflect distributive leadership reform agenda pursued by the schools. The question these results prompt is whether the reform agenda has focused on classroom practices at the expense of school-wide and community activities or that principals have limited teacher involvement and leadership to classroom rather than school-wide and community-related initiatives. This focus may have been both purposeful and appropriate as the reform initiatives began, and that focus may or may not remain so as the reforms evolve. However, the differentiated results of areas of efficacy measured could better inform strategic decisions on how to utilize community and school resources to support student achievement.

The findings of strong areas of efficacy found in the teachers’ beliefs that every child can learn, in their confidence that they could motivate their students, and in their ability to reach difficult students are positive and significant. These three areas are necessary conditions to build school achievement. These findings support the assumption that there is a positive relationship between the distributive leadership reform agendas of the schools and these three important areas. Findings that collective efficacy was, at best, average in areas of home life and community opportunities must be further considered by principals as they develop and adjust their distributive leadership reform initiatives. While these areas do not seem as basic to improving student achievement as the classroom beliefs and practices, it may be that expanding efficacy into these non-classroom domains will be necessary to maximize reforms (Goddard et al., 2000, 2004).
The majority of participating teachers fostered the belief that every child can learn. This is important because, according to Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy, the perception that one can accomplish a task is necessary for that individual to accomplish that task. That is, tasks can only be achieved if actors have a self-belief that they can be successful in task achievement. The majority of the teachers indicated that they are confident they can motivate their students. This is important because student motivation is correlated with student academic performance (Christiana, 2009). Most teachers in the present study expressed that they are able to get through to the most difficult students. Teachers largely disagreed with the statement, “Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.” This finding was evident in the quantitative survey data and in the focus group interview data. Teachers felt confident in their management practices to deal with negative student behaviors through creative and innovative ways to meet the differentiated needs of all students. The principals and teacher leaders alike expressed a laser-like focus on strategic lessons, which they believed minimized classroom disruptions. These data are encouraging when considering the many challenges confronting teachers to meet the different academic needs of diverse student populations in large comprehensive urban schools. The teachers are expected to provide individualized instruction to general education, special education, and second language students all in the same learning environment. This can be a daunting task given the limited resources and teacher training to accomplish this goal. Getting through to the most difficult students benefits the entire class because disruptive behavior can reduce the academic performance of entire classrooms of students (Ford, 2013).
Collective efficacy scores were low in the area of student home life. Most teachers disagreed with the statement, “Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.” Interview and focus group data from teacher leaders and school principals indicated that, while the schools provide computer access during school hours in classrooms and in school computer labs, a lack of computers in the homes may be one reason students are lacking school success. That is, the lack of home computer access may be one reason that the teachers in the present study believed that the home life of students does not provide “so many advantages that students are bound to learn.”

Collective efficacy scores were also low in the area of community opportunities. Most teachers disagreed with the statement, “Opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.” The reasons for this result are unclear. The community has a stake in the success of every student because today’s students will someday become adult community members. The present study was not designed to identify how teachers concluded that community opportunities failed to ensure that every student will learn.

**Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher efficacy benefits students because teachers who are high in self-efficacy are more likely to present creative instructional practices (Guskey, 1988). As previously mentioned, there was a statistically significant relationship ($r = .34, p < .00001$) between collective efficacy and teacher efficacy. This is not surprising given the natural relationship between the two concepts. Thus, overall, there were supportive and not conflicting findings. However, differences in the structure of the two instruments provided additional insights into those findings.
The teacher efficacy survey results differentiated perceptions of efficacy between classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies. Specifically, the highest scores were obtained for classroom management (75th percentile), the lowest scores were obtained for student engagement (25th percentile), and average scores were obtained for instructional strategies (46th percentile). Strength in the classroom management domain is consistent with the collective efficacy findings. Low results in student engagement seem inconsistent with the collective efficacy results. Average scores for instructional strategies were surprising given the presumed focus of CAPP schools and suggest a need to further review, revise, and refine the schools’ distributive leadership reform initiatives.

Teachers perceived themselves as providing the necessary instructional strategies to support student learning. The instructional strategies survey scores were at the 46th percentile according to the norms of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). On average, teachers indicated efficacy regarding crafting good questions, providing alternative examples, implementing alternative strategies, and using multiple assessment strategies. For example, when teachers responded to the question, “How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?” the most common response was *quite a bit* (99 of 199; 50%), followed by *a great deal* (48 of 199; 24%) and *some influence* (43 of 199; 23%). When teachers were asked, “How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?” the most common response was *quite a bit* (109 of 199; 55%), followed by *some influence* (54 of 199; 27%).

Survey data and focus group results indicated that teachers were confident in their ability to control student behavior in their classrooms. For the survey item “How much
can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?” most teachers indicated a great deal (27%) or quite a bit (46%), while zero teachers responded with nothing or very little to this item. The average overall score for this question was the highest among classroom management domain items. Similarly high scores were obtained for the items “How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?” and “How much can you get children to follow classroom rules?”

Student engagement (25th percentile) received the lowest scores of the Teacher Efficacy Scale. Student engagement is important because if students are less engaged, they may become less motivated, resulting in limited learning. This result was surprising given that the teachers were at schools participating in the HSLI. This was also surprising in light of the positive collective efficacy survey scores regarding having the skills to motivate students and to produce meaningful student learning. Further, on the teacher efficacy survey, teachers indicated that they can have quite a bit of impact in getting students to follow classroom rules and in believing that they can do well in school. Additionally, for the item “How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?” the scores indicated that teachers can have between some and quite a bit of influence. For these reasons, the low overall scores in student engagement were puzzling.

However, careful inspection of survey results revealed that scores were low for one student engagement item: “How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?” Therefore, it can be concluded that participating teachers have adequate student engagement in the areas that are related to the classroom (getting
students to follow classroom rules, motivating low-interest students, and helping students value learning) but low student engagement outside of the classroom (assisting families).

**Distributed Leadership Themes**

Survey, focus group, and interview data revealed major distributed leadership themes towards creating a culture of professional learning and innovation. These emergent themes included a clearly articulated vision, organizational structures, capacity building via PLCs, avoiding burnout, empowerment, collaboration and shared decision making, trust and communication, and accountability.

**Clearly Articulated Vision**

Leithwood et al. (2006) expressed that one component of successful distributive leadership practice in schools was having an identified shared vision and that the administrative team must publicly embody the school’s vision by sharing it verbally and through their actions (Lindsay, 2004). The present study found that all schools in this study had a clearly articulated vision. The researcher discovered that a clearly articulated vision and mission statement was evident across all schools in the study. Although it is not unusual for schools to have a vision statement, it is surprising to witness that many stakeholders were able to repeat and embrace it. The principals and teacher leaders expressed their individual beliefs that a shared articulated vision is paramount to the success of any educational institution. The principals and teacher leaders also indicated that the vision was not only visible throughout the schools, but the staff members appreciated how the teachers and community members embraced it. Additionally, the principals used the distributive model of leadership to collectively establish school-wide goals. Although each school organized its goals around student needs, one consistent
goal among all schools was to establish a culture of continuous learning. Central to the vision was the belief that every child can learn. Teachers also expressed their appreciation that the principal provided the necessary resources and supports to make the vision a reality.

The principals in this study played a pivotal role in providing a school culture that embraced a can-do philosophy to meet the needs of all students. A large majority of the teachers shared the same sentiment and indicated it was the principals’ influence and role modeling that created this positive school culture. The teachers in this study explained the importance of finding creative and innovative ways to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of their diverse student populations. Professional development activities that included cultural proficiency lessons represent an important step towards reaching this goal. This has implications that school leadership should have a clearly articulated vision which embraces and encourages the academic achievement of every student. Without this belief, it would be difficult for principals and teachers to provide quality instructional programs that include rigor and critical thinking skills.

Organizational Structures

The present study demonstrated the significance of having an organizational structure that supports continuous school improvement. All five schools had clearly delineated organizational structures in place. Although the structures were different, there were many similarities. Principals created school cultures that encouraged teachers to seek professional development activities that were meaningful for personal growth. Teachers were provided with numerous opportunities to facilitate and lead their core departments. Organizational structures, capacity building, PLCs, empowerment, and
shared decision making through collaboration can support school improvement and reduce staff burnout.

**Building capacity and PLCs.** Building leadership capacity within a school is essential to developing school leaders. Spillane (2006) concluded that it is not just the distribution of responsibilities, but the productive interactions between leaders and followers that are most important. Teachers seek ways to improve their learning and capacity. It is critical that teachers, as a group, share their experiences. The PLCs provide the structures for the teachers to collaboratively share ideas. Given that the participating schools each had 5 years of participation in CAPP, it was not surprising that all five schools had PLCs. All five principals shared their beliefs that PLCs within a distributive leadership model build teacher leadership capacity. A focus on continuous school improvement was evident in all PLCs. One principal shared his role in building teacher capacity.

> My job, as I saw it, was I’m going to create the structure, put these people in place, and then let them lead and see how each PLC differentiates itself. So, let’s first put in place a structure and then let’s let the teams of teachers and the support personnel in those structures develop their own identity.

Some PLCs consisted of vertical teams of teachers lead by teacher leaders, whereas others consisted of school-wide focus groups lead by leadership team members. Using data to drive instruction was common among participating schools towards allocating professional learning time. All participating schools evaluated and assessed student data, looking for clues to improve instruction. The only differences were the various facilitators involved in the meetings.
All principals in the study shared that professional development training was the most important vehicle to support building leadership capacity. The teacher leaders volunteered to seek professional development trainings to increase their capacity to develop leadership skills. The qualitative teacher leader interview data illustrated a willingness of the teachers to volunteer to take on additional responsibilities. They were proud to have the autonomy to be creative and innovative with finding successful interventions for struggling students. One male teacher leader shared the sentiment of his fellow focus group members of having the freedom to select workshops for personal growth.

We’ve been able to choose what PD we’ve been able to attend. We’ve also been able to choose a lot of things we’re doing and they’re not being forced on us. I think it provides an extra motivational piece because of that autonomy that you wouldn’t get if we went to all of the same workshops.

The data from this study showed that PLCs can provide structures for in-depth discussions of the various school programs, stimulate conversations for cycles of learning, and develop teacher leadership capacity. Teacher leaders were instrumental in using their personal strengths and knowledge to facilitate discussions in seeking strategies for student interventions. Principals provided many hours during the modified days for discussions about interventions to support students. Building capacity through PLCs is one important step towards reducing teacher burnout.

**Avoiding burnout.** Burnout is a genuine problem in American high schools. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (Haynes, Maddock, & Goldrick, 2014), more than half a million teachers quit every year and almost half of new high
school teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years. Therefore, preventing teacher burnout is a crucial component of sustaining transformational leadership.

In the present study, it was clear that burnout was a significant concern. One teacher revealed that:

Quite a few teachers on this campus get burned out because they’re givers and “Yes, of course” and “Yes, of course.” Then I get really protective of them; that’s it! Yes, of course the work needs to get done, and, yes, you’re passionate about it, and of course you’re not going to take a stipend because there’s no money. But there has to be a boundary that can be set and that’s where it’s really incumbent upon people who haven’t taken leadership roles to empower them to say, “Look, you can’t just have 20% of people doing 100% of the work.”

Burnout can be minimized as teachers become more involved in leadership. The teacher leaders expressed that the principals’ delegation of power indicated to them the principals’ trust in their abilities to perform both the instructional and operational program duties. Mulford and Moreno (2006) maintained the value of effective principals taking a leading role in changing the positional power of the principal to distributing power among the teacher leaders. Elmore (2004) expressed that a distributive leadership model that provides a system with sustained teacher leadership opportunities may be a safeguard to leadership turnover and lead to continued school improvement. In this study, the teacher leaders shared that their confidence as leaders increased as they assumed additional shared responsibilities. One principal stated,

My philosophy is, if you have people in place that can do the job, then they will probably be here longer than the high school principal himself, then they’ll
sustain and they’ll have the energy to do that as long as you continue to provide them the resources they need to do their job. Kind of providing—identifying people, supporting them, giving them resources, and giving them the freedom to make decisions.

This principal was expressing that burnout can therefore be minimized through the empowerment of teachers.

**Empowerment.** Distributing leadership requires empowering others. Schools are complex organizations, and one necessary step for success is empowering teachers to become leaders. Principal and teacher leader interviews demonstrated the importance of empowerment. For example, one principal stated:

> We all split up the duties so you’re pretty much the principal of your department. Delegate. Really empowering people that you trust them to do the work. That’s reality in a school like ours; the principal cannot be the one doing all the work.

Another principal expressed that, “You cannot do it alone. And allowing teachers to be creative, having some standardization but allowing your teachers to be creative in what they’re doing. If you do too much lock step, it’s not going to go anywhere.”

The teachers at the participating schools expressed positive views regarding the empowerment they received from the principal. One teacher stated, “I think one of the things that I really like is teacher empowerment.” Another teacher stated, “I think that when we move outside of the department chairs and we get other people to take on these roles, that’s really, really empowering.”
The effects of empowerment through distributed leadership go beyond minimizing burnout. Empowerment of teachers impacts students. One teacher expressed gratitude regarding the empowering distributed leadership style of the school principal,

I think people feel empowered to bring their concerns to the administration, and the administration is open—if teachers are willing to offer solutions, he is willing to look at that when you can demonstrate that it’s going to be something good for the kids.

Empowering others to take on leadership roles is a crucial component of the distributive leadership model. This view was established during CAPP, although most of the principals shared a lack of official training on how and when to delegate responsibilities. They further intimated that they used the strengths of the staff members to determine which leadership role they delegated to them. For example, a veteran teacher was asked to oversee the Title 1 budget due to his previous working experience with the Association of Student Body (ASB) and the financial clerk.

Teachers expressed that empowerment allowed principals to spend more time focused on the instructional practices at the schools. As a result, principals were able to increase their classroom observations to provide instructional support to teachers. Further, two of the principals were able to lead instructional rounds with teacher leaders. This was in part due to the principals finding additional time because they empowered teacher leaders to take on the responsibilities of some of the school’s operational programs.

Empowerment can therefore allow teachers to take on roles usually reserved for assistant principals. This strategy can provide teacher leaders with meaningful training
that can create a pipeline for teachers to become future administrations. As one principal revealed, “I think my role as principal is to create principals.” Combined, the interview data demonstrate the power of empowerment in increasing teacher satisfaction, building teacher capacity, supporting student outcomes, and preparing teachers to become administrators. Equally important are the roles of collaboration and shared decision making.

**Collaboration and shared decision making.** Collaboration and shared decision making are important elements of distributed leadership. According to Gronn (2008), as more people contribute to the decision-making process, better decisions are usually made, resulting in positive organizational outcomes. Collaboration is therefore an important element in the distributive leadership process that promotes quality decision-making processes for teachers and school staff leaders (Wallace, 2001).

Interview and focus group data showed that administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers discussed, collaborated, and made shared decisions about the instructional and operational programs. Additionally, the principals created school cultures that encouraged opportunities for two-way communication and staff input. One noted revelation was the consistency of the five schools to also provide opportunities for students, parents, and community members to participate in the shared decision-making process through the various governing bodies on campus. Teacher leaders stressed that when decisions are openly discussed in a collaborative manner resulting in a shared decision, stakeholder ownership increases. The principals echoed that utilizing the collaborative process for making decisions has been instrumental in getting the school to move forward with goals and programs.
In the interviews, both the principals and teacher leaders provided concrete examples of shared decision making during professional learning activities. For example, one veteran female English department chair shared the sentiments of all of the teacher leaders interviewed on her perspective of collective efficacy.

There is such a sense of collaboration in this school that I think has gotten stronger over the years. Our school has always been a very strong school in the sense of people always being willing to share. And it just feels like in the last 5 years or so there have been greater efforts to allow teachers to collaborate even when it comes to department meetings.

The teacher leaders intimated that a result of the shared decision-making process is transparency and the development of trust. The interview responses also demonstrated how this process created a sense of ownership and buy-in for the stakeholders of the schools. Of particular interest was the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

The new curriculum and everything with the Common Core is new to us, so we’re having to work together as a team to try to figure out what strategies we could use, what are we going to do for those kids that don’t get it, and then we talk about interventions and testing, and all of that.

These results demonstrate how principals can utilize collaboration and a shared decision-making process to pave the way for creating teacher buy-in and ownership for supporting school programs. Teachers expressed a feeling of being valued as a result of having input in the decision-making processes at schools. More time spent collaborating and making shared decisions provides a unified team approach to meeting the achievement goals for
students. This research highlights the need for district leadership to provide schools with staff development training on team management skills. As leadership team members become more adept with practicing their group dynamics skills, they become more confident with facilitating PLCs. By fostering collaboration and shared decision making, principals can further develop a school culture of transparency, inclusiveness, and teamwork. The distributed leadership features of collaboration and shared decision making are built on the foundation of trust and open two-way communication (Lord et al., 2008).

**Trust and Communication**

Huffman and Hipp (2003) concluded that the supportive conditions for developing relationships between principals and teachers in PLCs rely on trust and open two-way communication. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) highlighted the important role of trust both in classroom instruction and in nurturing effective relationships between teachers, teacher leaders, and administration. Open two-way communication is at the center of developing trusting relationships. Without communication and trust, it may be challenging to build a culture of collaboration and shared decision making. For these reasons, the dimensions of trust and communication can have a positive influence on a school’s culture as the school is undergoing change.

In the present study, the principals created school cultures that encouraged opportunities for clear and open communication. This is important in building a team that shares a common vision. One focus group member emphasized that a principal has to have “a very clearly communicated vision that inspires your teachers.” It is therefore not enough to have a vision. That vision must be communicated.
Another valuable component evident in the study was the role of trust in the distributive leadership model. The teachers shared that having trusting relationships with their principal is vital to creating teacher leaders. Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001) demonstrated the impact of trust on collective efficacy and student achievement. One teacher leader commented on the relationship between trust and empowerment:

I think one of the things that I really like is teacher empowerment. The administration really trusts the teachers and trusts the teacher leadership to move forward. If you want to do something as a teacher or as a teacher group, that opportunity is there. And if you want to take charge of it, go ahead. It’s embraced.

Teachers indicated that the CAPP experience provided the opportunities for teachers to collaborate and communicate amongst other leadership teams. As a result, built on the foundation of trust and communication, collaboration among teachers and administrators has created an educational environment that promotes collective efficacy, which is important because collective efficacy is vital towards fostering student achievement (Goddard et al., 2001).

While trust and open two-way communication are crucial towards building a culture of collaboration and shared decision making, trust and communication are not sufficient to achieve this distributed leadership goal. It is also necessary to have accountability.

**Accountability**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act made public schools increasingly accountable for the quality
of student education (Spring, 2005). In turn, beyond the responsibilities of school principals, the distributed leadership philosophy makes teachers accountable.

In the present study, principals and teachers alike expressed the value and complexities of teachers taking ownership and accountability for the instructional and operational programs. One principal began, “My role is to make sure that the leadership is distributed throughout the organization.” One teacher continued, “The principal has to set the tone . . . and makes teachers accountable.”

Accountability plays an important role in the empowerment that comes with the delegation of responsibility. As one teacher explained, “I always felt that the departments have some autonomy. That isn’t to say that they’re not accountable.” Therefore, along with the fundamentals of open communication, trust, shared decision making, and empowerment, accountability is crucial within the distributed leadership framework. This includes being accountable to peers, to administration, and to the most important stakeholder in education—the student. As one teacher summarized, “We’ve got to be accountable for our kids’ learning.”

**Distributive Leadership Conceptual Model Revisited**

Based on a review of relevant literature in Chapter 2, the author proposed a conceptual model that illustrated the possible effect of distributed leadership on increasing efficacy school wide, thereby enhancing the school’s capacity as a PLC. The proposed conceptual model of distributive leadership includes elements such as collective efficacy, PLCs, professional development, and strategies to improve instruction. The relatedness of the model’s elements influenced the creation of the purpose of the present study because the literature established a strong relationship between the use of PLCs in
schools and improved school performance (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1993; Hord, 1997). The previous sections have presented themes from the teacher surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The results indicate that increasing distributive leadership and increasing school-wide efficacy is not as linear as the proposed model might suggest. In fact, all of these components need to continually be reevaluated, revised, and expanded. That, in fact, is what a PLC does and is inherent in the cyclical nature of action research (Stringer, 2013). The themes that emerged from the present study do not alter the proposed model of distributed learning introduced in Chapter 2, but they do add substance and detail that can further inform future research as well as guide leaders who are challenged to move from theory to best practice. Figure 6 depicts a revised distributive leadership conceptual framework incorporating the specifics of these themes.

**Phase I: Components of Development Leadership**

One main important difference from the previous model is the addition of a clearly articulated shared vision that drives the model in a cyclical manner. All schools in the study mentioned this as a crucial element to success. At the top of the revised model, this vision drives Phase I, the structural design elements necessary to build leadership. Crucial components of Phase I that emerged from the surveys and interviews were the need to establish school-wide goals (such as every child can learn), the need to continue what is already working (meaningful professional development and the continuation of PLCs that are autonomous and free to establish their own identities), the need to build capacity among teachers in those PLCs, the need to improve knowledge of students’ cultural proficiency, and the need to create collaboration and shared decision
making among all stakeholders. Trust and open communication are vital components in all three phases.

**Figure 6.** Revised distributed leadership conceptual model.

**Phase II: Momentum**

With these leadership elements in place, Phase II then outlines the necessary conditions to increase teacher efficacy. Data from the surveys and interviews showed that teachers already possessed strong management skills and felt they were effective with instructional practices. However, data revealed that professional development in cultural proficiency is an area of need that could help increase teacher efficacy. Trust and open two-way communication between teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators were
also identified as necessary elements in empowering teachers and in creating collective efficacy. Empowering teachers was also mentioned in the context of administrators providing increased opportunities for more teachers to take on leadership roles within a distributive leadership model. This, in turn, was seen as a method of addressing the burnout of those teachers who currently assume most of the leadership positions in their departments.

**Phase III: Continual Student Improvement**

Once a culture of collaboration is created in Phase II, teachers would then continue to provide sustained improvements in their instruction and examine those outcomes in Phase III of the model. As teacher leaders, all teachers would assume responsibilities beyond their own classrooms and become accountable to all other teachers, to the administration, and to all students in their schools. Many teachers would assume responsibilities often notably assumed by vice principals. Teachers would also run PLCs with autonomous input, using data to drive their choices in professional development and in instructional choices. They would implement learning from professional development regarding cultural proficiency, and they would reflect collaboratively with administrators about student outcomes and achievement in order to develop a team approach to reform efforts.

Ultimately, all three phases would lead to reflection and a revision of the school-wide goals and of the shared school vision. The model would repeat in a cyclical fashion from year to year, ideally resulting in increased student achievement year by year.
Implications

The findings have important implications. Interview data highlighted the importance of the distributed leadership attributes of having a clearly articulated vision, organizational structures, capacity building via PLCs, empowerment, collaboration and shared decision making, trust and communication, and accountability. The findings imply that these attributes should be central in the development of interventions to promote distributed leadership in schools.

One of the implications of this study is the idea of organizational learning. As a result of attempting to distribute leadership across an entire school, everyone became a learner. Administrators were learning, teachers were learning, and teacher leaders were learning. In fact, an entire system underwent significant changes to reflect the emergence of organizational learning. In order to accomplish this continuous learning process among all members, the value of trust emerged at all levels. Trust is systematically threaded throughout all levels of the distributed leadership model. In this study, it was clear that principals and school leaders were able to utilize the vehicle of PLCs to enact organizational learning. PLCs can be used to accomplish many different purposes. One of the benefits of PLCs is that they provide teachers and principals’ opportunities to better understand the dynamics of teachers’ individual and collective efficacy when a distributed leadership model is used. PLCs can be used to motivate teachers for success. They can be used as the vehicle for exploring continuous school improvement, looking at data to drive instruction, and creating instructional interventions for students to support the various needs of the diverse populations schools serve. They are the place where teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators can use collaboration and shared decision
making to establish school-wide programs and goals. And, finally, PLCs can be a vehicle for developing a strategic professional development plan for teachers in their work with students. In this place of PLCs, principals can also use their positional influence to leverage the district’s research and accountability departments to provide accessible and useful school data to drive instructional agendas. In all of these ways, PLCs are tantamount to organizational learning.

In order to purposefully distribute leadership, a second important implication emerges. This is the need to concurrently build capacity and empower teachers as a dual-strategy to support programmatic reforms designed to increase student achievement. Using a reform agenda will require viable professional development opportunities for principals to learn about building relationships among teachers that result in effective team building and, hence, increased collective efficacy. Specific professional development training may create viable solutions to overcome any lack of teacher leadership in our schools. Empowering teachers is a key component necessary to support the involvement of teachers in taking on responsibilities of operational and instructional programs. By empowering their teachers, principals allow them to gain autonomy and creativity in seeking activities they feel will enact change for students. It is crucial to give teachers a voice and input to share their thoughts and feelings about the agreed-upon goals of the school and about the types of professional development agendas they need to do their jobs effectively.

One last implication is the need for both teachers and administrators to assume new roles and responsibilities. For example, teachers could assume the duties of overseeing attendance and discipline policies by participating collaboratively on
committees; they could assume the roles of leaders on data teams and other school-wide social activities that provide students with a well-rounded high school experience. These changing roles are part of participating in a culture of distributive leadership, which frees participants to assume roles others may once have occupied alone. Principals should assume the roles of coaching teachers and teacher leaders to become future administrators. For example, principals could train teachers to use district data to formulate professional development activities that would meet the specific needs of their students. Principals could also assist teachers in creating professional trainings, such as instructional rounds, so teachers would better understand the correlation between instruction and data outcomes. The findings discussed earlier in this chapter also suggest a need for more linkages between distributive leadership and school community initiatives. Again, this would involve new roles and responsibilities for both teachers and principals. Survey data indicated that teachers do not feel confident that they can positively influence students’ learning outside of school. This included learning at home and opportunities in the community itself. The implications of these results are that both principals and teachers need to be held accountable and should seek opportunities to improve student learning at home, utilizing local community resources to enrich the school experience. This is discussed further in areas for future research. If both teachers and principals embraced these changing roles and responsibilities, the school culture would, in turn, shift to become an environment where distributive leadership could flourish.

In this study, the selected participating schools were all part of CAPP, which did include some components of the original distributed leadership model. Even so, scores
were below the normative values of the scales used by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) in collective efficacy and teacher efficacy. These findings imply that mere involvement with state-supported programs such as CAPP is not sufficient to guarantee high levels of collective efficacy and teacher efficacy and, in turn, to truly capitalize on the potential benefits of using a distributive leadership model. These findings also imply that CAPP can be improved to foster higher levels of collective efficacy and teacher efficacy in participating schools by integrating all elements of the revised distributive leadership model provided in this chapter.

**Limitations**

Four significant limitations of this study are discussed herein. First, this study was limited by the sample size and method. To meet the goals of this study, only CAPP schools were included, as opposed to a random sample of all urban high schools. Therefore, the findings of this study may not generalize to non-CAPP schools. As well, only urban schools from California were included, so results may not be representative of suburban or rural schools or schools from other geographic regions. Only high schools were included, so whether the results of the present study are similar to results that could be obtained from elementary or middle schools was beyond the scope of the study.

Second, data from the five participating schools were not disaggregated, so it was not possible to interpret quantitative or qualitative results regarding collective efficacy, teacher efficacy, or distributed leadership in the context of school quality, school resources, or the SES of the families of students attending each school. Therefore, treating the schools in the study as a homogeneous group might have particular school(s) masking more significant overall efficacy scores of others. This could indicate that some
schools’ distributive leadership reform agendas are being implemented more effectively than others. Also, there was no disaggregation of the demographics, educational level, or work experience of individual study participants.

Third, this study was limited by the measures. While the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) were appropriate for exploring the research questions, there was only one measurement scale for each construct. Further, these were self-report measures and self-reported data could have resulted in the under expression of negative qualities and overexpression of positive qualities (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). This study did not include any objective measures or third-party reports to validate the quantitative findings from the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale and the Teacher Efficacy Scale or the qualitative findings from interviews and focus groups. Further, the measures employed in this study may have excluded important efficacy attributes, such as teaching students of any specific ethnicity, social status, or ability level.

Finally, this study was limited by the design. This study was cross-sectional in nature rather than pretest-posttest with a control group (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), so it was not possible to directly determine the effect(s) of CAPP on collective efficacy, teacher efficacy, or distributed leadership. Without pretest-posttest designs and appropriate control groups (schools that did not participate in CAPP), the design of this study limited the available resources for assessing the research questions.

The present study should be replicated with larger, more diverse samples to increase the generalizability of the present findings. These studies can be conducted in other areas of the county and can include elementary and middle schools in addition to
Areas for Further Research

In reflecting on the outcomes of this study, several areas for future research seem timely. First, it would seem that there are potential areas where more distribution of leadership is occurring as compared to other areas. Teacher surveys showed areas in which efficacy was significantly higher than in others. High efficacy correlated with areas in which teachers were more empowered to take on leadership roles, thus indicating the need for more distribution of leadership in areas where teachers do not feel as empowered to succeed. Exactly where these areas are will differ from school to school and will warrant further research.

Second, the phenomenon of burnout for both administrators and teachers is being minimized as the same teachers become more involved in leadership. Teacher leaders expressed that the principal’s delegation of power indicated to them the principal’s trust in their abilities to perform both instructional and operational program duties. It is important to involve more teachers in leadership roles and in different capacities, not just instructional and operational duties. Mulford and Moreno (2006) maintained the value of effective principals taking a leading role in changing the positional power of the principal to distributing power among the teacher leaders. In this study, the teacher leaders shared that their confidence as leaders increased as they assumed additional shared responsibilities. However, there are other potential areas in which leadership could be distributed to even more teachers—this could help burnout as well as teacher confidence.
Future research is needed to help principals decide which tasks are optimally suited to each teacher leader in the process of their individual development.

A third area for further research lies in exploring what constructs potentially affect student achievement. While a strength of this study was the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data, future scholars should seek to include important constructs not addressed in this study, such as exit exam data, demographics of both teachers and students, length of time teachers have been teaching, and gender of leaders. In this way, the effects of distributed leadership on student achievement can be assessed and a more comprehensive picture could emerge.

A fourth area for future study is in the area of PLCs. These were important in the present study, but these PLCs did not include leadership development. Therefore, leadership development should be investigated in the context of PLCs. This program should consist of teacher leaders and principals simultaneously participating in training to develop leadership skills as well as cultural proficiency.

The above discussion refers to PLCs that are formed as part of a school’s professional development plan (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995), that is, groups of stakeholders who come together to focus on specific practices or issues. Together, they might think about, study, define, propose, implement, and evaluate responses, practices, and solutions (Hall & Hord, 2001). A school is likely to have several PLCs operating concurrently, studying a broad range of issues and practices across one theme (e.g., literacy) or across a number of themes (e.g., literacy, school discipline, Next Generation Science Standards). This study not only examined PLCs as a small group of stakeholders learning together, but also as a way to conceptualize the school as a whole.
In other words, this study reinforced the need to conceptualize the entire school as a PLC and that the overall capacity of the school to engage in ongoing systemic reform is based on developing the capacity of the school to design, implement, and evaluate progressive changes (Stringer, 2013). To accomplish this, the author proposed a conceptual model of distributive leadership in Chapter 2 and refined that model in the current chapter based on the findings of the present study. The author indicated that expanding a school’s overall capacity to engage and sustain progressive reforms is a necessary component of continuous school improvement and that, according to Figure 6, distributing leadership is a means of building efficacy and that these conditions enhance a school’s performance as a PLC.

A final area of future research is to use a different theoretical approach to look at the distributed leadership model itself. Classic sociocultural theory per Vygotsky (1962) emphasizes relationships between people and their contexts, actions, resources, communities, and cultural histories. Barbara Rogoff (2003) took Vygotsky’s ideas a step further and proposed that there are three foci of analysis of sociocultural activity: the intrapersonal, the interpersonal, and the cultural-institutional. Use of these three lenses provides a view into learning that rejects the notion of individual contexts only. In Rogoff’s words: “People contribute to the creation of cultural processes, and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people” (p. 51). In this study, the views of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators were examined through surveys and focus group interviews; the intrapersonal view was fully present and the interpersonal level was reached through questions measuring collective efficacy. What is not present is the third lens of including the voice and perspective of the whole system by the inclusion of
students and the homes and communities from which they come. Further research might involve designing a study to include Rogoff’s three foci approach as a lens through which to examine the potential of the distributed leadership model. This is especially important because one particular area in this study in which teachers scored low in terms of collective efficacy was in their belief that students’ home lives could enrich their educational learning. Teacher participants did not believe that the communities in which their students lived could provide opportunities for learning. In essence, teachers indicated they did not feel confident that they could capitalize on the home and community lives of their students. This is clearly an area for further examination.

To address the teachers’ lack of confidence to positively influence their students’ home and community lives, leaders could promote PLCs in which teachers and administrators could study cultural capital and learn to view their surrounding communities from an asset approach rather than from a deficit approach. This would give voice and agency to the student body and to the surrounding communities from which students come. In terms of instructional professional development, a place to begin for teachers might be with Banks (2007) model of multicultural approaches to education. In his model, Banks explored four levels of integrating students’ cultural lives into educational curriculum. Banks argued that too often curriculum agendas stop at the superficial level of a contributions approach where teachers attempt to include heroes of color or at the second level of an additive approach where teachers add content, concepts, or themes to the curriculum in an attempt to address the other. However, Banks argued that teachers need to go further to a level three (transformation approach) or four (the social action approach) in order to truly include all students in shaping and having a voice
in their own education. At the third level, the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts and issues from the perspectives of diverse groups. And, at the final level, the social action approach, students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them. The highest levels are not possible to achieve if teachers hold the belief that students’ home communities do not have the potential for growth and learning. One important agenda item for teachers and teacher leaders, it would seem, would be to attend ongoing professional development to help shift this thinking from a deficit view to an asset approach.

Schools are constantly challenged to respond to ever expanding national, state, and district reform initiatives as well as those originating from the school itself. At the time of this study, the shifts to implementing the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards are the latest reform initiatives. These shifts require students to think critically, to work collaboratively to express their ideas, and to solve authentic problems. We need to add to this shift learning to view the communities of all of our students as rich resources from which to draw the content we explore in our classrooms.

Summary

In this study, principal utilization of a distributive leadership model in five urban high schools did not reveal evidence of consistently high levels of collective efficacy or teacher efficacy. Compared to published norms, collective efficacy and student engagement scores were relatively low, while instructional strategies and overall teacher efficacy scores were average, and classroom management scores were high. Considering that all five schools used a variation of a distributed leadership framework and still had
scores below the normative values of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy’s (2001) scaled scores in collective efficacy and student engagement, a revised model for a distributed leadership framework was constructed to address the identified areas lacking in the original model. Using the qualitative and quantitative data from this research study, vital elements were identified to enhance the original model and transform it from a theoretical model to a viable working model of how to effectively use the distributive leadership framework. The elements of the revised model include a clearly articulated vision, specific organizational structures, capacity building via PLCs, teacher empowerment, collaboration and shared decision making, trust and communication, and accountability. Findings from this study highlight the potential power of how a distributed leadership framework can increase collective efficacy, which would, in turn, increase student achievement. Together with the new instructional mandates (e.g., Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards), the implementation of a well-designed distributed leadership framework can help to create a culture of professional learning and innovation in urban high schools that may better meet the needs of all students.
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doi:10.1177/0013161X02239642

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Participant:

You are being invited to participate in a study of Distributive Leadership at your school. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of distributed leadership with respect to both increasing collective leadership across the faculty and whether these changes increase the school's capacity to function as a professional learning community. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to investigate whether effectively distributing leadership facilitates increasing collective efficacy, and whether these factors advance the schools capacity to function as an achievement oriented learning community.

Such a study advances awareness and understanding of the conditions of distributive leadership that promote individual teacher efficacy and collective teacher efficacy for capacity building. Therefore, leadership capacity building with a distributive leadership lens may provide the reform model necessary for increasing student achievement. There appears to be a gap in the current research on the “what and how” distributive leadership reform promotes capacity building a professional learning community capable of embracing and sustaining effective school practices. Your school’s previous participation in the California Academic Partnership Program’s (CAPP) High School Leadership Initiative (HSLI) provide a unique opportunity to follow-up on the sustainability of leadership structures and practices.
The researcher is Mr. Harry Shelton, an Educational Leadership doctoral student at San Diego State University. She has been an educator for over 30 years, and currently serves as a high school principal for San Diego Unified School District.

The findings of the research will be used to create a collective case study that other researchers can use for further investigation and that educational leaders and policy makers can use to advance leadership reform models for building learning communities that sustain improving student achievement. The faculty supervisor for this study is Ian Pumpian, Ph.D. Dr. Pumpian is a professor of educational leadership at San Diego State University.

You will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in two surveys (lasting about 15-20 minutes each) and a teacher focus group interview, lasting approximately one hour. The surveys and focus group interview will take place in a private location on your school campus. Interviews will be audio taped to ensure the accuracy of your responses. Handwritten notes will be taken for subjects who choose not to be audio taped. Examples of questions include: 1) What is the range of teacher leadership roles at your school? (2) Approximately how many (what percentage of) teachers at your school serve in leadership roles? (3) What are the characteristics of teacher-leaders at your school? You will be allowed to skip questions that cause discomfort and continue with participation. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to
participate or choose to discontinue participation. The research involves minimal risk to the participants (less than or equal to that encountered in daily life at school).

You may experience the following difficulties, as follows: You may feel uncomfortable talking about his/her feelings about the leadership environment or may become tired or frustrated when trying to complete the assigned tasks. If that should occur, you may discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently. You can also choose not to answer the questions you are uncomfortable with answering.

The researcher does not foresee any other discomforts or risks associated with this data collection. There are no experimental variables and there is no compensation for participation in this study.

You will have contributed to a study that could be of benefit to educational leaders. You may also learn about aspects of distributive leadership structures and practices that may impact student achievement. Your name will be coded to match data collected. All names in work published by the researchers will be pseudonyms. Focus group interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. If you choose not to be audio taped, you can still participate in the study and handwritten notes will be taken. Quotes from the focus group interviews may be used for publication of findings but no participant will be identified by name. Your participation will remain confidential (this means that we will conceal your identity and only codes will be used on interview forms and notes we take) except as required by law. The researcher does not believe there are any conflicts of interest, and the participant does not waive any legal right by participating in this study.

You may contact the researcher with questions by email (hshelton@sandi.net). It is suggested that you keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Affairs at San Diego State University (telephone: (619) 594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Boards’ stamps. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamps.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Your signature also indicates that you consent to the use of audiotapes and understand how the tapes will be used for this study. If you choose not to be audio taped you can still participate in the study and handwritten notes will be taken. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.
APPENDIX B

Principal Interview Protocol

Background

- What is your background in public education?
- How long have you been a principal at any school? How long have you been the principal at this school?
- *(For principals who were hired after CAPP/HSLI was completed)* Where you aware of your school’s participation in the CAPP/HSLI program when you interviewed for the principal position for *(fill in school name)*? What were your initial thoughts about your school’s previous participation in this program? How, if at all have those first thoughts about the program changed since you’ve been involved?
- What do you see as your most important roles as principal?

Conditions for Teaching and Learning

- Are PLCs in place at your school? If so, who is involved? What are the foci of the PLCs? What is your role as principal with the PLCs? What have the PLCs accomplished to date and what are the challenges?

Leadership Structure and Practices

- What is the current leadership structure at your school? *(If not already addressed)* What is your role as principal within this leadership structure? Are there formalized or informal leadership groups at your school and if so, what types of people are involved (e.g., administration, teachers, classified)? What responsibilities do these groups have? What decisions, if any, are these groups charged with making? *(If not addressed under role of principal)* What is your role as principal in these various groups?
- *(If not addressed above)* What key strategies/practices do you draw on to effectively serve in your role as principal (e.g., support staff to take on leadership roles, use data to inform decision making, advocate for additional district resources)
- In what ways has the leadership structure and practices changed since you became the principal at *(fill in school name)* OR since your school began participating in CAPP/HSLI *(for the couple of principals that were at the school prior to*
CAPP/HSLI (e.g., alignment of organizational policies and procedures, support of continuous improvement, use of best practices, use of data)? In what ways have you been supporting these changes?

Challenges

- What are the biggest challenges to building the leadership capacity at your school?
- What are the biggest challenges to improving student achievement at your school?

Views on Leadership

- In your opinion, what does effective leadership look like at your school? What roles and responsibilities should the principal play? What roles and responsibilities should teachers play?
APPENDIX C
Teacher Leader Interview Protocol

Background

- What is your background in public education?
- How long have you been a teacher at this school?
- What roles/responsibilities do you have at (fill in school name)?
  - What are your school’s current efforts to build leadership skills of teachers and school administration?
  - What are your school’s current efforts to improve student achievement?
  - What leadership roles, if any, do teachers play at your school to help implement your school’s current efforts to build school leadership capacity and/or improve student achievement?
  - What supports have you received to (e.g., PD on PLCs) to aid in the implementation of your school’s efforts? Who provided these supports?

Conditions for Teaching and Learning

- Are you participating in a PLC? If so, who is involved? What is the focus of the PLC you participate in? What supports have teachers received to support effective PLCs? What supports would help make your PLC more effective? What has your PLC accomplished to date and what are the challenges? How, if at all, has participating in a PLC changed how you teach and/or interact with your students and families?

Leadership Structure and Practices

- What is the current leadership structure at your school? What roles do teachers play within this leadership structure? What types of decisions, if any, are teachers involved in making for your school?
- (If teacher is playing a leadership role) What types of support have you received to take on leadership roles? What supports would be helpful for you to serve in leadership roles effectively?
- In what ways has the leadership structure and practices changed since you began teaching at this school (e.g., alignment of organizational policies and procedures,
support of continuous improvement, use of best practices)? What changes would you like to see in the future?

Successes and Challenges

- What are the biggest successes/challenges to building the leadership capacity at your school?
- What are the biggest successes/challenges to improving student achievement at your school?

Views on Leadership

- In your opinion, what does effective leadership look like at your school? What roles and responsibilities should the principal play? What roles and responsibilities should teachers play?
**APPENDIX D**

Collective Efficacy Response Frequencies and Percentages

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APPENDIX E

Teacher Efficacy Response Frequencies and Percentages

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