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Linking District Leadership to Teacher Leaders:

The District Office – School Partnership for Teaching and Learning Improvement

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Kelly Ganzel Santos

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Linking District Leadership to Teacher Leaders:

The District Office – School Partnership for Teaching and Learning Improvement

by

Kelly Ganzel Santos

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Mark Kevin Eagan, Co-Chair

Professor Eugene Tucker, Co-Chair

This study strove to identify promising structural, relational, resource, communication, and ideological linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders in high school districts that are perceived by these instructional leaders to positively affect student outcomes. The study was qualitative in nature, focusing on the meaning, context, and process of how district leadership engages with teacher leaders in collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships. The study population consisted of two union high school districts located within the urban Los Angeles area, both of which served at least 90% minority students and demonstrated comparable English and mathematics proficiency rates. Essential to this study, both district offices were

engaged in coordinated efforts to work closely with teacher leaders to develop strategic plans for improving teaching and learning districtwide. This study employed multi-case sampling of the two comparable districts, selecting the highest achieving and lowest achieving schools within each study district as focal points for all interviews and site-based observations. The research design provided for the collection of data through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document reviews. Data was triangulated through thematic coding of the strengths and weaknesses of each district's critical linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. The key findings of this study explicated how school-based teacher leaders brokered critical information between district leadership and teachers at large by serving as boundary spanners who bridged the organizational divide between school sites and the district office. Detailed analysis of each of these critical linkages clarified the specific role of teacher leaders in engaging teachers at large in instructional reform efforts, as well as of the means by which district leadership supported teacher leaders in this role. The key findings of this study also provided insight into the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders regarding districtwide instructional reform efforts that leverage teacher leaders as well as their impact on student outcomes. The promising practices revealed in this study may serve as a model for other districts to consider in their endeavors to work intentionally with teacher leaders to implement reforms designed to strategically improve teaching and learning districtwide.

The dissertation of Kelly Ganzel Santos is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015

DEDICATION PAGE

It is with the deepest of love and gratitude that I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmothers, Betty Ganzel and Nancy Johnson. I owe so much of my post-secondary education to the generosity of these two women. More importantly, G.G. and Nanny were my role models, my teachers, and the heart and soul of our family. They colored my childhood with happiness and adventures, big and small, and created beautiful memories with my daughters that will be deeply cherished. Indeed, writer Alex Haley reminds us, “Grandparents can do more for us than anyone else in the world; they sprinkle stardust in our eyes.” My grandmothers have inspired me to pursue my aspirations, to make my dream of becoming a Doctor of Education a reality. G.G. and Nanny, no other words can say it any better: I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Recent district- and school-effects research reveal that instructional improvement efforts that are coordinated across all levels of leadership within a school district may be critical in increasing student achievement districtwide (Chrispeels et al., 2008; Copeland & Knapp, 2006; Daly & Finningan, 2011; Finnigan & Daly, 2010). Such coordination typically occurs across three key levels of instructional leadership: district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders. For the purposes of this study, teacher leaders were identified as those who held the formal, established role of department chairperson. According to Chrispeels et al. (2008), “high levels of student achievement are possible when schools and the district act as coordinated units of change” (p. 730). Although both district- and school-effects research¹ are central to explaining the distinct structures and processes that may affect student outcomes at each of these levels of leadership independently, limited empirical studies exist that detail the effects of *interdependent* district and school-level efforts to improve student achievement (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006; Coburn, 2003; Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2007; Lasky, 2005).

Research focused primarily on the instructional support provided by district leadership to principals (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Davis, et al., 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Honig, 2012; Leithwood, et al., 2005; Peterson, 2002) and by principals to teacher leaders (Birky, Shelton & Headley, 2006; Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Few models for collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships across these three distinct levels of instructional leadership exist in the research. Despite the absence of such models, effective district leaders know that districtwide

¹ School-effects research encompasses “studies focused on inputs such as school resource variables (e.g., per-pupil expenditures) and student background characteristics (e.g., student SES) to predict school ‘products’ or outcomes [in terms of] student achievement” (Teddlie & Stringfield, 2007). District-effects research expands this critical lens to examine the effect of district level inputs on student achievement.

improvement in teaching and learning does not manifest itself without the consistent engagement of the district office with schools in their improvement efforts (Honig et al., 2010).

However, historically, the district office belies the portrait of leadership for learning, chiefly characterized as a bureaucracy that either inhibits school reform efforts or is irrelevant to instructional improvement (Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig & Rainey, 2011; Marsh, Kerr, Ikemoto, Darilek, Suttorp, & Zimmer, 2005; Peterson, 1999). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 forced the realization that schools are part of a larger, interconnected system (Chrispeels, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The federal pressure to realize student achievement gains on a large scale has led district leaders to rethink the traditional role of the district office as the administrative, fiscal, and regulatory agent of schools (Hightower, 2002; Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig, 2012).

Many studies of district reforms for advancing teaching and learning (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003) ignore how district leadership work practices either promote or obstruct highly effective teaching and learning (Honig, 2008; Spillane, 1998). Such studies focused on the individual role of the superintendent, paying little attention to other district office staff who might improve teaching and learning within schools (Honig, 2008; Spillane, 1998). In an attempt to bridge this gap in research and practice, district offices are now being tasked with operating as learning organizations (Honig, 2008).

Implementing district-wide reform necessitates the repurposing of the district office with learning as its focus (Honig, et al., 2010). Linkages between schools and the district office should be intentionally coordinated to enable district leadership to effectively support teaching and learning improvement efforts (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). Research stresses, in particular,

the importance of the relationship between district leadership and teacher leadership teams (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). Also referred to as school leadership teams (SLTs), these teams can serve as a central link between the district office and schools, and they augment the coherence of reform efforts (Chrispeels et al., 2008). Utilizing a case study methodology, Chrispeels and colleagues examined the relationship between district leadership and SLTs regarding the process of school improvement in a K-8 school district in southern California. The researchers determined that well-coordinated relationships between SLTs and district leadership can serve as significant bridges to “enhance coordination, depth, spread, and commitment to district reforms” (p. 730).

Similarly, the re-culturation of the district office to build the human capital for establishing instructionally focused district-school relationships, particularly in support of principals, is of paramount importance (Honig, et al, 2010). In a national study on behalf of the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington, Honig and others investigated the practices of urban schools and districts engaged in transformative leadership for learning improvement. The findings from this study delineate means by which district leadership can increase capacity for developing learning-focused partnerships with principals to improve principals’ instructional leadership practice. This is a critical emerging role for district leadership, as the principal’s skills as an instructional leader correlate strongly with the effective growth and sustainability of teacher leaders (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009).

What remains in need of further investigation is how district leadership, in partnership with principals and teacher leaders, develop a systemic, reciprocal, and interdependent framework linking these three distinct levels of instructional leadership for the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; McLaughlin &

Talbert, 2003). Indeed, Fullan, Burtani, and Quinn (2004) emphasize the need for establishing “the right bus – the structures, roles, and role relationships that represent the best arrangement for improving all schools in the district” (p.178).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the research regarding the dearth of models for collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships across these three distinct levels of instructional leadership. This study strives to identify promising linkages among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders in high school districts that are perceived by these stakeholder groups to positively affect student outcomes. In so doing, the study will address the following research questions:

1. What district leadership practices drive districtwide instructional reform efforts?
2. What is the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts? How does district leadership support teacher leaders in this role?
3. According to the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, how do districtwide instructional reform efforts contribute to improved student outcomes?

In identifying promising linkages, this study aims to provide contextualized evidence for organizational learning as it emerges between the district office and school sites in districts that promote continuous dialogue and collaboration. Central to organizational learning are participant recognition of the interdependence of the system as well as valuing reciprocal influence (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). Within this conceptual framework, district leadership and individual school leadership engage in intentional joint work focused on the improvement of teaching and learning (Honig et al., 2010).

Such joint work across district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders is further situated within the framework of distributed leadership. Firestone and Martinez (2007) maintain that through a distributed leadership framework principals and teacher leaders “can be integrated into a districtwide change effort and complement district leadership” (p. 4).

Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature, focusing on the meaning, context, and process of engaging in collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships between the district office and school site levels of instructional leadership previously discussed. The parameters of the study population were first defined by identifying the union high school districts within Los Angeles County. The focus on high school districts allowed for a targeted study population in which the formal teacher leader role of department chairperson was firmly established. This focus on secondary school districts also provided a setting in which district leadership was more likely to take an active, collaborative approach to working with principals and teacher leaders in instructional improvement efforts, simply due to having to support a smaller, more manageable number of schools.

Of the five union high school districts in Los Angeles County, I selected two for this study (see Table 1.1 in the Appendix A for an overview of key characteristics of these districts relevant to the study’s focus). Both districts were located within the urban Los Angeles area, served at least 90% minority students, and demonstrated comparable English and Mathematics proficiency rates. Essential to this study, both district offices were engaged in coordinated efforts to work closely with principals and teacher leaders to develop strategic plans for improving teaching and learning districtwide.

First, I connected with the district administrators in each district who were responsible for professional development, curriculum and instruction, and/or working directly with department chairpersons. Through these points of contact, I coordinated to conduct an online questionnaire and observe occurrences of the structural and communication linkages embedded within each district's practices for aligning school and district instructional leadership. I then explored these linkages in depth through individual interviews with district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders.

Research Methods

In keeping with Denizen and Lincoln's assertion that "qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand" (1994, p. 2), my study utilized content analysis, questionnaires, interviews, and observations to explore answers to the research questions posed. First, I conducted a content analysis exploring each district's website and guiding instructional documents to determine what structures for aligned district-school instructional leadership were publicly detailed. This information was collected for the express purpose of determining if each district's espoused structural and relational linkages among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders was corroborated by data gleaned from questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Next, I administered an online questionnaire to the principals and formal teacher leaders in all comprehensive high schools within each of the two districts. I developed two versions of the questionnaire, each unique to the distinct roles of principal and teacher leader. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data regarding these instructional leaders' understanding of their districts' practices that promote alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning, as well as their perceptions regarding the impact these practices

may have had on student achievement. The questionnaire also collected demographic data (such as instructional leader role, district, school, department, etc.) to assist in the disaggregated analysis of responses. Additionally, I utilized questionnaire responses to make refinements to the interview protocol. Ultimately, the questionnaire provided for the collection of basic quantitative data that was subsequently used to further contextualize and provide statistical comparisons alongside the qualitative data collected through interviews and observations.

Following the questionnaire administration, I interviewed the four district administrators, two from each study district, responsible for working with teacher leaders on curriculum and instruction. Next, I interviewed a total of four principals, representative of the highest achieving and lowest achieving schools in each study district. Finally, I completed my interviews with the following individuals, representative of the highest achieving and lowest achieving schools in each district: 1) two English department chairpersons, and; 2) two mathematics department chairpersons. As the shift to Common Core State Standards is the most significant recent impetus for districts to embrace a model of coordinated instructional leadership that is inclusive of teacher leaders, I focused my interviews in the two content areas most directly impacted by this shift in standards. The purpose of the individual interviews was to gather these instructional leaders' thoughts, perspectives, and feelings about the quality and effectiveness of their districts' practices that promoted alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning in their districts, as well as their perceptions regarding the impact these practices may have had on student achievement.

Next, I observed occurrences of the joint work engaged in by site-based and district leadership within each study district. These observations served as first-hand complements to the second-hand accounts of district-school alignment for the improvement of teaching and

learning offered by both the questionnaire and interviews. Most importantly, these observations provided the opportunity to document the organic process of these interactions within their natural contexts.

Finally, triangulation of the analysis of district instructional documents, questionnaires, interviews, and observation field notes allowed for the thematic coding of the strengths and weaknesses of each district's linkages established between district leadership and school site leadership for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. This analysis further informed recommendations for other districts regarding promising linkages among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders in high school districts that were perceived by these stakeholder groups to positively affect student outcomes.

Significance of the Research

The literature clearly indicates that studies of distributed leadership have rarely explored the spread of instructional leadership beyond principals and teachers to include the district office (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Hatcher, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). However, with the need to meet new accountability measures and support teachers in the transition to Common Core, district leadership are increasingly aware of the need to work collaboratively with principals and teacher leaders. This study illuminated the level to which site and district leadership in the two study districts recognized the pivotal role of their partnership for improving teaching and learning. In so doing, this study also provided an analysis of the extent to which critical linkages existed to facilitate district and school joint work, coupled with recommendations for strengthening these critical linkages. Examining the areas for growth as well as the promising practices within the two study districts served to inform the continued strengthening of their distributed leadership models, as well as offer models for other districts to consider in their

endeavors to work intentionally with principals and teacher leaders to implement reforms designed to improve teaching and learning.

At a minimum, the results of this study provided both study districts with formative feedback regarding their district office – school partnerships. As such, I provided a full report of the findings to each of the study districts for their own use in developing and strengthening their critical linkages across district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders. In addition, I plan to broaden the impact of this study by sharing the findings with the educational community at large through garnering opportunities to present at conferences sponsored by such organizations as the California Educational Research Association and the California Collaborative on District Reform.

Overview of Study

The following exploration of the literature base relevant to this study serves to highlight the need for further analysis of how districts are developing collaborative, non-hierarchical structures and relationships between district and school-based instructional leadership. Additionally, the subsequent chapter detailing the research methods employed to address the study's three key research questions further explicates how this study aimed to address the identified gap in the research surrounding effective district office – school partnerships for the improvement of teaching and learning. Ultimately, this study provides district leadership with an in-depth look at high school districts effectively employing a district-school partnership, as well as strategic recommendations for increasing the alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the following literature review, I examine the empirical research and detail theoretical foundations that serve as the basis for my study of how district administrators, in partnership with principals and teacher leaders, develop a systemic, reciprocal, and interdependent framework linking these three distinct levels of instructional leadership for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. More often than not, there is a lack of a reciprocal relationship among these levels of instructional leadership that inhibits collaborative efforts to improve student achievement. This research and theoretical base is foundational to answering the call for further research regarding “the structures and processes that frame building-level interaction within a district, and collaborative structures (e.g., districtwide committees, mixed teams of teachers and administrators)” as they relate to the alignment of district and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning (Watson & Scribner, 2007).

This review opens with a brief history of the evolving role of the district office, situating the district office as a learning organization. The evolutionary steps detail the need for the district office to focus on learning – in partnership with principals and teacher leadership teams as well as within the district office itself – as a comprehensive learning organization (Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig, 2008; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Leon, 2008). Next, I examine how distributed leadership, emphasizing the critical principles of interdependence and coordination, is enacted as a means of fostering reciprocal influence among members of a learning organization (Gronn, 2002; Watson & Scribner, 2007). Then, an analysis of empirical studies detailing the relational and structural linkages among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders

lays the foundation for conceptualizing the *interdependent* nature of district and school level efforts to improve student achievement as an enactment of socio-cultural learning.

The Evolution of the District Office as a Learning Organization

In response to the federal mandates for student achievement outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, the district office is playing a more significant role in instructional improvement (Archer, 2005; Firestone, 2009; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). Yet, historically, the district office has lacked a coherent framework of leadership for learning; further, its direct role in instructional improvement has required a redefinition of its organizational purpose (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig, 2008; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006; Mizell, 2010; Rusch, 2005;). In its 2006 study of high-performing, high poverty school districts in California, Springboard posed an essential question: “Can school districts, which many finger as the cause of the problem of poor school performance, become part of the solution?” (2006, p. 62). Indeed, there is a growing body of empirical research that illuminates how the district office can work in partnership with school-level leadership in efforts to close the achievement gap.

The district office: A historical perspective. Since the 1980s, research has focused on schools as the primary unit of change (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Chhuon, et al., 2008; Chrispeels, 2002; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). During the 1990s, the predominance of site-based management and whole-school reform reinforced the instructional impotence of the district office (Archer, 2005). Schools took it upon themselves to form professional learning communities and initiate instructional reforms they believed best suited their individual student populations. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, policy makers enacted what became the impetus for realizing that schools are part of a larger, inter-connected system (Chrispeels,

2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The long-standing characterization of the American educational system as loosely coupled schools fell by the wayside (Firestone, 2009). The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 called for large-scale school improvement, outlining sanctions for those schools that did not demonstrate a closing of the achievement gap (Archer, 2005; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010).

A 2005 national survey of 813 ranking district officials, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, revealed that NCLB had led to an emerging consensus that large-scale academic improvement requires strong district leadership (Archer, 2005). Fifty-six percent of the superintendents surveyed reported that during the previous three to five years, the district office assumed increasing responsibility for instructional decisions that once were the purview of individual school sites. Approximately three-quarters of the superintendents surveyed indicated that NCLB had forced district leadership to assume this more assertive role in guiding classroom instruction. Yet, despite confirming that the assumption of increased instructional leadership was not self-initiated, 93% of the superintendents surveyed indicated that district leaders needed to play a more active role in guiding classroom instruction, regardless of NCLB.

The pressure to realize student achievement gains on a large scale has led to the most current iteration of school improvement: districtwide reform (Elmore & Burney, 1999; Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). Although autonomous, whole-school reform efforts can increase student achievement (Chrispeels, et al., 2008; Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand & Flowers, 1997), the district office staff underpins effective implementation of school-based reform efforts (Chrispeels, Burk, Johnson, & Daly, 2008; Honig & Rainey, 2011). For the purposes of this synthesis, the term “district office” refers to those responsible for leading districtwide learning reform: the superintendent, board of education, and

other non-school-site-based administrators, such as assistant superintendents, directors, and coordinators.

These leaders are now rethinking the traditional role of the district office as the administrative, fiscal, and regulatory agent of schools (Hightower, 2002; Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig, 2012). However, many studies of district reforms for advancing teaching and learning (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003) ignore how district office work practices either promote or obstruct highly effective teaching and learning (Honig, 2008; Spillane, 1998). Effective district office work practices that have been little studied include the cultivation of learning-focused partnerships with school leaders, and the intentional investment of resources in the professional development of district office staff (Honig & Copeland, 2008). Limiting our access to research-based models for these professional practices, many studies have focused on the individual role of the superintendent, paying little mind to other district office staff who might improve teaching and learning within schools (Honig, 2008; Spillane, 1998). In an attempt to bridge this gap in research and practice, district offices are now tasked with operating as learning organizations (Honig, 2008). As such, implementing district-wide reform necessitates the repurposing of the district office with learning as its focus (Honig et al., 2010).

Leadership for learning defined. Schools and school districts posting gains in student achievement exhibit leadership that is focused on learning (Honig et al., 2010; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). Recent research refers to such leadership as leadership for learning, instructionally focused leadership, or leadership for school improvement (Murphy et al., 2007). Educational leaders possessing the skills of instructional leadership are referred to as learning leaders. Learning leaders focus on schooling, learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment as

well as on the capability of all other facets of schooling – administration, organization, finance – to directly support the instructional core and improved student learning. For the purpose of this synthesis, leadership for learning is the most appropriate label, as this connotes the larger concept of organizational learning.

Cooke and Yanov (1996) note that organizational learning arises in cultures that promote continuous dialogue and collaboration during reform efforts, realizing collective learning and shared meanings. According to Leithwood (1998), “collective learning is not just the sum of individual learning” (p. 245). Central to organizational learning are participant recognition of the interdependence of the system as well as a valuing of reciprocal influence (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). Within this conceptual framework, district offices and individual school leadership engage in intentional joint work focused on the improvement of teaching and learning (Honig et al., 2010).

Though such joint learning undertaken by the district office and individual schools is the logical implication of pursuing districtwide reform, it should occur simultaneously with ongoing learning *within* district office leadership (Honig et al., 2010). The district office is responsible for focusing on interactions with schools as well as pursuing its own learning and growth in relation to effective instructional leadership. Variably referred to by Honig as “central office administration as learning,” this practice of continual improvement on the part of district leadership is pivotal to district office efforts to redefine its sole organizational purpose as that of supporting teaching and learning (2010).

Obstruction of learning: The district office as a barrier to teaching and learning improvement? Historically the district office belies this portrait of leadership for learning, chiefly characterized as a bureaucracy that either inhibits school reform efforts, or is irrelevant to

instructional improvement (Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig & Rainey, 2011; Marsh, Kerr, Ikemoto, Darilek, Suttorp, & Zimmer, 2005; Peterson, 1999). A study conducted by Peterson (1999) concludes that the more heavily involved the district office is in school site decision-making, the less student achievement will increase. First, Peterson (1999) examined data gathered by the 1992 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) from school site administrators regarding their assessment of district office involvement in decisions related to eight key issues: hiring and firing teachers, grouping students, deciding on course offerings, selecting instructional materials, setting curricular guidelines, grading and student evaluation policy, establishing disciplinary policy, and determining how to spend school funds. Site administrators rated their district office on each item as exerting no influence in the area, some influence, or major influence over the policy. Next, Peterson assigned a composite measure to the English, math, science, and social science standardized scores of 7,338 students within the districts of site administrators surveyed. The study then correlated the mean scores of students to one of four levels of district office involvement in building level decisions as determined by the researchers. The data revealed that the most intrusive district office resulted in only a one-point reduction in students' standardized test scores, translating into a two percent decrease in student achievement.

Peterson's study frames the relationship between the district office and the school site as one that relies solely on top-down management. This data conflicts with the concept of districtwide reform presented in this literature synthesis which focuses on the systemic reform of the learning organization as a whole – both schools and the district office – through a reciprocal partnership (Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, & Chrispeels, 2008; Honig, 2012; Honig et al., 2010; Mizell, 2011). Multiple studies reveal that many school-based reform efforts are hindered

in part by a lack of district office support for implementation (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Honig, 2008). For example, Bogatch and Brooks' (1994) study of urban districts revealed that only 46% of district administrators had any knowledge of the reforms undertaken by their schools. Another study of five urban districts conducted by Berends, et al. (2002) found district office staff lacking focus, coherence, and a willingness to question the status quo. Such studies underscore the need for a clearly defined partnership between schools and the district office to maximize teaching and learning reforms.

The research also recognizes that a cautionary note accompanies this partnership for learning improvement: as the district office assumes more direct responsibility for instructional improvement, the need grows to set clear limits to centralized control and allow flexibility for school-based initiatives. Multiple researchers call for a balance between bureaucratic outcomes-based accountability and professional commitment (Hubbard, et al., 2006; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). While the district office may exert administrative control by establishing operational norms in such areas as curriculum alignment, common assessments, and districtwide professional development, the district office must also demonstrate flexibility by supporting the professional growth of teachers and allowing for input from professional learning communities (Hightower, 2002; O'Day, 2002; Rowan, 1990). As the most salient empirical studies reveal, this balance is most likely achieved by high leverage leadership behaviors and organizational actions which forge structured partnerships with schools and defy the traditional managerial role of the district office (Honig et al., 2010; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Murphy et al., 2007).

The road to a district office – school partnership. Effective district leaders know that districtwide improvement in teaching and learning does not manifest itself without the consistent engagement of the district office with schools in their improvement efforts (Honig et al., 2010).

As revealed by both district and school effectiveness studies, “High levels of student achievement are possible when schools and the district act as coordinated units of change” (Chrispeels et al., 2008, p. 730). Utilizing qualitative data from 45 school leadership team members, five principals, and 10 district office leaders, Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) examine how critical linkages between the district office and schools impact reform efforts through their research question: What are the linkages between the district office and its schools that support or constrain school reform? They determined that learning leaders engaged in district office transformation establish the following five critical linkages with schools: 1) relational linkages; 2) communication linkages; 3) ideological linkages; 4) resource linkages; and 5) structural linkages. Johnson and Chrispeels conclude that linkages between schools and the district office should be intentionally coordinated to enable the district office to effectively support teaching and learning improvement efforts.

Nevertheless, research demonstrates that despite efforts of district office administrators to align such linkages in direct support of teaching and learning improvement –redefining both their work and relationships with schools – most district leaders reverted to traditional work habits and relationships as defined by the historical role of the district office (Honig, 2006; Hubbard et al., 2006). Thus, it is critical for district office leaders to closely examine the research revealing effective means of transforming the district office – school partnership.

Human Capital Development: Relationships and Resource Partnerships

Coordination of a district office–school partnership begins with the establishment of relational linkages, which are central to reform efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Datnow, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2006; Hubbard et al., 2006). Adapting Lasky’s original concept, Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) define relational linkages as “robust, trusting professional relationships

within and across all levels of the system” (p. 761). These relational linkages have also been recognized as essential to understanding school improvement (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Daly, 2010; Daly & Finnigan, 2010; Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010; Finnigan & Daly, 2010; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Penul, Riel, Krause, & Frank, 2009). Ultimately, relational linkages are forged through a district’s commitment to developing their human capital; with respect to this study, a focus on the development of both teacher leaders and principals as instructional leaders is critical.

The critical role of trust. Relational trust across all levels -- district office staff, site administration, teacher leadership teams -- is foundational to cultivating relational linkages to sustain effective reform efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Louis, 2003). In an exploratory case study of a California school district, Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, and Chrispeels (2008) found that building trust between the district office and school sites is a strong initial step in pursuing districtwide reform. Additional research reinforces this finding, claiming that districtwide reform efforts thrive when districts focus first on building a time-tested culture of trust across all levels of the system (Berends, Chun, Schulyer, Stockly, & Briggs, 2002).

In the context of the district office – school partnership, trust is most aptly defined as one’s willingness to participate in a relationship that involves being vulnerable to another person (Daly, 2004; Goodard et al, 2001; Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998) Vulnerability is key to an organization’s inclination to openly examine shortcomings for the purpose of co-developing strategic actions to initiate reform (Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, & Chrispeels, 2008). Due to the hierarchical nature of the relationship between district office administrators and both principals and teacher leaders, the responsibility for modeling and cultivating trusting behavior on a districtwide scale falls upon the shoulders of district level leaders (Tschannen-

Moran , 2004; Kochanek, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998;). Though research does indicate that with higher levels of organizational trust come increased efforts among employees to strive toward organizational goals (Kalleberg, 2002; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Zaheer et al., 1998), only a few studies have explicitly examined the role of trust in the context of district reform efforts (Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, & Chrispeels, 2008).

Louis (2003) studied five districts that had adopted total quality management as a primary mean of reform. In two of the districts, teachers indicated engaging in a high-trusting relationship with the district office, and consequently embraced the reform as a contributing factor to their school's improvement. However, in three of the districts where teachers indicated a mistrust of the district office, the reform effort was viewed as a means of bureaucratic control and wholly ineffective.

Subsequently, Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, and Chrispeels (2008) built upon the work of Louis and other researchers (Daly, 2004; Louis & Miles, 1990) to address what they identified as a critical gap in the research on trust at the district level: exactly *how* trust is developed between the district office and schools. They conducted a case study during a four-year period to document the processes utilized by district office administrators to cultivate trust with school site leaders. Their interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observations illustrated how proactive steps taken by district office administrators to address particular facets of trust – openness, communication, risk, and integrity – can be essential to effectively engaging in and sustaining districtwide reform. Their study furthermore specified relational trust as one of the primary frames for examining trust in the district context.

Indeed, relational trust undergirds each of the three key relationships identified by Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) in their study of district-school partnerships: district office relationships (internal professional development, collaboration, and decision-making among district office staff); district office – principal relationships, and; district office – teacher and leadership team relationships. However, in order to develop these relationships, an organization must invest in the development of its human capital, particularly in regard to both district office and school site instructional leaders. According to Milanowski and Kimball (2010), human capital can be defined as “the productive skills and technical knowledge of workers. It includes individuals’ knowledge, skills, and abilities and the values and motivation they have to apply their skills to the organization’s goals” (p. 70). By continually developing and capitalizing upon the strengths of its instructional leaders at both the district and site levels, a district office strengthens its coherent, strategic approach to improving teaching and learning (Knudson, 2013).

Within the district office: The human capital development of district administrators. Before a district can effectively develop the collective leadership capacity reflective of a district that embraces the concept of organizational learning, it must invest in the professional growth of key individuals. From the perspective of a transformed district office whose purpose is to directly support school site leadership, this human capital development begins with an internal focus on district office relationships (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). Honig (2008) emphasizes the need for district office staff who are experienced and skilled in cultivating effective school assistance relationships to serve as resources for other, less-skilled district office staff. This harkens to Johnson and Chrispeel’s (2010) definition of resource linkages as encompassing material, technology, and human capital. Datnow et al. (2006) refers to this combination of relational and resource linkages as resource partnerships. Honig (2008)

posits that learning becomes *organizational* when district office staff develop such growth-oriented relationships. Internal professional development for district office staff in the areas of instructional leadership, principal mentoring, and organizational leadership strengthens the district's capacity to forge resource-rich, instructionally focused relationships with principals and teacher leadership teams.

Similarly, Honig et al. (2010) emphasize the need to re-culture the district office to build the human capital for establishing instructionally focused district-school relationships. In a national study on behalf of the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington, Honig and others investigated the practices of urban schools and districts engaged in transformative leadership for learning improvement. The researchers pursued three distinct investigations: school leadership, resource investment, and district office transformation. The segment of the study focused on the district office aimed to identify how leaders in urban district offices transform their work and relationships within the district office and with schools to support districtwide teaching and learning improvement. Researchers based conclusions upon an in-depth comparative qualitative case study of three urban district offices over the course of one academic year, collecting data through nearly 265 hours of observation, 283 interviews, and over 200 document reviews. The findings from this study delineate means by which district office staff can assist their peers who are primarily responsible for assisting principals in improving their instructional leadership.

Evidence from all three districts revealed that nested assistance relationships whereby district administrators assisting principals in turn received assistance with this work from district-level peers were crucial to cultivating a district office focus on teaching and learning improvement. Yet, while district offices invest significant funds to provide professional

development for teachers and other school-based staff, little capital outlay is made for the professional growth of district office staff. Some district office staff independently pursue doctoral degrees or attend annual conferences, at most. In all three districts studied, however, the professional development opportunities provided by the district engaged each individual district office administrator in “multiple, whole district, unit-specific, and individualized job embedded supports for improving their practice” related to teaching and learning improvement (p. 81).

The district office role in developing the human capital of principals. Such professional growth opportunities for district administrators facilitate meaningful participation in the joint work essential to both district office – principal relationships and district office – teacher leadership team relationships. Sociocultural learning theorists define “joint work” as activities that participants value both in the moment and over time (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; Wegner, 1998). From this perspective, district office staff find value in assuming responsibility alongside principals for improving instruction and student achievement (Honig, 2012). Again, the study conducted by Honig et al. (2010) revealed that district office transformation in all three of the urban districts studies included establishing relationships with school principals specifically meant to build principals’ instructional leadership capacity.

The study further highlights that the naming of a district office administrator as “Instructional Leadership Director” is central to this partnership and to overall district office transformation. Multiple researchers have concluded that the development of principals’ instructional leadership capacity is bolstered by continuous, job-embedded support (Davis et al., 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Peterson, 2002). According to Honig et al. (2010), such support should be provided directly by district office administrators trained in

principal development, such as and ILD. Subsequently, they identify five key practices of district office administrators for providing job-embedded support for cultivating principals' instructional leadership capacity: 1) engaging alongside principals in the joint work of improving principals' instructional leadership skills; 2) modeling effective practices for principals; 3) developing and utilizing tools, such as classroom observation protocols, to engage principals in strategic assessment of teaching and learning; 4) serving as a broker, or boundary spanner, who funnels to principals external resources for developing instructional leadership capacity and protects principals from unnecessary external stressors, and; 5) creating and sustaining social engagement both with and among principals. Ultimately, the foundation of the ILD's work is reflective of both the relational and resource linkages between the district office and schools as identified by Johnson and Chrispeels (2010).

The district office role in developing the human capital of teacher leaders. Further studies stress the importance of the third relationship distinguished by Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) between the district office and teacher leadership teams. Also referred to as school leadership teams (SLTs), these teams can serve as a central link between the district office and schools and augment the coherence of reform efforts (Chrispeels et al., 2008). Utilizing a case study methodology, Chrispeels et al. examined the relationship between the district office and SLTs regarding the process of school improvement in a K-8 school district in southern California. Through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observations, the researchers determined that well-coordinated relationships between SLTs and the district office can serve as significant bridges to “enhance coordination, depth, spread, and commitment to district reforms” (p. 730).

As student performance expectations increase with the onset of the Common Core Standards, both individual schools and whole districts are increasing their reliance upon classroom-based instructional leadership positions, such as department chairpersons (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010). However, a majority of the research regarding the development of teacher leadership capacity has been school-based, focused primarily on the principal as the primary cultivator of teacher leadership (Briky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006; Firestone & Martinez, 2010; Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Nevertheless, there is empirical evidence that linking the work of district office administrators and teacher leaders – both directly and through the mediating role of the principal – can increase the district office’s ability to more explicitly influence teaching and learning improvement. Research utilizing case studies of four schools in three districts revealed three critical leadership tasks that can be jointly fulfilled by both teacher leaders and district office administrators: procuring and distributing materials, monitoring improvement, and developing people (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

In order to support teacher leaders in their work to develop people, namely their colleagues engaged in classroom instruction, district office administrators need to focus, in turn, on developing the human capital of teacher leaders. In determining how best to develop teacher leaders’ human capital, it is critical to embrace a working definition of teacher leadership. Within the context of my study, teacher leadership is conceived as “the means by which credible teachers exercise formal...influence over supervisors, colleagues, and members of the school community through collaborative relationships that improve teaching and learning practices” (Poekert, 2012). Though efforts to transform the work of district office administrators place the most value on practices that directly support teaching and learning, much of how a district office operates is still perceived as removed from the instructional core of classrooms and teachers’

instructional work. The work practices of district office administrators are often viewed as “substitutes for leadership [that] operate at a distance to shape interaction” among stakeholders in support of efforts to improve teaching practice (Firestone & Martinez, 2007, p. 7).

Thus, it is critical for district administrators to recognize the direct link to the instructional core that teacher leaders provide. Empirical evidence indicates the need for district office administrators to invest in developing teacher leaders’ human capital for the purpose of employing teacher leaders’ influence with peers to forward district initiatives for teaching and learning improvement (Murphy, 2005; Poekert, 2012; Smeets & Ponte, 2009). In a three-year qualitative study of a regional school district comprised of 20 member districts, Mangin (2009) found that professional development opportunities aimed specifically at cultivating teacher leaders’ leadership capacity resulted in an increase in strategic conversations about student achievement facilitated by teacher leaders with colleagues. Similarly, Blackman’s (2010) study of a teacher leadership development program focused on engendering the coaching techniques of participants through day-long workshops followed by individual training sessions found that such investment in the human capital of teacher leaders increased teachers’ leadership abilities.

The task of developing people, of increasing human capital, is one that engages each of these three distinct levels of instructional leadership throughout a district in double-loop learning. As district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders continue to learn through the enactment of their own instructional leadership, a district’s capacity for collective leadership emerges.

Developing Social Capital: Cultivating the Collective Leadership of a District

As district office administrators work to develop the leadership capacity of individual members of their organization across all levels of instructional leadership, ensuring the

development of social capital is also critical to fostering organizational change (Bartol & Zhang, 2007; Daly, 2010; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008). Social capital theory moves beyond the capacities and resources of an individual to examine how the ties or linkages among individuals are employed to support change efforts (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1995). In regard to the relationship among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, the lens of social capital theory illuminates how these individuals “draw on resources available to them by virtue of their position in a network of social relations to attain a number of valued outcomes – including increased human capital, diffusion of implementation, and reform implementation” (Coburn & Russell, 2008, p. 204). There exist a multitude of social networks within a school district, yet the nature of trust engendered by the district office and opportunities provided for professional networking often dictate the quality and nature of these networks (Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Coburn & Russell, 2008). In particular, such variables affect whether or not these social networks exist between the district office and school sites as well as among individual school sites.

Ultimately, the level of trust within a social network impacts the quality and resourcefulness of these relational linkages, which in turn influences the structure, distributive strength, and success of districtwide reform efforts (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). Two key studies illustrate the power of social networks across a district’s levels of instructional leadership. Through a case study analysis, Daly and Finnigan (2012) provide a counter-example by illustrating how weak social networks and a lack of trust in one underperforming urban school district hampered districtwide efforts to improve teaching and learning. Their study revealed significantly more ties among district office administrators than between district office administrators and principals. Of the network ties they mapped, 78%

were within a singular instructional leadership group – district office administrator to district office administrator or principal to principal – and only 22% connected these levels of leadership in an attempt at coordinating reform efforts. Ultimately, their study emphasized the need for districts to lay a foundation of trust upon which to leverage the social capital of coordinated teams of instructional leaders bridging the district office and school sites.

Yet, another study (Coburn & Russell, 2008) drawing upon longitudinal data from two urban school districts in the midst of implementing new math curriculum provides empirical evidence demonstrating the power of districtwide social networks. The researchers investigated the human and social capital within teachers' social networks and how these constructs affected the implementation of district reform strategies. They found that district structures and patterns of interaction diffused through teachers' social networks, clearly impacting the content and shape of teachers' dialogue. Furthermore, the study revealed that principals were the chief mediating force between district policy and teachers' active implementation of policy. Both findings distinctly support the need for explicit, trusting relational and structural ties among district office administrators, principal, and teacher leaders.

Sociocultural learning: The learning theory of a school district. Ultimately, situating the district office as a learning organization that values sociocultural learning enables the district office to engage both the human capital of its individual instructional leaders as well as the social capital of its leadership networks. Sociocultural learning theory “locates human learning in social interactions, [and] views learning as inseparable from the relation between individuals and their social, cultural, and institutional contexts” (Knapp, 2008, pp. 522). Several studies conducted by Honig (2003) highlight the role of the district office in fostering and sustaining sociocultural learning districtwide. Her studies emphasize that for effective sociocultural

learning to take place across a district, individual actors – such as district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders – must all be willing and capable of engaging in various social networks focused on improving teaching and learning. The sociocultural lens assists instructional leaders, and all members of a district learning organization, in embracing each reform effort as a “learning” issue to be jointly negotiated (Knapp, 2008).

Structural Linkages: Scaffolds for the District Office – School Partnership

It is critical for district offices to establish the structures in which relational linkages and resource partnerships among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders can thrive. In applying Lasky’s (2004) definition of structural linkages to district office functions, Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) identify internal “practices, policies, and organizational arrangements within the district designed to complete tasks and meet external policy mandates” (p. 755). At the heart of Honig et al.’s (2010) study lies the call to restructure each district office unit to directly support the improvement of teaching and learning. With the development of human capital both within the district office and among principals and teacher leaders comes the capacity of all three levels of instructional leadership to co-create the structures necessary to support a district office – school partnership focused on teaching and learning improvement.

Multiple studies of districts engaged in systemic reform efforts have shown positive outcomes for districts that employed strategies for increasing intraorganizational ties (Honig, 2004; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Such strategies include establishing structures for consistent interaction between district administrators and school sites and developing learning partnerships across school sites (Copeland & Knapp, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Such claims are supported by quantitative data collected through a survey of 96 principals and 2,764 teachers regarding how effective leadership impacts student learning

(Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). This study found that district conditions that fostered the development of structures for principals to share knowledge with one another, teachers to collaborate, and the district office to manage the flow of information to and from schools resulted in a positive effect on student achievement.

Though many of the traditional work practices of the district office do not facilitate such opportunities for systemic, sustained interactions with school leadership (Chhuon et al., 2008; Togneri & Anderson, 2003), research detailing the evolution of the district office as a learning organization illustrates districts where such opportunities are thriving (Honig, 2008; Hubbard et al., 2006). In the late 1990s, San Diego City School District embarked upon a reform initiative to restructure how district office administrators worked with school sites (Honig, 2008). They structured opportunities, such as learning walks, for district administrators, principals, and teachers to partake in sustained, instructionally focused social interactions. Researchers were able to link such structured interactions, in part, to minor improvements in the district's ability to effectively support improvements in teaching and learning (Hubbard et al., 2006). Other studies also reinforce the value of formal organizational structures within a district, such as grade level teams and discipline-based departments, as they influence how and to what extent instructional leaders engage in social networks for the improvement of teaching and learning (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Gamoran, Gunter, & Williams, 2005; Penuel et al., 2004).

Communication: An Outcome of Relational, Resource and Structural Linkages

Though it undoubtedly takes communication to initiate relational and resource linkages, and to develop structural linkages, communication is perhaps the most valuable outcome of the combined establishment of these linkages among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders. Each of these key relationships between the district office and school sites serves as a

pathway for constructing knowledge of reform efforts and communicating means of implementation system-wide. Researchers agree that districts that effectively engage in the reform process with schools demonstrate consistent, coherent communication across all levels of the system (Hightower, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2006; Snipes, et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003;). Honig (2008) identifies joint work as a reciprocal process in which ideas are exchanged and decisions are made through activities that all participants find engaging and valuable. Clear, coherent communication undergirds such a reciprocal relationship among and between the key players – district office administration, principals, and teacher leaders.

Within the ranks of district office administration, communicating an explicit rationale for redefining each individual’s role in direct support of teaching and learning drives district office transformation (Honig et al., 2010). Organizational learning relies upon what Rusch (2005) refers to as “organized talk” featuring collective interaction (Hanson, 2001), reflective dialogue (Byrk et al., 1999), and reflective thinking (Leithwood et al., 1998). Organizational talk immerses district office staff in a culture of open dialogue among one another and with school sites. Through a collective case study of seven school districts in a Midwestern state, Rusch (2005) documented how individual school principals reached outside of their districts to professional networks for organized talk because their own districts lacked such productive dialogue. Without committing to continual candid discussion of the undiscussibles (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996) *within* the district office, communication linkages *beyond* the district office are hard-pressed to succeed.

District office administrators should initiate persistent and frank dialogue, first and foremost, with school site principals. The role of communication in the district office – principal relationship is two-fold. On the one hand, the district office administrator working one-on-one

with the principal (referred to as the Instructional Leadership Director) needs to clearly communicate to the principal that both of their work should focus upon increasing the principal's instructional leadership capacity (Honig, 2012). Furthermore, this district administrator should serve as the bridge to all other units within the district office – both instructional and operational – and buffer the principal from demands that distract him/her from focusing on teaching and learning improvement. On the other hand, the principal should serve as the chief communicator and distiller of the district's message regarding teaching and learning (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). Ultimately, two-way, reciprocal communication between the district office and the principal is central to nurturing this relational linkage.

Communication serves as an essential linkage between the district office and teacher leadership teams as well. According to Chrispeels, et al. (2008) establishing a “communicative relationship may allow for more explicit discussions of team and district theories of action, thus increasing an important opportunity for collective dialogue and greater co-construction of...reforms” (p. 744). All 45 SLT participants and six district administrators in Chrispeels et al.'s study (2008) affirmed communication as the chief task of the SLTs. Furthermore, in an embedded case study utilizing qualitative data sources ranging from interviews, focus groups, and observations to field notes and document reviews, Johnson and Chrispeels' (2010) data indicate that coordinated communication between the district office and the SLTs facilitated the advancement of districtwide reforms.

Ideology: The Final Link

The results of Johnson and Chrispeels' study (2010) also indicated that with established relational trust and improved communication linkages comes increased ideological consistency. Lasky (2004) defines ideological linkages as those that reflect common values, vision, and goals,

in conjunction with what comprises high-quality instruction. Datnow et al. (2006) maintain that “when reform leaders [such as district administrators] initiate improvement efforts that challenge individuals’ existing belief systems, one of the most important linkages that people need to make is ideological” (p. 63). Ultimately, Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) advocate for clear ideological linkages between the district office and school sites as a means of advancing districtwide organizational learning around a well-articulated instructional focus.

From the lens of relationships and communication among district office staff, such ideological coherence is achieved when district office leaders act as stewards of the overall district office transformation for learning and teaching improvement (Honig et al., 2010). As stewards, such district leaders provide peers with a clear direction and a sense of purpose as they undergo a reinvention of their work practices. Specifically, district office leaders clearly promote a focused *theory of action*, a concept derived from organizational learning studies. According to Honig et al. (2010), a well-articulated theory of action among the district office staff makes clear “the underlying logic of work or leaders’ starting assumptions about how and why an action, or set of actions, such as [district] office transformation, will lead to some desired outcome(s), [in particular, teaching and learning improvement]” (p. 88). Agullard, Huebner, Goughnour, and Calisi-Corbett (2005) studied superintendents’ theories of action and the varying impact of such theories when they are shared or not shared by all district office staff. Their study determined that an ideologically aligned district office staff has enhanced potential to enact more consistent reforms throughout the district (Agullard et al., 2005).

This ideological linkage among district office staff is foundational to expanding linkages regarding values, vision, goals, and instructional expectations to school site principals and teacher leadership teams. In Johnson and Chrispeels' study (2010), all ten central office leaders

and five principals independently demonstrated consensus regarding the shared vision and purpose of the SLTs – to improve student achievement for all students. Revisiting Rusch’s study (2005) of how individual principals sought support from independent professional networks instead of turning to their own district office staff revealed how an ideological chasm between principals and their district offices resulted in islands of weakly implemented reforms at individual school sites. Indeed, Rusch’s study yields further evidence of the need for solid ideological linkages between district office leaders and principals.

Conclusion

As the district office evolves in its work practices to focus on learning – in partnership with principals and teacher leadership teams as well as within the district office itself – the potential for improved student outcomes is significant. Yet, it is critical that these developing practices are founded in trust and in the development of human and social capital focused on the goal of improving teaching and learning. Additionally, future studies – such as this one – should strive to identify the promising structural and relational linkages among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders so as to inform this critical gap in the research.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Goals and Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the research regarding the dearth of models for collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships across three distinct levels of instructional leadership: district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders. Therefore, the goal of this study was to identify promising linkages among these three levels of instructional leadership in high school districts that were perceived by these stakeholder groups to positively affect student outcomes. To both guide the design of my study and situate the analysis of my findings in a theoretical base, I assumed the lens of organizational learning as it arose across these three levels of instructional leadership in districts that promoted continuous dialogue and collaboration. Within this theoretical framework, district leadership and individual school leadership engaged in intentional joint work focused on the improvement of teaching and learning (Honig et al., 2010). Next, I explored how distributed leadership, emphasizing the critical principles of interdependence and coordination, was enacted as a means of fostering reciprocal influence among members of a learning organization (Gronn, 2002; Watson & Scribner, 2007). Then, through both an analysis of empirical studies detailing the critical linkages among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders, and evidence gleaned from my own study, I laid the foundation for conceptualizing the *interdependent* nature of district and school level efforts to improve student achievement as an enactment of socio-cultural learning.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What district leadership practices drive districtwide instructional reform efforts?

2. What is the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts? How does district leadership support teacher leaders in this role?
3. According to the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, how do districtwide instructional reform efforts contribute to improved student outcomes?

Overview of the Research Design: Rationale for Population, Site, and Sample Selection

My study was qualitative in nature, focusing on the meaning, context, and process of engaging in collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships across the levels of instructional leadership previously discussed. Employing qualitative research allowed me to focus on “understand[ing] the nature of [the multiple] setting[s] [I studied] – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in [each] particular setting – and in [my] analysis be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting” (Patton, 1985).

The parameters of the study population were first defined by identifying two union high school districts located within Los Angeles County. The focus on high school districts allowed for a targeted study population in which the formal teacher leader role of department chairperson was firmly established. This focus on secondary school districts also provided a setting in which district leadership is more likely to take an active, collaborative approach to working with principals and teacher leaders in instructional improvement efforts, simply due to having to support a smaller, more manageable number of schools.

The basis of my site selection was predicated upon the value of studying comparable cases. In the context of this study, the criteria for these comparable cases were union high school districts located in an urban county on the west coast. Both districts were located within the

urban Los Angeles area, served at least 90% minority students, and demonstrated comparable English and mathematics proficiency rates (Appendix A). Essential to this study, both district offices were engaged in coordinated efforts to work closely with principals and teacher leaders to develop strategic plans for improving teaching and learning districtwide.

I employed multi-case sampling of the two comparable districts, focusing on three core instructional leadership levels. Recent district- and school-effects research reveals that instructional improvement efforts that are coordinated across all levels of leadership within a school district may be critical in increasing student achievement districtwide (Chrispeels et al., 2008; Copeland & Knapp, 2006; Daly & Finningan, 2012; Finnigan & Daly, 2010). Therefore, I narrowed my sample population to district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, as they represent the levels of leadership that bridge the school-to-district-office divide. According to Chrispeels, et al. (2008), “high levels of student achievement are possible when schools and the district act as coordinated units of change” (p. 730).

The district administrators were those in each district within the Educational Services Division who were directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and professional development. In Anthos Union High School District, the two administrators fulfilling such roles are the Director of Curriculum and Instructional Materials and the Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator. In Mairin Union High School District, the two administrators fulfilling such roles are the Director of Research and Curriculum and the Director of Categorical Programs.

I included all 10 of the comprehensive high school principals in my study districts when administering the initial questionnaire; however, I selected two from each district, representative of the highest and lowest performing schools in each district, for a total of four principals to interview. The inclusion of principals in my study was critical as the literature demonstrates that

they typically serve as the mediating force between the district office and teacher leaders.

Ultimately, “school leaders [particularly principals] ...shape the degree to which teachers’ talk focuses on district aims” (Coburn & Russell, 2008).

Finally, defining the identity of a teacher leader for this study was critical to designating the scope of this particular sample population. I chose to focus on the formalized teacher leader role of the department chairperson and the various forms of teacher leadership associated with this role in each district. Though this role has long been administrative in nature, primarily concerned with ensuring colleagues of like content have the requisite instructional materials, the position of department chairperson has evolved since the early 1990s to one inclusive of instructional leadership and coaching of peers to improve instruction (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Smylie et al, 2002). I administered a questionnaire to all department chairpersons at each of the comprehensive high schools within both study districts, totaling 150 teacher leaders. In line with an anticipated response rate of 30%, I collected 49 questionnaire responses, reflective of approximately 33% of the teacher leaders in both study districts.

I then interviewed two English department chairpersons and two Mathematics department chairpersons, representative of the highest performing and lowest performing schools in each study district, for a total of eight department chairperson interviews. I chose to focus my teacher leader interviews on both English and Mathematics as the ongoing work of districts to transition to the Common Core Standards in English-Language Arts and mathematics is critical to districtwide efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Data Collection Methods

In keeping with Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) assertion that “qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods hoping always to get a better fix on the subject

matter at hand” (p. 2), my study utilized document reviews, questionnaires, interviews, and observations to explore answers to the research questions posed. First, I conducted a document review utilizing a developed protocol exploring each district’s website to determine what structures for aligned district-school instructional leadership are publicly detailed (Appendix B). This information was collected for the sole purpose of determining if each district’s espoused critical linkages among district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders could be corroborated by subsequent questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Next, I administered an online questionnaire via Survey Monkey to all principals and department chairpersons in both of the study districts (Appendix C). The questionnaire took respondents approximately ten minutes to complete, and consisted of fixed-response questions, many of which were modeled after a survey previously administered by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) to measure perceptions regarding the impact of specific district conditions on student achievement. The questionnaire utilized skip logic in order to incorporate a limited number of questions that were unique to the respondents’ instructional leadership role. Overall, the questionnaire contained items that elicited responses from principals and teacher leaders in order to facilitate analysis of response variance between these distinct instructional leader groups.

The purpose of this tool was to gather data regarding these instructional leaders’ understanding of their districts’ practices that promote alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning, as well as their perceptions regarding the impact these practices may have on student achievement. The questionnaire also collected demographic data (such as instructional leader role, district, school, department, etc.) to assist in the disaggregated analysis of responses. Additionally, I utilized responses to make refinements to the interview protocol. Ultimately, the questionnaire provided for the collection of basic

quantitative data, specifically frequency data that further contextualized and provided statistical comparisons alongside the qualitative data collected through interviews and observations.

Following the questionnaire administration, I used a structured protocol to interview the two district administrators in each study district who were responsible for working with teacher leaders on curriculum and instruction, as well as the two strategically selected principals from each district (Appendix D). I concluded my interviews with the two strategically selected English department chairpersons and the two strategically selected mathematics department chairpersons from each district. The purpose of the individual interviews was to gather these instructional leaders' thoughts, perspectives, and feelings about the quality and effectiveness of their districts' practices that promote alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning, as well as their perceptions regarding the impact these practices may have on student achievement. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to conduct, and was conducted in the interviewee's office or classroom during the time of day that was most convenient to them.

Next, utilizing a semi-structured observation protocol, I observed at least two occurrences of the joint work engaged in by district and school site instructional leaders within each district at the course or content level; I also observed variations on content-specific and course-level professional learning communities engaged in at school sites in each study district (Appendix E). My observations lasted the length of these meetings, some of which took approximately one and a half to two hours, and others which lasted the length of the school day. These observations served as first-hand complements to the second-hand accounts of district-school alignment for the improvement of teaching and learning offered by both the questionnaire and interviews.

Most importantly, these observations provided the opportunity to document the organic process of these interactions within their natural contexts.

Finally, triangulation of the analysis of guiding instructional documents, questionnaires, interviews, and observation field notes allowed for the thematic coding of the strengths and weaknesses of each district's critical linkages established across the three levels of instructional leadership for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Triangulation is a vetted means of increasing validity and reducing chance associations when analyzing the data collected (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). This analysis further informed recommendations for other districts regarding promising linkages among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders in high school districts that are perceived by these stakeholder groups to positively affect student outcomes.

Data Analysis Methods

Document review. First, screenshots were taken of all online content reflective of the structure for partnering teacher leaders and principals with district leadership in efforts to improve teaching and learning, if it existed, for each district. Then, this content, along with each district's guiding instructional documents and agendas from districtwide leadership meetings were compared to information gathered from the questionnaire, observations, and interviews. Were the overt written and online documents – which would likely espouse collaborative decision-making inclusive of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders – supported by questionnaire responses, my observations, and interview responses?

Questionnaire. The questionnaire data was analyzed utilizing the basic quantitative functions of Survey Monkey. These data revealed patterns and frequency counts regarding such variables as the eight facets of relational trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Daly, 2004).

The questionnaire contained mostly Likert scale response types that lent themselves to frequency measurement (Fowler, 1995). The questionnaire also helped to establish foundational frequency patterns for other constructs reflective of district leadership practices that promote alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, the questionnaire reflected the perceptions of district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders regarding how alignment between district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning may contribute to improved student outcomes.

Interviews. All interviews of district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders were recorded utilizing an iPad recorder application. Each interview was subsequently transcribed through transcription services provided by rev.com. Upon receipt of each transcript, I thematically coded participant responses. The purpose of coding in qualitative research is to “fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 107). The codes for this study were housed in a digital qualitative codebook containing the names and definitions of codes and the corresponding instances gleaned from transcripts relevant to each code (Creswell, 2009). This coding was based upon the identification of emergent patterns regarding: 1) district leadership practices that promote alignment of district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning; 2) the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts and how district leadership supports teacher leaders in this role; and 3) perceptions of district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders regarding how alignment between district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning contribute to improved student outcomes. To ensure consistency regarding

the definition of thematic codes throughout the analysis of interview transcripts, I regularly compared my data with my code definitions (Creswell, 2009).

Observations. I scripted, utilizing Microsoft Word, all observations of district level leadership meetings that included teacher leaders. These meetings were also recorded utilizing an iPad recorder application, affording me the opportunity to refer back to specific interactions among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders as necessary. The observations were thematically coded to determine: 1) the extent to which district structures for aligning district office and school-based efforts to improve teaching and learning were implemented; 2) the extent to which teacher leaders actively participated in these collaborative meetings; and 3) the degree to which the meetings reflected a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship among the three levels of instructional leadership.

Role Management

Though I requested access to each of my study sites as a researcher and it was clear to my district points of contact that I was embarking upon this study for the purpose of earning my doctorate degree, it certainly did not go unnoticed that I am also a union high school district administrator myself. As a Director of Curriculum and Instruction whose work relies heavily upon cultivating and sustaining trusting relationships with principals and teacher leaders, I hoped for this study to inform my own professional practice. Therefore, it was important for me to ensure that my district office peers in this study believed in my assurance that I was there to learn from their effective practices with principals and teacher leaders, and not to judge the quality of their work relative to my own experience and skill in our role as district instructional leaders.

When working directly with principals and teacher leaders, I needed to plan for two scenarios: 1) that they had a positive working relationship with district leadership and saw their

work as collaborative and reciprocal; or 2) that they had a negative working relationship with district leadership and did not feel that they were valued enough by district leadership to be able to participate equitably in the decision-making process regarding efforts to improve teaching and learning. Particularly in planning for the latter scenario, I intended to share my own experience as both a department chairperson and two-time interim principal in order to let these study participants know that I was well aware of how it is to work with district leadership from their perspectives. I believed transparency about my past roles in my own district would help me to connect with these participants in particular, increasing both my credibility and their trust in me as a fellow educator.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

It was be critical for me to establish as trusting a relationship as possible with my study participants. That was precisely why I pursued all opportunities to build rapport and understand the specific structures and relationships across teacher leaders, principals, and district leadership in each of these districts now, prior to actually engaging in my study. I gained emotional access to my study participants, most especially those whom I would interview individually, by making it clear that the purpose of my study was to highlight best practices and recommend steps for growth in regard to the partnership between district leadership and school site leaders. Such trust also needed to be engendered by the district leadership with whom I worked, as how they portrayed my presence and the purpose of my study certainly influenced how open and honest principals and teacher leaders were in their interviews and through their questionnaires. Consequently, it was vital for me to listen carefully to my district points of contact to ensure my study provided them with insights and recommendations they could use to effectively improve their work with principals and teacher leaders.

Two validity threats stood to challenge the credibility of my study outcomes: reactivity and my own bias, particularly in the interpretation of data and subsequent drawing of conclusions. First, in addressing my own bias, I was careful not to view responses to the questionnaire and interview questions from the perspective of my own district experience. To combat this tendency, I employed the practice of peer review and had a trusted colleague share with me her analysis of questionnaire and interview responses. This aided in challenging any assumptions I held about the significance or meaning of specific responses. I was also aware of my likelihood to view events I would observe, such as districtwide department chairperson meetings, in light of how I structured and facilitated these meetings in my own district. To protect against this validity threat, I practiced my data collection method during informal observations scheduled in each of the study districts the spring and summer prior to the commencement of my study.

These informal observations also allowed me to build rapport with my study participants, which was one strategy I used to protect against reactivity, particularly in face-to-face interviews. I also strategically selected the principal and teacher leader interview participants in order to ensure I heard from the perspective of both high and low achieving schools in each study district. I was keenly aware that the district office administrators in my study may have felt the need to provide answers, on both the questionnaire and in their interviews, that reflected positively upon themselves and their work, as they were my professional peers. Principals may also have felt this pressure. Therefore, in addition to building rapport and employing strategic sampling, I triangulated my results across both data sources and data collection methods. Using systematic coding procedures, I examined questionnaire and interview responses across the data sources – district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders – to uncover the key themes about

the district office-school partnership that were clearly communicated by *all* three levels of instructional leadership. This protected against unbalanced reporting as to how the district office-school partnership was characterized by data source.

Ethical Issues

Since my study sites were part of a very small target population, I had to take specific care to reduce the likelihood that districts would be able to identify one another within my study. Protecting the anonymity of both study districts, which were representative of the five high school districts in Los Angeles county was a priority. Therefore, I assigned pseudonyms (Anthos Union High School District and Mairin Union High School District) to each study district. In addition, my study sample included individuals, particularly district leadership, and possibly the school site principals, who may have known each other through professional networks. Here, too, I assigned pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of these individuals. I also made sure not to discuss my observations of each district, share questionnaire results, nor reveal interview responses with any of my study participants. Finally, I attended to these particular ethical concerns through my role management strategies, which have been addressed above.

CHAPTER 4 KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examined the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts as supported by district leadership practices. A distributed leadership frame foregrounds how school-based teacher leaders brokered critical information between district leadership and teachers at large by serving as boundary spanners who bridged the organizational divide between school sites and the district office. This study furthermore sought to address the gap in the research regarding the dearth of models for collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships between school-based teacher leaders and district office leadership. Promising practices were revealed through the investigation of the following research questions:

1. What district leadership practices drive districtwide instructional reform efforts?
2. What is the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts? How does district leadership support teacher leaders in this role?
3. According to the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, how do districtwide instructional reform efforts contribute to improved student outcomes?

To answer these questions, I examined teacher leader roles as situated within a districtwide context in two urban high school districts. This study's findings are presented in seven sections. The first section provides a brief demographic, academic, and organizational overview of the two study districts, Anthos Union High School District and Mairin Union High School District, including a basic profile of each of the two focus schools within each study district. The next five sections present the key findings relative to the five critical linkages between teacher leaders and district leadership: relational, resource, structural, communication,

and ideological. Each finding is discussed relative to each of the two study districts and includes a cross-case analysis of the specific finding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The seventh and final section provides a summary of the key findings related to district leadership practices that bind an organization in pursuit of districtwide instructional reform.

Each finding is supported by evidence gleaned from multiple sources in order to triangulate key data points. Findings are informed by interviews of district administrators, principals, and department chairpersons; observations of districtwide course team meetings, districtwide department meetings, school site leadership meetings, school site department meetings, and school site course team meetings; questionnaires administered to department chairpersons and principals; and a review of district documents relative to districtwide instructional reform efforts.

Embedded within the analysis of each of these critical linkages is a detailed exploration of the specific role of teacher leaders in engaging teachers at large in these efforts, as well as of the means by which district leadership supported teacher leaders in this role. Finally, the key findings of this study provide insight into the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders regarding districtwide instructional reform efforts that leverage teacher leaders and their impact on student outcomes.

Two Study Districts: Demographic, Academic, and Organizational Overview

Anthos Union High School District demographics and academic snapshot. Anthos Union High School District serves just over 13,000 students in five comprehensive high schools, one continuation school, one alternative studies program, and one adult school. African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students combined comprise 4% of the student population, while the vast majority, 87%, identify as

Hispanic or Latino, followed distantly by the 9% of students who identify as White. Nearly 69% of district students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced-price meals. Additionally, 10% of district students are classified as English Language Learners, and 10% are identified as students with disabilities.

Having achieved significant academic gains over the past decade, Anthos is looked upon by other high school districts in the county as a model for scalable districtwide actions demonstrating marked academic improvement for its students. Under the former accountability reporting system, Anthos demonstrated a 168-point gain on the Academic Performance Index (API), from 622 in 2003 to 790 in 2013, just shy of the state's goal of 800. Even more notable in light of this study's focus on districtwide instructional reform efforts is the fact that all five of the district's comprehensive high schools are in the 90th to 98th percentiles for API growth in the state, signifying the presence of an organization-wide approach to improvement. In addition, Anthos Union High School District has managed to significantly narrow the achievement gap; the difference between the highest and lowest performing students was reduced from 25 percent in 2000 to 9 percent in 2012.

Anthos focus schools: Sydney and Sidon High Schools. In examining how the instructional work teacher leaders engaged in with district leadership was communicated to all teachers at individual school sites, two schools within Anthos UHSD were selected for site observations and interviews of principals and teacher leaders. With demographics mirroring those of the district, Sydney High School stood as the district's highest performing and only non-Title I funded school. In 2013, Sydney earned an API of 798, eight points above the district's average API. Representing the other end of the district spectrum, Sidon High School was home to a Hispanic student population of 95% in comparison to the district's demographic majority of

87%. Sidon also served a larger population of students with disabilities (14%) and an increased number of English Language Learners (15%) in comparison to the district (10%) relative to each of these critical subgroups.

Anthos Union High School District organizational profile. The history and evolution of the district's predominant organizational characteristics relative to the implementation of districtwide instructional reform are detailed throughout other sections of this chapter as evidence marshaled in support of key findings. However, the organizational overview of Anthos UHSD provided here is meant to furnish readers with a contextualized lens through which to view the key findings.

In 2003, Anthos officially redefined the role of the department chairperson, shifting the focus of this teacher leader position from one immersed in the management of people and resources to one dedicated to instructional leadership. Revised responsibilities highlighted instructional supervision, curriculum development, and the facilitation of collaboration within and across grade levels. In order to support this ideological shift in the role of formal teacher leaders, Anthos also introduced the role of course lead in 2003 to assist department chairpersons in the critical work of administering course-level common assessments and analyzing the data that emerged from these assessments.

Currently, course leads exist for 18 courses within the English-Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and world languages content areas. In addition to ensuring that teachers could easily access exams and scan answer sheets, course leads were also tasked with the facilitation of discussions among their course-alike colleagues focused on the analysis of student performance in order to identify students in need of intervention and to share best practices for teaching that would contribute to increased student achievement of the standards.

Of the district's 474 certificated teachers, 90 serve as course leads, and of this number, 25 dually fulfill the role of department chairperson.

To coordinate the work of course leads on a districtwide scale, Anthos introduced the role of curriculum and assessment support coach in 2008. This role was initially filled by a classroom teacher with three release periods, but as the role of course lead grew to become the cornerstone of Anthos' systematic approach to improving teaching and learning, the need to increase district-level support for the work of course leads became clear. In 2013, Anthos added a full-release Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator to support the work of the district's expanded cadre of six Curriculum and Assessment Coaches.

Mairin Union High School District demographics and academic snapshot. Mairin Union High School District serves 9,500 students in five comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school, one community day school, and one adult school. African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Filipino, Pacific Islander, and White students combined comprise only 3% of the student population, while the vast majority, 78% identify as Hispanic or Latino, followed by the 19% of students who identify as Asian. Just over 90% of district students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced-price meals. Additionally, nearly 22% of district students are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), and 11% are identified as students with disabilities. Regarding academics, under the former accountability reporting system, Mairin demonstrated a 146-point gain on the Academic Performance Index (API), from 592 in 2003 to 738 in 2013, closing in on the state's goal of 800.

Mairin Union High School District organizational profile. As with Anthos, the history and evolution of Mairin's predominant organizational characteristics relative to the implementation of districtwide instructional reform are detailed throughout other sections of this

chapter as evidence marshaled in support of key findings. The organizational overview of Mairin UHSD provided here is meant to furnish readers with a contextualized lens through which to view the key findings.

Akin to Anthos, Mairin's most recent iteration of the department chairperson's job description, developed in 2010, stresses instructional leadership, particularly in the promotion of effective teaching strategies to ensure student mastery of content standards. Of the 16 responsibilities detailed in the job description, those related to the managerial role of the department chairperson are listed as number 15, just above the task of participating in the interviewing of new hires. However, prior to this revision of the department chairperson's job description, Mairin instituted the position of content specialist in 2004. Despite focusing on the critical aspect of using data from common formative benchmark assessments to inform instruction, the existence of the content specialist position independent of the department chairperson position was short-lived. In 2006, the work of the content specialist simply became that of the department chairperson. As such, the department chairperson/content specialist worked closely with colleagues fulfilling the role of instructional course lead, a position introduced in 2009. The instruction course lead was responsible for coordinating the effective implementation of course pacing guides and serving as a leader in the data team process at school sites. The department chairperson/content specialist was to work with the instructional course leads in her department to monitor data team meetings and organize and share best practices with the department at large. Of the district's 411 certificated teachers, 20 serve dually as content specialist and department chairperson, while an additional 70 teachers fulfill the role of course lead at their respective school sites.

Structural Linkages

Both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts had clearly established structures in which relational linkages and resource partnerships between district leadership and teacher leaders would have the opportunity to thrive. The degree to which these formal organizational structures enabled teacher leaders to engage as social networks of professionals for the improvement of teaching and learning varied. However, the intraorganizational ties these structures fostered did assist in the development of learning partnerships across school sites within each district. The following analysis of structural linkages in both school districts establishes the context in which the remaining four linkages – relational, resource, communication, and ideological – can be examined.

This study revealed the following key findings relative to structural linkages: 1) District leadership can increase the effectiveness of districtwide structures as a means of driving instructional reform efforts by focusing their work on the technical core and permitting the structures to be adaptive in nature; 2) Perceptions of trust related to district leadership impact the extent to which teacher leaders report districtwide structures to be effective in driving instructional reforms; and, 3) Districtwide structures that establish a direct link between district leadership and teacher leaders, not requiring the hierarchical inclusion of school site administrators, compel teacher leaders to act as boundary spanners.

For each district case study, this section provides a descriptive portrait of the central district-level structure that ties teacher leaders directly to district leadership. Then, evidence gleaned from multiple iterations of coding of interviews and observations, substantiated by questionnaire responses and document analysis, speaks to the rationale for and effectiveness of the structure, including the impact the structure is perceived to have on improving student

outcomes. The section next discloses how the structure in place within each district cultivates distributed leadership and the extent to which the structure fostered teacher leaders as boundary spanners in service of advancing districtwide reform efforts. Embedded throughout this section is an analysis of how organizational trust impacts the effectiveness of each district's structure and the degree to which teacher leaders can span the real and perceived divide between school sites and the district office. Finally, a cross-case analysis of the key findings relative to structural linkages concludes the section.

The best practices structure in Anthos Union High School District. In 2004, following the introduction of course leads and the redefinition of the department chair position, Anthos introduced the concept of Best Practices. Though the evolution of the districtwide structure is addressed within this section as the key findings are closely analyzed, the current iteration of Best Practices allowed for course leads from across the district to meet for full release days to analyze data from common assessments and share, modify, and adapt instructional best practices and materials to meet the needs of students as determined by the data analysis. Teams of course leads were scheduled to meet three times a year and had already spent a full week during the summer working collaboratively on course-level curriculum and assessments prior to the observations conducted for this study.

A descriptive portrait of best practices days. Four day-long observations informed this descriptive portrait of the critical elements of Anthos' Best Practices structure in which course leads engaged in districtwide course-level teamwork focused on assessment results and instructional strategies,. A day spent observing the Best Practices days with the English 1, English 3, Algebra 1 (10-12), or Algebra 2 course leads were remarkably similar. Course leads began their day together at 8:00 am in one of the two newly renovated professional development

rooms at the district office, located on the campus of one of the five comprehensive high schools. It was clear by the ease of chatter and light-hearted atmosphere among each of the teams of course leads that their relationships had burgeoned over the time they had already spent working collectively.

A curriculum and assessment support coach or the curriculum and assessment coordinator, always present to facilitate the work, began the Best Practices day promptly yet unceremoniously just at or after the eight o'clock hour. Because each course lead was also accompanied by another teacher from his or her school site, introductions ensued, always coupled with the sharing of "one good thing," be it personal or professional. Personal connections acknowledged, the facilitator shifted the focus of the group to the day's agenda.

On a shared GoogleDoc, leads had previously ranked agenda items in order of priority based upon their school site perspective and needs. The agenda items never varied: 1) data from previous assessments; 2) next assessment; 3) share strategies with feedback discussion; 4) create new common material/resources (audio and video clips); 5) share technology apps and resources; and, 6) other. With the ranking of agenda items projected for all to review on an interactive whiteboard, the facilitator guided the teachers' next steps with such instructions as, "Work with your school site partner to determine how many minutes you would allocate to each item." Pairs typed their suggested time allocations directly into the GoogleDoc. The facilitator then employed subtle consensus strategies to solidify the allocation of time, averaging suggested time allocations per agenda item and asking such questions as, "Can we agree to start with an hour to look at our assessment data?" The course of their work collaboratively established, the real work of the day ensued.

The core of each team's work involved a balance of data analysis, decision-making, and

resource development. The English 1 team began by tackling the development of teacher instructions for their next assessment, a performance task comprised of multiple documents students must synthesize in response to a writing prompt. Within the 45 minutes allotted to this agenda item, 7 of the 12 teachers present verbalized their contributions to this effort, though all were visibly actively engaged in analyzing the documents for the purpose of developing the teacher resources. One teacher proposed, “What if like SBAC we put together some guiding questions for teachers to help guide their kids?” Colleagues nodded their assent and chimed in with such phrases as “sounds good” and “I like that.” Looking for times throughout the day when confirming consensus was needed, the facilitator took the opportunity to ask, “Does the team want to conquer this right now? I might even make the suggestion to split into teams to each take a document and develop the guiding questions.” The team agreed to commit time now to developing the teacher resource, and allowed the facilitator to assign pairs to each of the documents.

The Algebra 1 10-12 Best Practices progressed in kind. When the team analyzed data from their previous assessment, the facilitator asked guiding questions, such as, “What do you see in number four?” Teachers focused their attention on the interactive whiteboard where the assessment’s item summary indicated the percentage of students at each school site who answered the question correctly. The facilitator toggled between the item summary and the exam view detailing the actual test questions as teachers made comments such as “most students knew B was one of the answers” and shared possible explanations for why students could have answered the question incorrectly. After the team analyzed five questions in depth, the facilitator prepared the team to move to the next agenda item, and asked, “Anything else standing out to you before we go on to Unit 6?” Yielding to the will of the team, the facilitator engaged teachers

in the analysis of two additional test items. The facilitator brought closure to this agenda item when stating, “I want to move us. Are there any major concerns? If so, use the GoogleDoc to note what you want to talk about...we will refer to this in the summer for any additional comments.”

Embedded within each Best Practices was time to explicitly address how insights from assessment data analysis, resources developed, and instructional decisions made by the district-level Best Practices team would be shared with all teachers of the course at each school site. Information was clearly expected to be communicated to all teachers through the course leads, as indicated by this reference from the facilitator of the Algebra 1 10-12 Best Practices: “If [there are] any major concerns [with the assessment] use the GoogleDoc to note what you want to talk about in the summer after you discuss this at your site.” During the English 1 Best Practices, the facilitator told teachers, “Turn to a partner and discuss your plan to take this data back to your sites. How? When? Record this on the GoogleDoc, please.” This explicit emphasis emerged during the English 3 Best Practices as well, as the facilitator closed the day-long collaboration with this ticket-out-the-door: “How and when will you take back what you learned today to your site?” Again, course leads’ responses were recorded for reference on the shared GoogleDoc.

Rationale for the best practices structure. According to a document entitled *The Anthos Union High School Story*, “dispersed leadership” was one of the 10 tenets from which the district refused to deviate in its efforts to drive districtwide instructional reforms. In light of this tenet, Anthos recognized the need to establish a structure through which leadership could be distributed and whereby the district would have the “ability to involve many teachers in small...but important ways to grow a significant critical mass of strong teacher leaders.”

This tenet was reinforced by one of Anthos’ three non-negotiables as proclaimed by the

superintendent and documented in the district’s internal publication, *A Guide to Excellence in Teaching and Learning*: collaboration. The principal of Sidon High School confirmed the weight this non-negotiable carried within the district, stating, “there is an expectation, both at the district and here, that collaboration is expected. This is not a district where you can be a fabulous teacher but not share.” Ultimately, the implementation of the Best Practices structure for engaging course leads from across the district in joint instructional work was integral to a districtwide approach to improving teaching and learning, as it moved schools “away from working as independent high schools to schools who were inter and intra synergistically collaborative.”

However, Best Practices were not always structured as day-long collaboratives. The Algebra 2 course lead from Sydney High School, a veteran teacher leader of 18 years, recalled, “It [didn’t] happen overnight. These Best Practices meetings have been going on for awhile and they developed into something much more than they were five years ago.” The director of staff development detailed the evolution of the Best Practices model:

Originally, there were two-hour blocks, all in the same day, so Science from 7:30 to 9:30, English from 10:00 to 12:00, etcetera. Teachers sat at course-alike tables and we had the days twice each year. In 2008, we switched to Best Practices Dinners, so each content area had a different evening and we met from 3:15 until 5:45 and fed them dinner. Teachers still sat at course-alike tables twice each year. In 2010 we went to half-days for each course-alike team...In 2012, about half of course-alike teams asked if they could stay all day instead of just half day for Best Practices so that they could get more done, and we agreed. By 2013, all courses wanted full day Best Practices – half days were gone forever.

It was evident that teacher leaders themselves recognized both the need for and effectiveness of the Best Practices work. Indeed, what made this structure increasingly powerful for Anthos was the fact that teachers, not district nor site administrators, were empowered to make changes to this structure. Though the concept of Best Practices work was initiated by district leadership, it

began as an invitation, not a directive. Flyers for Best Practices Dinners in 2009 enticed course leads to share in pizza and “root beer” while analyzing common assessments, while the half-day Best Practices calendar for the 2011-2012 school year reflected nine courses meeting throughout the year, as only about half of the core courses had bought in to the significance of the work.

The key to increasing teacher leader buy-in was the district’s tight/loose approach. Anthos was tight on three non-negotiables: collaboration, common assessments, and directed intervention (the third one of these was not addressed by this study). They were loose on how school staffs decided to meet these expectations. The director of staff development simply stated, “How they get there is like the road to New York. How they get to New York is fine, just get there.” This confidence in the power of diligently pursuing what is tightly defined by the district to allow for flexibility and innovation at the school site and teacher level was reiterated by the principal of Sidon High School: “I can be really loose with allowing [teachers] to absolutely do what needs to happen as guided by the Best Practices work at the district level.”

Effectiveness of the best practices structure. When asked in general if they believed the districtwide Best Practices structure to be effective, district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders were emphatic in their affirmation. Questionnaire data revealed that 96.4% of the 38 Course Leads who responded believed the Best Practices days to be effective in aligning instructional direction across all schools in the district. The English 1 Course Lead from Sydney High School reinforced this data, commenting, “I think they’re super important because they really set the tone for everything that we do.” The Algebra 1 10-12 Course Lead from Sidon High School agreed, “[They are] very effective. There are times that we as participants are like, ‘What are we doing and why are we doing this?’... And now it’s like, ‘Oh, they had figured this

out and I'm just getting it.'...They really are time well spent. It's nice to be able to work with other teachers."

Observation data also supported this claim regarding the capacity of the Best Practices structure to establish and sustain the focus of the district's instructional work. All four Best Practices days observed held tightly to the established agenda items – data from previous assessments, next assessment, share strategies with feedback discussion, create new common material/resources, and share technology apps and resources – all of which align directly with two of the district's non-negotiables: collaboration and common assessments. As one course lead wrote when given the opportunity to add comments at the end of the questionnaire: "Strong and consistent...district subject-alike meetings are critical."

Principals' questionnaire data validated this belief in the effectiveness of the Best Practices days as well, as all five of the district's comprehensive high school principals indicated this structure to be highly effective. When interviewed, the principal of Sydney High School noted:

I think that's been a really good model for us...When people sit and look at scores together, if you're doing really well and I've not done very well at all, eventually I'm going to come around to where I'm going to adopt some of the things that you're doing or at least ask for some materials and start to share that way. It tightens itself up without [administrators] having to do it.

To drill deeper into the perceived effectiveness of the districtwide Best Practices structure, the interview protocol asked district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders if engaging in this collaborative work to improve instruction was more effective as a districtwide endeavor, as opposed to each school engaging in this work independently, and if so, why. In Anthos, all eight interviewees affirmed the increased effectiveness of having a districtwide structure in which to tackle this work. The curriculum and assessment coordinator stressed the calibration of

instructional expectations, stating, “Having teachers sharing what they’re doing so that no teacher is an outlier in their approach to curriculum, or their approach to standards...has great effect...There’s nothing crazy going on and the expectations are similar across the line.” The purpose of the districtwide approach was not to strip teachers of their freedom as practitioners, as instructional practices were far from universally mandated. However, the sharing of best practices served to more strongly unite teachers around sound standards-based instruction and assessment.

The director of staff development highlighted the power of the intra-organizational ties for sharing best practices, noting, “The consistency and coherency comes just from those strong lateral networks across the district and that sharing across the district isn’t, ‘This is working. You guys all do it,’ but, ‘Hey, that will work. Let’s try it.’” The director clearly believed in the power of a districtwide structure that fostered collaboration to breed both consistency and coherency in instructional practices. Professional networks of teachers across the district evolved through an invitation, not a mandate, to share and unite around best practices related to assessment and instruction.

Both Anthos principals confirmed the district leadership’s perspective that the districtwide approach was key to driving instructional reform efforts. The principal of Sydney, the highest performing school in the district, stated:

We have benefited from all the different people around the district who have different ideas and different expertise and ...we’re constantly looking at each other to see if we’re measuring up. If you’re in isolation, it’s very easy to feel things are going well and that whatever test scores, whatever data you get, it’s just a function of who walks through the door, not of what affect you can have in helping them achieve that higher level.

The principal of Sidon High School responded in kind, emphasizing her perspective as the one charged with leading the lowest performing school in the district, stating, “I’m at the school

where the students are definitely coming in with some deficits...To not be able to take advantage of the group think and the collective strengths of our district, it would just make no sense at all.” This principal believed in the power of the districtwide structure for implementing instructional reform efforts to increase student access to an equitable education, despite socioeconomic status and academic deficits. Indeed, both Anthos principals were quick to relate the effectiveness of the districtwide best practices structure directly to students.

All four teacher leaders interviewed mirrored the sentiments of district leadership and site principals. The thoughts of the Algebra 2 course lead at Sidon High School were echoed by the Algebra 1 10-12 course lead’s comment highlighting the interdependent nature of the role. She remarked, “I’m not an independent contractor...I think it’s important to hear other people’s opinions because...you’re building. You’re sharing your resources.” This course lead recognized how the districtwide structure directly fostered resource linkages, a critical connection between the district office and school sites discussed in detail within a subsequent section.

Additionally, two other Anthos course leads recognized how the districtwide structure helped teachers to view both their instructional challenges and the students themselves through a common lens. The English 3 course lead at Sidon commented, “It does give us a really good idea of how other schools are dealing with material and challenges that come up.” Likewise, the English 1 course lead from Sydney reflected, “You can definitely see things from a different perspective and see how even though we’re different schools, the kids are all the same. We all have the same struggles.” Ultimately, the districtwide Best Practices structure provided all teachers access to the material and human resources afforded by a broader professional network engaged in by course leads in comparison to what they would have access to within their

independent school sites.

To drill even deeper into the perceived effectiveness of the districtwide Best Practices structure, both the interview and questionnaire protocols asked whether district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders believed the Best Practices work contributed to improving student outcomes. According to questionnaire data, 71.4% of teacher leader respondents believed districtwide Best Practices significantly contributed to improving student outcomes, and the remaining 28.6% indicated that Best Practices made somewhat of a contribution. The English 1 course lead for Sydney High School validated this point by recalling research the Anthos Superintendent had shared with teachers, remarking, “They even showed us the data how when teachers have more efficacy or how when they’re all aligned and things...How that’s like the number one determination of student success...Demographics don’t determine destiny.” Reflecting the power of the collaborative work of Best Practices, she added, “It’s by working together, we’re able to better serve the populations because we can see what’s happening around us and better address everyone’s needs.”

Questionnaire data showed that all five Anthos principals also indicated a belief that the Best Practices work significantly contributed to improving student outcomes. Having served in the district for 15 years, the principal of Sydney High School had been involved in the decision-making process that led to the creation of the course lead position in 2003. Having witnessed the evolution of this distributed leadership model and the corresponding structural implementations to support it, he adamantly affirmed the positive impact of Best Practices on student outcomes, stating, “If you can get everybody up to...a minimum level of instruction...then your student achievement data and how kids experience school is going to improve...[Best Practices] is the synergy of everybody getting better together. It’s absolutely key to what’s going on here.”

The principal of Sidon High School expressed a similar valuing of Best Practices. She commented, “When you have all of those teachers coming together...to look at common core and the practice test, and then to develop those materials, that's always going to give you a better product than if you were to do it yourself.” However, she also highlighted how the Best Practices structure ultimately enabled teachers to spend their daily work time focusing on the nuances of instruction. She added, “Because you've been able to create that process, and they've honed it down fairly well...Now they can spend more time focusing on what good instruction looks like...all of that collectively...I would say absolutely that would have an impact.” As a result of the work completed within the time and outcome-based framework created by the districtwide structure of best practices, teachers spent less time independently creating and analyzing assessments and developing curriculum. Instead, teachers spent more time within their workday refining instructional practices that would directly impact student outcomes.

Trust and the extent to which the best practices structure compelled teacher leaders to act as boundary spanners. Perhaps the most unanticipated finding of this study was the intentional exclusion of principals from direct participation in the Best Practices structure. The Best Practices structure established a direct link between district leadership and teacher leaders, not requiring the hierarchical inclusion of the school site principals or other site administrators. Indeed, during none of the Best Practices observations were any site administrators ever present. As stated simply by the director of staff development, “The principals aren't really involved in a lot of this work. They have dialogue [with Course Leads], but they've kind of turned it over and trusted us...That's good and it's in line with the district mission.” The principal of Sidon confirmed how the structure of Best Practices reflected district and site administrators' ideological alignment, commenting, “as an administrative team, a few years ago we developed

what our mission statement was, and it was building leadership capacity amongst our teacher leaders.”

When interviewed, both Anthos principals also conveyed the vital role trust played in enabling the structure of Best Practices to work effectively without the involvement of site administrators. The principal of Sidon High School recalled a site administrator training on common assessments led by the curriculum and assessment coordinator:

I remember this one slide he had up, and it said something to the effect of, ‘What is the administrator's role in looking at common assessment analysis?’ And then he put up a slide and it said, ‘None.’ For some administrators, I could see them being like, ‘What? Of course, we're going to be involved!’ But, for many of us, we're like, ‘No, that's great.’ If we could trust our teachers, which we do...we wouldn't need to be in the room when they were having those conversations.

Despite excluding principals and other site administrators from the formal structure of Best Practices, the district had established a structure for consistently conveying the outcomes of Best Practices days to all stakeholders. Questionnaire data revealed that all five principals accessed minutes and resources from Best Practices through GoogleDocs and Moodle, and essential decisions made in Best Practices were also conveyed by district leadership at principals’ weekly Superintendent Council meetings. It was clear that principals trusted teacher leaders to make critical instructional decisions and that, as clarified by the principal of Sydney High School, “When you got really good people...who understand where they’re supposed to be going and then they’ve got coaching from [the district], our job is maintenance and support.”

Teacher leaders also reinforced trust as a driving force behind the effectiveness of a structure that excludes site administration. Commenting on the role of principals in Best Practices, the English 1 course lead for Sydney High School stated, “They don't really play too much of a role, it just comes straight through...They really trust us just to be doing the right

things and to know that we're getting the guidance of the district.” Indeed, trust is the crucial element that undergirds each of the five critical linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders, and such relational trust within and across levels of leadership in Anthos UHSD is examined in greater depth in the section on findings related to relational linkages.

Yet, as a result of this non-hierarchical structure, teacher leaders have become essential boundary spanners within the broader organizational structure of the district, tasked with bridging both the real and perceived gaps between school sites and the district office. In Anthos, strong relational trust and ideological alignment between the district office and school sites served to mitigate teacher leaders’ perceptions – usually ideological or relational – of a divide between these two levels of the organization. Instead, course leads expressed an understanding of how the structure of Best Practices days and their leading roles in this work required them to bridge the very real structural divide between the district office and school sites, given that site administration was not included. The Algebra 2 course lead for Sydney High School reflected upon her dual role on the frontlines of both district- and site-level instructional work:

I think the primary responsibility is to be the liaison between what's happening at the district and then to what's happening at your site...As course lead, you are wearing two hats in a way because you're on this district committee and you're participating with them and you're having to come to agreements with people from all five high schools.

Building upon this theme, the Algebra 1 10-12 course lead for Sidon High School emphasized the direct link district leadership explicitly made to course leads for the purpose of advancing instructional reforms. She stated, “They don’t go to the principal hoping that the principal will tell me. They will come to me. To make sure, tell your people we need to do this...They’re not micro-managing, but the direct connection is there.” Ultimately, working within a structure that directly linked them to district leadership was an expectation on the part of course leads.

In the absence of site administration in this structure, the teacher leaders inherently became the individuals whose responsibility it was to span the boundaries between district leadership and school site teachers. None of the four course leads interviewed expressed any reservations regarding their boundary spanning role, instead indicating high levels of self-efficacy. For instance, the Sydney English 1 course lead affirmed:

Being a course lead makes you the expert in that course... We're really strong as a district team... that leads into having a strong base [at the school site] too because everyone in the district agrees and then we come [back to the school] and it's easy to make everyone else see eye to eye because of that.

Ultimately, how teacher leaders managed this boundary spanning task was accomplished through the communication linkages established by district leadership that teacher leaders then expanded upon in order to connect with teachers at their school sites.

The content specialists structure in Mairin Union High School District. When Mairin introduced the role of the content specialist in 2004, it was presented as a position separate from that of department chairperson. The evolution of both the position itself and the districtwide structure for linking content specialists across schools is addressed within this section through the close analysis of key findings. However, the current iteration of content specialists' professional development allowed for these teacher leaders from across the five comprehensive high schools to meet three Wednesdays a month for two hours. The flyer detailing meeting dates for the current school year made clear the purpose of the content specialists' work by highlighting the word "FOCUS" followed by this excerpt from the Common Core State Standards: "the Common Core State Standards are the first step in providing our young people with a high-quality education."

A descriptive portrait of content specialists professional development sessions. Four two-hour observations of content specialists' professional development sessions – districtwide

content-level teamwork engaged in by department chairpersons in English, mathematics, science, and social studies – informed this descriptive portrait of the critical elements of Mairin’s content specialists’ structure. For the purpose of this study, observations focused on the English-Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics subgroups within these sessions, as ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies sessions occurred simultaneously within the same room.

Every afternoon spent observing content specialists sessions presented a unique agenda; however, it was clear that content-specific collaboration was intended as the focus of the session’s work. Content specialists began their almost-weekly Wednesday afternoons together at 1 p.m., the time within the school day afforded to them by an additional release period specifically for their content specialist work. All schools in the district agreed to couple this release period with the content specialists’ release period for dually serving as department chairpersons, and therefore, the four core content specialists at each site were free of teaching duties every afternoon. As each content specialist took his or her seat at large rectangular tables with subject-alike peers in the Professional Development Center located on the campus of one of the five comprehensive high schools, comfortable conversation ensued among all, evidence that relationships were well-established within these peer groups.

Present to facilitate every content specialist session, the director of curriculum began the meeting just at or after 1 p.m. After welcoming the group, he opened the floor for “shout-outs,” a standing agenda item he added this year to continue to build relationships among those engaged in this work, as well as to take the much-needed opportunity to celebrate the ongoing successes occurring at each of the school sites. Accomplishments recognized, the director shifted the focus of the group to the rest of the afternoon’s agenda, which consisted of three to five items written on the whiteboard at the front of the room. Varied topics were sandwiched within an

agenda posting the standing first and last items, “shout-outs” and “content collaboration,” respectively. The length of time non-content-specific items accounted for within the two-hour agenda varied between 16 and 35 minutes, leaving anywhere from one hour and 25 minutes to one hour and 45 minutes for content-specific collaboration.

When asked how the agenda for each weekly content specialist meeting was determined, the director of curriculum explained that one meeting a month was set aside strictly for Common Core in which the instructional coaches or the director of technology and other support services staff would provide a specific workshop. The director of curriculum remarked, “Other than that, with their outcomes, I look at it and next steps, I embed it into the next agenda if it’s an open agenda so that that way they stay the course so they see this is what we need to work on.” Thus, the general focus of the content-specific collaboration in both ELA and Mathematics was driven by each team of content specialists.

During each observation, once business items were addressed, the director transitioned the specialists to their content-specific work with an announcement similar to the one made at the initial observation: “From here, I will give you time to collaborate.” Here, his role shifted from facilitator to that of both an observer and a participant. The director spent the remainder of the meeting time rotating among the four core content area teams. During the majority of his ELA rotations, the director listened to discussions and indicated support for such things as the sharing districtwide of course readers developed by the Anthea High School English department. He also contributed to the debate as to whether or not copyright issues precluded them from being posted online.

When with the mathematics content specialists, the director was required to take a more active role as a central participant. Having transitioned from the traditional mathematics

pathway to integrated mathematics last year, teachers were still divided on curriculum. The current adoption of both Pearson (a more traditional approach to mathematics instruction) and CPM (College Preparatory Mathematics, an inquiry, problem-based approach to mathematics instruction) was the central topic during each observation, as the school board now required a uniform adoption for the following school year. As one content specialist advocated for yet another curriculum as the most viable option, the director expressed apprehension, noting, “This would be three curriculums in three years.” Though he did not directly discount this option, he worked to mediate the discussion before leaving to join the science team.

Observations of portions of the ELA and mathematics meeting times when the director was not present to observe or participate revealed moderately focused collaboration time. During the second observation, the ELA content specialists covered a variety of items within the first 41 minutes of content-specific collaboration time. One specialist opened the session with a discussion on “writing an ERWC (Expository Reading and Writing Course) literature-based module for the lower levels” as the district had just begun this year to offer this CSU-developed course for seniors. As three of the five ELA content specialists continued to discuss this item, the focus shifted from the curriculum itself to a related issue, one specialist asking, “What percent of your seniors take ERWC? We have more AP and ERWC than 4P.” This then led to a discussion about Advanced Placement retention issues. Simultaneously, the other two ELA content specialists present discussed the course readers developed by the Anthea High School English department. Mathematics content collaboration ensued in kind, as the team continually revisited the curriculum adoption debate. During the fourth observation, as three specialists fervently engaged in dialogue, three other specialists listened while simultaneously making revisions to upcoming benchmark exams. One specialist expressed concern regarding the

renewal of the Pearson adoption, noting, “We don’t have enough data from Pearson yet this year [to determine it’s effectiveness],” while the content specialist from Sammi High School, an advocate for the CPM curriculum, simply stated, “But the board says we have to go with Pearson for the next three years.” However, it was the instructional coach from Sammi High School who spoke to the heart of the struggle, acknowledging, “With inconsistency between school sites, it doesn’t matter what we adopt. Our pacing is all different. Change is stressful on teachers...As a district, we have to be united; we aren’t sharing.” Ultimately, without the director of curriculum present to either facilitate or observe each of the content groups, the the collaboration time ensued with a moderate focus on specific instructional reform efforts.

Rationale for the content specialists structure. The content specialist’s existence as an independent role was short-lived, and in 2006 the work of the content specialist was simply subsumed by the department chairperson. The director of curriculum cited “differing philosophies and power struggles” as the reason for the melding of positions. The ELA content specialist for Anthea High School, a 25-year veteran of the district, told a similar story, remarking, “[If] you’re going to pick someone else [other than the department chairperson] to be the content specialist, then you’re going to have a power struggle between who do I follow, the department chair or the content specialist?”

Despite this merging of positions, the individuals fulfilling this dual role still carried both official titles. They were primarily identified as department chairpersons at the site level and as content specialists at the district level. When the mathematics content specialist for Anthea High School learned of the duality of his role, he was surprised, commenting, “When they gave me the job as department chair, they said, ‘Oh, yeah, you’re the content specialist now, too.’ I still

haven't figured out what the distinction is between the two...Hasn't changed my job; still doing the same thing."

According to the principal of Sammi High School, a veteran of the district, "The content specialists' original concept was with the CSTs...Let's have a representative from every school and come up with some common formative assessments." Indeed, this description of the content specialists' purpose was in direct alignment with the district's core values, as communicated in the document entitled *The Mairin Union High School District Performance Meter*. The role's focus on assessment correlated to the district value of "perfecting a focus on results." The districtwide structure established for linking content specialists across school sites likewise correlated to another one of the district's core values, "building a collaborative culture." Ultimately in service of the district's third core value, "ensuring all students learn," Mairin viewed the districtwide content specialists structure as a critical element in pursuing the district's mission to serve "every student, every minute, every day."

However, the current structure of the content specialists' collaborative work was being considered for revisions. As noted by the principal of Anthea High School, "Because the Common Core structure has changed so much, because they were focused on the standards before, do we really need to look at reworking what a content specialist really does?" The principal of Sammi High School, a self-proclaimed "pro-content specialist," expressed his concern regarding the possibility of eliminating the position, stating, "I just know what we've been doing has been highly successful. Now when we go away from that, how is that going to be? Are we going backwards?" However, this concern about the future of the content specialist position was only raised by principals, as none of the four teacher leaders interviewed referenced any such discussions.

What seemed more likely was the possible restructuring of the content specialist work, as noted by both principals, and alluded to by the director of curriculum. The director described his vision for the future of the Content Specialists:

I like to continue with the content specialist meetings perhaps where they're not meeting as an entire group on a weekly basis but have them come together as an entire group once a month with the Instructional Coaches, but break off or they meet weekly but with the course leads instead. Then you get in to true district-wide collaboration and it isn't just a site-based professional learning community but a district-wide professional community taking place. I see that happening within the next two years.

New to the position this year, one of the first structural changes the director made was to institute some initial districtwide meetings of course leads. He noted how this action was in services of expanding the district's distributed leadership model, stating, "You get to see and hear powerful conversations with course leads, you're truly creating leaders so that that leadership is spread across and they understand the responsibilities."

Effectiveness of the content specialists structure. When asked in general if they believed the content specialists structure to be effective, district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders indicated that the structure was mostly effective; however, both questionnaire data and interview responses revealed reservations. Questionnaire data showed that 75% of the content specialists who responded believed the districtwide content specialist meetings to be effective or extremely effective, while 25% found this structure to be only somewhat effective.

The director of curriculum cited the positive impact of the districtwide Content Specialist structure, stating, "They want more in reality a form of consistency because schools have done things so differently and they were silos for so long and having someone at the district now bringing them in and now giving a directive that, yes, we will all use a common textbook, etc." The director of categorical programs echoed this positive sentiment, affirming, "What we're

trying to have happen is that we're working as a team instead of different silos." The content specialist structure played a critical part in an organizational shift from a district of loosely connected schools to one where the schools were bound by a common instructional mission.

The principal of Sammi High School was swift in his affirmation of the content specialists' work, stating, "Content specialists really helped this district big time...when you look at the growth over time." The principal of Anthea High School, a newcomer to the district, confirmed what district leadership noted about the shift from schools working independently to a more collaborative approach, saying, "I think it's hugely powerful...They have a chance to...bring ideas to the table. They're not thinking about their own silo." Though he clearly found additive value in the collaborative nature of the districtwide structure, when asked to quantify its effectiveness, he responded, "At best, maybe 60% effective." This was most notably due to his lack of role clarity, as he commented, "It's like looking through a fuzzy glass...because I don't sit on those [meetings]... I don't know their overall goal. Maybe they're doing what they're supposed to be doing."

All four of the Mairin teacher leaders interviewed also felt that the districtwide content specialist structure was effective. The ELA content specialist for Anthea High School believed the districtwide structure gave her a broader perspective from which to evaluate the progress of her school's instructional program, stating, "The most value in content specialists [is] in finding out the temperature of what my school site is as compared to other school sites." The ELA content specialist for Sammi High School echoed this sentiment, expressing gratitude for the opportunity the districtwide structure provided her for engaging in a comparative analysis of her school's instructional progress. She remarked, "I've learned a lot about where we fit in relationship to the other sites. I feel like I've benefited from the expertise of the other content

specialists and... we're sharing enough of the best practices that it's really productive, that it's effective.”

However, this study must acknowledge the underlying factors that may have contributed to 25% of content specialists deeming the districtwide structure to be only somewhat effective, as based on questionnaire responses. The mathematics content specialist for Anthea High School revealed frustration about significant amounts of the collaborative time being spent on developing benchmark exams, admitting, “Honestly, it’s kind of a waste of time right now because we are just doing our benchmark...I would rather be doing, ‘Hey, where are you at?...How did you do that?’” The sharing of best practices as a cornerstone of collaborative instructional work was reinforced by what one content specialist wrote when given the opportunity to add additional comments at the end of the questionnaire: “More gets accomplished with collaboration between departments on site than at the content specialists' meetings. It is good, however, to meet with others from the district to share ideas and accomplishments. I just don't think we need to meet as often as we do.” For this content specialist, determining effective use of time was critical to assessing the value of this districtwide structure.

The director also noted that he made an important change to the structure of content specialists sessions this year in an effort to increase their effectiveness. He reported, “I changed things up this year when I came aboard and stated that course leads will participate in three to four meetings with the content specialists.” With this small shift, the director had begun to adapt this districtwide structure to include teacher leaders even closer to the technical core than the content specialists in order to foster districtwide discussion regarding course-specific student progress, instruction, and curriculum. Commenting on this adaptation to the structure, the

Sammi High School ELA content specialist affirmed, “I think that's probably one of the most powerful things that we're doing.”

However, when the director of curriculum tasked each team of specialists with determining to which subsequent content specialists meeting they would invite course leads to attend, one ELA specialist expressed her uncertainty about the purpose of connecting with course leads. She inquired of her peers, “Do we have to have a course lead meeting? What do we want them to do?” The content specialist from Anthea High School responded, “He wants us to give dates for when to have them come in. We can have them give input on the grade level skills lists we are making.” This lack of clarity regarding content specialists’ interaction with course leads was mirrored by principals’ lack of clarity regarding the course lead role. The principal of Sammi High School commented, “[The course lead role] is not as structured as the content specialists.” The principal of Anthea High School likewise highlighted the need to explicitly determine the role of course leads, remarking, “I think it’d be good for us if we could hit the reset button. It’s like these are the expectations.” As the director of curriculum noted in his interview:

[Course leads used to] meet after school...and then there were contractual issues in which meetings after instructional time...require that they be paid so prior to my arrival, they had not met at all. My concern was that they were being paid a stipend but what is it that we’re actually seeing? What product is being produced?

Ultimately, the expectation from the district was that extending the districtwide collaboration to another level of teacher leaders would allow for more conversations about student performance data to ensue, the outcomes of which would then inform instructional planning.

Trust and the extent to which the content specialists structure compelled teacher leaders to act as boundary spanners. In Mairin Union High School District, the inclusion of school site administrators was minimal and not a requisite of the structure as established for communicating

and implementing districtwide instructional reforms through the content specialists. However, the director of curriculum explained his efforts to ensure that site administrators were present at content specialist sessions, stating, “In the past it was we’d like to invite you but I now say I need to have a representative from every school site. If you can’t stay the entire two hours, come in for an hour.” During the initial observation, three school site administrators and the director of categorical programs were also present but only for the first half hour of the session. During the second and third observations, two site administrators were present, again, for the opening business agenda items. Finally, during the fourth observation, three site administrators were present but did not join content specialists during the content-specific collaboration time.

When asked about site administration presence at content specialists sessions, the principal of Anthea remarked, “It’s a district expectation, but do people get penalized for it? No. Most schools will send somebody... I don’t want to micromanage what they’re doing... Whether we say anything or not, they know we’ve got their back.” Despite not requiring site administrators to be active participants in content specialist sessions, the director of curriculum established a new practice this year of emailing minutes from the sessions to all administrators and the school board.

Questionnaire data revealed that all Mairin principals accessed the minutes and met informally with their content specialists to receive updates on their work. The Anthea content specialists both indicated that they reported out regarding information from the content specialists sessions to the principal and other department chairs at their monthly site curriculum committee meetings. At Sammi High School, the messaging back to the principal was informal. The ELA content specialist confirmed the comment of her mathematics counterpart who reported, “I just walk into his office if I need to talk to him about anything from the meeting.”

Ultimately, the content specialists' structure established a direct link between district leadership and teacher leaders, not requiring the hierarchical inclusion of school site administrators. As a result of this non-hierarchical structure, Mairin teacher leaders have been compelled to act as boundary spanners within the broader organizational structure of the district, tasked with bridging not only the real gaps between school sites and the district office but the perceived ones as well. In Mairin, as will be discussed in greater depth in the section on findings related to relational linkages, teachers' issues with trust and district leadership have made narrowing this divide challenging.

Perceptions related to trust between district leadership and teacher leaders, particularly related to the facet of competence, or confidence in possession and effective use of skills in fulfilling formal roles and responsibilities (Chhouon et al., 2008), impacted the content specialists' role as boundary spanners within this structure. When asked how he believed teachers at his school site perceived instructional messages conveyed by district leadership through content specialists, the mathematics specialist for Anthea High School responded, "Honestly, I think they are frustrated by it.... because we're being force fed... They feel like they are being told what to do by people that have never taught before, or taught but, like some other subject." This mistrust was reiterated during an observation of the Anthea mathematics department meeting. When discussing why they need multiple-choice questions on benchmark exams when the new state test, SBAC, is formatted much differently, one teacher commented, "The district wants change without change," while another quickly followed with, "They want to micromanage us but all the work is on us."

The ELA content specialist for Anthea High School spoke of concerns regarding trust and district leadership, but from a more tempered perspective, stating, "Certainly we have a lot

of teachers that have distrust of the administration because of the fact that they don't see them very often and they don't work closely with them." Yet, during the observation of the one-hour Anthea English department meeting, no concerns regarding district leadership were raised.

The issue of trust and district leadership impacted each of these two content specialists' sense of self-efficacy, particularly related to their engagement in boundary spanning actions. For Anthea's mathematics content specialist, the mistrust of district leadership as expressed by his department members clearly dampened his sense of effectiveness in regard to serving as the liaison between district leadership and Mathematics teachers at his school site. When asked about his part in driving instructional reforms through his role as a content specialist, he commented, "I don't know how much power I have ...I'm more of a cheerleader in that respect...That's about as far as I can take it." However, the Anthea ELA content specialist expressed a higher amount of self-efficacy. She noted specifically how she spanned the boundary between district and school site, stating, "I'm the representative. [Information] comes from the district to the content specialist. Then you change hats, and become really the department chair. For the most part,...my department trusts that I'm going to give them an accurate amount of information."

Cross-case analysis of structural linkages in Anthos and Mairin. Both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts had clearly established structures in which relational linkages and resource partnerships between district leadership and teacher leaders would have the opportunity to thrive. However, the degree to which each district's formal districtwide structure enabled teacher leaders to engage as networks of professionals for the improvement of teaching and learning varied in several meaningful ways.

Most notably, the districtwide work of course leads in Anthos Union High School District was situated directly amidst the technical core of teaching and learning. The director of staff development shared, “there's a tight connection between what they're doing and the results that they're seeing [in their] assessment data.” By focusing the districtwide structure at the course lead level, district leadership enabled Anthos teacher leaders to engage in collaborative instructional discussions and decision-making around course-specific student data and not simply more general data about student performance in ELA or mathematics. However, in Mairin, district leadership focused its districtwide structure on the work of the content specialists who, as individual teachers, were direct links to the technical core. Yet, as a team of teacher leaders within the core content areas, they functioned as slightly more removed from the nuances of teaching and learning that could be grappled with by focusing at a course level.

When asked what could be done to continue to strengthen the districtwide structure in Mairin, the director of curriculum highlighted additional adaptations to the structure that would include course leads on a more regular basis:

I like to continue with the content specialist meetings perhaps where they're not meeting as an entire group on a weekly basis but have them to come together as an entire group once a month with the Instructional Coaches but break off or they meet weekly but with the course leads instead. Then you get into true district-wide collaboration...I see that happening within the next two years.

The ELA content specialist for Sammi High School responded in kind, confirming, “I think the course lead meetings, it would probably be beneficial to have that at least twice a semester...I think it [would be] really wonderful.” Ultimately, Anthos has fully implemented a districtwide structure where course leads are situated as the primary instructional experts, while Mairin is in the beginning stages of formalizing this role as a cornerstone of their districtwide instructional reform efforts.

Another key point of comparison relative to structure was the means by which each district established its agenda for the districtwide collaboration. Mairin's almost weekly content specialist agendas were certainly Common Core focused, however, the more loose nature of specific items resulted in less outcomes-based work. In contrast, the five standing agenda items that drove the work of Anthos' best practices days – 1) data from previous assessments; 2) next assessment; 3) share strategies with feedback discussion; 4) create new common material/resources (audio and visual clips); and 5) share technology apps and resources - kept teacher leaders tightly focused on work most directly related to the technical core of teaching and learning. Anthos was able to accomplish this by strategically utilizing another quarterly districtwide structure, the Curriculum Improvement Team (CIT) focused wholly on the Department Chair role, to address business items independently of content-specific instructional and curricular work.

Differences in the extent to which each districtwide structure was adaptive in nature were also apparent. In Mairin, initial revisions to the role of the content specialist were swift, as the change from a stipend to a release period was made after the first year, thereby enabling the districtwide Wednesday sessions. However, in 11 years, the structure has only recently begun to adapt as course leads are being infused into the district level work, primarily due to the vision of the director of curriculum. In contrast, the best practices structure in Anthos adapted frequently, having experienced four structural iterations in eight years as a direct response to teacher leader input. As shown by Anthos, and may soon be evident in Mairin, the willingness on the part of district leadership to allow for structural adaptability has the power to increase the effectiveness of the districtwide structure as a means of driving instructional reform efforts.

Though the role of the facilitator as a resource linkage is explored in a subsequent section, the role of the facilitator as a structural component is certainly also a key point of comparison between the study districts. The role of the facilitator was critical to the advancement of the work in Anthos. As noted by the curriculum and assessment coordinator, “One of the main roles of a facilitator is to help them establish an agenda, to help them establish priorities, to help make sure that everybody is engaged.” The consistent and active presence of the facilitator throughout the Anthos best practices days ensured that the structure was implemented with fidelity. However, in Mairin, the structure of the content specialists sessions precluded the director of curriculum from serving as the facilitator of the content-specific collaboration, as four content areas engaged in this work simultaneously. In combination with the lack of a tight agenda, the lack of consistent facilitation may have resulted in less effective use of Mairin’s districtwide collaborative time than if both of these elements been embedded in the structure.

Finally, though the construct of trust is primarily discussed in the section on relational linkages, differences between study districts relative to the context of structure are critical. In Anthos, high levels of trust related to district leadership undergirded teacher leaders’ belief in the effectiveness of the districtwide best practices structure as a means of driving instructional reform. 89% of teacher leader questionnaire respondents indicated that they trusted their district administrators as instructional leaders. High levels of trust also fostered high levels of self-efficacy regarding their boundary spanning roles.

In Mairin, however, the level of trust related to district leadership was significantly lower, with only 37.5% of teacher leader questionnaire respondents indicating they trusted their district administrators as instructional leaders. Mairin teacher leaders also expressed mixed feelings

about their boundary spanning roles. Differences between study districts in perceptions of trust related to district leadership were significant in terms of how effective teacher leaders reported districtwide structures to be in driving instructional reform efforts, and to what extent teacher leaders embraced their boundary spanning roles.

Relational and Resource Linkages

Both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts made significant fiscal and structural investments in teacher leaders by establishing formal positions that required stipends or release periods, and instituting districtwide structures for connecting these teacher leaders. The degree to which each district was able to capitalize upon these teacher leader positions and districtwide structures to build relational and resource linkages between the district office and school sites varied due to multiple factors. Ultimately, this study revealed the following key findings relative to relational and resource linkages: 1) Resource linkages are an outgrowth of strong relational trust and foster districtwide organizational learning in service of instructional reform efforts; and 2) District leaders who are viewed as instructional leaders can serve as human capital resources for developing the leadership capacity of teacher leaders, thereby linking the work of district leadership more tightly to the technical core of teaching and learning.

Trust and its role in the development of relational linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders in Anthos Union High School District. Notwithstanding the level of relational trust inherent in the workings of the districtwide Best Practices structure, observations, questionnaire data, and interviews revealed a long-standing, high level of trust throughout the Anthos organization. When asked specifically about the frequency of supportive interactions with district leadership, three of the four Anthos course leads interviewed were compelled to reference their superintendent, even when the interview protocol specified the

director of staff development and the curriculum and assessment coordinator. The high levels of trust were ultimately a reflection of the efforts of district leadership – including the superintendent – to cultivate meaningful relationships with teachers. The Sydney High School English 1 Course Lead commented:

Maureen, [our superintendent], goes into each of our classrooms at least twice a year. We get a hug. She talks to us about what's going on. She knows about our lives and stuff, too. It's not just like, 'Who are you? What are you doing?' She's like, 'How did the Halloween costume contest go this year?' She knows stuff. It makes you feel important.

Through explicit efforts to foster relationships with individual teachers, district leadership established a climate in which trust could authentically develop between district leadership and teachers. The centrality of this sense of feeling valued by district leadership as high ranking as the superintendent was echoed by the Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 Course Lead when she commented that the trust teachers have in district leadership “comes down from Maureen [who] meets us one-on-one with names and hugs...you feel like ‘I’m on a team with her.’” Ultimately, the valuing of relational linkages was central to the Anthos organization as a whole, and this was subsequently reflected in the workings of the districtwide Best Practices structure.

Indeed, the approach taken by district leadership in regard to their relationship with teacher leaders was one founded in the ethic of caring. The curriculum and assessment coordinator made this clear, stating the following when asked to describe his relationship with teacher leaders:

I know it's not rhetoric to use in a formal interview, but we really love them, as in looking out for their best interests. That's the best definition of love that I've heard. We look out for their best interests. We really care about them. We care about them as an individual, as an individual teacher, as a leader, as a group, as a school.

He did not allow his role, and what teacher leaders might perceive as positional power, to supersede the importance of demonstrating benevolence as a factor of trust (Daly & Chrispeels, 2007). The director of staff development echoed this high level of benevolence for teacher leaders, along with her respect for each of them, by valuing the critical role each teacher leader played in the district's efforts to improve teaching and learning. When asked to describe her relationship with course leads, she remarked, "They're the experts that we honor...we want to make sure that we honor them and that we put them in a position where they'll be successful leading."

This focus on building relational linkages was confirmed by each of the four districtwide Best Practices observation as well. No matter the facilitator, each team of course leads began their day-long session with greetings and circling the table to share one good thing, personal or professional. In Anthos, the work of the day began only after a personal interest was taken in each individual in the room. Even after 11 years of facilitating Best Practices, the centrality of relationships was not taken for granted; the effort to sustain and cultivate relationships with teacher leaders was ongoing.

Questionnaire responses from teacher leaders likewise validated the importance of relational linkages. When asked to indicate a word or phrase that best characterizes the relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership, the most frequently used word was "collaborative" which occurred in 43% of the responses. Other variations on this theme, such as "teamwork," "partners in helping students," and "cooperative" brought the frequency of collaborative-themed responses to 57%. All other responses reflected a positive relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership, as evidenced by words and phrases such as "focused," "quality," "ambitious," and "mutually respected."

Principals further confirmed the positive nature of the relational linkage between teacher leaders and district leadership. When asked to indicate a word or phrase to describe the relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership from their perspective as principals, all five respondents characterized the relationship as collaborative. Likewise, principals described their own relationships with district leadership through such words and phrases as “teamwork,” “facilitative partners,” “close and stress free,” and “trust; strong collaboration.” Ultimately, all data points revealed that Anthos had prioritized the establishment of a time-tested culture of trust across all levels of their organization.

From relational trust to resource linkages. By focusing first on building and sustaining a culture of trust across the district, Anthos created the opportunity to cultivate meaningful resource linkages, particularly with teacher leaders through the Best Practices structure. What is central to district leadership’s resource linkages with teacher leaders is the concept of reciprocal influence (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). One principal’s description of the relationship between district leadership and teacher leaders as “mutually beneficial [and] symbiotic” aptly captured the essence of reciprocal influence in Anthos. Ultimately, both district leadership and teacher leaders served as human capital resources to one another in service of instructional reform efforts, while teacher leaders also served as resources to teachers at large as a result of their boundary spanning roles.

District instructional leaders as human capital resources. Here, it is critical to revisit the definition of teacher leadership within the context of this study: “the means by which credible teachers exercise formal...influence over supervisors, colleagues, and members of the school community through collaborative relationships that improve teaching and learning practices” (Pokert, 2012). In Anthos, observations, questionnaire data, and interviews revealed

that the district was committed to offering district leadership as human capital resources for the continuous development of teacher leaders' instructional leadership capacity. The director of staff development captured this commitment most aptly, stating, "We want to also develop them but also expand their capacity."

However, for the district to invest in the development of teacher leaders, they first had to identify and develop the human capital within the district office to engage in this critical work. When the work to develop the leadership capacity of course leads began in 2004 through the districtwide Best Practices structure, the director of staff development was solely responsible for providing the leadership training to all 90 course leads and facilitating each Best Practices session. In 2008, the district released a teacher for three periods to serve as a curriculum and assessment support coach, and in 2010, added a second support coach for two release periods to assist in facilitating Best Practices and planning leadership trainings for course leads. Then, in 2013, according to the director of staff development, "[Our superintendent] walked into an event I was facilitating, took one look at how exhausted I looked, and told our Assistant Superintendent of Personnel to get [a support coach] out of the classroom full-time to help me." As a result, the district demonstrated its commitment to providing the supports necessary to stay true to one of their 10 tenets – dispersed leadership – by creating the full-time position of curriculum and assessment coordinator to assist in facilitating the critical work of Best Practices.

From this foundation, Anthos district leadership established its critical resource linkage to teacher leaders. As stated by the director of staff development, "We put ourselves always at the district in a support position." This is clearly evident through the way in which the facilitators of Best Practices approached their work. Aside from ensuring teacher leaders' work focused on two of the three Anthos non-negotiables – collaboration and common assessments – how the

facilitators carried out their role stayed true to the statement made in the Anthos Union High School Story document: “[Anthos] is not a district of heavy-handed mandates; it is a place where collective learning and teaching of best practices are utilized to ‘move’ educators on whatever journey to which they aspire.”

Thus, during Best Practices, one role of the facilitator was to serve as a resource for materials development. The English 1 Best Practices facilitator actively supported the course leads’ collective decision to use 45 minutes of their time to develop teacher directions and a rubric for a student performance task, offering, “I can format this for you into a teacher packet by the end of the day and show it to you.” The English 1 course lead for Sydney High School confirmed the value of this facet of the facilitator’s role, stating, “It’s the one go-to person that has all the notes, has all the information that I can rely on with my memories...It helps a lot having that one beacon that you can go to and get the information you need.” The Algebra 1 10-12 Best Practices facilitator enacted his role as a resource in a similar fashion, formatting a rubric for brief constructed responses as the course leads dialogued about performance descriptors.

Another role of the facilitator was to serve as a resource for procuring materials and sharing critical knowledge. The facilitator for the English 1 team provided course leads with sample rubrics from other teams across the content areas, and reached out to the curriculum and assessment coordinator during the session to have him populate the English 1 Google Docs folder with the sample rubric from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The English 3 course lead for Sidon High School also validated the importance of this facet of the facilitator’s role, stating, “I know who I can go to when I need things. I know ...who can enlighten me when I’m confused.”

Likewise, the Algebra 1 10-12 facilitator shared essential knowledge that informed the course leads' development of their rubric, revealing, "Here's what I saw when I graded the SBAC practice tests..." When asked about the importance of the facilitator in Best Practices work, the Algebra 1 10-12 course lead for Sidon High School made a broader reference to the knowledge sharing engaged in by district leadership as a whole. She remarked, "They saw [Common Core] before the avalanche came. They...had been driving this slowly because change takes time, but little by little, they've been giving us the tools." From this perspective, facilitators' enacted their role as human capital resources in direct response to teacher leaders' needs in real time within the Best Practices structure.

Finally, facilitators shouldered the critical responsibility of developing the leadership capacity of teacher leaders. One factor that enabled district leadership to fulfill this facet of the facilitator role was the recognition by teacher leaders of district leadership as instructional leaders. According to questionnaire data, 90% of teacher leader respondents considered district leadership to be instructional leaders. The 10% of teacher leaders who did not view district leadership as instructional leaders cited that administrators "were not in the classroom" and were not usually the ones delivering professional learning, as "other teacher coaches are instructing or leading instruction." According to questionnaire data, all five Anthos principals echoed the teacher leader majority view of district leadership as instructional leaders as well.

District leadership recognized early on that serving as a resource for leadership development of teacher leaders would be critical to their role in ensuring success of the Best Practices structure. The curriculum and assessment coordinator acknowledged:

[Course leads] needed to be trained. They didn't sign up for it. I've talked to [other] districts whose PLCs have not gone so well. A lot of that has to do with that training. Luckily, we realized that early; that we need to train them in some of the basic leadership

skills. We really have Leadership 101, we have How To Run Meetings 101, and it's actually called that.”

The Sydney English 1 course lead reinforced the importance of leadership training for course leads, commenting, “We've had meetings on how to run meetings...How do you deal when someone's late on your team? Do you call them out? Do you let it go? How do you deal if someone is grading papers and not paying attention?” Principals also provided leadership training for their course leads. According to the principal of Sydney High School, this training took place prior to the start of the school year: “We do a course lead meeting, an all-day meeting...Here's your expectations for the year. Here's the focus...We always do a segment on dealing with difficult people.” District leadership believed the strategic, combined support of district and site administrative leadership would significantly increase course leads' capacity to lead their peers in the critical work of improving teaching and learning. The results of this investment in the development of course leads' leadership capacity is explored in detail in the subsequent section on communication linkages.

Linking district leadership to the technical core of teaching and learning. The work engaged in by Anthos district leadership reached significantly beyond the traditional bureaucratic responsibilities assumed to be the limited purview of the district office. Through district leadership's cultivation of the districtwide Best Practices structure, Anthos redefined the organizational purpose of the district office, situating district leadership to take a direct role in instructional improvement. Indeed, when given the opportunity to share additional comments through the questionnaire, one teacher leader wrote, “I think it is clear that the formation and nurturing of these teams is [the curriculum and assessment coordinator] and [the director of staff development's] main goal. This is a crucial step to improving education.” Even the principal of Sidon High School was aware of how critical her teacher leaders believed the resources provided

by district leadership in the form of Best Practices to be, stating, “[Course leads] sa[y] they aren't just sharing lessons. They are actually...building those lessons and those units collaboratively.”

Yet, it was clear that Anthos' focus on developing the leadership capacity of teacher leaders was what tied them most closely to the technical core of teaching and learning. As one teacher leader commented through the questionnaire, “District administrators facilitate teachers being their best.” This act of facilitation has transformed Anthos district leadership into a critical resource for the improvement of teaching and learning. The Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 course lead reflected, “[District leadership is] not micromanaging...they're the direct connection.” In Anthos, district leadership ultimately served as a human capital resource to link both teacher leaders across school sites as well as teacher leaders to the district organization as a whole.

As a result of their relational and resource partnerships with teacher leaders, district leadership was able to focus their work on the technical core itself. The director of staff development stated it most simply, “We use assessments to drive change.” Indeed, as course leads increased their capacity to serve as instructional leaders among their site-level peers, this driving force became a focal point of all teachers' work. As noted by the Sidon English 3 course lead, “We actually have responsibility...as a leader...actually needing to back up what we are doing with pass rates going up, our grades going up, our test scores getting higher, [and previously] our CST targets being met.” Ultimately, district leadership developed high quality, resourceful relational linkages with teacher leaders that in turn increased the distributive strength of the districtwide Best Practices structure. As a result, district leadership work practices became situated much more closely to the technical core of teaching and learning than traditional perceptions of district office roles indicated.

Trust and its role in the development of relational linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders in Mairin Union High School District. Early in the course of this study, Mairin’s superintendent, a more than 30-year veteran of the district, abruptly resigned. As this change in leadership occurred only two months after the hiring of a new assistant superintendent of educational services, teacher leader interviews and questionnaire responses reflected a significant amount of uncertainty regarding their trust in district leadership. Furthermore, interactions with course leads revealed that relational trust between teachers and district leadership had ebbed and flowed for several years prior to these recent changes in key leadership positions. According to the Sammi High School mathematics content specialist:

The assistant superintendent of instruction has been a revolving door for the last four or five years. If we can get some consistency in there, I think that will [help. The director of curriculum] does a great job...but he also knows that we have to wrangle in our teachers if we're going to do this.

Coupled with the fact the director of curriculum had just assumed his position eight months prior to the start of this study, turnover in senior district leadership had made it challenging for Mairin to cultivate high levels of trust between district leadership and school sites.

Indications of low levels of trust in district leadership were also expressed by the Anthea ELA content specialist, who revealed, “We have a lot of teachers that have distrust of district administration because...they don’t see them very often and they don’t work closely with them...If you've never worked with someone and you're only hearing hearsay...they become that collective body of them.” However, some teacher leaders did express that relational linkages with district leadership had been improving lately, due in large part to the efforts of their new director of curriculum. When asked specifically why things were “getting better,” the Anthea mathematics content specialist stated, “The biggest thing is [the director of curriculum]. The person before him was the nicest person but not the most competent person...She seemed to drag

her feet with a lot of things... [our new director] does push things through.” Indeed, this reflected a growing sense of trust, particularly the factor of reliability, wherein follow through was a critical skill in enabling district leadership to truly serve in a resource capacity (Daly & Chrispeels, 2007).

Yet, the Anthea ELA content specialist explained the improved relational linkages with district leadership from a different perspective, noting:

I think that the more teachers feel as though they have control over what's happening in their classrooms, the better they will respond to what they're being asked to do and not see and vilify the district in a way where they're just the ones telling us what to do all the time. Now, it's, ‘This is the playground that you can play in and we would like to know what you're playing and what you're doing but we're not going to tell you what you're necessarily going to do and we're not going to force everyone [from each school] to do exactly the same thing.’

Her explanation for the improved relational linkage with district leadership reflected the efforts of the districtwide content specialist structure to create a coherent framework within which individual schools could then operate with a significant degree of instructional autonomy. From this perspective, Mairin district leadership appeared to be shifting their role from a bureaucratic dictator of both policy and practice to one situating them as more of a resource for schools and teacher leaders in their efforts to improve teaching and learning.

However, about half of the teacher leader questionnaire respondents were not as optimistic in their conceptions of relational trust with district leadership. When asked to indicate a word or phrase that best characterizes the relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership, some respondents used such negative phrases as “definitely not a collaboration,” “complacent,” “distant,” and “logic is not a term used.” Such responses reflected a need for Mairin district leadership to make more explicit efforts to foster relationships with teacher

leaders. Yet, significant turnover in senior district leadership made it difficult for such efforts to take root, making it challenging to combat the climate of distrust that was clearly evident.

Some questionnaire respondents, 13%, took a neutral stance when describing their relationship with district leadership, using such words as “cordial.” When interviewed, even the director of curriculum described his relationship with teacher leaders through a wholly professional, politically correct lens, stating, “I see it as a professional, very collegial-type relationship.” Though certainly positive, the director’s description of district leadership’s relationship with teacher leaders did not reflect a sense of personal connection with teacher leaders.

As Mairin’s district leadership works to increase relational trust and foster relational linkages with teacher leaders, it is important to note that 27% of the questionnaire respondents indicated a positive relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership. This was evidenced by words and phrases such as “cooperative and supportive,” “professional and casual,” “very accessible,” and “collaborative.” This positive sentiment was also echoed in an interview with the Anthea ELA content specialist, as she described her relationship with district leadership to be “very cooperative and supportive.” Clearly, seeds had been planted among teacher leaders from which district leadership would hopefully be able to cultivate increased relational trust.

From relational trust to resource linkages. Though the cultivation of relational trust with teacher leaders is in need of tending to, Mairin has still been able to develop meaningful resource linkages, particularly with teacher leaders, through the Content Specialists structure and the evolving course lead role. When describing the relationship between district leadership and teacher leaders, the director of curriculum stated, “We’re there to support one another,”

reflecting the concept of reciprocal influence (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). Indeed, through the districtwide content specialists structure, district leadership and teacher leaders served as human capital resources to one another in service of instructional reform efforts. However, the degree to which this reciprocal influence proved effective was clearly affected by both the low level of relational trust teacher leaders had in district leadership and by the limited relational linkages current district leadership had been able to form with teacher leaders thus far.

District instructional leaders as human capital resources. When asked how district leadership helps to build the leadership capacity of content specialists, the director of curriculum responded by describing a support system other than district leadership. He shared, “We are a resource for them...The instructional coaches play a vital role and we use them actually as trainer of trainers as well, and I’m there to assist with facilitation. I’m there also to observe and provide feedback.” Here, the role of district leadership was characterized as an indirect one, supporting the work of another set of teacher leaders, the site-based instructional coaches, in their direct work with content specialists. The indirect role of district leadership was further reinforced by the director of categorical programs, who stated, “I work directly with instructional coaches...They are the ones who work more closely with the content specialists... as long as I’m seeing the coaches talking to their content specialists and working with them, that’s how I work with them indirectly.” Though the work of both district leaders was connected to the work of the content specialists, these district leaders did not perceive themselves as a direct human capital resource link to teacher leaders.

Furthermore, although the director of curriculum also shared, “One meeting a month is set aside for strictly Common Core in which we have the instructional coaches or the director of technology coming in and other support services provid[ing] some type of overall seminar or

workshop for the specialists,” none of the examples of such workshops were focused on the development of leadership capacity. This need for explicit leadership development for content specialists was also evident when interviewing principals. Both Anthea principals indicated that developing teacher leadership was part of their duties as the leader of their school sites. The principal of Sammi High School affirmed, “My job is to take these individuals and make them leaders in their departments.” The principal of Anthea High School noted how he used his content specialists as human capital resources, stating, “You find out people who want to step up, who can step up, that you can start counting on to the point where your [content] specialists are natural teacher leaders and working through them.” However, neither principal could articulate specific leadership development processes utilized by the school site nor the district. Ultimately, though both district leadership and principals informally supported the growth of content specialists’ leadership capacity, neither the district nor school sites engaged in explicit leadership development efforts on the behalf of teacher leaders.

This lack of engagement in explicit leadership development for content specialists and the more indirect role of district leadership in supporting content specialists were confirmed by teacher leader questionnaire data as well. When given the statement “I consider my district administrators to be instructional leaders,” 62.5% of content specialists disagreed. When provided the opportunity to explain why they did not consider their district administrators to be instructional leaders, one content specialist wrote specifically about the director of curriculum, revealing, “He does not have a full concept of what his job entails. He allows us to work on what is best for our areas but does not have much true vision or guidance for an end product.” This teacher leader clearly expressed the need for district leadership to understand their roles in regard to the content specialists, and to provide clear direction for their work.

Yet another content specialist also indicated the need for district leadership to detail explicit outcomes for content specialists' work, writing, "Much of the work the district administrators do consists of paperwork and overseeing meetings. There is often little direction given and even less follow-up. It sometimes seems like they are not aware of major changes or issues going on within departments." Both responses highlighted the need for Mairin district leadership to more explicitly identify and develop the human capital within the district office to collaboratively engage with teacher leaders in the critical work of improving teaching and learning.

As Mairin progresses in its collaborative work with content specialists, it is important to note that 37.5% of content specialists did consider district administrators as instructional leaders. The Sammi mathematics content specialist acknowledged the importance of the director of curriculum's role as the facilitator of the content specialist sessions, stating, "[His] job is to keep us organized and keep us focused," a sentiment quite opposite of the questionnaire comments. The Sammi ELA content specialist also affirmed the positive role of the director of curriculum in the content specialists' instructional work, remarking in her interview:

District administration... have been acting more as facilitators so that we can get our work done, so that we can decide what's needed as content specialists for the different sites. We pretty much have been charting our own course here. It's been wonderful. I think we've come up with some good things, and we're continuing to come up with new things and better things, and sharing information. I think facilitating is what they've been to me.

Recognizing that just over a third of the content specialists view the instructional leadership capacity of district administrators in a positive light serves as an indicator that district leadership *can* continue to cultivate their relational and resource linkages with teacher leaders as they develop their identities as instructional leaders.

Linking district leadership to the technical core of teaching and learning. The work engaged in by Mairin district leadership during the course of this study was challenged by senior district leadership turnover and subsequent relational trust issues, so much so that much of what both interview and questionnaire data revealed about the work of district leadership portrayed the district office as more focused on traditional bureaucratic responsibilities. Through district leadership's cultivation of the districtwide content specialists structure, Mairin has been working to redefine the organizational purpose of the district office so as to situate district leadership more closely to instructional reform efforts.

This redefinition is also in line with what teacher leaders were asking of district leadership as well. As one content specialist wrote when given the opportunity to share additional comments on the questionnaire, "We need more involvement from district administrators...in a more visible way. They need to be able to model and articulate the instructional practices." Teacher leaders desired district leadership to be direct human capital resources for effective instructional practices, not simply secondary supporters of others' instructional leadership activities, such as the instructional coaches.

As Mairin looks ahead to restructuring their content specialists sessions to include course leads, a more powerful opportunity exists for district leadership to link their work more tightly to the technical core of teaching and learning. In anticipation of this change in structure, the director of categorical programs reflected upon how district leadership could improve their resource linkages with teacher leaders, noting:

The missing link is getting [content specialists, course leads, and coaches] together on an ongoing basis to say 'You're the content expert. This is what they need to know. Here's a process. This is how kids are going to learn it...This is what they're going to use.'

Indeed, this may be a critical step in district leadership's efforts to develop high quality, resourceful relational linkages with teacher leaders that, in turn, may increase the distributive strength of the districtwide content specialists structure. Such partnerships possess the potential to help situate district leadership closer to the technical core of teaching and learning and significantly beyond the traditional work practices of district offices.

Cross-case analysis of relational and resource linkages in Anthos and Mairin. Both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts utilized their respective districtwide structures to support the efforts of district leadership to cultivate relational and resource partnerships with teacher leaders. However, the degree to which each district was able to capitalize upon their relational and resource partnerships in order to link the work of district leadership more tightly to the technical core of teaching and learning varied in several meaningful ways.

Most notably, Anthos benefited from long-standing, high levels of trust between district leadership and teacher leaders. As one teacher leader noted when given the opportunity to make additional comments on the questionnaire, "I appreciate the spirit of respect and teamwork that is evident in working with other teacher leaders, my principal, and district administrators." Again, respect as a critical factor in fostering relational trust was also communicated by all four teacher leaders during their interviews, and evident in the reciprocal interactions observed during Best Practices days.

On the other hand, Mairin faced the challenge of bonding teachers in efforts to reform teaching and learning in the face of significant concerns regarding the trustworthiness of district leadership. As one anonymous teacher leader wrote:

The animosity of the board toward the teachers has been a cancer the last couple years. It has made getting people motivated to be involved in real change difficult. It often feels the board and district just want more of the same and do not take opportunities given to us by the new standards and the LCAP to make real changes.

Though the majority of distrust conveyed by Mairin teacher leaders stemmed from senior district administrator turnover, it was clear that all levels of districtwide organizational leadership engendered a low level of trust which permeated throughout the teacher leader ranks. Ultimately, the stark difference in the levels of relational trust in each of the two study districts significantly affected the degree to which district leadership was able to cultivate relational linkages and situate themselves as human capital resources. In Anthos, relational and resource partnerships flourished amidst a climate of trust, while in Mairin these partnerships were challenged to affect change within an organization battling issues of trust in relation to district leadership.

Another key point of comparison relative to relational and resource linkages was the extent to which each district fostered relationships with individual teachers leaders. In Anthos, observations, interviews, and questionnaire data all revealed that building personal relationships with teacher leaders was an explicit focus of district leadership, inclusive of the superintendent. In Mairin, however, both district leadership and teacher leaders described their relationships with one another in professional, collegial terms. The more personalized relational linkages that permeated Anthos allowed district leadership to cultivate meaningful resource linkages between teacher leaders and district leadership that were based upon networks of individual educators collaborating, and not limited to formal positions connecting across the school-district divide.

Differences in the extent to which the facilitator role served as a critical resource linkage were also apparent. In Mairin, the director of curriculum did facilitate the opening agenda items; however, he was unable to closely facilitate the work of the content specialist teams due to the fact that all four teams met concurrently. Content specialist teams were left to facilitate their own sessions, with the director of curriculum providing information or feedback as necessary.

On the other hand, in Anthos, the facilitator role functioned as a key human capital resource.

The Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 course lead reflected on early Best Practices that did not have a facilitator:

Before it would be one of us... That person loses power of say because they're supposed to be facilitating and it becomes awkward because it's a conflict of interest. I think it's vital to have a facilitator that's non-judgmental, that's just there to help the process along, so that every [course lead] has equal say and isn't forced to hold back.

Indeed, the facilitator role in Anthos ensured a targeted agenda was carried out, and that all teacher leaders contributed to the work at hand. In Mairin, the lack of consistent, impartial facilitation for content specialist teams may well be linked to why only slightly more than half of the content specialists, 55%, feel supported by district leadership in their leadership roles. In contrast, 90% of Anthos course leads that cited district leadership as a source of support for their roles as teacher leaders.

Finally, differences between study districts relative to district leadership's engagement in explicit development of the leadership capacity of teacher leaders were significant in assessing the degree to which effective resource linkages were actively at play in each district. When interviewed, the Anthos director of staff development noted that the district's next steps in cultivating and sustaining the distributed leadership model inherent in the Best Practices structure would be continued leadership development. She remarked, "We're having the coaches spend more time one-on-one developing course leads and making those contacts because it needs to be differentiated and individual." In Mairin, however, none of the data points – observations, interviews, questionnaires, nor document reviews – revealed explicit efforts to provide leadership training for content specialists. Ultimately, the significance of Anthos' investment in the development of course leads' leadership capacity, in comparison to the extent to which

Mairin district leadership supported the leadership development of content specialists, is explored in detail in the subsequent section on communication linkages.

Communication Linkages

Though communication is certainly central to initiating relational and resource linkages and to developing structural linkages, communication may be the most valuable outcome of the combined establishment of these linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders. The degree to which each study district realized effective communication linkages as an outcome of relational, resource, and structural linkages varied due to a variety of factors discussed in this section. Ultimately, this study revealed the following key findings relative to communication linkages: 1) When district leadership utilizes teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing the communication of instructional messages from the district office, teacher leaders are compelled to act as brokers of information; and 2) Feedback loops that are iterative and embedded within districtwide structures foster not only clear messaging between district leadership and teacher leaders, but targeted, action-oriented collaboration as well.

In the case of both districts, communication linkages relative to their respective districtwide structures were evident at two critical points within each organization: 1) between district leadership and teacher leaders, and 2) between teacher leaders and their site-based peers. In order to determine the extent to which iterative feedback loops were established and how effectively teacher leaders served as brokers of information between school sites and the district office, observations of site-based collaboration sessions were conducted in each study district. In conjunction with interviews, questionnaire data, and the observations of districtwide structures, these site-based observations provided a comprehensive view of each district's communication linkages.

District to school site messaging in Anthos Union High School District. Though a feedback loop that enabled reciprocal communication between school sites and the district office was the ultimate goal, simply focusing on the carrying of messages from the district office to school sites was a necessary first step in Anthos as teacher leaders enacted their boundary spanning roles. The director of staff development detailed how the district began training course leads to convey critical messages to school site peers, explaining:

We started with Pay It Forward, which were [leadership training] modules, because we realized principals needed it, too, but then we also realized it wasn't going past the principals or assistant principals. We did that, I think, two, maybe three years... Then we started realizing that it wasn't getting to all the course leads in a consistent manner. That's when we started designing [our own] full-day [leadership trainings].

Both the curriculum and assessment coordinator and principal of Sidon High School also referenced this specific training when asked how the district had prepared teacher leaders to deliver instructional messages back to their school site peers. Akin to what was reported by the director of curriculum, they indicated that the training was a solid starting point but that the district needed a more systematic means of holding teacher leaders accountable for actually “paying forward” instructional messages to their school site peers. The curriculum and assessment coordinator noted:

We just have to figure out a way to make sure that...on a regular basis...everything gets sent back so that those teachers feel that they have a voice. We really think it's in the best interests of the leads to get messages back to everyone. Because we don't want, a couple years from now, as that role changes, to say, ‘Yeah, they never did anything. They never told us that.’... We just need to figure out how to do it without, again, having them feel like we're checking up on them. But, holding people accountable is not something we shy away from, and we are transparent in the fact that we want that to happen.

However, once the district decided to use their own human capital resources to provide leadership training to course leads, they were able to build in this accountability component.

According to the curriculum and assessment coordinator, “Whatever we share with them [at Best Practices], we give them time to say, ‘Okay, what’s this going to look like back at the site?’ Then, have them actually write it out.” The Sidon English 3 course lead further acknowledged how critical it was that course leads strategically conveyed instructional messages from district leadership to all teachers. She remarked, “In terms of the district, it seems like their biggest issue is that we deliver the messages.”

Anthos teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing communication. Indeed, Anthos was intentional in its development of a distributed model of leadership and communication wherein teacher leaders were the most vital component in delivering instructional messages. Indeed, when given the statement, “district leadership empowers teacher leaders,” the response was wholly positive with 25% of course leads agreeing and 75% of course leads strongly agreeing. All five principals also agreed with this statement. One principal also wrote the following statement when provided the opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the questionnaire: “We have spent our money carefully to fully develop local experts and then empowered them to lead, train, and make decisions.” Indeed, as the “local experts,” course leads were empowered by district leadership to serve as the central conduit for messaging to teachers at large.

When commenting on the effectiveness of the distributed model within Anthos, the director of staff development noted, “I think it’s really effective. I think it’s the only way because it’s not telling people what to do. It’s being led by their peers, and peer accountability is somewhat stronger than any principal or administrator could be.” The fact that course leads were classroom teachers who did not actually possess formal positional authority allowed them to convey instructional messages to teachers at large with increased credibility.

The Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 course lead affirmed the important role course leads played in personalizing the delivery of instructional messages to all teachers. When asked to reflect upon the effectiveness of Anthos' distributed model of leadership and communication, she commented:

I think it's more effective than it's ever been. Twenty years ago it was just, 'Well, the department chair said because the district said.' There was no name. It was the district. Like, we hear the White House has made a decision. Who in the White House made the decision?

She further explained how the district communicated needs regarding such topics as common assessments directly to course leads. Such messages, she noted, "Didn't go through the department chair. It went through me as a [course] lead. So that, they're more invested in it." Such leading from the middle (Birch & Spillane, 2004) most aptly exemplified the act of brokering as engaged in by course leads on behalf of district leadership. More importantly, this example reflected how critical Anthos viewed the role of course leads in personalizing instructional messages so as to increase the likelihood of teachers at large taking a vested interest in the instructional direction of the district.

Anthos teacher leaders as brokers of information from the district office. Indeed, during observations of ELA and mathematics department meetings as well as course team Best Practices sessions at both Sydney and Sidon High School – totaling eight individual observations – course leads explicitly brokered instructional messages from the district office to school site peers. Here, it is important to note a working definition of brokering as a job that entails the processes of translation, coordination, and alignment whereby brokers – in this case, course leads – may provide trainings, manage data, and build networks in the service of organizational learning (Birch & Spillane, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Anthos district leadership strategically employed the distributed leadership model, utilizing teacher leaders as a resource for

personalizing the communication of instructional messages from the district office to teachers at large.

The brokering role of course leads was enacted during each of the four site-based Best Practices observations. Nine days after attending the districtwide English 1 Best Practices session, the Sydney course lead facilitated a site-based English 1 Best Practices session with nine of her peers. During the session, she signed in to her Google Drive and shared with her colleagues the teacher instructions for their upcoming assessment, a performance task comprised of multiple documents students would have synthesize in response to a writing prompt. Here, the course lead explicitly communicated the work accomplished during the districtwide Best Practices day, linking her peers to the instructional resources developed as a result of district leadership's provision of the structure, time, and technical support necessary to accomplish the task.

The Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 course lead likewise enacted this brokering role as she facilitated her site-level Best Practices session. She focused the brief, 30-minute session on detailing the revisions the district course team made to the upcoming unit test, directly communicating the work engaged in at the district Best Practices Day to all of her Algebra 1 10-12 colleagues. Here, as in all four site-level Best Practices observations, the course lead served as the direct conduit of instructional information the districtwide Best Practices team worked collaboratively to develop.

Two-way communication: The Anthos feedback loop. Anthos' goal in strategically developing a structure for messaging between the district office and school sites, via the human capital resource of course leads, was to establish a feedback loop that enabled reciprocal communication between school sites and the district office. Communication of instructional

messages from the district office to school sites needed to be complemented by reciprocal communication from school sites back to the district office. As course leads engaged in brokering and boundary spanning actions, two-way communication was vital. The Sydney Algebra 2 course lead characterized her role metaphorically, reflecting, “We’re this bridge between these two teams.” Indeed, district leadership and site-level course teams relied upon course leads to operate within and across both levels of the organization in order to support the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts.

At a foundational level, the feedback loop in Anthos was utilized to inform the evolving structure of Best Practices sessions. According to the director of staff development, the first three agenda items – data from previous assessments, next assessment, and sharing strategies with feedback discussion – had been standard practice since the inception of the districtwide structure. However, as she shared, “We’re constantly assessing and seeing where we need to help support and what we need to do to change.” Indeed, changes to the agenda items for Best Practices evolved from district leadership listening carefully to teacher leader feedback regarding what school site teachers needed in order to implement instructional reforms driven by the district office. The curriculum and assessment coordinator noted:

When we brought in what we call Best Practices 2.0, we were really listening to what they wanted, I think, and letting them establish those [agenda items]. So now they couldn't blame anyone but themselves if something wasn't covered. But that's important. They were responsible for their own actions. You couldn't say the district made us do it. It's like we voted.

Here, district leadership explicitly pursued and then took action to validate teacher voices.

Ultimately, the collaboration between two levels of instructional leadership, both teacher leaders and district leadership, resulted in a more targeted, meaningful districtwide structure.

Yet, when asked to what extent messages from course leads were brokered back to all teachers at a site level, the director of staff development responded, “I don't know, but I think it gets back to more than any other way of getting back to them.” The curriculum and assessment coordinator validated her uncertainty, admitting that, though they do expect leads to take what they learn at Best Practices back to their sites, “That has needed some accountability practices in there, because they don't.” Therefore, as this study began, Anthos added yet another element to their Best Practices structure to augment the feedback loop.

In response to this gap in communication, Anthos decided that the facilitator would provide course leads with time to document within their Google Doc how they planned to take the day's work back to their school site teams. Indeed, this occurred within each of the four districtwide Best Practices observations. The curriculum and assessment coordinator explained the feedback loop that would begin as course leads subsequently brought feedback from their teachers regarding the district team's work back to the following Best Practices day:

So now we have plans. Whatever we share with them, we give them time to say, ‘Okay, what's this going to look like back at the site?’ Then, have them actually write it out. Then we check on it. At the next meeting we say, ‘Okay, how did that go? You wrote this up. Did you do it, first of all, and did it get back.’

This is yet another example of how Anthos took targeted action, resulting in the decision to embed the feedback loop intentionally into their districtwide structure for instructional collaboration.

Additionally, the embedding of the feedback loop was meant to continue on an iterative basis in pursuit of the goal of having all instructional messages brokered by course leads to all school site teachers. The curriculum and assessment coordinator noted this goal as he described course leads' responses when asked if they communicated what they learned at districtwide Best Practices days back to their school site colleagues:

[At first,] we get ‘Uh, no, we haven't had a chance to.’ We don't want to pressure them either, because we know if they don't buy in, but it is a reminder. They know we're going to ask. So, we don't usually get that, ‘We didn't do anything with it,’ the third time.

Indeed, the iterative nature of the feedback loop in Anthos was evident in both observations and interviews with course leads. During the English 3 Best Practices day, the facilitator provided the group with districtwide and site specific data from the previous assessment. As course leads reviewed data for particular questions, they noted that some revisions to the assessment that they had agreed to at their previous session had not been made. The facilitator suggested:

If you want, we can make changes here with all eyes on it. To do this, we need to work on the exam view file directly. [District leadership] didn't want this to happen before, because they wanted to track the changes, vote on the changes, etc. But this is certainly an issue of communication from the team to the district. Did they read our notes wrong, etc.?

During this observation, the feedback loop continued, as the team noted the previous communication breakdown, and moved forward by providing their input for revisions once again. This iterative feedback loop was also referenced by the Sydney English 1 course lead who noted when interviewed, “It's not just a one way system... We talk to our team and then bring the feedback to the district... Then we make decisions there and then bring it back and see what they think about it. It keeps teeter-tottering back and forth.”

Ultimately, the concept of an ongoing feedback loop between the district office and school site teachers, via the course leads, was evident in all four site-based Best Practices sessions as well. During the Sydney Algebra 2 Best Practices session, the course lead solicited input from teachers regarding progress in addressing specific items from summer professional development that were slated for follow-up throughout the year. She stated, “When I next meet with department chairs, I need to report back what we have accomplished from this list of goals.” Indeed, this course lead was able to share her team's progress with department chairs

districtwide at a subsequent mathematics curriculum improvement team meeting. Likewise when the Sydney English 3 course lead brought her colleagues' feedback regarding the previous assessment to the table, sharing, "Our school site despises this Thomas Paine Piece of literature. If this stays on the test, we are going to do something different," the district team took action and determined more accessible pieces of literature to use. Ultimately, Anthos had embedded feedback loops within each level of their distributed communication model, fostering not only clear messaging between district leadership and teacher leaders, but targeted, action-oriented collaboration as well.

District to school site messaging in Mairin Union High School District. According to the *The Mairin Union High School Performance Meter*, embedded within the district's core value of "building a collaborative culture" are two goals: 1) to develop "high-performing collaborative teams," and 2) for these teams to engage in "intentional collaboration." When situated within the context of the content specialists structure, both of these goals require a clearly articulated process for implementation, founded in two-way communication between both district leadership and teacher leaders, and teacher leaders and their school site colleagues.

The frequency with which content specialists met, nearly once a week, allowed them to receive timely information from the district office. All four content specialists interviewed indicated that email was their primary means of communicating to their teachers critical instructional messages shared by the district office. The Sammi mathematics content specialist noted, "Most of the time...we'll meet, I'll send an email out Thursday or Friday, just say hey, this is what we talked about, or this is what's going on." Indeed, communication via email was necessary to ensure the most timely communication of district messages, as content specialists met with all of their department members only once per month.

When asked to describe district leadership's expectations of content specialists in regard to messaging back to school sites, the director of curriculum commented, "My expectation is that they are taking information back to their sites but how thoroughly and transparent it is, you really don't know." Indeed, three out of four observations of content specialists meetings with their department members did not reflect direct communication of district instructional messages to school site teachers. The Anthea English department meeting involved all teachers in norming the grading of two essays utilizing a newly adopted rubric, while the Sammi English department engaged in a focused discussion about vertically aligning their grade level curriculum for the following school year. In contrast, the Sammi mathematics content specialist informed his colleagues about the district's decision regarding instructional materials for the following year, a strongly debated issue covered at each content specialist session observed. He shared, "The district has decided what we will do next year. It will not be the CPM curriculum. We will have to do Pearson." This messaging led to a heated discussion about the fairness of this decision, given Sammi High School's affinity for the CPM curriculum.

Ultimately, as content specialists engaged in their boundary spanning roles, they did so without a structured process, with clearly defined expectations, for carrying messages from district leadership to school site teachers. When asked to describe the expectations for content specialists in regard to carrying messages back from the district office to their school site peers, the principal of Anthea High School responded, "I don't know what kind of direction we're giving them. I'm totally blind on that." Akin to the response from the director of curriculum, this reply reflected a need for increased clarity regarding the specific role of content specialists in brokering instructional messages between the district office and school sites.

Mairin teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing communication. However, one open-ended comment from the teacher leader questionnaire stated both the role and critical benefit of content specialists' work with confidence: "Working collaboratively, information is shared, discussed, and eventually disseminated to site teachers in a way that district personnel cannot do." This comment reflects the valuing of teacher leaders as the vital conduit for delivering instructional messages to teachers at large due to their role as boundary spanners.

However, both observations of school site department meetings and interviews of content specialists revealed variance in the degree to which these teacher leaders were willing to take ownership of the messages district leadership tasked them with brokering to their peers. Though the Anthea ELA content specialist characterized the distributive communication model from the district to school sites via content specialists as "a chain of command," she also exhibited comfort with this role. When asked how she shared messages from districtwide content specialists meetings with her school site peers, she reported:

What I normally will do is anything that comes up in content specialists...sometimes too it's just really an information. I'm the representative. [The director of curriculum] just brought us information and I make sure to disseminate that information to the department. Also when the content specialists have questions or concerns or things of that sort, I will bring that back to the department.

She clearly felt it was her role to share information with her peers, both from district leadership and from fellow content specialists.

On the other hand, the Sammi mathematics content specialist was not as vested in his role as a district human capital resource for communicating instructional messages to his peers.

While facilitating a school site department meeting, a disgruntled peer asked, "[Recently] there was a meeting ...updating on CCSS [Common Core State Standards]. Why weren't course leads invited?" The content specialist responded, "You are asking the wrong person." He clearly was

not comfortable speaking on behalf of the district. Additional comments made by the Sammi content specialist throughout this observation appeared as intentional efforts to distance himself from the district. For example, when he reluctantly reminded teachers of the district's request that assessment scores be entered into the district's data management system in order to monitor student progress, he shared the reason for this in a mocking tone, "So they can say, 'This is what we are doing.'" Though this content specialist seemed to reluctantly broker messages from district leadership to his school site peers, the delivery of such messages did not benefit from the power of personalization.

Mairin teacher leaders as brokers of information from the district office. In regard to communication linkages, as with this study's analysis of other critical linkages in Mairin, the issue of trust and district leadership impacted content specialists' sense of self-efficacy, particularly related to their engagement in brokering actions. When given the statement, "district leadership empowers teacher leaders," 62.5% of content specialist respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while 37.5% who disagreed with this statement with 25% doing so strongly. Based upon this questionnaire data, content specialists varied widely in regard to the degree to which they believed district leadership supported them in carrying out their roles as brokers and boundary spanners.

This data was confirmed by interview responses as well. The Anthea mathematics content specialist commented, "I really have no power over the teachers to do anything. But, if I go in and I'm positive about it...I think most people say ok, let's go try it...That's about as far as I can take it." This content specialist exhibited limited confidence in his capacity to communicate messages from district leadership so as to garner the buy-in of his colleagues, despite his willingness to give it his best try. The Sammi mathematics content specialist revealed

a similar sense of self-efficacy when sharing about dealing with colleagues who do not buy in to the implementation of district instructional reform efforts. He stated, “Unfortunately, you don't have the power as department chair to evaluate...I can encourage them, but if they say they're not going to do it, what am I to do?” The questioning of their validity as a leader of their peers points to the need for targeted leadership training for content specialists.

Indeed, some Mairin content specialists found it challenging to broker messages that needed to be communicated at a course level, as opposed to at a department level. While explaining how mathematics course teams at his site informally collaborated on a weekly basis during lunch, the Anthea mathematics content specialist commented, “ When I can make it to those meetings, I'll explain to them what is going on. I try to bring it back...I try not to keep anything to me because I don't want anybody to come up and say I didn't know.” Here, this content specialist noted the challenge posed by having a singular broker of information between district leadership and teachers at large.

Yet, district leadership had begun to respond to this need to further distribute teacher leadership, thereby increasing the social capital necessary to broker instructional messages between the district and school sites. The director of curriculum noted that a next step in the evolution of the content specialists structure would be to include course leads in these collaborative efforts on a regular basis. During this study, such work had just begun. As the Anthea ELA content specialist shared, “We're trying to integrate them and work more with them as content specialists and bring them altogether as well so they're all in the same room with us.” Such efforts to distribute the direct lines of communication between the district and school sites, via course leads, were noted by the Sammi ELA course lead to already have positive effects.

When reflecting upon how instructional messages get communicated from district leadership to teachers at large, in addition to noting her own position as content specialist, she stated:

Another thing that's really valuable is the fact that the course leads go [to content specialists meetings sometimes], so it's not just coming from me. It's coming through another person who's gone and seen it and said, 'Wow, look what they're doing.' It's...creating more leadership I think. I think it's elevating the discussion. It's creating more accountability. I think it's really professional.

According to this content specialist, the increased distribution of leadership allowed for a stronger instructional message to emerge, as her voice no longer stood alone trying to encourage teachers to buy in to instructional reform efforts.

Ultimately, one open-ended comment from the teacher leader questionnaire best highlighted the importance of Mairin's system of distributed leadership and communication: "The content specialists are an important part of the communication process from the district to site." Indeed, interviews reflected that district leadership did intend for content specialists to act as brokers of instructional information from the district to school sites. However, observations and questionnaire data revealed that content specialists' fulfillment of the brokering role was dependent upon district leadership's continued development of a strategic plan for how content specialists are to effectively deliver district instructional messages to teachers at large.

Two-way communication: The Mairin feedback loop. At the time of this study, Mairin was in the midst of embedding communication linkages within the content specialists structure that would foster the development of a feedback loop enabling reciprocal communication between school sites and the district office. From the teacher perspective, such a feedback loop was desired, yet there seemed to be little confidence in it. This claim was most strongly supported by observations of site-level mathematics department meetings at both Sammi and Anthea High Schools. For example, when a colleague expressed her frustration

regarding the exclusion of course leads from a district level meeting on the Common Core State Standards, she stated, “I’m telling my department chair, so you need to take that back.”

However, when she asked the Sammi mathematics content specialist if he thought district leadership would consider her request to have course leads included, he responded, “You have a better shot at winning the lottery.” Such an exchange demonstrated how eager teachers were to have content specialists take boundary spanning actions to broker messages on their behalf.

However, it also exemplified how detrimental it could be when content specialists did not possess the self-efficacy nor possibly the trust in district leadership necessary to embrace such a role on behalf of their colleagues.

Indeed, when asked how he felt teachers viewed his role in communicating messages from teachers to district leadership, the Anthea mathematics content specialist responded, “I think they feel that at least I will go to bat for them with the group. Whether or not it’s going to matter, that’s a different story.” Again, akin to how he characterized his role as a broker of information from the district office to teachers, this content specialist also conveyed low levels of self-efficacy when it came to the reciprocity of communication from teachers to the district office.

However, the Anthea ELA content specialist clearly noted that her role involved reciprocally brokering messages between district leadership and teachers at large. She remarked, “You disseminate information to your department and then it goes back in the other direction as well.” Though this was not directly evident when observing the Anthea ELA department meeting, this content specialist also reflected a higher level of self-efficacy when it came to delivering messages from teachers to district leadership. She shared, “I try very hard to let people know that I am the voice of our department and if our department as a whole is not happy

with something, I would like to know that so I can report that.” This content specialist clearly embraced both her boundary spanning and brokering roles, as her comments reflected a willingness to facilitate a feedback loop in a way the district had yet to formalize.

However, the district was certainly taking action to expand its distribution of leadership, and thereby communication, in a way that would foster increased two-way communication between district leadership and school site teachers via the human capital resource of both content specialists and course leads. By including course leads in content specialists meetings for the first time, district leadership increased the breadth of human capital through whom instructional messages would be brokered back to school site teachers, and reciprocally brokered from teachers at large to the district office. Yet, though the districtwide structure was adapting to allow for more explicit messaging between the district and school sites, district leadership was still grappling with how to ensure that such a feedback loop would result in action-oriented collaboration both within districtwide content specialist sessions and at school site department and course team meetings.

The director of curriculum noted, “The course leads are supposed to be meeting regularly with their cohort and turning in the minutes...and we scan them and place them in our data files.” Though district leadership was collecting “data” about school site collaboration facilitated by their teacher leaders, it was unclear how the communication of such “data” to the district office informed targeted, action-oriented collaboration at both the districtwide content specialists and the school site course team sessions. Though the director of curriculum also referred to “outcomes and next steps” for both the content specialists and the course leads, it was unclear how such feedback from both of these levels of teacher leadership contributed to maintaining a solid focus on implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts.

Cross-case analysis of communication linkages in Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts. Both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts were able to establish communication linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders as a result of structural, relational, and resource linkages. However, the degree to which each study district's communication linkages proved effective in supporting the implementation of districtwide reform efforts varied. Variance in the degree to which teacher leaders were able to personalize the communication of instructional messages from the district office to school site teachers, as well as in the degree to which feedback loops were embedded within the districtwide structure, affected teacher leaders' abilities to engage in effective brokering of instructional messages.

One notable point of contrast in relation to communication linkages emerged as a result of differences in the strength of relational linkages between the two study districts. In Anthos, the consistently strong relational linkages between teacher leaders and district leadership allowed for open, reciprocal communication to occur on a consistent basis. This may be contributed, at least in part, to how accessible teacher leaders found district leadership to be. According to questionnaire data, all teacher leader respondents in Anthos agreed with the statement "district leadership is accessible to teacher leaders," with 32.1% agreeing and 67.9% strongly agreeing. When given the statement "as a teacher leader, I can freely express concerns to district leadership," all Anthos teacher leaders responded positively, with 42.9% agreeing, and 57.1% strongly agreeing. In Anthos, the fact that teacher leaders could easily access district leadership helped to enable open, reciprocal communication between these two levels of instructional leadership. This, in turn, facilitated district leadership's deployment of teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing the communication of instructional message from the district office to teachers at large.

In Mairin, however, where relational linkages between teacher leaders and district leadership were challenged by concerns regarding the trustworthiness of district leadership, open and reciprocal communication linkages struggled to emerge. According to questionnaire data, when given the statement “district leadership is accessible to teacher leaders,” 37.5% of teacher leader respondents agreed, and the same percentage of respondents strongly agreed. However, 25% of respondents disagreed with this statement. When given the statement, “as a teacher leader, I can freely express concerns to district leadership,” the discrepancy in responses was even more apparent. Though 25% of Mairin teacher leader respondents agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed, 25% disagreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed. In Mairin, the fact that a significant percentage of teacher leaders found district leadership to be inaccessible, and felt that they were unable to express concerns to district leadership, hindered the development of open, reciprocal communication linkages between these two levels of instructional leadership. This, in turn, made it challenging for district leadership to utilize teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing the communication of instructional messages from the district office to teachers at large.

Yet another key point of contrast in relation to communication linkages surfaced as a result of differences in structural linkages between both study districts. In Mairin, the principal of Anthea characterized the structure of the district as “an umbrella and...a loosely connected organization.” Though the concept of school districts as loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976) provides for the autonomy schools need to function as unique communities of students and educators, the links that couple individual schools into a district should be tight enough to foster such points of coupling as feedback loops. In the case of Mairin, clearly defined expectations for

iterative, reciprocal communication between district leadership and teacher leaders were not tightly embedded into the districtwide structure of collaboration.

In contrast, Athos exhibited clear expectations for communication between district leadership and teacher leaders within their districtwide structure. This was reflected in the director of staff development's perspective on how the loose-tight balance operated within Anthos' districtwide structure: "It used to be much more structured, and they'd have less wiggle room. Now the capacity is there." It is important to note here that as capacity for distributing leadership and communication increased, and Anthos loosened some of the structural elements of Best Practices, they remained tight on key linkages, such as those involving communication and feedback loops. Clearly, structured means of communication remained within the most recent iteration of the Best Practices structure, and were responsible for guiding the targeted work of both districtwide and site-based collaboration related to instruction.

Ideological Linkages

Foundational to each of the critical linkages explored thus far – structural, relational, resource, and communication – is the linkage based upon ideology. How ideology, encompassing values, vision, and goals, has influenced the role of teacher leaders in supporting the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts was a significant point of contrast between Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts. Given this point of contrast, this study revealed the following key finding relative to ideological linkages: When district leadership strategically promotes a shared instructional vision, all levels of leadership more willingly engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms.

The instructional vision in Anthos Union High School District. Anthos' internal publication, *A Guide to Excellence in Teaching and Learning*, states as its purpose "to clarify

expectations, providing specific processes and protocols that facilitate a focused and consistent implementation of our instructional vision...By working closely together and learning from one another we will continue to collectively raise the level of our work.” Indeed, interviews, observations, and questionnaire data revealed that the instructional vision detailed in this guiding document had been the driving force behind Anthos’ districtwide Best Practices structure.

When teacher leaders were provided with the statement, “there is a shared instructional vision among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders,” questionnaire respondents were wholly positive, as 32.2% agreed and 67.7% strongly agreed with this statement. Additionally, all five Anthos principals indicated strong agreement with this statement. Simply the belief that all stakeholders were focused on the same instructional priorities was integral to driving districtwide instructional reform efforts. The Sydney English 1 course lead explained how this collective belief in the work in which teacher leaders engaged with district leadership and school site colleagues was most aptly encapsulated by the district slogan:

I think it's mostly the whole ‘whatever it takes’...When you look around, everybody follows it, everybody does it. It's hard to leave class to go to the Best Practices. When you go there, it's like you know you're doing whatever you can to help the kids succeed. You're making it better. You take it back here and then everyone is still doing whatever it takes to achieve it in their classrooms. To further it, to make sure that we're all consistent. I think that's probably just the biggest thing, that we're all on board. Even if we disagree, we're still on board.

The ideology of the district was the driving force behind districtwide efforts to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, district leadership’s strategic approach to fostering this ideology, to communicating the instructional vision, was key to garnering stakeholder buy-in. Therefore, documents such as *A Guide to Excellence in Teaching and Learning* served as internal tools to guide the Best Practices work and reinforce a consistent message about instruction.

Indeed, both principals and all four course leads interviewed affirmed that both district leadership and site leadership encouraged teacher leaders to embrace a common instructional direction. When asked if there was a high level of coherence between the instructional direction set by district leadership and that set by the principal at Sidon, the Algebra 1 10-12 course lead responded, “They're in line because, bottom line, we want what's best for the kids. If it's in the best interest of the student, bottom line, that's what's being asked.” Likewise, when asked the same question, the principal of Sidon responded, “It's tightly aligned, because... I've been a principal as long as we've been doing Whatever It Takes, when we created the course leads, we created the job description and what the products would look like, so in my mind that's really clear.” Such interviews demonstrated that Anthos' shared instructional direction permeated all levels of instructional leadership.

This coherence of instructional direction was confirmed by questionnaire data as well. When teacher leaders were provided with the statement, “the instructional initiatives around which my principal focuses all teachers are in alignment with those communicated to teacher leaders by district leadership,” the response was wholly positive, with 50% of respondents agreeing and an equal percentage of respondents strongly agreeing. Questionnaire data also reflected that all five Anthos principals believed that the instructional initiatives around which they focused all teachers were in alignment with those communicated to teacher leaders by district leadership.

However, the true test of this coherence was founded in additional questionnaire data indicating the specific instructional reform efforts around which both teacher leaders and principals believed the shared instructional vision promoted by district leadership focused their joint work. When given the opportunity to list what they believed to be the top two to four

instructional initiatives in Anthos Union High School District, 75% of teacher leader respondents indicated core components directly detailed in *A Guide to Excellence in Teaching and Learning*. Examples included “teachers collaborate to improve instruction by developing common assessments that can be analyzed, so that data-based decisions about changes in curriculum can be implemented,” “increased student achievement,” “directed intervention,” and “whatever it takes.”

Ultimately, their responses demonstrated that the essence of the district’s shared vision for instruction was equally as important as the substance. This was reflected in interview responses as well, as the Sydney Algebra 2 course lead shared:

There's that spirit here. Spirit of ... We want to work together. We're all a team. It's for the good of the students and there's just that real positive, gentle, kind spirit. We just all try and work well with each other as much as possible. Everybody is on board with this collaborative model.”

This exemplified the belief that Anthos educators demonstrated a high level of commitment to the first of the district’s three non-negotiables, collaboration, the effects of which the district’s guide to instructional direction claimed has resulted in “the most significant academic growth” for all students. The principal of Sydney High School likewise stressed how critical the belief in the power of collaboration was to the district’s ideology, commenting, “We talk about how important teams are and when we hire we say, not this directly, but, ‘You’re either going to be a good team member or you’re not going to work here.’” Indeed, collaborative processes were deeply embedded in the district’s culture, and within each school site.

Complementing these remarks, the Sidon Algebra 1 10-12 course lead emphasized the vision district leadership established which promoted all stakeholders’ willingness to engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms. She shared, “I’m very fortunate that the people at the top have the vision, and are taking us through this changing

time [of the Common Core State Standards].” However, equally as important as having district leadership establish a vision was the inclusion by district leadership of teacher leaders in the pursuit of that vision. When presented with the statement “district leadership’s actions demonstrate that teacher leaders are essential to enacting a shared instructional vision,” all teacher leader questionnaire respondents replied in the affirmative, with 25.8% agreeing and 74.2% strongly agreeing. Likewise, when given the same statement, all five principals strongly agreed that district leadership engaged in overt actions demonstrating teacher leaders were indispensable to carrying out the district’s instructional vision. In Anthos, it was clear that the shared instructional vision strategically promoted by district leadership compelled all levels of leadership – teacher leaders, principals, and district leadership – to more willingly engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms.

The instructional vision in Mairin Union High School District. Mairin’s internal document entitled *The Mairin Union High District School Performance Meter* identified the district’s three core values as 1) ensuring all students learn, 2) building a collaborative culture, and 3) perfecting a focus on results. Indeed, interviews, observations, and questionnaire data demonstrated that the evolving districtwide collaborative structure supported the district’s pursuit of the other two core values. However, as the relational, resource, and communication linkages within this districtwide collaborative structure were still developmental in nature, the ideology detailed within this guiding document was still working to embed itself into the culture of the Mairin district as well.

When teacher leaders were provided with the statement, “there is a shared instructional vision among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders,” questionnaire respondents were divided. While 44.4% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed with this statement (totaling 55.5%),

33.3% disagreed and 11.2% strongly disagreed (totaling 44.4%). Though the data reflected a slightly stronger belief that all levels of instructional leadership were focused on the same instructional priorities, the fact that a significant percentage of teacher leaders felt a shared instructional vision was not present impacted the coherence of efforts to implement instructional reforms.

In contrast to the divided response of teacher leaders, all principal respondents indicated strong agreement with the above statement. However, the principal of Sammi High School provided critical insight into what strong agreement with this statement meant. When asked how he encouraged teacher leaders to embrace a common instructional direction, he shared:

Eventually, [the district is going to say], ‘We’re just going to go in that direction, and you guys have to fall in line.’... That’s where the site principals are going to have to get together with their people and say, ‘Look, we’ve got to go [in this] direction.’ I never go a different direction. I may disagree behind closed doors, but I don’t tell them, ‘I disagree with this.’ I put a happy face on and say, ‘Guys, this is what we have to do. This is our mission, and this is how we’re going to fulfill that mission.’

For this principal, at least, a commitment to communicating a shared instructional vision did not necessarily equate with a deeply seated belief in that vision. However, the Anthea High School principal did indicate that an inherent belief system was driving the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts. He shared:

One thing I love about this district is that there’s a belief. Inherently what we do, but not maybe explicit...is that when you give teachers time and a space to have the crucial conversations, a framework and the vocabulary, the academic language to use in that time and space, a tryout, that’s when you see the most bang for your buck.

Again, the developmental nature of Mairin’s districtwide structure for building a collaborative culture was likely a reason, along with the relational trust issues previously discussed, for why the goal of establishing “shared mission, vision, values, and goals” as stated by the *Performance Meter* was one the district still needed to strategically pursue.

The need for continued fostering of a united instructional direction was confirmed by questionnaire data as well. When teacher leaders were provided with the statement “the instructional initiatives around which my principal focuses all teachers are in alignment with those communicated to teacher leaders by district leadership,” responses leaned toward the negative, with 50% of teacher leaders disagreeing and 12.5% strongly disagreeing (totaling 62.5%). In contrast to the divided response of teacher leaders, all principal respondents indicated strong agreement with the above statement.

Additional questionnaire data indicating the specific instructional reform efforts around which both teacher leaders and principals believed the shared instructional vision promoted by district leadership centered their joint work also indicated a need for a tighter instructional focus. Indeed, 62.5% of teacher leader respondents felt they could not articulate their district’s instructional initiatives. When a follow-up question asked teacher leaders to list the top two to four instructional initiatives, three of the respondents’ answers cited “common core,” while all other responses were distinctly different. Responses included such phrases as “SIOP [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol],” “rigor in the classroom,” and “improvement of EL and special education academic performance.” One comment exemplified these responses most aptly, stating, “This changes every 2 - 3 years so it is too inconsistent for me to list.” Indeed, the need for a clear ideological approach to instruction impacted the district’s progress toward implementation of coherent reform efforts.

Ultimately, this need reflected the even deeper need within Mairin for district leadership to establish a clearer vision capable of promoting all stakeholders’ willingness to engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms. Undoubtedly, the recent string of turnovers in senior district leadership had affected the communication of such a

vision. One content specialist lamented, “There is no guidance from the superintendent. What we decide in specialist groups sometimes flies in the face of what the board or superintendent want, but we are unaware of their desires.” An ideological divide between district leadership and teacher leaders clearly permeated the districtwide content specialists structure. Likewise, other content specialists noted the need for an articulated vision when given the opportunity for additional comments within the questionnaire. One specialist noted, “I think we have a lot of good ideas as teachers and as content specialists. However, I think we could be doing a lot more if there was more direction and guidance from above.” Again, teacher leaders were in need of clarity regarding the driving force behind their districtwide collaborative work.

Though the need to have district leadership establish a clear vision was certainly a priority among teacher leaders, a majority of teacher leaders did feel that district leadership acknowledged the importance of including teacher leaders in the pursuit of that vision. When presented with the statement “district leadership’s actions demonstrate that teacher leaders are essential to enacting a shared instructional vision,” 33.3% of teacher leader questionnaire respondents agreed with this statement, and an equal percentage strongly agreed (totaling 66.6%). Likewise, when given the same statement, all five principals strongly agreed that district leadership engaged in overt actions demonstrating teacher leaders were indispensable to carrying out the district’s instructional vision.

However, it is important to note that 22.2% of content specialists disagreed with the above statement, and 11.2% strongly disagreed. As one open-ended comment reflected, “The lack of an articulated vision makes it difficult to know if the specialists are headed in the wrong direction. This leads me to worry all my work is for nothing because the district will decide something without our consultation.” Some teacher leaders in Mairin were not certain that

teacher leaders were viewed by district leadership as critical players in the promotion of the district's instructional vision. In Mairin, it was clear that district leadership still needed to develop its strategic approach to promoting a shared instructional vision that would compel all levels of leadership – teacher leaders, principals, and district leadership – to more willingly engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms.

Cross-case analysis of ideological linkages in Anthos and Mairin Union High School

Districts. Both Anthos and Mairin district leadership worked to establish ideological linkages with teacher leaders encompassing values, vision, and goals as a foundational driving force behind districtwide instructional reform efforts. Based upon this study, the strength of such ideological linkages and the degree of coherence the ideological linkages brought to each district's pursuit of districtwide reform efforts through the complimentary structural, relational, resource, and communication linkages varied significantly.

Anthos employed a highly strategic approach to establishing a clear vision and goals to which course leads could connect while engaging in instructionally focused collaborative work. It was clear from interviews, document analysis, and questionnaire data that the district slogan of “whatever it takes” was the driving force behind the work engaged in by all levels of instructional leadership. Teacher leaders demonstrated a depth of buy-in regarding the vision and goals embedded within this memorable slogan that promoted their willingness to work with one another and with district leadership to advance districtwide instructional reform efforts.

In contrast, Mairin's multiple senior district leadership turnovers and resulting distrust of district leadership made it challenging for the district to implement a strategic approach to promoting a shared instructional vision. The district slogan of “every student, every minute, every day,” though evident in the *Performance Meter*, could only be found once on the district

website, two layers in from the homepage, and was not referred to during interviews or within questionnaire responses. In addition, the need for clarity regarding instructional initiatives in Mairin stood in strong contrast to the tightly aligned responses provided by Anthos teacher leaders.

However, both study districts demonstrated a strong belief in the inclusion of teacher leaders as critical human resources needed to promote a shared instructional vision throughout the district. Though Anthos boasted 100% of course lead respondents feeling valued by district leadership in this role, Mairin was making significant progress in this regard, with 66.6% of content specialists validating that district leadership acknowledged their role in promoting a shared instructional vision. Ultimately, all data points reflected the establishment of clear, well-articulated ideological linkages in Anthos that promoted a shared instructional vision which, in turn, fueled the districtwide Best Practices work, while Mairin data points reflected the developmental stage of their ideological linkages.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings of this study explicated how school-based teacher leaders brokered critical information between district leadership and teachers at large by serving as boundary spanners who bridged the organizational divide between school sites and the district office. Detailed analysis of each of these critical linkages clarified the specific role of teacher leaders in engaging teachers at large in instructional reform efforts, as well as of the means by which district leadership supported teacher leaders in this role. The key findings of this study also provided insight into the perceptions of district administrators, principals, and teacher leaders regarding districtwide instructional reform efforts that leverage teacher leaders and their impact on student outcomes.

From a structural perspective, this study found that district leadership can increase the effectiveness of districtwide structures as a means of driving instructional reform efforts by focusing their work on the technical core and permitting the structures to be adaptive in nature. In addition, perceptions of trust related to district leadership directly impact the extent to which teacher leaders report districtwide structures to be effective in driving instructional reform efforts. Finally, districtwide structures that establish a direct link between district leadership and teacher leaders, not requiring the hierarchical inclusion of school site administrators, compel teacher leaders to act as boundary spanners.

Both study districts worked to build relational and resource linkages in support of their structural linkages. This study revealed that resource linkages are an outgrowth of strong relational trust and foster districtwide organizational learning in service on instructional reform efforts. Also, district leaders who are viewed as instructional leaders can serve as human capital resources for developing the leadership capacity of teacher leaders, thereby linking the work of district leadership more tightly to the technical core of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, this study showed how communication may be the most valuable outcome of the combined establishment of structural, relational, and resource linkages between teacher leaders and district leadership. This study found that when district leadership utilizes teacher leaders as a resource for personalizing the communication of instructional messages from the district office, teacher leaders are compelled to act as brokers of information. Moreover, feedback loops that are iterative and embedded within districtwide structures foster not only clear messaging between district leadership and teacher leaders but also targeted, action-oriented collaboration as well.

Finally, this study explored how the most foundational linkage, ideology, bonded teacher leaders and district leadership in their collaborative work to improve teaching and learning. In relation to ideological linkages, when district leadership strategically promotes a shared instructional vision, all levels of leadership more willingly engage in the focused joint work necessary to advance districtwide instructional reforms. Ultimately, interviews, observations, document analysis, and questionnaire data from both Anthos and Mairin Union High School Districts detailed how these five critical linkages – structural, relational, resource, communication, and ideological – emerged within districtwide structures for teacher leader collaboration, and how each manifested from both a developmental (Mairin) and fully implemented (Anthos) perspective.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Evidence found in this study demonstrates how district leadership, in partnership with teacher leaders, can develop a trusting, reciprocal, non-hierarchical structure coupling these two levels of instructional leadership through critical linkages, all in service of improved teaching and learning. Though there were certainly limitations to the study, the data that I collected suggest that, when district leadership establishes structural, relational, resource, communication, and ideological linkages with teacher leaders, a cohesive focus on districtwide instructional reform efforts emerges, one that can contribute to improved student outcomes. Each study district exemplified both the benefits and the challenges that come with being at two very distinct places along the continuum of implementation of a districtwide structure, based in teacher leadership, for driving instructional reform.

This study examined the role of teacher leaders in the implementation of districtwide instructional reform efforts as supported by district leadership practices. A distributed leadership frame foregrounded how school-based teacher leaders brokered critical information between district leadership and teachers at large by serving as boundary spanners who bridged the organizational divide between school sites and the district office. This study furthermore sought to address the gap in the research regarding the dearth of models for collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships between school-based teacher leaders and district office leadership.

In this final chapter, I discuss key findings relative to the five critical linkages that bond district leadership and teacher leaders in pursuit of improved student outcomes: structural, relational, resource, communication, and ideological. This discussion is couched in the two critical roles for teacher leaders that emerged authentically during the course of this study, that of

teacher leaders as brokers and boundary spanners. I also discuss the implications that key findings have for the role of district leadership in driving instructional reform efforts, and how they support teacher leaders in their brokering and boundary spanning roles. Next, I disclose the limitations of this study. Finally, I conclude this chapter by sharing recommendations for practice based upon my research findings and suggest avenues for future research.

Mid-Study Insight: Two Critical Roles for Teacher Leaders.

While researching for my own work in a role akin to that of Anthos' director of staff development and Mairin's director of curriculum, I happened upon a key piece of literature that brought new meaning to the districtwide work I was observing in each study district. While exploring literature on the role of district-based instructional coaches, I was introduced to the concept of brokers and boundary spanners (Swinnerton, 2007). As I examined how instructional coaches served as brokers and boundary spanners and compared the literature to the work in which teacher leaders in Anthos and Mairin engaged through their respective districtwide structures, I realized that these teacher leaders were enacting all of the chief characteristics of these roles.

As brokers, teacher leaders in Anthos and Mairin “design[ed] tools, manage[d] data, ...buil[t] networks, and coordinate[d] work with others throughout the system” (Swinnerton, 2007, p. 199). They carried out these tasks both within their respective districtwide structures as well as in their site-based, collaborative time with teachers of their departments (Mairin) and courses (Anthos). For example, the Anthos English 1 team spent time during a Best Practices day designing teacher instructions – a tool – for their upcoming assessment, a performance task comprised of multiple documents students must synthesize in response to a writing prompt. Mairin mathematics content specialists spent many of their afternoons developing and revising

benchmark exams, a tool for use by mathematics teachers throughout the district. In both cases, teacher leaders were tasked with brokering these resources back to their school site peers.

In so doing, teacher leaders' brokering actions in both study districts engaged them in boundary spanning as well. In Anthos, course leads expressed an understanding of how the structure of Best Practices days and their leading roles in this work would require them to bridge the very real structural divide between the district office and the school sites, given that site administration was not included. The following comment from the Algebra 2 course lead most aptly reflected how these teacher leaders were essential to coordinating instructional work:

I think the primary responsibility is to be the liaison between what's happening at the district and then to what's happening at your site...As course lead, you are wearing two hats in a way because you're on this district committee and you're participating with them and you're having to come to agreements with people from all five high schools.

In Mairin, though some teacher leaders did find discomfort in their boundary spanning roles given mistrust of the district office, they did engage in this task. The Anthea ELA content specialist noted specifically how she spanned the boundary between district and school site, stating, I'm the representative. [Information] comes from the district to the content specialist. Then you change hats, and become really the department chair. For the most part,...my department trusts that I'm going to give them an accurate amount of information." Ultimately, in both districts, teacher leaders exemplified the core characteristics of Swinnerton's conception of how brokers and boundary spanners function within an educational system.

When discussing the implications of her study, Swinnerton (2007) stated that "further research is needed to explore how the work of brokers and boundary spanners influences instructional reform efforts across a system of schools" (p. 219). This study helps to answer this call for additional research by applying the work of brokers and boundary spanners to the context of districtwide course level (in Anthos) and department level (in Mairin) collaborative efforts

between teacher leaders and district leadership. Indeed, the core work of each of these unique collaborative structures was to approach the implementation of instructional reform efforts on a districtwide scale, hence, “across a system of schools.”

Focusing on the Technical Core of Teaching and Learning

Research shows that districts that employed strategies for increasing intraorganizational ties, such as establishing structures for consistent interaction between district leadership and school sites and developing learning partnerships across school sites, experienced improved student achievement (Copeland & Knapp, 2006; Honig, 2004; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Findings from this study suggest that Anthos Union High School District may be such a case in point.

District leadership realized that any given structure was only as good as the people nurturing and sustaining it. Therefore, Anthos was strategic in developing the human capital within the district office for establishing instructionally focused district-school relationships. They fully embraced the concept of leadership for learning, which research demonstrates is linked to schools and school districts posting gains in student achievement (Honig et al., 2010; Murphy, et al., 2007). In so doing, Anthos cultivated the Best Practices structure that was tightly focused on the technical core. Throughout each Best Practices observation, Anthos district leadership ensured that all work was dedicated to the technical core by establishing a consistently implemented, instructionally focused agenda.

During the course of this study, Mairin Union High School District was in the midst of developing a structure deeply rooted in the technical core. Though the content specialists had been meeting consistently for a decade, time and space seemed to be the most defining features of this districtwide structure. Undoubtedly, impactful work did result from the collaboration

among content specialists – the design of common assessments, the development of ELA course readers, sharing of best practices, etc. However, the lack of an instructionally focused agenda, coupled with the fact that some content specialists felt they could not define their district’s instructional initiatives because they “change every two to three years so it is too inconsistent...to list,” weakened the structure’s focus on the technical core.

Ultimately, my findings reinforced previous research by exemplifying how structures for consistent, reciprocal interactions between district leadership and teacher leaders can lead to increased student achievement. Indeed, when Anthos redefined the role of department chairperson and introduced the role of course lead and the Best Practices initial structure in 2003, the district’s Academic Performance Index (API) stood at 622. After 10 years of developing and sustaining the Best Practices structure, the district’s API rose to 790, just shy of the state’s goal of 800. The Best Practices structure honed the district’s focus on the technical core of teaching and learning and undoubtedly contributed to the increase in student achievement over time.

Trust and ideology. From the outset of this study, it was clear that the construct of trust played a critical role not only in determining teacher leaders’ perceptions of how effective their respective districtwide structures were in driving instructional reform efforts, but in their own willingness to enact broker and boundary spanning roles. Though Chapter 4 ties the construct of trust directly to structural, relational, and resource linkages, its association with ideology cannot be overlooked. Indeed, research demonstrates that districtwide reform efforts thrive when districts focus first on building a time-tested culture of trust across all levels of the system (Berends, Chun, Schulyer, Stockley, & Briggs, 2002). This culture is most deeply reflected in a district’s vision, values, and goals.

In Mairin, deep-seated mistrust of district leadership cast a shadow over the work in which the director of curriculum labored to engage teacher leaders. Teacher leaders referenced the numerous recent turnovers in senior district leadership positions, and often cited their mistrust, with remarks such as, “There is no guidance from the superintendent. What we decide in specialist groups sometimes flies in the face of what the board or superintendent want but we are unaware of their desires.” Such a high level of mistrust clearly muddled district leadership’s efforts to convey a shared instructional message.

In Anthos, however, time-tested high levels of relational trust permeated not only the ideological linkages between district leadership and teacher leaders, but all other linkages as well. Unconditional trust on behalf of teacher leaders – in district leadership, in school site administration, and in fellow teacher leaders – is the solid foundation upon which the Anthos Union High School District has built a culture unwavering in its commitment to supporting academic success for every student. Hence, “whatever it takes” seems to have evolved from a slogan to a way of life in Anthos.

Ultimately, variance in the levels of relational trust within each study district, particularly the trust of teacher leaders in district leadership, directly impacted the strength of implementation with respect to each district’s districtwide structure for driving instructional reform efforts. In Mairin, the ebb and flow of trust over time and the varying perceptions of individual teacher leaders regarding the extent to which they trusted their district leadership led to a structure that was loosely implemented and moderately effective in communicating instructional messages to teachers at large. In Anthos, however, sustained high levels of relational trust in district leadership compelled teacher leaders to fully engage in broker and boundary spanning actions

within the districtwide Best Practices structure, resulting in the consistent communication and implementation of instructional reform efforts.

Defying hierarchy. As noted in Chapter 4, perhaps the most unanticipated finding of this study was the intentional exclusion of school site administrators from direct participation in the Anthos Best Practices structure. In Mairin, though district leadership stated they expected site administrators to attend the content specialist sessions, site administrators played no formal role as human capital resources within this collaborative structure. Prior research showed that principals act as the chief mediating force between district policy and teachers' active implementation of policy (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Indeed, as the study ensued, I was prepared to validate that each district's districtwide structure would reflect a clear hierarchy, particularly of communication, as messages were carried along the organizational continuum from district leadership, to school site administrators, to teacher leaders, and then to teachers at large.

However, this was not the case in either study district. In both districts, the fact that school site administrators were not utilized as communication nor resource linkages within the districtwide structure is what compelled teacher leaders to act as both brokers and boundary spanners. This defied the assumption that there would be at least some semblance of a linear progression of messaging from the district office to all school site teachers. Even the work of Chrispeels et al. (2008), which examined the relationship between the district office and school leadership teams (SLTs), included the principal as part of the SLT.

The fact that Anthos overtly excluded site administrators from the Best Practices structure served to empower the course leads as direct brokers of instructional messages between their school sites and the district office. This empowerment, in turn, served to increase these

teacher leaders' sense of self-efficacy and their confidence to serve as boundary spanners as they moved between and among multiple levels of the districtwide system.

Leadership for learning. Furthermore, the fact that district leaders in Anthos assumed the role of instructional leaders, functioning as human capital resources for developing the leadership capacity of teacher leaders, served only to augment the empowerment of teacher leaders. The following acknowledgement on the part of Anthos district leadership was critical to the overall success of their distributed leadership and communication structure:

[Course leads] needed to be trained. They didn't sign up for it. I've talked to [other] districts whose PLCs have not gone so well. A lot of that has to do with that training. Luckily, we realized that early; that we need to train them in some of the basic leadership skills. We really have Leadership 101, we have How To Run Meetings 101, and it's actually called that.”

The extent to which Anthos prioritized teacher leadership development utilizing the district office's human capital directly impacted the success of the Best Practices structure. This finding was significant, as it increases the body of empirical evidence linking the work of district leadership directly to teacher leaders, thereby increasing the district office's ability to more explicitly influence teaching and learning improvement (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). This is also significant given that the majority of current research regarding the development of teacher leadership capacity has been school-based, focused chiefly on the principal as the primary cultivator of teacher leadership (Briky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006; Firestone & Martinez, 2010; Gajda & Koliba, 2008).

Mairin district leadership, on the other hand, had yet to determine how to benefit from their decision not to require the hierarchical inclusion of school site administrators in the districtwide content specialists structure. The structural opportunity existed for district leadership to capitalize on teacher leaders as direct relational, resource, and communication

linkages with teachers at large. However, Mairin district leadership was unable to coordinate the human capital resources from within their district office to provide explicit leadership training for teacher leaders. Content specialists undoubtedly demonstrated initiative and varying degrees of focus as they engaged in the “content collaboration” portion of the afternoon agenda. However, during times when the director of curriculum was not with the ELA or mathematics teams, their focused wavered, becoming fractured among the team. Consequently, Mairin teacher leaders exhibited less self-efficacy and decreased confidence to serve as boundary spanners.

If, moving forward, the Mairin director of curriculum is to remain the sole facilitator of districtwide sessions – both with content specialists and with course leads – the practice of running each content or course session concurrently must be revisited. If not, the director of curriculum remains less a truly engaged facilitator of instructionally focused work and more the mouthpiece for a loosely connected agenda.

Limitations of This Study

Though my research design was strategically developed to study the districtwide structures for linking district leadership and teacher leaders to the greatest depth possible, this study proved not to be free of limitations. I encountered the chief limitation of this study in Mairin Union High School District, approximately two months into my four months of planned data collection. When interviewing the director of curriculum I asked him to describe how the role of content specialist differed from that of a department chairperson. He responded, “We blended it so that they are no longer two different hats because the content specialist is working with the data, with the strategies, to support and give direction to the course leads that also specialize in a particular cohort.” This was the first time in the course of my study, having

already conducted eight district and site observations and three informal planning meetings with the director, that I had heard mention of Mairin having a formal course lead position.

Had this information been disclosed prior to my study commencing, I would have adjusted my research design to include observations of Mairin's districtwide course lead collaboration. Since district leadership was at the beginning stages of implementing this districtwide structure, I had just missed the opportunity to observe the first round of collaboration between course leads and content specialists when this position came to light, and the second round for the year was not scheduled until a month after this study closed. Though this level of observations would not have quite paralleled the Best Practices observations in Athos, I anticipate that it would have provided somewhat more insight into the work Mairin was progressing toward, particularly in terms of adapting their districtwide structure in order to link it more tightly to the technical core.

Another potential limitation of this study is its generalizability due to site and sample selection. I chose to focus my data collection in two union high school districts located within Los Angeles County, which begs the question as to whether or not the findings from this study can be transferred to elementary school districts, areas outside of urban Los Angeles, or other district contexts. However, the reality is that each school, each district, is its own unique community, and therefore, generalizability of findings from this study will likely rely upon the "rich, thick description" (Merriam, 2001, p.227) of the qualitative data shared herein. To enhance generalizability, I also employed purposeful sample selection. In both Athos and Mairin, I chose to target my site level observations and interviews at the highest and lowest performing schools in each district.

Finally, this study is also potentially limited by the use of perception data, rather than quantitative data, to reflect how districtwide instructional reform efforts in both Anthos and Mairin contribute to improved student outcomes. Though other research has found that “high levels of student achievement are possible when schools and the district act as coordinated units of change” (Chrispeels et al., 2008, p. 730), I chose to tie perception data from district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders to academic performance data as reported by the California Department of Education.

Recommendations for District Leadership

The following recommendations for practice pertain to critical elements gleaned from this study’s observations, interviews, document analysis, and questionnaire data for driving districtwide instructional reform efforts through a well-defined districtwide structure for teacher leader collaboration. Historically, the district office belies the leadership for learning that was fully realized in Anthos and in development in Mairin. Research is ripe with portraits of the district office as a bureaucracy that either inhibits school reform efforts, or is irrelevant to instructional improvement (Hillman & Kachur, 2010; Honig & Rainey, 2011; Marsh, Kerr, Ikemoto, Darilek, Suttorp, & Zimmer, 2005; Peterson, 1999). As district leaders, we need to ensure that every action we take is from the perspective of an instructional leader, one who embraces servant leadership and directly supports teacher leaders in districtwide collaborative work that is tightly tied to the technical core of teaching and learning.

Firestone and Martinez (2007) maintain that through a distributed leadership framework teacher leaders “can be integrated into a districtwide change effort and complement district leadership” (p. 4). However, when developing a districtwide structure as a means of driving instructional reform efforts, district leadership should carefully consider at which point in the

organization the distribution of leadership and communication will be situated. While Anthos employed a districtwide model utilizing those closest to the technical core, course leads, Mairin chose to situate the nexus of their distributed leadership model one step away from course leads at the content specialist level. It is critical that district leadership ensures that the districtwide structure they establish enables teacher leaders to enact their boundary spanning and brokering roles with the school site colleagues with whom they have the closest relational linkages and highest level of instructional influence.

Secondly, the Best Practices structure in Anthos clearly exemplified how critical it is to have a member of the district leadership team facilitating the collaborative work of teacher leaders. In order to accomplish this, district leadership should allocate resources to developing the human capital within the district office. Honig (2008) emphasizes the need for district office staff who are experienced and skilled in cultivating effective school assistance relationships to serve as resources for other, less-skilled office staff. Indeed, had this nested assistance relationship (Honig et al., 2010) been established in Mairin, a district leader such as the director of categorical programs, whose strength lies in instructional coaching, could have provided job-embedded training for the director of curriculum and other key district personnel so that each content specialist team could benefit from full facilitation.

District leadership should also consider how to develop a standardized agenda to guide the districtwide collaborative work of teacher leaders. The agenda items should be determined in conjunction with teacher leaders, and tightly tie the work of any given collaborative session to the technical core of teaching and learning. Ultimately, teacher leaders should recognize that the instructionally focused work in which they engage with their peers is all in support of a shared instructional vision.

Another recommendation for practice is to establish feedback loops that are iterative and embedded within the districtwide structure. Anthos clearly accomplished this by ensuring that within each Best Practices day, course leads documented a plan, albeit simple, for taking what they learned during the day and the resources they had co-constructed back to their school sites. They ensured two-way communication by reminding course leads that they would need to share out at the next Best Practices regarding their school site colleagues' feedback related to the resources and data shared.

Additionally, in recognizing the direct link to the instructional core that teacher leaders provide and planning how to capitalize upon this proximal connection, district leadership should plan to facilitate explicit training to increase the leadership capacity of teacher leaders. Empirical evidence indicates the need for district leadership to invest in developing teacher leaders' human capital for the purpose of employing teacher leaders' brokering and boundary spanning influence with peers in order to forward district initiatives for teaching and learning improvement (Murphy, 2005; Poekert, 2012; Smeets & Ponte, 2009). This leadership training should be highly structured and founded in research-based leadership strategies, and sustained as new teacher leaders fold into the districtwide work over time.

Finally, district leadership would benefit from clearly defining the role, if any, of school site administrators in the districtwide structure for teacher leader collaboration. Going into this study, it was expected that site administrators would play a critical role, particularly in relation to communication, in the districtwide structures established in both Anthos and Mairin. However, a key finding was the intentional exclusion of site administrators from the districtwide collaborative work of teacher leaders. District leadership must consider the strength of their direct relational linkages with teacher leaders – most importantly, relational trust – in

determining whether or not the inclusion of site administrators is critical to the success of the districtwide structure.

Implications for Future Research

Each of the following suggestions for further research is directly linked to at least one of the recommendations for practice outlined above. Indeed, the best practices gleaned from this study can be further refined and considered for institutionalization within a district when additional studies validate their effectiveness. Therefore, as supported by other research preceding this study, my findings reiterate the need for future research to delve deeply into the practices of district leadership that drive instructional reform efforts (Chrispeels, Burk, Johnson & Daly, 2008; Honig & Rainey, 2001). Such continued research is necessary in order to establish models of how district leadership can serve as an asset, and not an obstruction, to the improvement of teaching and learning.

In particular, the pivotal role of the facilitator, as fulfilled by district leadership, should be examined in the context of a districtwide structure for driving instructional reform efforts. Indeed, the facilitator role witnessed in Anthos Union High School District reflects previous research that identified three critical leadership tasks that can be jointly fulfilled by both teacher leaders and district administration: 1) procuring and distributing materials; 2) monitoring improvement and; 3) developing people (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). In fact, two of the Anthos Best Practices agenda items align directly with the first two leadership tasks listed: 1) create new common materials/resources and; 2) analyze data from previous assessments. The third critical leadership task is encompassed by the work of the district leadership facilitator at large, during both Best Practices days and explicit teacher leadership development trainings.

Undoubtedly, the use of a consistent, teacher-vetted, and highly focused agenda to guide the ongoing work associated with implementing districtwide instructional reforms is also a facet within this study that would benefit from further research. Likewise, an exploration of different means by which districts establish feedback loops in order to foster clear messaging between teacher leaders and district leadership would prove helpful to districts when establishing their districtwide structures. And, research investigating the role of site administrators would greatly illuminate this process. Is it necessary to directly involve site administrators in this work? How does the work benefit from the exclusion of school site administrators? What might be some concerns stemming from the exclusion of site administrators from districtwide instructional collaboration among teacher leaders?

Finally, more research is needed to explore how teacher leaders can effectively serve as brokers and boundary spanners within a districtwide structure established for the purpose of driving instructional reform efforts. Swinnerton (2007) also recognizes the need for insight into the following questions: How are strategic communication opportunities afforded to boundary spanners within a school district? How do we train and support those who assume brokering and boundary spanning roles? As we conceptualize the work of teacher leaders within a districtwide structure as reflective of these two critical roles, the focus of district leadership should be on how to cultivate the structural, relational, resource, communication, and ideological linkages with teacher leaders that will enable them to effectively fulfill serve as brokers and boundary spanners.

Conclusion

After only one year working as a member of district leadership in in an urban Los Angeles high school district, I knew when I chose to begin my doctoral studies that I would

focus on deconstructing the relationship between district leadership and teacher leaders. I recognized immediately that both real and perceived divides existed between me and teacher leaders as we negotiated how to work collaboratively to improve student achievement in our school district. I had once been a teacher, a teacher leader, and a school site administrator who felt that district administrators were anything but partners in the most challenging work of educating low socioeconomic, ethnically diverse students who entered our schools often below proficient in both ELA and mathematics.

Findings from this study have reaffirmed my belief in what previous research has already revealed. Indeed, “High levels of student achievement are possible when schools and the district act as coordinated units of change” (Chrispeels et al., 2008, p. 730). Furthermore, these findings have added to the research base on this topic by detailing the inner workings of such coordinated units of change. I look forward to putting into practice what I have learned from studying each of these districts in order to strengthen the district office’s partnership with teacher leaders. Furthermore, I am hopeful that the promising practices revealed in this study will serve as a model for other districts to consider in their endeavors to work intentionally with teacher leaders to implement reforms designed to strategically improve teaching and learning districtwide.

Appendix A

District Name	District-Level Instructional Leadership	Structures for Aligned School-District Instructional Leadership	# of Comprehensive High Schools	Enrollment	% English Learners	% Minority	% Proficient Lang Arts	% Proficient Math
Mairin UHSD	Director, Research & Curriculum Director, Categorical Programs	Content Specialists Sessions	5	9812	21	98	54	60
Anthos UHSD	Director, Curriculum & Instructional Materials Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator	Best Practices Days	5	13486	10	90	58	61

Table 1.1 **KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY DISTRICTS**

Appendix B

Document Review Protocol

Content to be Analyzed: Online content and guiding instructional documents reflective of the structures for partnering teacher leaders and principals with district leadership in efforts to improve teaching and learning
Agendas from district-level meetings with department chairpersons
Other artifacts as produced by district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to help inform this study's first research question: What district leadership practices drive districtwide instructional reform efforts?

Name of Document	Purpose	Author	Date	How does the document align/not align with information from questionnaire, observations, interviews?

Appendix C

Questionnaire Protocol – Teacher Leaders and Principals

Questionnaire Introduction

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and the answers you provide will remain confidential. No names will be used, as each participant will be given a code. This information will be used to conduct an analysis of the partnership among department chairpersons, principals, and district office administrators regarding efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Throughout this questionnaire, the term “district leadership” refers specifically to:

In Anthos UHSD: *your Director of Curriculum & Instructional Materials and your Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator.*

In Mairin UHSD: *your Director of Research & Curriculum and your Director of Categorical Programs.*

By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you agree to participate in a research study conducted by UCLA doctoral student Kelly Santos under the supervision of Professor Kevin Eagan, Ph.D.

Questionnaire Directions

Please reflect upon your role as a teacher leader/principal as you answer the following questions.

NOTE: Exact wording of the questionnaire stems below are for teacher leaders; wording was adjusted for the principal protocol.

There is a shared instructional vision among district leadership, principals, and teacher leaders.
Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree

My district leaders’ actions demonstrate that teacher leaders are essential to enacting a shared instructional vision. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

I consider myself an instructional leader. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

I feel supported as a teacher leader by the following (select all that apply): a) district leadership, b) my principal, c) fellow teacher leaders at my site, d) other teacher leaders across the district, e) my department, f) course-alike colleagues at my site

Please indicate how often district leadership provides professional development opportunities to increase the instructional leadership capacities of teacher leaders. (When answering this question, you may consider your districtwide meetings, workshops facilitated by the district or external providers, classroom walk-throughs/observations with peers/administrators, etc.).

Monthly, every other month, quarterly, once per semester, never

Please briefly describe the professional development that you find MOST valuable to increasing your instructional leadership capacity as a teacher leader. If you find none of value, please type “none” in the textbox.

I can clearly articulate the instructional initiatives in my district. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

List what you understand to be the top 2 to 4 instructional initiatives in your district.

The instructional initiatives around which my principal focuses all teachers are in alignment with those communicated to teacher leaders by district leadership. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

District leadership includes teacher leaders in making instructional decisions that will directly impact the work of all teachers. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

District leadership is accessible to teacher leaders. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

As a teacher leader, I can freely express concerns to district leadership. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

District leadership empowers teacher leaders to seek new, innovative ideas for improving instruction. *Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

I consider my district administrators to be instructional leaders. *Yes, no*

[If answer to previous question was “no”] Please briefly explain why you do NOT consider your district leadership to be instructional leaders.

Please indicate a word or phrase that you feel best characterizes the relationship between teacher leaders and district leadership.

Is your district office in any way a barrier to efforts to improve teaching and learning at your school? *Yes, no*

[If answer to previous question was “no”] Please briefly explain how the district office serves as a barrier to efforts to improve teaching and learning at your school.

My principal includes teacher leaders in making instructional decisions that will directly impact the work of all teachers. *Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never*

I consider my principal to be an instructional leader. *Yes, no*

[If answer to previous question was “no”] Please briefly explain why you do NOT consider your principal to be an instructional leader.

How effective are the district Content Specialist meetings (Mairin) / Best Practices Days (Anthos) in aligning instructional direction across all schools in the district? *Extremely effective, effective, somewhat effective, not effective*

Please briefly describe how often and in what setting you collaborate with other teachers in your department AT YOUR SCHOOL SITE regarding instructional decisions and developments determined at district Content Specialists meetings (Mairin) / Best Practices Days (Anthos). If there is not a particular structure that allows for this at your school site, please type "none" in the text box.

To what extent do you believe the alignment between the instructional work engaged in at the district level by Content Specialists (Mairin) / Course Leads (Anthos) and the instructional work engaged in at the site level by all of your department/course members contributes to improving student outcomes? *Significantly, somewhat, not at all*

Please share any additional comments regarding efforts to improve teaching and learning jointly engaged in by teacher leaders, principals, and district leadership in your district. You may also indicate any questions you may have about this study.

Appendix D

Interview Protocols – Teacher Leaders, Principals and District Leadership

Population: Teacher Leaders

Participants: 4 English Teacher Leaders (2 from each study district)

4 Mathematics Teacher Leaders (2 from each study district)

Approximate Length of Interview: 45 minutes

The following information will be collected through the Intake Form just prior to the interview:

- a) Name of the school at which the teacher leader works
- b) Department/course for which he/she serves as a teacher leader
- c) Gender
- d) Total years at current school
- e) Total years serving as a teacher leader

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please note that the interview will be kept confidential. No names will be used, as each participant will be given a code. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, today's conversation will be recorded. If at any point during the interview you feel you would like to stop the recording, please let me know. Also, you may stop the interview at any time.

The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher leaders work with principals and district leadership for the common purpose of improving teaching and learning. When I refer to district leadership, please note that I am referring to specific district administrators responsible for instruction.

In Anthon UHSD: In your district, think particularly about your Director of Curriculum & Instructional Materials and your Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator.

In Mairin UHSD: In your district, think particularly about your Director of Research & Curriculum and your Director of Categorical Programs.

1. Tell me about the path you took to becoming a teacher leader. (Probe for principal or district leadership support, encouragement, etc. for teacher leadership.)
2. From your perspective as a teacher leader, how would you describe your relationship with district leadership? (Probe: What kinds of interactions do you have with district administrators? Probe for examples of support or barriers to gaining support.)
3. In what ways do district policies and initiatives influence teachers' instructional practices at your school?
4. Describe your role as a teacher leader in supporting the implementation of district-level policies and initiatives to improve teaching and learning, particularly in light of Common Core.
5. As a teacher leader, describe the interactions and discussions you have with your principal about improving teaching and learning at your school. (Probe whether formal or informal and extent to which Common Core is an emphasis.)
6. How would you characterize the level of coherence between what is asked of you as a teacher leader by your principal and by district leadership?

7. How effective are your district-level meetings with other teacher leaders? (Probe: What makes them effective/ineffective? Probe for specifics related to the implementation of Common Core Standards and requisite skills.)
8. Do you believe that alignment between the district office and your school in efforts to improve teaching and learning contributes to improved student outcomes? (Probe: If so, can you provide an example of when district leadership, your principal, and teacher leaders worked collaboratively to support all teachers in implementing an initiative that you believe positively affected [or is affecting] student outcomes?)
9. What would you say are the weaknesses of district leadership in regard to supporting teaching and learning? (Probe for examples of lack of alignment with teacher leaders and principals, particularly in regard to Common Core.)
10. What recommendations do you have for addressing these weaknesses?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Population: Principals

Participants: 2 Principals from Anthos Union High School District
2 Principals from Mairin Union High School District

Approximate Length of Interview: 45 minutes

The following information will be collected through the Intake Form just prior to the interview:

- a) Name of the school at which the principal works
- b) Gender
- c) Years as principal at current school
- d) Total years as an administrator
- e) Years spent as a teacher leader, if applicable

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please note that the interview will be kept confidential. No names will be used, as each participant will be given a code. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, today's conversation will be recorded. If at any point during the interview you feel you would like to stop the recording, please let me know. Also, you may stop the interview at any time.

The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of how principals work with teacher leaders and district leadership for the common purpose of improving teaching and learning. When I refer to district leadership, please note that I am referring to specific district administrators responsible for instruction.

In Anthos UHSD: *In your district, think particularly about your Director of Curriculum & Instructional Materials and your Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator.*

In Mairin UHSD: *In your district, think particularly about your Director of Research & Curriculum and your Director of Categorical Programs.*

1. How would you describe your relationship with district leadership? (Probe: What kinds of interactions do you have with district leadership? Probe for examples of support or barriers to gaining support.)
2. In what ways do district policies and initiatives influence teachers' instructional practices at your school?

3. What roles do district leadership, and you as principal, play in the development of teacher leaders?
4. At your school, what is the role of teacher leaders in supporting the implementation of district-level policies and initiatives to improve teaching and learning, particularly in light of Common Core?
5. Describe the interactions and discussions you have with your teacher leaders about improving teaching and learning at your school. (Probe whether formal or informal and extent to which Common Core is an emphasis.)
6. How would you characterize the level of coherence between what you ask of teacher leaders and what is asked of them by district leadership?
7. How effective are district-level meetings with teacher leaders? (Probe: What makes them effective/ineffective?)
8. Do you believe that alignment between the district office and your school in efforts to improve teaching and learning contributes to improved student outcomes? (Probe: If so, can you provide an example of when you, district leadership, and teacher leaders worked collaboratively to support all teachers in implementing an initiative that you believe positively affected [or is affecting] student outcomes?)
9. What would you say are the weaknesses of district leadership in regard to supporting teaching and learning? (Probe for examples of lack of alignment with teacher leaders and principals.)
10. What recommendations do you have for addressing these weaknesses?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Population: District Leadership

Participants: Director of Curriculum & Instructional Materials and the Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator, Anthos Union High School District
 Director of Research & Curriculum and the Director of Categorical Programs, Mairin Union High School District

Approximate Length of Interview: 45 minutes

The following information will be collected through the Intake Form just prior to the interview:

- a) Name of the district at which the administrator serves
- b) Gender
- c) Years as a principal, if applicable
- d) Total years as an administrator
- e) Years spent as a teacher leader, if applicable

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please note that the interview will be kept confidential. No names will be used, as each participant will be given a code. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, today's conversation will be recorded. If at any point during the interview you feel you would like to stop the recording, please let me know. Also, you may stop the interview at any time.

The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of how district leadership works with principals and teacher leaders for the common purpose of improving teaching and learning.

When I refer to district leadership, please note that I am referring to specific district administrators responsible for instruction.

1. How would you describe your relationship with teacher leaders? (Probe: whether formal or informal. Probe for examples of supporting department chairpersons in their teacher leadership role.)
2. What is your role in supporting the implementation of Common Core standards and requisite skills?
3. What roles do principals, and you as a district administrator, play in the development of teacher leaders?
4. What is the role of teacher leaders in supporting the implementation of district-level policies and initiatives to improve teaching and learning, particularly in light of Common Core?
5. Describe the interactions and discussions you have with teacher leaders about improving teaching and learning at your school. (Probe whether formal or informal and extent to which Common Core is an emphasis.)
6. How would you characterize the level of coherence between what you ask of teacher leaders and what is asked of them by principals?
7. How effective are district-level meetings with teacher leaders? (Probe: What makes them effective/ineffective?)
8. Do you believe that alignment between the district office and school sites in efforts to improve teaching and learning contributes to improved student outcomes? (Probe: If so, can you provide an example of when you, principals, and teacher leaders worked collaboratively to support all teachers in implementing an initiative that you believe positively affected [or is affecting] student outcomes?)
9. What would you say are the weaknesses of district leadership in regard to supporting teaching and learning? (Probe for examples of lack of alignment with teacher leaders and principals.)
10. What recommendations do you have for addressing these weaknesses?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix E

Observation Protocol – District-Level Meetings with Teacher Leaders

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to provide general categories for observation, correlated to this study's first research question: What district leadership practices drive districtwide instructional reform efforts?

Date & Time:

Title of Meeting:

of Teacher Leaders Present:

Facilitator:

District:

of Principals Present:

Key Term	Abbreviation
Teacher Leader	TL
Principal	P
District Leadership	DL

Units of Observation	Comments on Units of Observation
<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda is explicitly tied to at least one district instructional initiative	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda (or any part thereof) is focused on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> teacher leadership development dialogue prior to an instructional decision-making process a decision-making process Common Core Other, to be specified 	
<input type="checkbox"/> There is mutual respect between DL and TLs	
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator engages participants in structured consensus- building strategies	
<input type="checkbox"/> DL explicitly solicits input from teachers	
<input type="checkbox"/> TLs are not afraid to participate and voice opinions, recommendations, dissension, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ps are present	

<input type="checkbox"/> DL, Ps, and TLs share leadership of meeting <input type="checkbox"/> There is balanced participation among DL, Ps, and TLs <input type="checkbox"/> Time is provided for TLs to collaborate <input type="checkbox"/> Time is used to inform TLs about state initiatives <input type="checkbox"/> Time is used to inform TLs about district initiatives <input type="checkbox"/> TLs are clear on the next steps to be taken at their sites with department teachers re. meeting topic(s)	
<p>On average, active participation is distributed to each instructional leadership group in the following percentages (totaling 100%):</p> <p>TLs _____% Ps _____% DA _____%</p>	
<p>Description of the physical layout/set-up of the meeting:</p>	
<p>General Field Notes:</p>	

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