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Building from the Ground Up: The Relationship between Structure, Culture and Teachers' Role
in Site Decision-Making at an Educator-Run School

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

in

Educational Leadership

by

Kyle Maurice Weinberg

Committee in charge:

California State University, San Marcos

Professor Sinem Siyahhan
Professor Joni Kolman

University of California San Diego

Professor Amanda Datnow

2020

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University of California San Diego
California State University, San Marcos

2020

DEDICATION

*To the family at the educator-run school who graciously welcomed me into their home and
continue to serve as a source of inspiration to me and countless others.*

EPIGRAPH

Zapatista Principles of Governance

Obedecer y no mandar
Lead by following

Representar y no suplantar
Represent and not replace

Bajar y no subir
Work from below and not seek to rise

Servir y no servirse
Serve and not serve oneself

Convencer y no vencer
Convince and not conquer

Construir y no destruir
Construct and not destroy

Proponer y no imponer
Propose and not impose

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Building from the Ground Up: The Relationship between Structure, Culture and Teachers' Role
in Site Decision-Making at an Educator-Run School

by

Kyle Maurice Weinberg

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California San Diego, 2020

California State University, San Marcos, 2020

Professor Sinem Siyahhan, Chair

Power structures in U.S. public schools have grown increasingly more hierarchical in response to a perceived decline in K-12 instructional quality. The rising prominence of high-stakes accountability mechanisms has resulted in top-down limiting of teachers' role in site decision-making. Promoting a more prominent teacher role in school governance is a promising countermeasure to the teacher turnover and lower quality of instruction disproportionately found in schools serving vulnerable populations. When educators have a greater voice in site decision-making, they are more committed to the organizational vision and more likely to stay at a school. Student academic and civic outcomes also improve when school governance is democratically collaborative. Recognizing the need for additional research on the relationship between decision-making authority and the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school, one site was examined through a qualitative, case study approach using an integrated theoretical

framework that incorporated structure, culture and agency and the areas of collective autonomy exploring (1) the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school and (2) the structural and cultural systems that support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making.

Qualitative data compiled through interviews, observations of decision-making meetings and gathering of site documents clarified how structural and cultural systems shape and are shaped by teachers' participation in site decision-making. Analysis of the themes and categories that surfaced from the data shed light on the relationship between formal, prescribed decision-making authority and the dynamics of educator-run school governance in practice.

Findings from the study indicated that systems that hinder teachers' participation in school governance are legal, district and budget constraints, lack of preparation and mistrust. Governing documents that support significant teachers' role in school-level decisions are the pilot school agreement and Elect-to-Work Agreement with its annual teacher-driven revisiting and refinement. Representative leadership, rotating leadership and protocols help to democratize decision-making at the research site by providing transparent structures to guide selection of leaders and horizontal collaboration. Cultural systems that support significant teachers' role in school-level decisions are a common vision, collaboration, sense of ownership, peer accountability, mentoring and organizing skills.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk*, a report decrying the decline of American public education and its consequent impact on US global economic competitiveness (Mehta, 2015). While the initial response was a push for strong, shared leadership as a policy prescription to address the perceived shortcomings of the K-12 educational system (Leech & Fulton, 2008; Barth, 2001), the panic the report engendered led to the growth of top-down, high-stakes accountability systems that constrain the role of teachers in classrooms and schools (Ingersoll, 2012; Berry & Farris-Berg, 2016).

As such, many US secondary schools have highly centralized governance structures, with authority concentrated in the administration (Ingersoll, 2012). When surveyed, only 20 percent of teachers in the US believed that they are regularly included in school-level decision-making at their site (Duffett et al., 2008). In a 2012 study of teacher morale, only 39 percent of teachers felt satisfied with the profession, down from 62 percent in 2008, and those who reported lower levels of satisfaction expressed a desire to take on a greater roles and responsibilities (Harris Interactive, 2013). Sparks and Malkus (2015) found that teachers who believed they had low autonomy increased from 18 percent during the 2003-2004 school year to 26 percent in the 2011-2012 school year. Lower levels of autonomy and teacher leadership were more likely to characterize schools that served low-income, urban student populations (Ingersoll et al., 2017). Unless teacher leadership is formally entrenched, educators do not have decision-making agency to collectively design and implement practices that will lead to greater student outcomes, particularly for marginalized populations that have been most impacted by harmful policies in the past that were imposed from above (Markow et al., 2013).

Lack of teachers' role in site decision-making results in greater teacher turnover and consequent lower instructional quality that particularly impact vulnerable student populations at risk of being pushed out of the educational system. Student outcomes such as rate of high school graduation and persistence are directly correlated to teacher preparation and instructional quality (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Aaronson et al., 2007; Kane et al., 2006; Hanushek et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Elmore, 2000; Most, 1996). Researchers have determined that teachers make major gains in efficacy in their first three years and experience more incremental growth over the following few years (Harris & Sass, 2011; McCaffrey et al., 2003; Hanushek et al., 2005). Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) found that teacher turnover adversely affects student performance, even without taking into account the professional caliber of teachers who leave or stay. Schools with higher populations of students who are low-income and from traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education tend to have higher rates of teacher turnover, teachers with insufficient training and teachers with unsatisfactory performance (Hahnel & Jackson, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1985; Kozol, 1991; Esch et al., 2004; Lankford et al., 2002).

Teachers are more committed to the organizational vision and more likely to stay at a school if they have a greater role in site decision-making (Ingersoll, 2003; Farris-Berg et al., 2012). Ingersoll (2007, p. 24) writes that “schools in which teachers have more control over key schoolwide and classroom decisions have fewer problems with student misbehavior, show more collegiality and cooperation among teachers and administrators, have a more committed and engaged teaching staff, and do a better job of retaining their teachers.” Smith and Rowley (2005) found that greater teacher involvement in school decision-making correlates with lower rates of teacher turnover. When surveyed, three quarters of US teachers echoed these priorities when

they reported that a greater role in school governance was critical for teacher retention (Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).

An area of research that is underconceptualized is the nature of teachers' decision-making participation in school governance and how this contributes to, deviates from or has the power to change roles and structures, particularly in a setting in which teachers are formally empowered. Research on the relationship between culture, structure and teachers' role in schools has spanned curricular decision-making (Palmer & Snodgrass Rangel, 2011; Priestley et al., 2012) to data-driven decisions (Spillane, 2012) to relational power dynamics with preservice co-teachers (Scantlebury et al., 2008). A potentially fruitful line of inquiry would examine the nature of teacher influence on a broader scope of school governance including areas of collective autonomy such as hiring and evaluating peers and leaders, allocating site budgets and means of evaluation and professional development. As previous researchers have established, solidifying a more prominent role for teachers in site decision-making necessitates more than perpetuating a formal structure, although this is a critical foundation to build upon (Weiss et al., 1992). To strengthen teachers' role *in practice* in school governance, further investigation is needed on the dialectical arrangement between culture, structure and teacher decision-making roles as informed by critical realist social theory (Archer, 1995).

Educator-Run Schools

In response to the limiting of the role of teachers in public schools and its pernicious effects on student outcomes, a movement for educator-run schools has emerged to challenge the trend toward more centralized governance structures. Starting in New York, San Francisco and Connecticut in the 1970s, continuing in Minnesota and Wisconsin with the founding of teacher

cooperatives in the 1990s and recently with the implementation of pilot, autonomous schools in Boston and Los Angeles, educator-run schools with enshrined collective autonomy have been a growing force in the United States (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Apple & Beane, 2007; Meier & Gasoi, 2017). Educator-run schools are those that are “collaboratively designed and run by a group of teachers, where authority to make decisions (not just input in decisions) is secured in a wide array of areas that influence school success” (Farris-Berg et al., 2014). In educator-run schools, curriculum and school priorities are targeted more directly to student needs due to (1) powerful insights gained through direct relationships between teachers and students and (2) an increased teacher schoolwide decision-making role that facilitates collaboration with colleagues to implement effective methods that strengthen student learning (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Wiliam, 2014; Weiss, 1995; Kerchner & Mulfinger, 2010). When participating in a climate that promotes a greater decision-making role and accountability, teachers and students gain skills needed to be confident, collaborative changemakers in their communities (Freire, 1993; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Cammarota & Fine, 2010).

It is essential to study effective practices for the sustainable distribution of autonomy and decision-making authority in educational systems, particularly those serving vulnerable populations. Schools serving low-income, urban communities tend to have more hierarchical decision-making structures (Sparks & Malkus, 2015) and therefore there is an acute impetus to conduct additional research on the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teacher schoolwide decision-making role in these contexts. This investigation can help refine efforts to empower stakeholders to address achievement and civic opportunity gaps through horizontal collaboration built on a solid foundation of mutual trust.

Overview of this Study

The goal of this study was to understand the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an educator-run school. This was accomplished through an examination of the lived experiences of teachers as they engage with decision-making structures that serve as the medium and outcome of their interactions. An analysis of this mutually constitutive dynamic served to shed light on the factors that promote and hinder teacher decision-making role in practice. To this end, a case study was conducted and one educator-run school in Los Angeles Unified School District that serves a low-income population was studied. Site leaders (classroom teachers and non-classroom staff including administrators) participated in the study during the fall 2018 semester. Data was collected in the form of interviews, observations and artifacts. 30-minute to one-hour interviews were scheduled with site leaders, as well as four observations of site decision-making practices. Data analysis of teachers' role in site decision-making was organized around the areas of collective autonomy that cover a broad range of school governance including the ability to select, evaluate and coach colleagues and leaders, allocate budget priorities and determine the learning program, means of assessment and professional development (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). The study explored the experiences of educators at an educator-run school as they interact with and inform structural and cultural systems. The overarching research question that guided this study was: "What is the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school?" Specifically, the following research questions were investigated using qualitative methods:

1. What is the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in decision-making at an educator-run school?
 - a. How do structural and cultural systems support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making?

- b. Do teachers shape structural and cultural systems that mediate site decision-making? If so, how?
2. Are there differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff in school governance?

Significance of the Study

As teacher decision-making authority is limited in US public schools, most acutely at sites serving low-income communities, there is a growing need for research that examines the relationship between formal empowerment of teachers through structural systems and teacher decision-making role in practice. Raising the profile of teachers in school governance is a promising path for stimulating positive student academic and civic outcomes. An important component of this line of research is delving into the nature of democratic participation in site decision-making and its dialectical relationship with the structures that shape interactions. Through gaining a deeper understanding of the interplay between structure, culture and teachers' role in school governance, factors that foster and hinder collective autonomy can be identified that contribute to the body of knowledge of practitioners aiming to strengthen the role of teachers at their own sites. Educator-run schools are a small but growing movement in the United States and this study can potentially contribute to the evidence and arguments used by advocates for more meaningful teacher empowerment in our public schools.

Definition of Terms

Advisory: Multi-age class that all students in grades 7-12 take. It meets 3 times per week. The purpose of Advisory is to provide socio-emotional, academic, and core competency development support.

Complex: Location of research site and 5 co-located pilot schools.

Dens, Departments and Divisions: The way that grades and subjects are organized at the school:

- *Den:* The multi-age manner in which the Lower School is organized. There are three dens:
 - Den 1 – Grades Kindergarten and 1
 - Den 2 – Grades 2 and 3
 - Den 3 – Grades 4, 5 and 6
- *Department:* In the Upper School, the unit within which teachers often collaborate instructionally. The departments are EAST (English, Art, Spanish Team), Social Studies, Science and Math.
- *Division:* The manner in which the Upper School is organized. There are two grades per division:
 - Division 1 – Grades 7 and 8
 - Division 2 – Grades 9 and 10
 - Division 3 – Grades 11 and 12

Elect-to-Work Agreement (EWA): Delineates roles, responsibilities and duties of teachers. Revisited annually. Modifies sections of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) union contract.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD): Local education agency for research site

Leadership Team: Composed of administration and lead teachers, this team oversees schoolwide curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessments and the accreditation process.

Lower School: Includes grades K-6. Organized into 3 multi-age dens.

Operations Team: Composed of administration, lead teachers, den/department chairs, and coordinators, this team oversees calendaring, coordinating of events, staffing and hiring and school operations.

Pilot School: Autonomous, public school that is expected to be a model of educational innovation and serve as a research and development site for effective urban public schools.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle: Systematic series of steps for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for continual improvement. Research site's process for instructional improvement and professional collaboration.

Professional Learning Plan (PLP): Structure used to facilitate professional collaboration and growth. Completed collectively in dens or departments.

School Governing Council (SGC): Comprised of teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community partners. Includes the School Site Council within its composition.

Seminar: Program in grades 7-12 which provides students with an opportunity to explore four areas to discover interests and passions that they could pursue in college and/or careers. Seminar courses meet three times per week.

United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA): Union for educators in LAUSD.

Upper School: Grades 7-12 located on the upper floor of the school site.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include the single school site and the short data collection period. As the population included in the study is only being evaluated over a short period of time, it was difficult to generalize larger conclusions about the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance in educator-run schools. The qualitative case study is bounded and therefore focused on relationships observed during a

limited number of events or situations (Stake, 1995; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Therefore, the results of the study can help point to new research directions and contribute to existing literature, but cannot be deemed to be conclusive on their own accord.

An additional limitation is my advocacy for educator-run schools based on my experience working in low-income communities in public schools more likely to have more hierarchical decision-making structures, as well as the bias of teachers included in the study who are working within this context. There is also a power asymmetry between researcher and participants that may prod interviewees to say what they think the representative of a postsecondary institution wants to hear (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The use of multiple data sources and efforts from the researcher to encourage participants to speak freely mitigated the risk of this phenomenon and overall bias in the study.

Overview of Dissertation

In this chapter, the problem was introduced and the research study was delineated. In chapter two, the literature review examines the evidence supporting more inclusive site decision-making that empowers key stakeholders. The history of power relations in K-12 public education is explored, from the development of educator-run schools to the growth of charter schools with hierarchical governance structures in low-income communities. The impact of limiting or promoting teachers' voice in school governance is detailed, including a look at teacher turnover and commitment to the organizational vision, peer evaluation and mentoring and student outcomes. In chapter three, the qualitative, case study approach is outlined with the aim of understanding the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an educator-run school. In chapter four, results of data analysis are shared that stem from interviews, observations of decision-making meetings and documents related to

school governance. In chapter five, key conclusions are discussed as well as implications for expanding the teacher-run governance model and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Promoting a more prominent teachers' role in school leadership is a promising countermeasure to the rapidly declining teacher authority that is particularly pronounced in schools serving vulnerable populations. When teachers have a greater voice in site decision-making, they are more committed to the organizational vision and more likely to stay at a school (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005; Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). Student academic and civic outcomes also improve when school governance is democratically collaborative (Ingersoll et al., 2017; Lee & Smith, 1996; Bryk et al., 2010; Anrig, 2013). Democratic governance of schools is, thus, a potentially viable means of addressing the inequitable educational outcomes experienced by historically underserved groups in our educational system. In this chapter, the phenomena that have contributed to the limiting of teachers' role in schools through the narrowing of teachers' voice and agency are explored, as well as the consequences of limiting teacher decision-making authority. Next, the benefits of increased teacher voice and role in school governance are detailed, including its impact on student outcomes through interactions structured by the norms of the institution. The chapter ends with a discussion of the efficacy of efforts to promote a more significant teachers' role in school governance including charter schools, educator-run schools and distributed leadership.

Narrowing of Teachers' Role in School Governance through Neoliberal Reforms

Since the release of the Nation at Risk report, educational reforms based on market-based, neoliberal ideologies have proliferated (Hursh, 2007, Apple, 2000), affecting the kind of education provided and the role of teachers in US public schools. These policies are based on a perceived need to prepare youth for the demands of the global economy through the imposition

from above of rigid curriculum, instructional methods and means of assessment, which supersede the drive for a more prominent teacher decision-making role and education for civic engagement (Mirra & Morrell, 2011). The expansion of these measures has created conditions that have pushed K-12 schools in the United States to become continually more hierarchical and less democratic spaces, especially those serving urban, high-poverty populations. Teacher curricular autonomy and decision-making authority have also been constrained in the drive for bureaucratic structures to gain tighter control of individual student outcomes (Gutiérrez, 2008; Majhanovich, 2002). In contexts where this has occurred, the teachers' role can be reduced to a passive transmitter of information, rather than an educational professional with discretion to collectively determine the best method of preparing students for postsecondary careers and community engagement that leverages their experience and knowledge (Freire, 1970, Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009). This phenomenon further penalizes marginalized youth most in need of targeted interventions and meaningful relationships of trust with adult mentors in schools.

Sociocultural Context of Schools

As open systems, educational institutions inform and are informed by the values of their environment (Braun et al., 2011). The governance model of schools was originally borrowed from industrial factories, which led to standardization of the hierarchical structure of public education and the positioning of administration as the ultimate authority in school-site decision-making (Tyack, 1974; Meyer et al., 1978; Callahan, 1962; Lortie, 1975). The hegemony of management can also be attributed to gendered segregation in the education field, with teachers being predominantly women, administrators being primarily men and power relations between the two reflecting those observed in the larger society (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; Abbott, 1988). The highly stratified distribution of power led to

the establishment of a norm of noninterference in school governance for teachers, particularly collaboration on the site's continuous improvement with peers (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Little, 1998).

In the past few decades, neoliberal economic philosophies have strengthened their hold over educational policy and values of competition have superseded the priorities of those advocating for greater equity and democracy within the power structure of US schools (Webb, Briscoe, Mussman, 2009). The No Child Left Behind act was initially passed in 2001 and instituted top-down education reforms with punitive consequences for schools that did not meet the criteria established by the bill. The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind act in 2015 during the Obama administration required that states continue standardized testing and made funding for teacher and leader preparation predicated on student test scores. In the all-encompassing drive to prepare students for the demands of the capitalist economy, the role of teacher within the school power structure is reduced to a technician who passively implements mandates directed from above (Apple, 2000; Ball, 2008). When priorities regarding student learning are imposed through the testing regime, the teachers' role in site curricular decision-making is constrained and power shifts to administrators who use data collected on student performance to monitor adherence to goals that align with prescribed, standardized curriculum such as the Common Core State Standards (Saltman, 2016).

Limiting the Decision-Making Role of Teachers in the United States

Danielson (2006) defines teacher leadership as a skillset that generates influence within the organization and elsewhere, going beyond the traditional domain of the classroom. Research suggests that teacher leadership plays a crucial role in retaining quality teachers in the workplace (Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). Freidson (1986) asserted that the level of decision-making authority

held by workers determines the degree of professionalization and the prestige of a particular occupation. Compared with the authority in organizational decision-making wielded by lawyers, doctors, engineers and university professors with similar standards of certification and preparation, teachers do not benefit from the same levels of professional trust and workplace collective autonomy (Hodson & Sullivan, 1995). This is reflected in the growing number of teachers in US public schools who perceive themselves to have minimal voice in the governance of their school site (Heller, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005; Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). When Bierly et al. (2016) polled public school teachers on job satisfaction, only 27 percent said that they would recommend their school to others as a good place to work. The researchers also conducted a measurement of loyalty to the educational organization using the Net Promoter Score metric and found that teachers scored a negative 18, placing them below the results of colleagues in higher education and other government workers (Bierly et al., 2016). Teachers in the survey attributed their sentiments to limited collaboration and opportunities for meaningful leadership at their worksites. These findings were echoed in a study by the Gallup organization (Rath, 2014) of professionals from 12 different fields that found that teachers were the least likely to agree with the statement, “My opinion seems to matter at work.” In a separate survey conducted by Education Evolving (Farris-Berg et al., 2014), only seven percent of teachers stated that they have some or a great deal of authority in their schools, while 91 percent of the public believed that teachers should have that role. When teachers are not included in decision-making, their role is deprofessionalized and their abilities and experiences are not utilized to the extent necessary to improve the dismal and highly inequitable outcomes that characterize the United States educational system (Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Elevating the Role of Administrators at the Expense of Teachers’ voice in School Governance

While teachers' role in school governance is further diminished, numerous studies have demonstrated that school principals are overextended (Copland, 2001; Grubb & Flessa, 2009; Bierly et al., 2016) underprepared (Danielson & McCreary, 2000) and engage in misguided attempts to evade conflict with teachers (Bridges, 1986), all of which contribute to the struggles of principals to be effective instructional leaders. In many schools, the principal is the primary person responsible for the evaluation, professional development and instructional growth of the teachers at their school site. In a study conducted by Bierly et al. (2016), 80 percent of principals reported they were tasked with the following responsibilities for, on average, 40 teachers: observation and feedback, instructional coaching, overseeing professional development and collaboration, attracting and hiring talent, teacher retention and establishing a school culture of high expectations.

In one study of a large, urban school district, the principal and the assistant principal of a school were responsible for almost 220 evaluations each during the academic school year (Bierly et al., 2016). This was due to a district policy of multiple formative observations a year from a direct supervisor on top of the summative evaluation. Instead of a functional assessment that could inform practice through continual dialogue, supervisors were obliged to conduct short observations with a checklist given to the teacher as feedback after the visit (Toch & Rothman, 2008; Bierly et al., 2016). This hindered relationship-building and teachers reported that the limited feedback rarely led to improved instructional effectiveness. Superficial reviews that result from overburdened evaluators are obligated by the bureaucracy and top-down accountability mechanisms but rarely result in data that can be applied to site-based problems.

Traditional administrator-led teacher assessment tends to be a separate process from assistance and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Wise et al., 1984). When

governance is shared, however, support through coaching and mentoring is an integral element of the evaluation process (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Hawkins, 2009; Williams, 2007). Teacher-led processes such as peer review have led to reductions in teacher attrition when implemented at a school site (Marshall, 2008) and improve the average quality of instruction (Humphrey et al., 2011; CSUIER, 2000; Goldstein, 2010).

In response to administrators being stretched thin in their supervisory duties (Portin, 2004), mechanisms must be established to strengthen the voice and power of teachers in school decision-making. When this does not occur, teachers leave the profession, particularly those with strong academic backgrounds (Boyd et al., 2005; Feng et al., 2010; Hanushek et al., 2004; Boyd et al., 2002; Henke et al., 2000; Lankford et al., 2002). Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) had similar findings when reviewing empirical literature on teacher retention and determining that higher performing teachers have a greater probability of leaving. Compared to higher-status professionals like lawyers, engineers, architects, college and university professors and even pharmacists, teachers have a significantly higher annual turnover rate (Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). The lack of teachers' voice in school decision-making is a major factor in the lower status of the profession compared to other careers with similar educational requirements (Ingersoll, 2007; Little, 1998; Etzioni, 1969).

Benefits of Increased Teachers' Role in School Governance

When teachers have a greater role in school decision-making, teacher turnover decreases significantly, from 19 percent average yearly teacher turnover in schools with low teacher control in social and instructional governance areas to 4 percent turnover in schools with high teacher control (Ingersoll, 2003). High teacher turnover also affects student outcomes - when academic performance of 4th and 5th grade students in New York was studied in relation to

teacher turnover, there was a correlation between lower results and higher teacher turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The literature demonstrates that democratically collaborative governance has a strong relationship with improved student outcomes (Ingersoll et al., 2017). By elevating teachers' role within the institutional decision-making apparatus, educator expertise is honored and trusted to be exercised through inclusion in shared, democratic leadership (Sundin, 2014; Freidson, 1986). Key to implementation of collective decision-making, however, is acknowledgment by all stakeholders that an equal, horizontal partnership is essential to improving student outcomes. Education is political and teachers are in a unique position to deftly navigate the informal and formal power structure by leveraging social and intellectual capital gained through interactions with students, parents, administration and the larger community (Donaldson, 2001). Instead of being passive recipients and implementers of directives from above, research suggests that sustainable school change requires flipping the conventional school leadership hierarchy and promoting teacher autonomy and decision-making power.

Teachers who have the authority to participate in school-level decision-making hold themselves to a higher standard of instruction and are more willing to be held accountable for student growth (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Louis et al., 2010; Howey, 1988; Livingston, 1992). Student performance also improves across all subjects when teachers have collective responsibility over student learning and there is a democratically collaborative working environment (Lee & Smith, 1996; Ouchi & Segal, 2003). In schools with greater teacher voice, student development of deep knowledge and higher-level critical thinking skills are more prevalent (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). The gains are found across the socioeconomic spectrum, lending credence to the argument that greater teacher voice helps to diminish achievement gaps (Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Rubinstein, 2014). These findings are supported by a longitudinal study

conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research that found a correlation between academic improvement in struggling schools and “intense staff collaboration” that included teacher-led professional development (Bryk et al., 2010). Conflict between educators, leadership and students is also reduced when teachers have a more prominent voice in “social decisions” such as the student discipline policy and professional development priorities (Ingersoll, 2003). A key element of many successful schools is an equitable, working partnership between teachers and administrators, founded upon a common, student-centered vision (Anrig, 2013; Farris-Berg et al., 2012).

Students can be prepared to be powerful changemakers in a US society desperately in need of transformation through participation in a school environment that cultivates civic abilities (Lawy & Biesta, 2007, Nasir & Kirshner, 2003; Gutmann, 1987). Instead of being an atomized, isolated experience, education, learning and growth are social and cultural processes that take place within community through interactions between individuals that are structured by the norms of the space or institution in which such interactions take place (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978, Nasir & Hand, 2006; Rogoff, 1995). If the governance of a school is participatory and horizontal, students benefit from exposure to this model. Learning within this environment allows students to internalize mindsets and essential skills that are the foundation for active, conscious engagement with their society (Dewey, 1975; Higgs & McMillan, 2006). Teacher empowerment, therefore, promotes student empowerment, ownership and academic outcomes (Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Wells et al., 1999; Hawkins, 2009; Bryk & Hermanson, 1993).

Efforts to Strengthen Teachers' Role in School Governance

Charter Schools

Charter schools were initially conceived as an attempt to challenge top-down school reforms in the United States through the creation of autonomous spaces where innovation could flourish without restraints. When charter schools were first proposed by American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker, they were envisioned as a space that featured an equal teacher role in their governance (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Originally intended to be a collaboration with traditional public schools, charter schools have since become a source of competition and in some areas like New Orleans, a replacement for public schools whose governance was characterized by strong teacher voice. Charter schools represent seven percent of US public schools and serve disproportionately higher percentages of students from low-income, urban and traditionally underserved groups (Glander, 2015; NAPCS, 2010; NCES, 2002; Rebarber & Zgainer, 2014). Within the boundaries of the Los Angeles and San Diego unified schools districts, charter schools enroll 26 and 17 percent of the student-age population respectively (NAPCS, 2019).

While charter schools were conceived as educator-run organizations, the original charter school law in Minnesota created an opening for schools without teacher unions and their accompanying educator decision-making power. This new space would then be exploited by market-oriented forces within the charter school movement (Emerson, 2013; Gleason et al., 2010), who aimed to concentrate power with management at the top of the organization at the expense of teacher, parent and student voice in decision-making (Casey, 2015). Despite the original vision of teacher leadership as a key strength of charter schools (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014), the perceived levels of autonomy and agency by teachers in charter schools today are lower than those in traditional public schools (Crawford & Forsyth, 2004; Imig et al., 2015). The accountability demands stemming from the state standards and national high stakes testing

movements have led charter schools to impose tight controls on teacher autonomy (Mehta, 2015; Brinson & Rosch, 2010). When authorizing laws lack mechanisms that mandate accountability and transparency for the governing boards that oversee charter school organizations, undemocratic governing practices can flourish (Emerson, 2013; Gleason et al., 2010). Teacher turnover is much higher in charter schools than public schools and has a close correlation with teachers' voice in school decision-making (Stuit & Smith, 2012; Ingersoll, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005; Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). In a study conducted by Stuit and Smith (2012), the researchers found that 24 percent of charter school teachers had left their schools during the 2003-2004 school year, compared to just 12 percent of teachers in traditional public schools. Some of the discrepancy in the turnover rate between district schools and charter schools could be attributed to teacher experience or student population, but more than half of the discrepancy remained after disaggregating the data. Charter school teachers were also found to be more likely than colleagues in traditional public schools to state that insufficient salaries and benefits and school dissatisfaction were reasons for leaving a school or teaching as a profession (Goldring et al., 2014). This supports the idea that codified teachers' voice in site decision-making is a crucial element of working conditions that promote teacher recruitment and retention.

Today, the governing boards of charter schools often empower management at the expense of teachers' role in decision-making through their opposition to unions that would provide educational workers with a formal, collective voice (Casey, 2015; Gyurko, 2008). While 78 percent of public school teachers nationwide are members of unions, only 7 percent of teachers in charter schools are union members (NCES, 2008, Rebarber & Zgainer, 2014). Only five of the 42 states with charter school laws require that charter school teachers be covered by

district collective bargaining agreements (NAPCE, 2016). Ronald Reagan's Assistant Secretary of Education, Chester Finn, an original opponent of charter schools, came to eventually embrace the model based on the logic that "the single most important freedom for charter schools is to hire and fire employees as they like and pay them as they see fit" (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). This attitude is representative of the corporate school reform agenda that prioritizes top-down management over democratically collaborative governance.

Educator-Run Schools

An antidote to reforms in the United States that reduce teacher's role in school governance is the growth of educator-run schools. Educator-run schools have horizontal decision-making structures that grant those on the educational frontlines the authority to determine school practices that affect student outcomes such as selecting and evaluating colleagues and leaders, allocating budget priorities and developing curriculum, professional development and means of assessment (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Newell & Buchen, 2004; Dirks, 2002). The conventional school leadership hierarchy is reversed and leaders are tasked with implementing policies developed democratically by educators. Instead of being responsible for ensuring internal compliance to mandates from outside entities, the role of leadership is to be a facilitator of the school governance process through inclusive practices that establish a shared commitment and mutual trust, both essential to collaborative teaching and learning (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). These leaders can be selected from the body of teachers and positions can be rotated at a determined increment, depending on the needs of the school. This decision-making arrangement is consistent with a governing principle of the indigenous Zapatista movement in southern Mexico that requires leadership to "*mandar obedeciendo*" (lead by

following) (Esteva et al., 2014). In schools, this translates to the elevation of the traditionally marginalized decision-making voice of teachers within key areas of school operations.

Farris-Berg, Dirkswager and Junge (2012) define teacher-powered schools as those in which teachers “work collaboratively to make school-level decisions” in a variety of areas. They identify 15 areas of potential empowerment or collective teacher autonomy that include the power to select, evaluate and mentor colleagues and leaders, which contrasts with the norm in US public schools that allocates these decision-making responsibilities exclusively to school administrators and governing boards. Another area of collective teacher autonomy is the ability to determine budget priorities and working conditions including compensation and tenure, responsibilities traditionally reserved for administrators through language in school bylaws, charters or collective bargaining agreements. In educator-run schools, educators develop curriculum, instruction and assessment methods and professional development due to teachers being trusted to make decisions using professional experience and insight gained through daily, direct interactions with students in the classroom. Finally, academic and discipline policies including schedule and school hours are co-constructed by teachers in schools with democratic governance, as all key areas that impact school success are within the scope of teacher decision-making power.

Distributed Leadership

With the myriad problems facing US public schools, most notably inequitable outcomes for historically underserved populations, a response in the past was to seek a highly talented but often egocentric principal to rescue “failing” schools (Timperley, 2005; Bierly et al., 2016; Smylie et al., 2007). Leaders often experienced short-term success due to personal charisma and authoritarian micromanagement but lacked sufficient humility to sustain relationships critical to

achieving positive outcomes (Collins, 2005; Bierly et al., 2016). Therefore, instead of relying on the less reliable ability and stamina of an individual for desired results, sustainable improvement is more likely when the school leadership structure is redesigned (Deming, 2000; Wehling, 2007).

In response to this phenomenon, school reformers sought other models that emphasized greater teacher voice in decision-making (Woods, 2004; Bush & Glover, 2003; Fink & Brayman, 2006). One of these models is distributed leadership, which recognizes that “tapping into the ideas, creativity, skills and initiative of all or the majority of those in a group or organization unleashes a greater capacity for organizational change, responsiveness and improvement” (Woods, 2004, p. 5). In the case of teachers, the most important strengths to leverage are knowledge and experience with teaching and learning and their commitment to implementing best practices in direct interactions with students (Howey, 1988; Livingston, 1992).

Instead of viewing leadership as solely within the domain of an individual with a particular skill set, the perspective provided by the school of horizontalism views governance as a collaborative process between diverse stakeholders (Spillane et al., 2001). Distributed leadership is a dialectical process of balancing the needs and input of authority figures and those with collective power (Burns, 1978, Archer, 1995). In a school setting, the determination of the ideal equilibrium employs equitable student outcomes as the principal metric. The theory of transformative leadership adds the lenses of liberation, justice and an analysis of power, privilege and equity inside and outside the educational institution to the criteria for school leadership that embodies democratic values (Shields, 2010). Critical realist social theory considers the nature of the interaction between structure, culture and agency, which sheds light on the significance of teacher role in site governance in relation to other key actors (Archer, 2003).

The Benefits of Distributed Leadership

Effective implementation of distributed leadership in schools has been demonstrated in multiple studies to produce positive student outcomes (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Marzano, 2003; McEwin et al., 2004) and improved organizational performance (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2007). Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) determined that 33 percent of gains in school achievement could be attributed to teacher leadership, crucial as teachers more commonly collaborate with each other rather than with superordinates within the organization (Leana, 2011).

Collaboration and the amalgamation of disparate expertise produces an aggregate result that surpasses atomized, individual efforts (Hatch et al., 2016; Gronn, 2002; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009). Other studies have drawn similar conclusions regarding the primacy of shared or distributed leadership over the individual, heroic model of school leadership (Louis et al., 2010). Teachers are more likely to successfully and sustainably implement best practices when such policies are developed within the context of educator-led decision-making processes that galvanize commitment to the school vision (Louis et al., 2010; Farris-Berg et al., 2012). There is also a positive correlation between teacher authority in school-site decision-making and accepting responsibility for improved student outcomes particularly with traditionally vulnerable populations (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001). Relatedly, control over one's life and professional working conditions is crucial to achieving higher levels of performance, empowerment and job satisfaction, even more so than extrinsic factors like salary increases and the threat of losing one's job (Pink, 2011; Freidson, 1986; Marks & Louis, 1999).

Strengthening Democratic Decision-Making Within Distributed Leadership

With distributed leadership, power is shared within the organization through allocation of leadership roles with varying levels of autonomy and responsibility (Ritchie & Woods, 2007). In

order to maximize results, however, it is not enough for leadership to be merely distributed - the process of distribution needs to be democratic and horizontal (Wallace, 2001; Hansen & Roza, 2005), as opposed to the top-down allocation of decision-making authority characteristic of initial efforts to promote teacher leadership that failed to yield expected schoolwide and instructional outcomes (Hatch et al., 2005). Dahl (1989) argues that in order for a decision-making process to be fully democratic, stakeholders must benefit from the following conditions: (1) equal voice and authority over full scope of school operations, (2) equal access to information needed to make democratic decisions (enlightened understanding), and (3) full and equal participation in the decision-making process. Thus, democratic governance of schools is equitable, participatory, collaborative and inclusive. Participants have equal authority within the decision-making process and leadership is shared, rather than being consolidated and centralized. When the democratic and distributed model is implemented effectively in schools, increased levels of commitment, trust, innovation and empowerment among stakeholders are observed (San Antonio, 2008; Fullan, 2005, Farris-Berg et al., 2012).

Promoting greater teacher voice in school decision-making has a powerful effect on teacher sense of agency, (Farris-Berg et al., 2012) which fosters teacher innovation in many spheres, principally collaboration, instruction, assessment, and peer evaluation and mentoring - all contributing factors to greater student academic and civic outcomes. The ever-multiplying research demonstrating the positive impact of the model has led to the global growth of educational systems that feature democratically collaborative governance, from the Zapatista indigenous, bilingual, autonomous schools in southern Mexico (Baronnet, 2008) to schools run by teacher assemblies in Greece (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010) to the teacher cooperative movement in the United States (Kerchner & Mulfinger, 2010; Farris-Berg et al., 2014). Teachers

have had collective autonomy in some US public schools since the 1970s and the introduction of charter school laws in the 1990s opened up a space for further expansion of this model. Today, pilot programs in the Boston and Los Angeles school districts have expanded collective autonomy to unionized teachers.

Educator-run schools are a compelling example of democratic and distributed leadership in action in the US public education system. Not only do teachers have a more prominent role in school governance, this authority extends to the full scope of site operations. In order to make truly informed school-level decisions, however, teachers must have access to information and educator expertise and knowledge of student communities must be prioritized. In educator-run schools, professional development is targeted to individual areas for growth with the goal of preparing and maintaining empowered decision-makers in school governance. Lastly, in educator-run schools, educators have a full and equal voice in all stages of the decision-making process, from agenda formation to designing the gathering of community input to the structure of major policies that influence school success. Thus, educator-run schools, when implemented with fidelity to the vision of democratic governance, secure collective autonomy for teachers over a broad range of critical school operations (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). Additional research is needed on the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance, formal and informal mechanisms that support or hinder democratic decision-making in practice and if and how teachers shape governance structures at an educator-run school. Considering the current trajectory in US public schools toward continual weakening of teachers' role in site decision-making and the detrimental centralization of power in administration, particularly in schools serving low-income and historically underserved populations, it is imperative to gain a better understanding of the factors that promote full and equal teacher

participation in school governance and how such participation can inform organizational structures.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature review examined the evidence supporting more inclusive site decision-making that empowers key stakeholders. The history of power relations in K-12 public education was explored, from the growing prominence of top-down, high-stakes accountability mechanisms to the development of educator-run schools to the growth of charter schools with hierarchical governance structures in low-income communities. The impact of limiting or promoting teachers' voice in school governance was also detailed, including a look at teacher turnover and commitment to the organizational vision, peer evaluation and mentoring and student outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study utilizes a qualitative case study approach to understand the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an autonomous, educator-run school serving low-income and historically vulnerable populations. In this chapter, the broader context of the emergence of autonomous, educator-run schools is presented. Also, the criteria for collective autonomy and teacher schoolwide decision-making roles are introduced. The participants in the study and the procedures that were used to collect qualitative data are discussed. The chapter closes with a discussion of how data was collected and analyzed in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Context of the Study

There is a long history of reform efforts in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that have pushed for site-level control of school policies and teacher working conditions. The Belmont Pilot Schools initiative began in 2007 as a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between LAUSD, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) and Associated Administrators of Los Angeles unions, spurred by the advocacy of a coalition of community organizations and universities (Martinez & Quartz, 2012; Kerchner et al., 2008). This program differs from previous reform initiatives due the institution of Elect-to-Work Agreements or *thin contracts* at each school site that provide for flexibility in implementing district policy and the union contract. While not all of the staffs of the 48 pilot schools in LAUSD have chosen to leverage their autonomy to be an educator-run school, there are currently 16 pilot schools within the district that have been identified by the Teacher-Powered initiative as meeting the criteria for de facto and de jure teacher collective authority in site decision-making (Teacher-

Powered Schools, 2017). All of the educator-run schools except one are smaller schools that are housed within larger educational complexes. The educator-run pilot schools include two elementary schools, two K-12 schools, one middle school, one 6-12 school and 10 high schools (LAUSD, 2017).

The research site is a K-12 pilot, autonomous, educator-run school that was opened in 2009 as a research-practice partnership between a university, LAUSD and underserved, culturally and linguistically communities. Aiming to cultivate a democratic and sustainable workplace culture, the school develops mentor teachers prepared to help novice educators grasp the nature and promise of teacher leadership (Quartz et al., 2017). The 45 teachers at the school have autonomy and freedom to innovate with staffing, budget, curriculum, instruction and assessment in exchange for heightened accountability as full members of the school district and teachers' union, running contrary to the top-down charter school governance model prevalent in schools serving low-income communities (Estrada, 2017). Part of the national community schools movement that collaborates with "community agencies and local government to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement," core principles of the school are commitment to social justice, bilingualism and biliteracy and culturally-relevant pedagogy aimed at developing self-directed, passionate learners, ready to "enter the adult world as confident and capable human beings, prepared to succeed in college, pursue meaningful careers, and participate in our democracy." Teachers, students, parents, and researchers at the school are engaged in learning together as "active and critical participants in the larger struggle for educational equity and community schooling" (Quartz, 2017; Oakes et al., 2017). The school serves almost 1000 students, with over 90% classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and almost 30% English learners.

Areas of Collective Autonomy

Members of the Teacher-Powered Schools network identified areas in which teachers can secure collective autonomy by compiling research findings on school decentralization and autonomy and data from observations of educational field practitioners (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). For each of the areas of school governance, teachers are able to secure collective autonomy along a spectrum ranging from none to full and final decision-making authority. The areas of collective autonomy cover a broad scope of school operations such as: (1) selecting colleagues, leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff; allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions), (2) evaluating and coaching colleagues, (3) determining the site budget, (4) determining the learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology) and professional development, (5) setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year) and work hours, (6) setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.), and (7) determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures. These criteria for collective autonomy were used by the researchers to determine the impact of the role of teachers in school governance at educator-run schools across the United States (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). The areas of collective autonomy have been adapted to align with the research questions and populations of this study. To understand the relationship between prescribed authority and responsibilities and site decision-making in practice, the interplay between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance can be observed and interpreted through this frame for analysis.

Structure, Culture and Agency

Latour's (1986) analysis of power differentiates between having decision-making authority in principle and the agency to influence policies in practice. Feldman and Pentland (2003) apply this ontology to organizations and note the potential discrepancy between the abstract, ideal structure and the actual, contextual performance of actors within an environment. An underdocumented area of research is an investigation that incorporates the duality and interplay of structure, culture and agency as a lens to analyze the role of teachers in school-level decision-making practices in schools. This approach focuses on the daily work or "action" and how this is consistent or contrasts with formal roles and structures (Eccles & Nohria, 1992; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Heifetz, 1994). Practices emerge from interactions between actors (Bourdieu, 1990; Weick, 1979) and while these interactions are structured by institutional norms, the same interactions have the potential to change the structures that shape future interactions (Archer, 1995; Sewell, 1992; Giddens, 1986).

Biesta and Tedder (2007) posit that agency is informed by the interaction between personal capacities for decision-making and the environment in which decision-making takes place. Using a realist ontology and social constructivist epistemology, Archer (2003) developed critical realist social theory to explain the interplay between structure, culture and agency within the zone of social interaction. Structural and cultural systems are the medium for decision-making interactions at a school, but they are not the sole determinants of teachers' role, as the systems are also the outcome of practices recreated iteratively by formal and informal leaders in the school (Spillane et al., 2001). Giddens (1986) defines schema that compose culture and structure as the "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life." While formal schema like structural systems are the policies and responsibilities provided by contracts and governing documents, cultural systems or informal schema are made up of the

organic routines, language (verbal and non-verbal) and norms that govern interactions and access to resources (Archer, 1995). Resources are defined by Sewell as “anything that can serve as a source of power in social interactions” which include “knowledge of the means of gaining, retaining, controlling, and propagating either human or nonhuman resources.” Systems facilitate, constrain and shape interactions among actors in the process of school governance and these interactions - the practice of agency mediated through one’s role within the social environment - transform the guiding systems in a mutually constitutive relationship (Archer, 2000).

Table 1. Structure and Culture Conceptual Model	
Schema: “generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life” (Giddens, 1986)	
Formal (Prescribed)	Informal (Organic)
Structure	Culture
• Governing documents • Contracts • Job Descriptions	• Routines • Language (verbal and non-verbal) • Norms (shared understandings)

(Sewell, 1992; Archer, 2000; Spillane, 2012)

Participants

Participants for this study were K-12 site leaders, made up of classroom teachers and non-classroom staff including administrators the school during the 2018-2019 academic year. The only requirement for participation was that the teacher or administrator was employed at the site. Interviews were conducted with 17 staff members at the school including four elementary school teachers, three middle school teachers, three high school teachers, two special education teachers, one counselor, one school coordinator, two vice-principals and the school principal.

Pseudonyms are used for interviewee names in the interest of confidentiality. Observations of decision-making interactions at the school included the School Governing Council, Leadership Team and Operations Team meetings and teacher-led staff professional development.

Table 2. Shared Leadership Bodies at Research Site

Team	Members	Purview
Leadership Team	Administrators, Den/Department Leads, Research Director	K-12 Articulation, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Professional Development, Research
Operations Team	Administrators, Den/Department/Division Chairs, Support Staff	Calendar, Schedule, Events, Staffing & Hiring, Matrix
Support Staff	Administrators, Counselors, Coordinators, Coaches, School Administrative Assistant	Operations, Attendance, Programs, Services
Dens/Departments	Leads, Teachers	Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Dens/Divisions	Chairs, Teachers	Learning Supports, Intervention, Parent Engagement
School Governing Council	Administrators, Teachers, Certificated, Parents, Students	Budget, Elect-to-Work Agreement, Principal Evaluation

Procedures

The researcher contacted site leaders at the educator-run school to determine interest in signing a letter of support for the research to be conducted at that site. Once site-level collaboration was confirmed, consent was obtained from the other site leaders at the school for

participation in interviews and observations of decision-making interactions. The study was introduced to site leaders at a staff meeting and through email and participants had the opportunity to engage with the researcher with clarifying questions. Those who agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and procedures including the ability to ask questions, skip interview questions, use of pseudonyms for participant names and voluntary participation in the study. School governance documents were collected with the assistance of school leadership. 30-minute to one-hour, one-on-one interviews were scheduled with site leaders (classroom teachers and non-classroom staff including administrators), as well as four observations of site decision-making meetings. More details about interview and observation methodology will be provided in the following section.

Data Collection

The data collection consisted of (1) semi-structured, one-time, one-on-one interviews with site leaders (classroom teachers and non-classroom staff including administrators), (2) the collection of school governance documents (e.g. School Governing Council bylaws, site Elect-to-Work Agreement, lead teacher job description, professional development slides), and (3) observations of school decision-making interactions. Each data collection method is described in detail below and in Table 3.

Interviews with Site Leaders

Interviews were conducted with site leaders to gain insight into the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance (see Appendices A & B). Administrators were included in interviews in addition to teachers to help determine relational power dynamics in conversation with organizational and social decision-making structures. Interviews are a key component of a phenomenological inquiry in which the researcher solicits

the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2017). In order to determine the essence of the experiences of individuals who know the phenomenon first-hand, it is necessary to conduct open-ended, semi-structured interviews with follow-up questions when a line of inquiry relevant to the research questions is presented. (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). As semi-structured interviews are neither open, everyday conversations nor closed questionnaires, the questions listed in Appendix A and B were suggestions and differed between interviews depending on data gathered during observations of decision-making meetings and during the interview itself (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews are intended to gather data on intentions and impacts that might not surface in observations of decision-making meetings. Using the protocol provided by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the interviewer requested examples and attempted to draw out lived experiences using minimal initial questions. After the groundwork was laid, targeted follow-up questions that clarified or encouraged made the final data a co-production between researcher and participant.

The interview questions targeted the areas of collective autonomy to understand site leaders' perception of teachers' role in site decision-making in relation to structural and cultural systems. Example interview questions to solicit leaders' perspective on teachers' role in school governance are "What challenges have you experienced in participating in school-level decision-making? What obstacles have you had to overcome?" Questions that seek to unearth teacher perspective on equal voice and authority over a full scope of school operations are "How does the decision-making role of teachers at your school compare with other settings where you have worked?" and "Do teachers have the power to change the structures that guide decision-making? If so, can you give an example?" To understand leaders' perspective on factors that impact teachers' role in decision-making, an example question is "What supports the role of teachers in

school-level decisions at your school? Can you give an example?” Finally, example questions to ascertain teacher perspective on full and equal participation in the decision-making process are “Who are others that have a voice in school-level decisions? Do teachers have an equitable decision-making role in comparison? Why or why not?”

School Governance Documentation

Documents such as the pilot school proposal, School Governing Council bylaws, the site Elect-to-Work Agreement, and the lead teacher job description were collected to understand the structures that shape site decision-making and to identify formal mechanisms that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance in practice. The pilot school proposal provides the framework for the Elect-to-Work Agreement that is unique to pilot, autonomous schools as well as the rights of teachers related to school governance. The site Elect-to-Work Agreement is collectively developed by the teaching staff and determines how governance will be implemented as well as how teachers' voice and authority in decision-making is codified. The School Governing Council bylaws and lead teacher job description conform with the site Elect-to-Work Agreement and contain information on the nature and structure of decision-making relationships between teachers and non-classroom staff. Furthermore, professional development slides related to site decision-making were collected to document how school governance is implemented.

Observations of Site Decision-Making Interactions

A total of four observations of site decision-making interactions were conducted including staff professional development and School Governing Council, Leadership Team and Operations Team meetings (see Appendix C). The observations targeted the areas of collective autonomy previously identified that shed light on the relationship between structural and

particularly cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance. Observations are critical for identifying social structures like norms, language and informal routines that promote or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making. Whole-staff, School Governing Council, Leadership Team and Operations Team meetings yielded data on how teachers' role in school governance compares to that of non-classroom staff in the areas of collective autonomy and how structural and cultural systems shape and are shaped by teachers' participation in site decision-making. Leadership Team and whole-staff meetings were observed to illuminate how teachers interacted with colleagues when making decisions about assessment, instruction, professional development and peer coaching. Detailed field notes were written during observations of decision-making meetings.

When assessing teachers' role in site decision-making, targeted areas for observation in meetings are whether the input of all participating teachers is weighed equally by the other decision-makers and if teacher ideas are incorporated into a final decision. To evaluate teacher decision-making authority and role in school governance, criteria for observation were differences in the decision-making role of teachers across the full scope of school governance in comparison to non-classroom staff and if and how this was addressed. Critical spheres of focus are teachers' role in determining professional development and the nature of mentoring, curriculum, hiring and evaluation. Particular attention was directed toward how proposals that teachers moved forward were received and if the final outcome reflected teacher preferences.

To observe teacher equal access to information needed to make decisions during meetings, the extent to which teachers have access to sensitive data on students and peers was documented in fieldnotes. The role of teachers' expertise and knowledge of student communities

in decision-making was assessed by observing how these contributions were incorporated into the decision-making process and if the input was an integral component of the final decision.

Full and equal participation in the decision-making process was observed through monitoring the participation of all teachers in dialogue at all stages of the process and how many times each teacher participated in the conversation. Part of data collection for this area of decision-making was observing how frequently a space was opened for reflection on the role of teachers in school governance and the nature of this conversation. Another area of focus is whether teachers' sense of responsibility for participation in school governance was explicit in meetings as well as if expectations for teachers' role in site decision-making were communicated and instituted as a consistent protocol. Finally, the role of teachers in shaping structural and cultural systems was observed.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions and understand the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance, interviews and observations were conducted and documents were collected and analyzed through the lens of the areas of collective autonomy including the ability to select, evaluate and coach colleagues and leaders, allocate budget priorities and determine the learning program, means of assessment and professional development (Farris-Berg et al., 2012). Critical to understanding the interplay between formal and informal factors that shape and are shaped by teachers' role in school governance is the inclusion of the comparison of the decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff. Semi-structured interviews with site leaders were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were verified by reading the text while listening to the recording. Following transcription, interviews were coded for emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Documents

produced through collective decision-making, such as meeting minutes, policy memorandum and media related to school operations, were used to inform questions asked during the semi-structured interviews. Site decision-making meetings were observed and detailed field notes were written. Data from observations of site decision-making and gathered documents were also used to triangulate with emerging themes from interviews to attempt to achieve validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Table 3. Summary of Data Instruments and Analysis

Instrument	Data Collected	Analysis	Informs
Semi-structured, 30-minute to one-hour interviews with site leaders (classroom teachers and non-classroom staff and administrators)	Qualitative interview data inquiring into: - Formal and informal structures that support or hinder critical teacher role in democratic governance - Differences in site decision-making roles between teachers and non-classroom staff - Teachers' role in shaping decision-making structures	Thematic coding	Whether or not teachers secure: - Collective autonomy over full scope of school operations Teachers' role in site decision-making: - Relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance - Differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff - Teachers' role in shaping decision-making structures
School governance documentation	- School Governing Council bylaws - Site Elect-to-Work Agreement - Lead teacher job description - Professional development slides	Thematic coding	Formal and informal structures that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance: - Codified practices and policies - Informal routines and norms - Teachers' voice and authority - Teachers' access to information pertinent to decisions - Teachers' participation in decision-making processes

Table 3. Summary of Data Instruments and Analysis, continued

Instrument	Data Collected	Analysis	Informs
Observations of school decision-making interactions	Fieldnotes of: • Staff Professional Development • School Governing Council meeting • Leadership Team meeting • Operations Team meeting	• Thematic coding	Teachers' role in site decision-making: • Relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance • Differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff • Teachers' role in shaping decision-making structures • Questions to ask in semi-structured interviews Whether or not teachers secure: • Collective autonomy over full scope of school operations

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This research study used qualitative methods to delve into the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an educator-run school. The case study included interviews, observations and the gathering of site documents that shed light on supports and impediments to teachers' role within school governance. Interview data was coded to highlight themes relevant to areas of teacher collective autonomy and the factors that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance. In order to fully delve into the research questions, fieldnotes from observations and analysis of gathered documents were used to triangulate with themes that arose from the interviews. Findings of the research study will be described, starting with themes that emerged concerning the areas of teacher collective autonomy and differences between decision-making roles of teachers and administrators. This is followed by a discussion of the structural and cultural systems that impact teachers' role in school governance and teachers' ability to shape systems that mediate site decision-making.

Emerging Themes from the Analysis of Qualitative Data from Site Leaders

To gain greater insight into the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance, 17 site leaders including teachers and non-classroom staff were interviewed, four site decision-making meetings were observed and relevant documents were gathered. Analysis of interview transcriptions, field notes and documents that guide site decision-making yielded three emerging themes that align with the research questions (1) the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school, (2) the structural and cultural systems that support teachers' role in site decision-making, and (3) the structural and cultural systems that hinder teachers' role in site decision-making (Table 4).

Table 4. Emerging Themes from the Analysis of Qualitative Data from Site Leaders

Themes	Categories
Role of Teachers in Site Governance (Areas of collective autonomy adapted from Teacher-Powered Schools)	• Staffing including selecting colleagues, selecting leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff; allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions) • Evaluating and coaching colleagues • Determining the site budget • Determining the learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology) and professional development • Setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year) and work hours • Setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.) • Assessment including determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures
Structural and Cultural Systems that Support Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making	Structural Systems • Pilot school proposal ▪ Shared social justice vision • Elect-to-Work Agreement • Representative decision-making structure • Rotating leadership ▪ Expectation of teacher leadership • Protocols to facilitate horizontal decision-making • Targeted distribution of resources ▪ Structured time for collaborative leadership ▪ Monetary stipends • Administrators supporting teachers' role in site decision-making ▪ Access to information ▪ Administrators sharing decision-making authority ▪ Administrators as buffer with district • Role of the teachers' union • Small, span school • University-Assisted • Improvement Science Cultural Systems • Common values ▪ Student-centered values • Collaboration ▪ Creative, persistent collective problem solving • Teacher sense of ownership • Peer accountability • Mentoring • Organizing skills • Continuity of personnel
Structural and Cultural Systems that Hinder Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making	Structural Systems • Legal and district policy constraints • Budget constraints • Lack of preparation Cultural Systems • Mistrust

Theme 1: Role of Teachers in Site Governance

This research was a phenomenological case study conducted at a school in Los Angeles Unified School District on the participation of teachers within site governance. Observations of decision-making meetings included the School Governing Council, Leadership Team, Operations Team and teacher-led staff professional development. Interviews were conducted with 17 staff members at the school including four elementary school teachers, three middle school teachers, three high school teachers, two special education teachers, one counselor, one school coordinator, two vice-principals and the school principal. Pseudonyms are used for interviewee names in the interest of confidentiality. The following is a description of the roles that teachers adopted within school-level decision-making.

Areas of Teacher Collective Autonomy

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p. 175) define collective autonomy as a situation in which “the group at the local level acts with discretion and internal accountability while defining itself as part and parcel of the larger system.” At the pilot school in this study, the teaching staff has local control over key areas of school governance enshrined through the pilot school MOU with the district and the Elect-to-Work Agreement (EWA) developed and revisited annually by the educators at the site. While the teachers at the school are members of United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the union representing all educators and certificated staff in LAUSD, and are covered by the same collective bargaining agreement, they have the freedom to innovate and share accountability in five areas of autonomy: (1) budget, (2) curriculum, instruction and assessment, (3) professional development, (4) governance, and (5) scheduling. The School Governing Council (SGC) has the power to delegate decision-making authority in these areas of

autonomy to educators at the site and the Elect-to-Work Agreement details the nature of roles within the areas of collective autonomy. In this research study, the areas of collective autonomy developed by the Teacher-Powered Schools network (see Role of Teachers in Site Governance Theme in Table 4) were used as a lens to examine the teacher decision-making role in practice the research site. When considering the depth of democratic practices, Dahl's (1989) criteria for decision-making of (1) equal voice and authority over full scope of school operations, (2) equal access to information needed to make democratic decisions (enlightened understanding), and (3) full and equal participation in the decision-making process is employed as a frame of analysis.

Staffing. Teacher collective autonomy in the area of staffing can encompass the power to select colleagues, leaders, transfer and/or terminate colleagues and set staff pattern (including size of staff as well as allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions). Teachers at the school highlighted decision-making authority over hiring colleagues as being critical to their ability to sustain a common vision at the site. Elementary teacher Kira shared:

But we have a ton of great teachers. Part of that is that we have autonomy over hiring, so we interview people and people who want to be here are here. People who align with the vision are here, which also makes it very different than other schools where it's like you're going to school because you want to service the kid. And there's a very general mission and vision around like, 'We're going to provide rigorous instruction and get kids ready for college and careers.' But there's a lot of avenues to get to that. Because people differ really sharply in how to do that. So I think they see progress at slower rates. So yeah slower rates but just more frustrating. Because from the get go, there are people who want to focus on workbooks and phonics and worksheets and whatever. It's like classroom management is good, kids they're learning. They are. But it's very different than like a literacy perspective or a CGI perspective for math. And then you can't work together to create common units or common goals or share resources. And so, I think our hiring has a lot to do with it...I feel like we all come into the space agreeing to this particular vision around social justice and that looks really different.

Kira emphasizes the impact that having the authority to select staff can make on teachers' ability to collaborate around common goals that stem from a shared social justice vision. Educators at

the research site have the ability to make decisions on hiring peers and can therefore shape staff composition to reflect the school's priorities. Vice-principal and founding teacher Qiana communicated the importance of decision-making authority in this area of collective autonomy from the outset, because "as a new school, you get to pick your staff, that's one of the biggest, the most important things, who you put on your staff." Full and equal participation in the hiring process is essential to ensuring that decision-making is democratic. Middle school teacher Iris remarked that "as far as staffing, the teachers and administration serve equally on the staffing and hiring committees and have discussions and everybody's opinion is equal at the table around who's going to work out to come and work for us and who isn't." Teachers have opportunities to give equal input on potential hires and have equal say in the final decision. The EWA establishes the Operations Team as the decision-making body with purview over hiring, staffing and displacement including authority to designate an Interview Team and interview protocol. Special education teacher Julia expressed that the interview team is composed of "multiple teachers, counselors and admin. It's never just an interview with an administrator." This sets a tone that later translates into a shared mission and vision held by the staff of the school. High school teacher Callie expounded on this idea, saying that the school is "a place where teachers genuinely collaborate and you can see that from the first moment you're applying because our hiring committee is teacher...it's like teachers. There's two administrators and then everyone else is teachers on the committee. And so often when you go to your job interviews, it's just an admin, right?" Thus, the foundation for an educator-run school is established from the point of initial contact, setting expectations that are reinforced through daily exercise of the collective autonomies.

Evaluating and coaching colleagues. The ability to mentor colleagues and provide constructive feedback is a defining feature of a democratic, educator-run school. While administrators are often tasked with these roles in schools with traditional governance models (Bierly et al., 2016), teachers at the research site embrace the responsibility of concretizing the slogan of their school “Where we grow together.” The Leadership Team, as outlined in the EWA, is composed of teachers and administrators and is responsible for “creating a culture of continuous learning for all faculty and staff.” Lead teachers, required to have at least 5 years of experience with project-based, interdisciplinary education, support their peers with the implementation of Professional Learning Plans and iterative cycles of self-reflection and assess progress toward goals. Lead teachers are the representatives of small learning communities called dens at the elementary school level and divisions and departments at the secondary level. Elementary teacher Juliana explained that “now I’ve become the lead for my den and also with the den and our department, we have a lot of say over what we want to teach and how we want to teach it. We give each other feedback and we have discussions about what we think is best for students, so that’s also a place in our den meetings.” Conversations on improving curriculum and instruction occur in a democratic, non-threatening environment and yield innovative teaching practices that grow out of educators’ professional discretion to determine the best practices to meet student needs.

At a Leadership Team meeting that was observed, a discussion took place about a colleague who was struggling with implementing collaborative learning. As different teachers offered suggestions on how to coach and provide constructive feedback for this teacher, it was evident that teachers felt a sense of responsibility to impact education beyond their own

classrooms, dens, departments and divisions through a collective process. Elementary teacher Emma remarked that:

With literacy I knew about Readers' Workshop. But nobody formally taught it to me. We had [teacher], who is a literacy consultant, who just happened to be a teacher here and she just held my hand and others of us here. I had no idea. She actually taught us like if we were the students and she was a teacher and she went through the whole process of what Readers' Workshop looks like and Writers' Workshop and I thought, 'This is so amazing.' ...I just thought, 'Wow, people really just want to help and really have empathy and really just care.' And I was just so not used to that, I didn't know how to act in the beginning, but then it just felt natural to me after and I felt more comfortable with sharing who I am.

By nurturing a non-hierarchical community of support through peer coaching and evaluation within the representative Leadership Team structure, teachers are comfortable sharing their difficulties and shortcomings without fear of reprisal or judgment.

The lead teachers serve in the roles of instructional coaches in addition to their other leadership responsibilities on top of the full load of classes and students that they share with their peers. Elementary teacher Jazmin shared that "I think the structures of the den and [the lead teacher] was amazing...She was really patient to help us plan and develop curriculum and just kind of stay afloat." By acting as a resource, guide and facilitator of reflection on Professional Learning Plans, the lead teacher is able to move the vision of the school forward through empowerment within the collective autonomies of coaching and evaluation.

School budget. The School Governing Council (SGC) at the research site, made up of educators, staff, administrators, parents, students and university partners, has the authority to approve the annual budget for the school. When budget decisions impact teacher jobs, the Operations Team, which also includes teachers among its stakeholders, makes recommendations on personnel that need to be shifted or displaced. Those interviewed asserted that teachers have equal decision-making power with other actors in these spaces and that the significant voice in

staff composition justifies the additional time needed to research options and meet to decide the collective course of action. Elementary school teacher Kira communicated that when teachers must be displaced “I think it's probably better to have a team of people making that decision as opposed to one or two [administrators].” She also commented on the value of budget decisions around classroom resources being democratic:

Because it's a collective decision, we prioritize instructional materials and we prioritize books for kids, the things that we need to be able to do well in the classroom. That doesn't mean that we have everything. But I also find that I'm not spending a whole bunch of time to buy a whole bunch of stuff for my classroom. Because as a school community, we're trying to figure out how to do it together as opposed to every teacher on their own, which I think overall just improves the quality of instruction for all students of the school.

Teachers’ collective autonomy over the school budget results in more targeted instruction when those implementing curriculum have an equal voice in the resources that are allocated to these ends. Ensuring that the budget decision-making process is democratic leads to student-centered priorities because those who have influence in the decisions are the ones with proximal experience. Middle school teacher Iris shared:

Collaborative time is a priority. And how much or how little we get every year depends on the budget. But we all do our budget survey and those days are on there and everybody is part of the whole process of looking at the whole budget knowing that our collaboration is one of our priorities. And then budgeting towards that. We've never had any administrative interference in that process at all. Because that's obviously a huge part of who we are.

Teachers at the research site value time allocated for collaboration because they know that these spaces can be utilized efficiently to strengthen the school’s instructional programs. Through mechanisms like the budget survey, teachers’ voice in budget decisions is secured and they are able to advance solutions tailored to student needs.

Learning program and professional development. Teachers’ collective autonomy over the learning program is a natural starting point for the expansion of teachers’ role in decision-

making at a school site, potentially yielding powerful student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). School coordinator Rosalie described how the teachers' role in governance regarding their own classrooms can broaden into decision-making authority in other areas of collective autonomy:

I think it starts with empowering people to make decisions in their most local team, which is their dens and departments. So giving those teachers full authority to make decisions about their pacing, about what they teach, the assessments that they're giving, when they're going to give certain assessments or tests, calendaring, giving them authority in the most direct way I think empowers new teachers to start to see like, 'Oh, ok. People are making decisions. And I can make decisions too.' So then, that nurtures the ability to say something or to advocate for yourself. And then once the new teachers get a handle on teaching, then a lot of them then start joining committees or they start kind of thinking of ways to engage in the school. So, I think if you want to nurture that in teachers, then you have to allow them to make decisions on the most basic levels - their day to day work.

Complementary to guaranteeing a voice in the curriculum, teaching methods and resources utilized at a school, the authority to determine the content of the professional development calendar gives teachers the ability to shape spaces where collective decisions are actualized through collaborative conversations and targeted problem-solving. Special education teacher Helen spoke to the interplay between teachers' power to design professional development and their freedom to develop learning programs:

I was working in the math department and we get to choose our own curriculum and when we do professional development, we get to choose exactly what you want to focus on. And that's not something most schools let you do. They usually tell you, 'This is the focus for the year and this is a project that you're going to do.' But that's not the case here. These professional learning groups like the department collectively decide what they want to focus on, how they're going to go about it and then present the information.

Lead teachers, as defined in their job descriptions, are delegated the authority to "[create] a culture of continuous learning for all faculty and staff, by leading formal and informal professional development sessions." As classroom teachers, leads are attuned to the needs of

their colleagues and can design professional development accordingly. Middle school teacher Willa elaborated on this dynamic:

As a lead team, we meet on Fridays, every other Friday and we do most of our planning and discussion then. But the leads also create spaces in the professional development calendar so that on Wednesdays we're not just listening to faculty meetings or like administrators telling us, like going over these trainings that are irrelevant. We use some of those times to either have department time, have division time so that's cross grade level or have professional development that is aligned to the instructional focus of the school. So, we really try to maximize all of those spaces since we have the freedom to have release days and have freedom over professional development as well on Wednesdays.

Other teachers interviewed highlighted the connection between decision-making authority over learning programs and professional development and teachers' capacity to implement mainstreaming of students with disabilities, flexible seminar elective classes, anti-racist and multicultural curriculum, a social justice checklist used to define pedagogy that aligns with the school's mission and math, reading and writing workshops. These learning programs were provided as examples of innovative, student-centered practices that are the fruit of teachers' ability to work within the Leadership Team, dens, divisions and departments to make full use of the collective autonomies at their disposal. Elementary school teacher Kira summarized the strengths of this model in comparison to schools with traditional governance structures:

Here, once a week we get together as grade level dens. And we're deciding the agenda, so like, 'We need to work on math this week or we need to revise this unit or we need to prep for the upcoming unit. Or we need to tweak this test thing. Or I have questions about the new grading system and I want my time on that.' So, every week, we as classroom teachers get to be like, 'Hey, we have time to meet.' And that's part of the EWA - you sign up knowing that you have to come in an extra hour every week to that meeting. But it's super helpful. And then Wednesday, for the PD [professional development], the leads are deciding it together and the leads are doing it based on what the feedback is from their dens and departments and can support the mission and the vision. So, the PD here never feels like it's irrelevant or it's being forced upon us. You know, it's good, quality professional development, every single PD that we have.

By extending collective teacher autonomy to all key areas of school-level decisions, teachers are able to have a voice in hiring peers who share a commitment to a common vision. This is leveraged when teachers can productively collaborate on developing learning programs and professional development, working from a mutual understanding of the time needed to invest in group projects and the objectives of the education carried out in their classrooms.

Schedule and work hours. The Operations Team at the school, made up of den, division and department chairs, lead teachers, coordinators, counselors and the site's administrative assistant, has purview over the collective autonomies of scheduling and work hours, as delegated by the EWA. When the Operation Team was observed, teachers had the opportunity to give input on coverage schedules at the school and asked clarifying and probing questions to attempt to get to the root of the impediments to an effective solution being implemented. Vice principal Jack mentioned that in the Operations Team, "teachers have a say in things like scheduling when tests are going to occur, when field trips are going to occur, when we want to have this event, how that's going to infuse all the other components of the school and the movement of K-12." With so many moving parts at the school, the decision-making process for scheduling can be complicated with multiple variables at play. For teachers to be able to participate as equals in this area of governance, it is essential that they have the same access to information that non-classroom staff like administrators benefit from to be able to consider all of the different factors involved in school-level decisions. High school teacher Winnie remarked:

Teachers were advocating for a period off, like a seminar or advisory off because it was too hard to travel. They thought that that was the fairest thing because we keep asking teachers to do more and more on less. So that's what they're really advocating for. But then those systems also impact other people and the rest of the school, right? What about if they don't teach a seminar class, well how is that going to impact the numbers in the other classes? So that also impacts other teachers. So those are also some of the tensions.

By codifying teachers' decision-making authority over work hours and classes in the EWA, those most impacted by potential changes have a seat at the table when the ramifications on workload and sustainability are considered. With a collective decision-making process in place, a structure exists that enables representatives for the various school teams to take a more holistic perspective and consider the impact of a particular decision on a broader segment of the affected stakeholders. Dialogue among the members of Operation Team was observed that demonstrated careful deliberation prompted by the inclusion of multiple voices. The meeting was facilitated by an administrator who promoted participation through constant check-ins that assessed individual input on proposed ideas. By maintaining this decision-making structure with fidelity, the conditions are present that can nurture equal teacher participation in school governance within the areas of collective autonomy of scheduling and work hours.

Setting school-level policies. When a whole-staff meeting and professional development were observed at the research site, it was evident that teachers had the authority to exercise their decision-making authority regarding school-level policies such as socio-emotional systems of support, discipline and after school tutoring. For example, educators discussed their ability to make decisions on enrolling students in additional services if warranted, implementing a positive behavioral system in classrooms or taking a restorative approach to student actions that violate the school's norms versus a punitive approach that would could lead to interfacing with the school-to-prison pipeline. Teachers were empowered to engage in creative problem-solving about practices that could address student needs outside of the academic sphere and allowed themselves to be vulnerable in the conversations by sharing that individual choices were not yielding desired results. The culture of horizontal collaboration creates an environment founded

on mutual trust that is conducive to generating collective solutions. Counselor Danielle spoke to the impact of these relationships:

I'm able to approach the teachers or go to Leadership Team and say, "Here's something I want to try in terms of socio-emotional support. What do you think?" And they're very receptive to it. I mean we are a restorative justice school and that was something I really wanted to do prior to taking this role...And they're like, 'Of course.' And just anything that's strength-based, we can do here.

Educators at the school feel empowered to tackle issues and formulate plans of action instead of relying on an administrator to handle key school-level decisions. With shared accountability, administrators are also willing to delegate decision-making authority knowing that there is a collective commitment to follow the process through all the necessary steps. Open communication and access to information is key to maintaining this culture of non-hierarchical collaboration within the areas of collective autonomy that traditionally fall within the domain of administrators (Bierly et al., 2016). Special education teacher Julia noted the following about teachers feeling ownership to take on school-level decisions:

The division chairs for the high school pushed for more time to do targeted student intervention and to build more relationships with families for students who are struggling and really make that a prominent thing that we're doing and get more professional development time to do it. And so, they wrote a proposal to the Operations Team and they talked to the principal about it and they have regular meetings with the principal now. So, they didn't create new structures but they really changed the content of the current structure in a way that did change the direction of the school to a degree or I should say changed the focus or priorities.

Teachers were comfortable advocating for a particular course of action and had the institutional know-how to navigate their plan through the different decision-making bodies at the school. The school's leadership structures of division chairs and the Operations Team that they served on provided a space where teachers could go with ideas that they wanted implemented. At these meetings, the plan is refined through the input of diverse stakeholders, resulting in a final

intervention that a wide segment of the staff has committed to put into practice due to their equal involvement through all stages of the decision-making process. The course of events for this particular initiative is representative of the larger pattern at the research site of empowerment within the area of collective autonomy of determining school-level policies like disciplinary protocol, parent/community engagement and socio-emotional supports. Because staff share the common value of education being that of the whole child and not solely facilitating the development of discrete, standardized skills, teachers push to have an equal voice and exercise their authority in an extensive range of school-level decisions.

Assessment. Lead teachers are delegated authority by the EWA to make decisions within the structure of the Leadership Team on assessment expectations that “align to the schoolwide vision and goals.” With autonomy in the area of assessment included in the LAUSD pilot school MOU, teachers at the research site have the freedom needed to tailor assessments to the schools’ vision of cultivating “confident and capable human beings, prepared to succeed in college, pursue meaningful careers, and participate in our democracy.” High school teacher Willa explained how teachers exercise their authority within this area of collective autonomy to develop assessments consistent with the values that the team has prioritized:

As a pilot school, we had the freedom to create our own assessments that were different from what the district would provide us. So not having to do these benchmarks that were not aligned with our philosophy, not aligned with what we were already doing in the classroom. Our lead at the time, Rosa, she was like, ‘We’re going to do our own assessments. We’re going to use the content that we want to make sure our students learn. But also support the same skills like the rigor and the analysis.’ So, I thought that was one of the big things, actually, because I just felt so passionate about it. I mean I still do. And I just learned so much from that, that I was able to take that even to my other school. Like, ‘How do we build meaningful assessments and how do we make sure that it is culturally relevant or something that students can relate to or can connect to?’ So, I found that experience more valuable than being like, ‘OK, we’re just going to do some assessments that the district has provided for us.’

While other pilot schools in LAUSD have assessment autonomy, the research site ensures that teachers will have an equal voice regarding innovation in this area through the lead teacher and Leadership Team structures. The school's EWA outlines the core practices around "Agency and Democracy" that are implemented through progressing toward Individualized Learning Plans that are strength-based and target learning to students' interests and career goals. Structures such as release days and professional development are built into the school year, giving teachers the time needed to design assessments collectively. When conditions are not in place to facilitate meaningful educator participation in assessment decisions, teachers have the ability to advocate for their full inclusion in decision-making. Elementary school teacher Kira detailed how this unfolded when the district communicated a new plan for student assessment:

And with the new grading system, they wanted us...we already input grades into [student information system] and then they wanted us also to put a certain number of grades into Schoology. And we said we would do our best and we worked with admin to figure out what felt manageable and that's what we did. And it wasn't entering multiple grades for all the subjects, which is what other admin are requiring teachers at their school to do. Because the district often will come in and be like, 'Full implementation. This is what we're doing.' And that's not how human beings work. So, we just scale it back. And it's not that we're not doing what the district is saying. But we are trying to figure out 'How do we share responsibility for the mandates that are coming down so that it feels manageable to everybody?'

Through authority in the collective autonomies established by the various decision-making bodies at the research site, teachers are empowered to work in partnership with administrators to find solutions that will allow the school to satisfy district mandates while also meeting the unique needs of the site. The first consideration is how a new initiative will impact existing programs if teachers decide to adopt the new program and the next factor to determine is how to adapt the plan proposed by outside bodies to align within core beliefs and practices. When teachers have a voice in the logistics of who, what, when, where and how in the roll-out of new

assessment frameworks, they are more committed to implementing the program with fidelity. Although the five autonomies enshrined by the LAUSD pilot schools MOU of budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment and the school calendar provide the opportunity to target programs to student and family needs, the democratic structures established by the research site are instrumental to ensuring that decision-making is inclusive and participatory at all stages of the process, increasing the likelihood of outcomes that reflect collective values.

Theme 2: Structural and Cultural Systems that Support Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making

Structural Systems

Archer (1995) defines structural systems as formal policies and responsibilities, such as those provided by contracts and governing documents. Structural systems are a powerful determinant of teachers' role in site decision-making. High school teacher Michelle described the function of structural systems in how the research site promotes the educator-run governance model in comparison to other pilot schools:

So, I'd say here it's different because it's much more formalized, like it's written in code so to speak. It wasn't as codified as it is here. You know at a [LAUSD pilot school] it kind of was implied or assumed because it was a pilot school and the teachers who'd written the pilot school plan were faculty members there. But even though they had written a pilot school plan, I don't feel like it was as structured as it is here or kind of ingrained in the culture of the school. Here it's very clear what the structures are. It's very clear that ownership of much of the direction that the school moves is really led by the teachers and not by admin.

Michelle lays out the impact of structural systems on establishing a teacher-powered school culture with policies and formal responsibilities that guide the decision-making process. In the following section, the structural systems that support teachers' participation in school governance are explored.

Pilot school proposal. The significant teacher role in school-level decision-making at the research site was in place from its founding, built on the foundation of the pilot school proposal that was submitted by a team representing the site, United Teachers of Los Angeles, the LAUSD local district, an education collaborative and a coalition of community organizations. In this proposal, the following norms promoted by the Coalition of Essential Schools were present: local control, democratic and distributed leadership, collaboration within the school and with outside organizations, flexible staffing time to allow for teachers to take on diverse responsibilities, professional growth, curricular autonomy, peer evaluation and teacher representation on all key decision-making bodies. Interviewees attributed their decision-making authority within the collective autonomies to the opportunity they had to start the school and establish roles that would strengthen over time. Speaking about the team of teachers who founded the school in 2009, former elementary teacher and current middle school teacher Iris said that “the three of us planned the entire curriculum plan, the plan for incorporating the different students that we were getting and starting a dual language program, the plan for what materials we would use and the plan for what assessments we would use and when we would do them.” By solidifying this culture from the outset, teachers were able to build on their defined role within site decision-making as each program, grade level or team were added to the school’s structure. When the site became a span school expanding to middle and high school grades, new teachers were brought on to the team and had the opportunity to design the Upper School, exercising their authority within the collective autonomies that was already a precedent codified in the EWA and was battle-tested, having been refined for several years to meet the unique needs of the site. Counselor Danielle explained the teachers’ role in decision-making in place when she began working in the school:

During the summer preceding our first year that we opened for Upper School, all the founding teachers were always invited to meet and talk about ‘How are we going to do this and how are we going to do that?’ And we talked about advisory and electives and what our visions were. And so, I didn't even realize at the time that that's what was really happening was this whole concept of the leadership.

With educators already empowered within school governance, it was a natural progression to extend this role to the teachers who would found the Upper School. And having the collective experience of building a school together, the teachers already knew the impact of a meaningful voice in school-level decisions. Vice principal Jack noted the relationship between establishing a foundation of significant teacher role in site decision-making at the birth of the school and educator empowerment at the school today:

It's been interesting to see the original teachers stay on who really served a much different role than teachers who come and join the staff now because not only did a lot of them have to go through the design of how the school was going to be run, but they had to do things in the beginning that required them to do so much more than just teach. There was a sense of pride and there's a sense of ownership that was essential because there are other pilot schools or other schools that went through the same design and decision-making process that I don't think have the same level of input from their teachers. I see that now and I see how hard those teachers have worked and the fruits of their labor.

The founding teachers who created the school together valued their roles within school governance and implemented mechanisms to ensure that their ability to exercise their authority within the areas of collective autonomy was maintained. Their shared process of horizontal problem-solving helped to forge the school's commonly-held vision, informed by the initial pilot proposal and another reference point used to ground decisions on what governance at the site should look like. Elementary school teacher Emma shared:

This whole school began as an idea of social justice. So then you scale back and we think, ‘Well, what's needed right? We need to have all voices heard.’ Trump wanted to use this land to create a hotel and the community really resisted that. So in that same sense, we thought, ‘Well, the community is being heard, because we're saying we want a school, kids deserve a school here. Yes, it's going to cost a lot of money but our kids deserve it too. Like other kids in other areas have great schools too, our kids deserve it

too.’ So when the parents pushed for that, the founding teachers here and the leadership group said, ‘Well, we always need to have that voice, right?’ And so then, I think that’s how everything surged, like, ‘Okay, every time we have some kind of a group or committee, we need to have teacher voice, parent voice and student voice.’

Emma ties teachers’ role within decision-making to the school’s social justice vision, which prioritizes grassroots voices who have been traditionally excluded from power structures. As the school was formed in partnership with families and community advocates, the spirit of leadership from the bottom-up has continued to sustain democratic and inclusive governance as a guiding philosophy.

Shared social justice vision. When asked why they chose to work at the research site, elementary school teacher Kira responded:

The social justice component to it where it seemed really exciting to be part of a team or people were already coming in with a vision of, "We want to create a school and curriculum and a community where people feel safe and are all working together to challenge racism, classism, sexism and homophobia." It felt like the perfect place for me to be at. But I knew it was going to be a lot of work, it's just very different than organizing people who have very different visions for what they want in their school community and how they want to get there. So, I think just the cohesiveness of the vision. I think the fact that I wouldn't have to start it at the pilot school and the politics of it, focused on the curriculum and instruction and then the organizing work that drew me here.

Kira explains that when teachers are united around a common vision, decision-making is enhanced because the staff is engaging in dialogue that is structured by a shared understanding of how their work fits into the larger picture of being agents of change in a society with systemic inequities. She recounted experiences at other schools where the staff lacked a foundation of core beliefs and where conversations about pedagogy and student needs did not yield positive outcomes because the viewpoints of those involved were too disparate. On the contrary, interviewees expressed appreciation for the shared vision at the school that provides a set of principles to refer to when disagreements occur, reducing the conflict that can slowly wear on

someone who is already investing significant time and energy into multiple responsibilities.

Callie shared that “we have a culture and a process of working through [conflict], of not personalizing those debates that come up that are necessary for actually having our vision continue to live and continue to develop.” Middle school teacher Jessica explained the role of a common vision in supporting collective leadership at the research site:

I think that vision piece is really important because if everyone is not looking at the same North Star, then we can't all push in the same direction. And it doesn't mean that everyone needs to agree on like, I don't know the nitty-gritty of how we're going to get there necessarily. I think having different opinions and perspectives is important and inevitable, but at the end of the day, if someone works here and thinks that college is the only way that a person can succeed or that that is the most important job of a teacher and that getting to know students personally and investing in them relationally, if they're like, "That's not important," they're not going to drive here at our school and them being in a leadership role is not a push in the same direction because we don't believe in the same things.

Other interviewees concurred that codifying core values in governing documents such as the EWA helps to attract teachers to the school who share similar philosophies on leadership and pedagogy. With a group of professionals who have commonly-held beliefs, the groundwork is set for collaboration and conflict resolution when necessary. Teachers can build on relationships that are already bonded by shared attitudes instead of starting from ground zero with peers who have been selected by the district or school administrators. Interviewees stressed that their equal voice in hiring is an integral component to establishing a culture of social justice values at the school.

When issues arise at the school that must be handled collectively, teachers at the research site share a sentiment consistent with the core belief of their school that they must model for students how to demonstrate courage in the face of injustice and promote democracy. Elementary

school teacher Juliana described how their common social justice vision helped teachers to be unified in the face of powerful opponents:

This year, when [superintendent] Beutner came, there was a lot of tension because it was a surprise and the elevator was broken. And then we were not allowed to participate and we were told that we couldn't protest verbally by the principal, that we could be out there and that was really disheartening. But that's the directive she got, so that's what she told us or else we would get written up, is what they told us. But we still went out anyway. We still went outside and we still had our signs, it was mostly Lower School too because our schedule allowed us to be out there before they started the event or at least a little bit after they started the event. So, then the district people and all the principals are out there standing around telling us to leave, leave, leave like 10 times. But we wouldn't leave and we were out there with our students with our signs and our colleagues...I think it brought our community together in a way that we saw that if they want to silence our voice or they want to tell us that tell us that we can't do something, we're still going to do it.

At the time, teachers at the school were engaged in a contract fight with the district represented by superintendent Beutner in the run up to their strike. Teachers decided to take a risk and engage in collective action because not doing so went against their shared values. They showed students the power of unity amongst members of a community and strengthened trust amongst teachers that could improve collaboration in the future within the areas of collective autonomy.

Elect-to-Work Agreement. The pilot school memorandum of understanding between LAUSD and UTLA sets the parameters for the Elect-to-Work Agreement (EWA) that authorizes educators to adapt sections of the collective bargaining agreement on school schedule, calendar, evaluation and professional development to the unique needs of the site. The EWA is updated every year by teachers on the EWA subcommittee delegated by the School Governing Council and is required to be ratified by at least 2/3 of the faculty. The research site's EWA goes beyond the parameters provided by the pilot school MOU and codifies teachers' role in decisions regarding the school's vision and core beliefs and policies that include the instructional program and curriculum, the nature of parent, community and university engagement and staffing. The

decision-making structures of dens and divisions, which provide for “smaller learning communities of students and teachers” with lead teachers serving on the Leadership Team and/or the Operations Team are also outlined within the EWA. While the EWA does not delineate the teachers’ role in decision-making within the School Governing Council, Leadership and Operations Teams in comparison to non-classroom staff like administrators, it refers to guidelines in other documents within the faculty handbook and asserts that “democratic school governance structures that ensure all members of the school community have a voice” are part of the school’s core practices. Teachers have taken ownership of the EWA annual renewal process as a school norm and this is both a contributing factor and result of the significant teacher role in school-level decisions within the areas of collective autonomy. High school teacher Jacob spoke about the critical role of the EWA in establishing teachers’ role within school governance:

It was the creation of the Elect-to-Work Agreement and we made sure that not only that document but that the way in which that document got revised every year was a very democratic process. It really still is to this day. So, really that was kind of I think a way that teachers signaled to the administration that this was going to be a school that had a very horizontal leadership model.

High school teacher Michelle also commented on the impact of the EWA on comparative teacher role in decision-making in leadership groups:

Every year we bring up the EWA and there's a whole process where teachers can propose changes to the EWA and then it gets written up and amendments are made and then the whole faculty votes on it. And anybody can propose changes to the EWA. And I feel like that kind of works in almost all of the leadership committees as well. I know SGC is legally mandated and so that's sort of a different story. But in other cases, I definitely think we have the opportunity to propose those changes. You know whether it's to the schedule whether it's to how the matrix is created, whether it's to the instructional program or what classes we offer. Typically those decisions actually all come from the teachers. They rarely if ever come from admin.

The mechanisms in place to promote democratic decision-making on the EWA such as the amendment structure and the vote by the entire faculty are essential to maintaining teacher ability

to exercise their school-level decision-making authority. The EWA subcommittee of the SGC oversees the annual review of the EWA. This subcommittee is governed by the SGC bylaws, which include the objective of instilling a “democratic school culture” and an egalitarian decision-making process with all members having equal input at all stages of the process. When asked what contributed to an inclusive culture at the school, Principal Lucia explained the vital role of the measures that solidify teachers’ role in determining their own decision-making power:

The EWA, respecting the process, you know for that Elect-to-Work Agreement. We really take it seriously and I always get sad when I hear schools say, ‘The principal just shows it to us and we’re just all okay.’ And I’m like, ‘Wow, that’s not even for the principal to do.’ Yeah, like maybe the principal was a founding teacher at some point. But that really should belong with the teachers. That’s their contract, their document. And so, it’s sad for me to see that some of that is getting lost, sometimes I think with pilot schools. Because to me like then you were eroding some of that dynamic for people to decide their own working conditions. So, I think that that’s helped a lot that we always go back to the values and principles every time we start a new initiative or try to think, ‘We’re in this system. Are we trying to make a change? Is this really democratic? Like is this really the best way and how do we have some input from people?’

The EWA sets the standard for teachers’ role in school governance, providing clear expectations that serve as guidelines for the development of protocols that actualize the core values referenced by the questions that Lucia presented. In bodies like the SGC, Leadership Team and Operations Team, teachers lead collaboratively in the collective autonomies with other stakeholders in an equal relationship and that draws on the expertise particular to each stakeholder group.

Representative decision-making structure. Within dens and divisions, teachers make decisions in their professional learning communities and are represented by a lead teacher who brings the group’s ideas and concerns to the governance teams. In these horizontal spaces made up of their peers, educators have the ability to workshop proposals collectively, implement core practices and bring data to the team for group feedback and problem-solving. Teachers have the

authority to shape the education of students in their multi-age communities while also having a meaningful voice in larger, school-level decisions.

The lead teacher job description promotes teacher leadership by establishing responsibilities on par with administrators such as “leading formal and informal professional development”, mentoring and evaluating peers, participating in decision-making bodies as a representative and as facilitators in their dens, departments and divisions, and “developing and sustaining school culture, core beliefs, vision and mission.” Leads are expected to be dynamic actors who act as conduits between their peers and decision-making spaces by stimulating conversations, soliciting opinions and bringing ideas generated in teams back to the larger group. Vice principal Jack spoke about the impact of lead teachers fully realizing the potential of their role:

We see that as teachers joined the Leadership Team and they carry the role of being lead and it's not just somebody who attends meetings, but it's how you are participating in those spaces to make sure that your colleagues have their opinions voiced and valued and that you're taking a direction of the school versus just saying, rubber stamp. Okay, let's move on to this topic. Let's move onto this topic.

By embracing the representative leadership element of their position, lead teachers are able to significantly influence decisions within the areas of collective autonomy. Accountability for outcomes is shared with administrators who participate equally in decision-making, and consequently teachers are committed to implementing processes that will generate productive dialogue aimed at arriving at policies that reflect collective priorities. When asked how representative leadership works in practice, high school teacher Callie explained that “it’s division leads and department leads who go to [decision-making meetings]. And we try to hold meetings beforehand to talk about it with the people in our departments and divisions, so we can bring their perspectives and voice.” This inclusive structure involves all affected staff in site

governance by seeking input before conversations that lead to final decisions occur. When teachers are included in every stage of the decision-making process, whether in their division, den or department or through their representative in larger governance bodies, their democratic participation is assured. And by maintaining participatory decision-making, practices are more likely to be implemented with fidelity when staff know that their voice was included in the conversation. Elementary teacher Emma shared her experience with structures that encourage collective problem-solving involving various decision-making bodies with representative lead teachers as liaisons:

I've been here one year less than when the school was created and the structures were already set. I mean they've been refined every year but it's always been that teacher, parent, student in every committee and I feel like that's how all the decisions are made here and that's what's felt best because you have the commitment of everybody and then you have those core people going out and getting research, leading things, the students the teachers and the parents and then we bring back, "Well, my group said this. Ok, my group said this. My group...all right let's figure out another proposal and then let's take it back. Let's bring it back." And then when we present it, it's not like, "Well, where did this come from?" And everybody's bought into the proposal mostly because it's already been dialogued in all these different spaces and groups.

She highlights the power of the representative structure to promote the continual refinement of ideas through critical interrogation generated by the process of moving proposals between decision-making bodies. The constant back and forth between diverse groups also fosters transparency and trust because all stakeholders have equal access to information. Emma emphasized the importance of trust and transparency with representative structures when she said that "I feel like we all have a say because let's say, I'm not a lead this year. OK, that's fine because I know I trust my lead this year, every year, right? I trust my colleagues, so then my lead is my representative on that leadership committee or team." This decision-making model leverages the various strengths of individual staff members such as writing, research, facilitation

and advocacy. While the lead teacher position might not be suited for all staff, the representative decision-making structure gives opportunities for meaningful participation at many steps of the process. Vice-principal Qiana described the dynamics of individual department or den members generating and prototyping ideas before having their collective proposal carried forward by a lead teacher:

If it's something within a department or den, I feel like it's pretty doable. I think it comes down to, "Do you want that? How willing are you to write it up? Break it up into...", and it's all those things. And so I think some people are into it and they're like, "Oh yeah, I'm going to take this on," and some people are just like, "No, I don't want to do it," and they're fine with it. And then I think people choose how much they want to get involved in this decision-making and how much they're like, "I'm okay with not deciding that and just working on this. I'm glad we have these processes and structures but it doesn't have to be me."

Sharing responsibilities allows the group to distribute tasks within the decision-making process to the people most suited to that role due to ability and interest. Staff members have varied capacity for participation in decision-making spaces and the structures at the school take this into account. The voice of individuals is included even if they do not have the capacity to participate on the same level as lead teachers. And lead teachers are trusted to accurately communicate the positions of the departments, dens and divisions they represent. Part of this trust is the shared belief that all within the school are capable of being leaders in a form that plays to their strengths.

Rotating leadership. The structure of rotating leadership at the school is based in the tenets of democratic decision-making. By sharing roles of responsibility, more voices are included in site governance, school-level leadership becomes part of the culture and power is not consolidated into the hands of a few individuals. High school teacher Jacob related the origins of rotating leadership at the research site as “a shared set of values that no one person should hold a position for more than three years and the initial lead teachers, most of them I think stepped

down after three years, and that really created a value that I think still sticks around to this day.”

This was in contrast to what special education teacher Julia described as the culture at her previous pilot school that lacked clear processes for mentoring new leaders. Elementary teacher Emma shared how the representative leadership model is strengthened through rotation of lead teachers:

The good thing is that we each take turns doing things, you know taking on these roles. I feel like almost everybody in my den has been a lead already and then things change. We have new teachers. So then, what they do is they get immersed and they watch what the lead does. And I feel like there's a lot of support for people to take that step and be a part and take that commitment. But what's good is like, "All right, I did it. Now I'll step down, somebody else does it. But I still feel like this lead is voicing my opinion in those spaces to bring it back." So, I do feel like even though I'm not a part of every team, my voice is heard.

With the common experience of being lead teachers, educators have a shared set of skills and values they can draw upon when collaborating. Lead teachers mentor the next generation of leaders and ease the transition into the new role. Colleagues trust each other to represent the department's collective position on a particular initiative and are comfortable with relinquishing a position of greater decision-making power because they are confident in the structure of rotating leadership that is in place. School coordinator Rosalie spoke further on how rotating leaders yields a strengthened teachers' role in site decision-making:

I think the rotation model of the Leadership Team is really important in making it sustainable because then people know, "I'm in this role but I'm only in it for a few years, so it's tiring now but I know I'm going to keep going." And so, when then the new lead comes, then that kind of collective leadership gets passed down. So, the leadership approach and the practices are sustained. And it's not sitting with one human. It continues. So in that way, I think that rotation system sustains and then it forces people in their dens and departments, and those departments are usually like five people, six people, to all practice, like to have agency in their group, because they see that one day they have to be the lead and they have to lead their teams.

Knowing that there will be regular transitions of lead teachers makes den and department members more likely to volunteer for roles with greater responsibility and increased time commitment. This also prevents power from being entrenched and instead helps to distribute decision-making as teachers are engaging in a facet of school governance and gaining the skills and experience that will prepare them to assume a leadership role in the future. By engaging on a regular basis with lead teachers in collective problem-solving within departments, educators have a first-hand example of how lead teachers can bring the group's work to bear on larger school-level decisions. This can provide the confidence to take on this role in the future with the guidance of the current lead teacher when the opportunity arises. Middle school teacher Iris also highlighted the impact of rotating leadership on creating a greater cohort of teachers who can approach decisions with a broader, school-level perspective.

Expectation of teacher leadership. Teachers at the school are aware that they are expected to take on a leadership role within site decision-making and this helps transition those who were initially unfamiliar with the educator-run governance model when they started working at the school. Elementary school teacher Emma described her first decision-making interaction:

The first meeting I had here at the library, I came in with my bag and a notepad and I sat at the meeting and everybody at the meeting had their laptops open with proposals to incorporate into our curriculum. And I looked around and I just was astonished that everybody had already thought about how to make an impact within the curriculum and that they knew like, "This is why I'm here, because I'm going to give my opinion and I have research. And I know a lot and my opinion matters here. So here it is."

Emma recounted her experience of seeing the culture of teacher leadership at the research site in action, which inspired her to take on a greater role within school governance. Veteran teachers establish a standard for participation in school-level decisions that newer teachers gradually

assume. Elementary school Kira explained how the rotating leadership model creates a cultural expectation for participation in site decision-making for all staff:

Everybody knows you're going to have to be on the SGC at some point. Whereas I think at other schools, it's like, "Oh yeah, that teacher or those teachers will do it." Like a smaller group of leaders. Whereas here, if you're teaching and you've gotten through your first year and your second year, we need you to step up. It's a cultural expectation that everybody is capable of leading and is capable of learning too.

The democratic structures established at the school ensure that it will not be a select group of teachers that take on additional leadership responsibilities. By distributing roles with decision-making authority over a greater number of individuals, teachers absorb through osmosis the expectation of their future role within school governance. Principal Lucia also emphasized how the expectation of teacher leadership helps to create an environment where teachers learn by watching each other acting in decision-making roles. Lucia shared how this process plays out and contributes to democratic decision-making:

I think other people are going to take a little longer to decide, "Okay, now I'm ready to step into that" but I think our expectation is that really you can lead from any chair, that you should think that your voice matters. And so even if you don't have the formal role or title that we are hoping to hear your voice, your ideas, your contributions because they matter to us and they make the school better.

By providing opportunities for new teachers to participate in school-level decision-making even before they have formal leadership roles, the research site establishes a culture in which expectations of participation in school governance permeate the organization. This also helps to create a democratic, inclusive medium for decision-making to occur with all stakeholders empowered to contribute toward actualizing the school vision.

Protocols to facilitate horizontal decision-making. While representative and rotating leadership determine who will be engaging in school governance, meeting structures create the medium for decision-making. Once roles are established, meeting structures provide a canvas

that guides how stakeholders will interact. Interviewees emphasized the importance of clearly defined structures that guide decision-making processes. Special education teacher Julia shared:

Everything that's happening at the school is addressed on a biweekly or a monthly basis by a body of people that represents really all of the teachers. And in that way, you always find out from someone you know, "Hey, this was discussed," around some testing issue or some professional development issue or teacher evaluation issue. You always find out from your peers and peers are always in an ongoing discussion around what is the best way forward. I'm not saying it's perfect because it's not, but I think that infrastructure really helps create a feeling like we do have decision-making power.

Regularly scheduled meetings with representatives from different dens and departments allow for consistent dialogue to occur in multiple decision-making spaces with input from individual teachers. Those meetings are governed by a variety of protocols to promote democratic decision-making that have been incorporated and refined over time. Principal Lucia explained how these protocols were developed and how they are implemented:

From the birth of this organization, those were the principles and values that were embraced with its inception and we have now ritualized how we go back to those values of democracy and fighting against systems of oppression that get replicated everywhere and we're trying to question whether we are replicating those or not....But I think definitely the fact that it was founded with those principles in mind that we have been able to ritualize how to revisit those, keeps it alive. It's kind of like our constitution.

High school teacher Jacob shared that there was a history of grassroots teacher leaders in LAUSD who educated colleagues about mechanisms to ritualize democratic decision-making and these lessons were applied when building structures at the research site. Interviewees mentioned attending Adaptive Schools trainings facilitated by the Carnegie Foundation that provided skills that they could later use with school governance guided by the educator-run model. Jacob talked about his experience:

The Adaptive Schools training that I received, which most people just kind of went through because it was a district training, but once put into the pilot school

model I realized, "Oh, this is stuff that we could really use to our own advantage." On the other hand, I wasn't at all prepared because, for the first time, we were kind of given the reins once we were put at a pilot school and given a lot of autonomy and power that we didn't have at our former school site, where I kind of think it's similar to being an apartment tenant and suddenly becoming a hotel owner, that before we could kind of like complain to the landlord that things weren't working, complain to our administration. At [previous high school] we had something like ten vice principals and it was crazy. It was like there was a whole cohort of people that you could kind of lay responsibility on and suddenly at a small school there's one principal and two vice principals and a lot of teacher decision-making spaces.

With teachers assuming greater decision-making responsibility at the pilot school, they needed tools to assist with democratizing collective processes. When teachers knew that their voice was included in decisions, they were more willing to accept greater accountability. High school teacher Michelle mentioned that the Adaptive Schools training professionalized interactions between staff and provided structures for interactions within the context of school governance. She shared that "I think it still is really essential for educators and especially leaders to go through [the training] because being a teacher leader is very different than being a teacher. It's totally different than just being in your classroom." Interviewees also highlighted union trainings and other professional development that provided additional mechanisms to promote teachers' voice and authority in site decision-making. School coordinator Rosalie elaborated on the impact of school improvement protocols on teachers' role in school governance:

The process map has really helped. Using process maps for how we're going to make decisions and really mapping out and using that tool, because we were trained in that tool and now everyone knows, or have a basic understanding around that, using a diver diagram to articulate what are the barriers and what are we doing to address some of the barriers to meet our goals has been helpful and making everyone's work transparent and also connected. And the Fishbone diagram, also trying to figure out what's the root cause of some of the issues we're having. I think those protocols have been helpful. We do the "five whys" too that have been helpful. So engaging people in these problem-solving protocols has helped nurture collective leadership.

When the operations meeting was observed, administrators and teachers proposed using process maps and referred to previous school improvement tools that had been implemented. During a faculty professional development, teachers' voice was fostered through breaking into small groups to problem-solve and sharing conclusions with the larger group. At the School Governing Council and Leadership Team meetings, the Fist to Five protocol for arriving at consensus was explained to new members and utilized to ensure that all participants were included in the decision. The Fist to Five protocol stimulates dialogue by asking those who are not satisfied with a proposed policy to explain their objection and provide alternative solutions. When the group has heard the reasoning behind that person's objection, they can engage in collective problem-solving to attempt to arrive at a decision that will be amenable to all stakeholders. Other interviewees mentioned check-ins and community circles as additional protocols that promote a democratic decision-making culture built on strong relationships of trust. One teacher shared that seeing others willing to be vulnerable made her more willing to take risks in her professional life and increase her level of participation in school-level decisions with colleagues who would support her. Teachers have also been able to shape decision-making structures at the research site by spearheading the creation of a social justice checklist which is referred to when developing course content that aligns with the school vision. When asked what educators can do at other schools who are looking to implement a more significant teacher role in school-level decisions, elementary teacher Kira replied:

I think the biggest is meeting structures with routines of practice that are respectful and if you don't have those structures or those decision-making protocols, refine them and then figure out what to do if there's conflict if they're not agreed upon because that's where the breakdowns happen. And then I think the other big piece is just aligning the vision and mission, getting everybody on the same page. It's really important because then people are going into those different decision-making structures and it becomes easy if everyone at least has a baseline understanding of what the goals are.

Other interviewees echoed these concerns, expressing the need for collectively constructing and enforcing norms on conflict resolution, equitable participation in decision-making dialogue and delegating responsibilities. While the EWA and other governing documents delineate the meeting structures where school governance occurs, the protocols are what determine how that governance occurs and are a major influence in establishing what the long-term role of teachers within decision-making will be in practice. The protocols that facilitate horizontal decision-making are dynamic and interviewees expressed that there is a process of trial and error in which the staff identifies the appropriate tools for particular situations. Another common point that was emphasized was the need for a clear agenda and objectives that drive the decision-making process. Teachers have an equal role in setting and revising agendas which shape priorities and provide a roadmap for how policies and practices will be developed.

When clear protocols are not in place, this can be detrimental to teachers' role in school governance because decision-making processes are not clearly defined. Middle school teacher Jessica spoke about how lack of clarity on protocols can lead to teachers being unsure of how to engage with decision-making structures:

There are other instances where things are not transparent, things happen and then there is a lot of surprise and pushback from the teachers of like, "How did this decision get made? Who was consulted about this? Why is this process so unclear or we're running into the same problems year after year after year, even though we've given feedback about things?" So, one of those examples would be how we do the matrix at our school. That's kind of one of our big projects right now that there is not really a set protocol or cemented process that has been followed. So, it has resulted in a lot of chaos in the first couple weeks of school as schedules get settled and then also as we start our seminar program. I don't know if you're aware it's kind of like our extra elective class and issues with class size and kids taking the same class over and over again. There's just no protocol for that. And even though we brought this up every year, there hasn't really been any administrative change on that end. So now it's, again, teachers kind of organizing and trying to develop these processes to help the situation.

When teachers saw that there was not a structure in place that ensured their authority in the school-level decision, they collectively spoke up and addressed the issue. With their equal role on the Leadership and Operations Teams, teachers have forums where they can problem-solve with administrators when deficits in the decision-making protocols arise. Teachers shared that the protocols provide transparency and, once accustomed to using them collaboratively, it is evident when changes are required to maximize educator decision-making role in relation to other actors.

Targeted distribution of resources

Structured time for collaborative leadership. Numerous interviewees stressed the importance of allocating sufficient time throughout the work week for teachers to fully realize the potential of their decision-making role. This structured time can take the form of regular, calendared after school meetings, embedded time during the teaching day or release days with substitutes covered through line items in the school budget. Middle school teacher Jessica indicated the resources that support the teachers' role in school-level decisions:

Leads meet twice a month, operations meet once a month. Division chairs used to meet an additional once a month on top of that. Each department meets within their own den and departments meet, it varies by group, but all of these teacher-centric spaces are spaces where we talk about logistics, vision, concerns and then a lot of things will arise from those meetings. And then things get prioritized of what is going to be addressed and who's going to delegate what kind of projects to each other. And so, these meetings are one type of structure that we have. Release days are another way, mostly for dens and departments. Our release days are centered around instruction....We get a sub and then all of the people in that team get to meet on campus for that day to collaborate.

The number of decision-making spaces with equal teacher voice and authority and the frequency of such meetings provides a positive feedback loop characterized by one group reinforcing the work of another group and teachers' role within that process. Regular calendared meetings allow groups to assign tasks between meetings and plan agendas ahead of time to support

implementation of collective decisions. Release days provide teachers the time needed to engage in deeper dialogue around a particular topic or problem which is more likely to yield solutions that have been collectively refined. When time is allocated in a way that promotes teachers' voice in tackling school-level issues, teachers are more invested in the implementation of a plan that they were given the space to design. While there is often no other option and teachers add school governance responsibilities on top of their teaching duties for the day, ideally teachers have substitutes which allows them to focus their energy on decision-making within the areas of collective autonomy. Interviewees emphasized that administration plays a significant role in making times for collaboration a priority in the schedule and the budget if monetary costs are associated. Teachers also have the power to advocate for resources needed to support their role within school governance, a phenomenon that was evident in the School Governing Council and Leadership Team meetings that were observed when additional professional development time for collaboration on school-level decisions was clearly expressed as a priority. Middle school teacher Willa spoke about the teachers' ability to shape decision-making structures:

Our division really needed the space. We felt that we didn't have any time to collaborate, like the way that the school was structured wasn't really structured to support the divisions, so we didn't really have a lot of that, but we're like, "We need time for us to collaborate, we need time for us to talk about students and talk about what we can do." So, I think our admin wasn't really involved at first with us, they were just kind of like, "Figure it out. Do it." There was no support. And they kind of kept telling us it wasn't going to happen but eventually we kept pushing. We kept writing proposals. We were able to figure out a way to get our common planning time so the divisions would get some collaboration time during the school day. So, we were able to get common planning time as a result of that constant like, "We're not getting...we're not able to support our students."

Teachers were able to use their collaborative and organizing abilities to push for changes in the master schedule that would provide the time they knew they needed to collectively address student needs. The division identified the problem and worked together to bring their power to

bear and effect a change. Teachers' role within decision-making is dynamic and can erode over time if leaders become complacent with the status quo and do not seek to continually refine practices to adapt to changing environments, personnel, students and families. In this case, teachers were persistent with their advocacy until they eventually achieved their objective. Interviewees also shared the example of the EWA process as one in which teachers advocated for professional development time dedicated to clarifying and refining proposals before any votes or decisions occur. Middle school teacher Jessica explained how the teachers' ability to shape release time supported their influence over school practices:

Last year, after [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] was repealed or they weren't accepting any new applications, we hit this moment where it was like "What is the point of education, especially for our demographic of student if there's not even a pathway for them to receive financial aid to be able to go to universities? So, if the door is closed and there is no handle, what is the point?" Like we can't just be like, "Oh being college-ready is how you're going to make your mark as a successful student." So we started asking a lot of questions out of socio-political necessity of, "What is the point of what all of this is about?" I happened to be facilitating lead meetings and release days that month. And so when we took a release day to discuss a lot of the big vision stuff, one of the huge things that we had discussions around is, "What does a social justice classroom look like?" and "What is the role of education given our socio-political climate?" So, I made the agenda for the PD which is basically helping the lead teachers to think through some of these questions and to think about how do we mobilize our school? What do our PDs look like from here? What is supposed to be our instructional focus in relation to all these things and we decided to do a lot of work and read different things about what it means to actually develop anti-racist curriculum and multicultural classrooms. And we ended up doing an entire year's worth of instructional focus PD around learning about both of those things.

When teachers at the research site encountered a significant obstacle to implementing the school's vision that they had an equal voice in determining, they had the space that release time provided to collectively problem-solve. With their limited professional development time, teachers decided to prioritize developing curriculum to address the issue with their students. Teachers had the autonomy to adapt agendas for release time on the fly to accommodate

changing needs. Other interviewees attributed the freedom to innovate to administrator support of the educator-run model, knowing that trusting teachers to apply professional expertise to tackle school issues would yield the best possible outcomes. Through the Leadership Team, teachers have the ability to make decisions about which professional development release time spaces are needed based on effectiveness and alignment with school goals. When reflecting on the Leadership Team's ability to allocate release time, elementary school teacher Kira remarked that "if you don't give people time to sit on a committee and participate, they won't do it. But what [blocking off time to do committee work during release time] did, it opened up space for everybody at the school to sit on a committee, participate because we were given time to do it." Leads also get release days to alleviate pressures on their time due to their additional commitments. Special education teacher Julia commented on the relationship between release time within the school day and teachers' participation in school-level decisions:

There's a little bit of tension, I think, with people who maybe have been around for a long time or who are more traditional in their approach and I guess took this job for slightly different reasons and then feel like so much is being expected of them, like they're not necessarily interested in being involved beyond their own classroom walls. And that can create a little bit of tension but I think even those teachers can be brought into the fold if effective professional development is offered during school hours that allows them to feel like they can engage with some of the school wide goals without working extra hours.

The research site features multiple tiers of engagement in school governance for teachers. Those who are willing and able to take on additional responsibilities can be lead teachers, participate in committees or positions within the union structure. Release time allows all teachers to have a role in developing school-level policies, regardless of their ability to dedicate additional hours beyond the school day to this endeavor. Interviewees noted that lack of release time with the educator-run model risks burning out teachers who have finite energy to dedicate to school governance. Jessica elaborated on this concern:

It really feels like working two full-time jobs. Not only do we have our hours in the classroom and then all of that extra time that comes with it, of lesson planning and grading and all of that kind of stuff, but we also then have these meetings that we have to attend, which take up additional time and then in addition to those meetings, there's also outside work that gets put into creating agendas or preparing for PDs. If you take on any of these other delegated projects like matrix proposal or class reduction or transparency around the budget, social emotional support for middle school, intervention, all of these things are then extra time that you also do outside. If for some reason, I was unable now, like have some horrible accident, can't come to work anymore and someone has to take over all my responsibilities, I feel like it would be unfair to ask someone to do all the things that I'm doing because this is not sustainable for a person to hold this many roles and to be asked to do however many things it is that I'm doing. So I think because there is very limited amount of time and people to carry all of the work that it can feel very unsustainable, that there's always like a thousand things happening at the same time....It's still unsustainable to have teachers basically run schools and also be part-time admin with no additional release time. I think ideally the lead teacher should be in the classroom half the time and then have the other half of our working hours to do lead work and to support our department, to be able to coach them, go observe other teachers.

Jessica asserts that significant teacher role in site decision-making without commensurate release time allocated for governance responsibilities limits the pool of those with the capacity to participate as school leaders. With the multiple initiatives that the site engages in at any one time, there is a need for teachers to staff committees and lead professional development. If release time is not provided during work hours for school governance work, Jessica describes the phenomenon of only select teachers being able to take on additional work which results in individuals sometimes assuming more responsibilities than they can sustain in the long-term. While the school has been able to provide release time to mitigate some of the challenges associated with a greater teacher role in decision-making, the budget is constantly in flux and prioritizing this allocation of resources is an area that sees continual advocacy. The lead teacher job description notes that “we remain committed to the principle of teacher leadership and the effort needed to secure the time and resources required to support this new role.” Budget levels vary from year to year based on grants and funding from the state and federal government and

therefore the dialogue around use of release time will look different depending on the parameters imposed by available resources.

Monetary stipends. Teachers on the Leadership Team receive a stipend which according to their job description, is “paid in the spring to offset the costs of their year-round planning and professional development activities, including work during the months of July and August” although “expectations are tempered” due to the monetary amount not being commensurate with the additional work involved with site governance responsibilities. Interviewees noted that the monetary stipend is a contributing factor to their ability to sustainably invest additional time and energy into their school leadership work without it being a principal motivator. When asked about how to alleviate obstacles to greater teacher role in site decision-making such as lack of release time to support school governance responsibilities, elementary school teacher Juliana had the following response:

“We get a stipend which maybe that’s going to make me happy when I get the check for all time I spent. We get a stipend but I also feel intrinsically motivated, I feel like I’m a part of something and that it is hard right now and I’m adjusting to it. But it’s for the greater good...I just think that, at the end of the day, when you’re part of something like this, you just kind of have to come to terms with the fact that you’re going to be putting in a lot of time. But for me it’s worth it, it’s worth my time because I feel like I’m creating positive change in a very real way, day to day, every day. Not just like with my kids but on the macro level.”

Juliana recognizes that the amount of additional work she has invested into her leadership role at the school is partially compensated by the monetary stipend but more importantly by the results that collective work has yielded at the site level. This is consistent with statements from other interviewees that highlighted the value of effecting change on a greater scale that is a product of teachers assuming more significant decision-making roles. When taking the sustainability of the educator-run school governance model into account, the monetary stipend was emphasized by

interviewees as a critical element to incentivizing teachers to continue taking on greater leadership responsibilities, especially considering the multitude of competing priorities in their professional and personal lives.

Administrators supporting teachers' role in site decision-making.

Access to information. One of Dahl's (1989) key criteria for structures that facilitate equal voice and authority in democratic decision-making is access to information. Even with structures in place such as representative and rotating leadership and protocols for reaching consensus, if some have access to sensitive information due to the nature of their role (such as an administrator) and others do not, decision-making will not be equal and democratic. When the Operations Team meeting at the research site was observed, the administrator present was transparent about data relating to teacher coverage of peer classrooms, answered clarifying questions and provided parameters based on the school budget. The teachers present were able to participate as equal actors in decision-making because they were on equal standing with administrators, considering that everyone was party to the same information. The structure of access to information that supports teachers' role in site decision-making is dependent on administrators who are willing to lead with and not over the staff of the school. As the gatekeepers of information and without formal structures for providing access, administrators have discretion as to the extent to which they choose to share information with the staff. Elementary school teacher Kira spoke about how access to information affects teachers' role in school governance:

There was a decision about a teacher who got let go of at the school. It was her first year as a teacher. She was an older teacher, but it was just her first year as a teacher. Teacher-leaders had a say in making that decision but some of us who weren't part of the Leadership Team didn't agree with it, so it's like as well as we want systems to work, there will always be moments where not everyone is being represented....There are things that we vote on democratically, but I think with

staffing, that's when people are let go of or whatever and then oftentimes it's like those folks who are not in those conversations don't know all the ins and outs of what's going on. But we can't have access to all that information because it's people's personal, professional records. But I think those are the times that it felt the most challenging to me as a participant on the ground.

Lead teachers were able to make a staffing decision based on sensitive information provided that was not shared with all educators on staff. At a school with a traditional governance model, this decision would have been exclusively within the purview of administration. The Leadership Team structure is a space where teachers take on additional responsibilities and the corresponding greater voice in school governance that would not be possible without access to information. Other teachers who are not on the Leadership Team may critique decisions because they do not have the same access to sensitive personnel data that influenced the final consensus of the decision-making body. Kira expresses that the advantages to a representative leadership model in which certain teachers have access to information that provides them with an equal role in decision-making outweigh the disadvantages of withholding the information from other teachers and making the decision-making process less participatory.

When engaging in governance around the school budget, the complexity of the information involved can make it so that administrators have outsized influence in decision-making due to their greater familiarity with the technical language, procedures and rules provided by the district. This can be alleviated by making a conscious effort to democratize the process by educating the staff about the ins and outs of the budget. Principal Lucia shared the challenges of this approach:

We create a new process for looking and really saying, "This is what the students are saying, this is what the parents or the teachers and how do we balance all of that out? And what data are we looking at?" You know, I can honestly say it's taken so many years for people in our School Governing [Council] to be able to look at the budget and have some really good questions but not about "Well, is this it or is there some other money that we don't know about or how is this going

to happen?" But rather just about the money itself or "Well, when we do get more what are we gonna do with that? And are we going to follow the same process? Like the questions are more about, "So what's next and how do we work with what we have?" rather than almost questioning whether or not this is the real budget. Like this last SGC. So I'm like, "yeah, okay everyone gets it," like they're using the numbers of the codes and I know that when we do the next update I'm going to have a lot to update, but they'll have this frame of reference and some of the people on our SGC this year, they did it before, so there's also this institutional memory of "Yeah, that's right. We do this every year."

Lucia describes the process of going from teachers without access to technical information being skeptical of the integrity of budgets presented to them to teachers fully versed in complex budget criteria being equal and active participants in determining the final composition of the budget. The principal led the budgeting process but had measures in place to mitigate as much as possible any inequality in decision-making role due to discrepancies in technical knowledge or access to information.

Administrators sharing decision-making authority. Principal Lucia's interest in democratizing the budget allocation process by building the capacity of stakeholders to wield the technical knowledge and skills needed to act as equal participants is reflective of a larger phenomenon of administrators at the research site facilitating a significant teacher role in school-level decision-making, something that interviewees noted has been in place as a core value since the founding of the school. Although teacher decision-making role is codified in governing documents, administrators who are not supporters of shared leadership have the power to diminish teachers' participation in school governance by not implementing structures with fidelity. Teachers and administrators remarked that the administration believes in and supports the teachers' role in decision-making within the collective autonomies in the Elect-to-Work Agreement. When decision-making meetings at the school were observed, this was evident as administrators served as co-facilitators who sought to uplift teachers' voice. For example, during

the faculty professional development, significantly more time was allocated for clarifying questions and teachers' collective problem-solving than administrator presentation time. While administrators at the Leadership and Operations Team meetings were able to provide a unique birds' eye perspective on whole school and whole campus operations drawn from their daily job responsibilities, their opinion was not privileged over those who work primarily in the classroom. High school teacher Michelle elaborated on this meeting dynamic:

On [the Operations Team], [VP] is really the one admin who's regularly there and then everything else is really coming from the teachers and she really would always function much more like a facilitator and somebody who would a) facilitate b) provide information and then c) kind of help make things happen. So, for the most part it really seemed like, I always felt that the decisions were really coming from the teachers and not the other way around.

This description is consistent with the shared leadership philosophy of power with, not over. Instead of the traditional dynamic in which teachers implement decisions imposed from above, the hierarchy is flipped and administrators are tasked with facilitating the democratic decision-making process. Administrators also share the responsibility of holding staff accountable for implementing collective decisions and seek resources when needed to help with following through on shared commitments. Teachers commented that stepping into this role can be a difficult transition for new principals who are not accustomed to the educator-run school governance model. Once on board, however, administrators are a powerful force for strengthening teachers' role in school-level decision-making. "It's the culture that is created by the administrators, that you matter, your voice matters," said elementary school teacher Juliana. Principal Lucia spoke about how she nurtures this culture at the research site:

I had been an assistant principal and a principal at other schools before coming here and that's kind of how I always try to do things. And why I have been able to mobilize or set some things up because I didn't see leadership or formal leadership as, "Oh, I'm the one making all the decisions or the one who has to do everything but rather that everyone has a role to play and it's really much more rewarding and

best when it's the community and everyone's invested and they're doing the work, they own the work, not you.” Like it shouldn't be with me. So, I feel that it aligned well, but I think it's here that I've learned through iterations of what that looks like. The power that comes from the complexity of it, just the work that it takes to really make it happen, the trust that is required from both sides.

When a principal views leadership in this way and works to actualize this vision, trust is built with the teaching staff and effective collective decision-making can occur. Instead of focusing on wresting power from administrators who fear giving up control, teachers can expend energy on collaboration with decision-making roles on a level playing field. One mechanism for putting this philosophy into action is through the selection of individuals for formal leadership positions. Lucia explained that instead of serving as the chair of the School Governing Council as was traditionally the role of the principal at the research site, she makes an effort to find other stakeholders such as parents, students or teachers for this position. This empowers those serving in this role and also makes decisions more horizontal as the principal continues to be a strong voice in the conversation but without a formal title as chair that would set her above the rest of those on the SGC. Lucia described another way in which her values on collective leadership impact teachers' role in school governance:

You have to be humble and just know that you don't have all the answers and I think that's easier, maybe harder for others. Like for me, I have no problem saying that I don't know everything, that I don't know enough, that I need help but we cannot do this, I can't do this alone nor can it be only on my shoulders to do such a big mission. I'm fine with that vulnerability and also the humility, you know, I tend to approach it from a very humble kind of like, "Okay, what am I here to learn from you?"...I've learned to step back, ask questions just like the people who love to ask questions do. Or the people who love to connect with bigger picture do and the people who think about how everybody's feeling....I think in the end, time and time again, I feel like everything ends up being so much better. So much richer and just bigger than I could have possibly imagined but it's in the collective that's the power and I see it with our families, with our students, just everywhere.

By facilitating the participation of other stakeholders in the decision-making process, Lucia plays to the strengths of individuals and yields an outcome that is superior to that which she could achieve with a more centralized leadership model. She notes that it takes confidence in oneself as a leader to be comfortable promoting equal voice and authority in school governance for teachers at the site. The day-to-day decision-making process is not always smooth and leaders must be prepared to embrace the turbulence that accompanies democratic dialogue and problem-solving, knowing that this will provide sustainability in the long-term through greater stakeholder commitment to seeing through collective agreements.

Administrators as buffer with district. Interviewees described situations when teachers were in favor of a particular course of action, but district administrators sought to overrule the site decision. In cases like this, the school's administrators can defer to the district's preference or be advocates for implementing the decision made through the democratic process at the site. If site administrators are not prepared to put themselves in the sometimes precarious position of pushing for an approach that contradicts the wishes of superiors in district administration, this can be a significant impediment to teachers' role in decision-making at the site level. Special educator teacher Julia spoke to the importance of teachers knowing that school administrators will champion their collective decisions at the district level:

When I was UTLA rep, talking to people at other pilot schools, it was frustrating because sometimes they feel like they grew too fast. And principals don't really understand the way they work. Principals don't understand the autonomies or sometimes I think principals have to push back on the district and they don't want to push back on their boss. And so that goes back to having strong leadership because yeah like you're pushing back and I know there's times when [former principal]'s had to push back with the district, [current principal]'s had to push back with the district. I think sometimes some principals don't do that or it's too much work.

Julia highlights the critical role that principals play in choosing to respect and, if necessary, defend the autonomies granted by the pilot school agreement concerning teachers' participation in school-level decision-making. Even if the teaching staff is well-versed in their rights and responsibilities concerning school governance, there are limits to the voice and authority that can be exercised when administrators serve as obstacles that must be overcome. Instead of concentrating on developing and implementing practices that meet the needs of students, teachers must exert energy in defending their role in decision-making and the collective decisions that are in dispute. High school teacher Michelle spoke about the unique role that principals play in either supporting or hindering democratic decision-making at their site through the nature of their interactions with superiors at the district:

I think that the other piece to it too is that you really have to have the right leadership and when it comes to admin because you're talking about people who are put into this role of being leaders, being guides that are expected by a higher entity to play one role but expected to play a different role at their school site. They're very much like the Jan Brady of the situation, they're just so stuck in the middle. And you know to me, that piece is super crucial because you have to have it a group of people who are who are supportive, who are competent. But also who are ego-less, who understand how to push back on the top and if necessary but also kind of push back here as well. I just feel like it's such a fine line that they have to walk. It's really kind of extraordinary. And you really do have to have a certain temperament for it.

The principal at an educator-run school must be willing to engage in shared leadership at the site level and defend collective decisions at the district level. If the principal refrains from taking a risky stance with district leadership, site staff can lose faith in the decision-making process and withdraw from participating. Thus, the critical importance of administrators who believe in a significant teacher role in decision-making and act upon this conviction by championing positions collectively developed at the site, even in the face of powerful opposition. This is made

easier knowing that you have the force of other stakeholders behind you, as principal Lucia explains:

I always tell people I feel like teachers and students always made me braver because definitely I'm the formal leader, the face or representative of the school in certain settings, but I feel the support of my teachers and the families and the students right behind me. So, I always feel like I can speak with authority about things not because that's how I see things, there's only my opinion. But because I'm echoing the processes we put in place, the voices that we all represent including mine, but not only mine.

When site administrators have faith in collective decision-making processes and that sentiment is shared by other participants, a solid foundation is built that can be leveraged when interacting with district leadership. Accordingly, the teachers' role in site decision-making is directly intertwined with their administrator's ability to get behind and articulate shared leadership in which voice and authority are equally distributed.

In some situations when negotiation must occur with the district or other sites within their complex, teachers' hands are tied with implementing collective priorities because their official roles do not include interfacing with other organizations. Middle school teacher Willa commented on teachers encountering difficulties finding enough classroom space for the courses that had been selected by decision-making bodies:

We also have a problem of creating or having enough classes for all of the classes being taught. So teachers have to share rooms and they're also stuck up in a little library room that is pretty inconvenient to have out there. So, it's also the issue of dealing with space [complex]-wide and I feel like there hasn't been an actual solution to that. We had this issue of having to travel or not having enough classes for all of the courses since last year, I think. So, at this point, what can leads do about that? That feels like a very structural problem that admin might need to figure out because they deal with the other schools or that they need to figure out with the district, but the district doesn't necessarily listen to admin all the time. So certain things, it's kind of hard. So, we have to problem solve around things like that.

In this instance, teachers are reliant on the ability of administrators to arrive at acceptable solutions with district representatives or staff at other sites within the shared school complex. This can be detrimental to teachers' role in school governance as they are not direct parties to negotiations and while their collective position on the matter is represented by administrators, their voice and authority is diminished through second-hand participation in a school-level decision.

Role of the teachers' union. Interviewees shared that some leaders within the teachers' union, UTLA, were initially skeptical of pilot schools because there existed the possibility of an erosion of collective bargaining rights due to language in the MOU that allowed site staff to override contract language within the areas of collective autonomy during the EWA process. High school teacher Jacob stated that he and other teachers decided to leave their large comprehensive schools and come to the research site in the hopes of going “into the lion's mouth and see it for ourselves and see if we can make it work or for us, for parents, for students and for this budding social justice movement that you now see really coming to fruition in UTLA.” Many teacher interviewees reported that they had been UTLA chapter chairs at previous schools and were able to apply their knowledge and experience to strengthening the teachers' role in decision-making at the research site. Teachers at the school are also active in the union on a larger, district-wide scale, something that was at the front of the minds of many as the interviews occurred shortly before UTLA's historic strike in January 2019.

When the School Governing Council meeting was observed, elementary school teacher Emma, the site's designated liaison between the union and parent leaders, spoke about the need for stakeholder groups to collaborate on defending the autonomies that the research site exercises that are also pillars of a community school (Maier et al., 2017). Since the teachers' contract

demands were directed at bringing about “the schools that students deserve”, the strike served as a vehicle to defend existing union schools with shared leadership and scale this model out to more schools within the district in partnership with families and community allies. High school teacher Callie shared that educators were able to work in their capacity as union members in collaboration with parents, students and a local organization to develop a protocol for how the research site could function as a community school. The union structure also provides UTLA chapter chairs with another formal space to engage with administrators in collective problem-solving as equal partners.

Vice-principal Qiana also emphasized the critical role of the union to “drive and inform things that teachers want to work on” which can occur when site priorities are aligned with the larger goals of UTLA. Middle school teacher Willa explained the union’s function in providing spaces for education of teachers and input into decision-making:

The other thing about being teacher-powered, what I think really helps is we also have a really strong union. So, if there's an issue of admin doing something weird or we're not really clear why they're doing things, we have these conversations in other spaces, not only in the lead space. And then teachers problem solve or they think about like, "Why? Why is this happening?" or how there's always a way for teachers to not stay quiet about things. I think we always continue engaging our admin with things and our admin is generally pretty good about listening. So, I think even if we were to get a brand new admin who was a lot more strict, there would probably be a lot of pushback. And not only in the lead space, but in our department space, we'd have a conversation around it, probably in our union space, our division spaces, so we're sort of not just allowing things to happen to us.

Willa highlights the importance of multiple spaces that support engagement with administration and other stakeholders in governance around school-level collective autonomies including and particularly the union space. When meeting with fellow union members, there is no hierarchy with rights or privileges as everyone is equally protected by contract provisions. Teachers can be transparent with each other without fear of reprisal. An environment is nurtured that is conducive

to assisting one another based on individual strengths and experience with prior relevant issues. After hashing out the problem within the union meeting, teachers are prepared to enter other decision-making spaces with a collective response borne out of honest and critical dialogue.

Some of the issues that teachers reported working through in the union space before tackling in other decision-making bodies are internal displacement when teachers are bumped from their current position and need to find a new position within the school, supporting the development of new teachers, yearly revisiting of the EWA and pushback against the district's Breakfast in the Classroom program. Special education teacher Julia describes the nature of the union's role in supporting teachers' voice in opposition to the Breakfast in the Classroom program:

Breakfast in the Classroom for a while was something that was causing a lot of lost instructional time during the end of the first period of each day. And it was a big fight with the school district around how we were going to implement Breakfast in the Classroom and for a while it was something that we were forced to do. We said we weren't going to do it and we talked to the administration, we had union meetings where we talked just amongst ourselves and ultimately what we came up with, well we set some conditions, like we didn't want students to be doing basically unpaid labor, carting food around when that's not their job and again, it's more lost instructional time if you have certain kids that leave class earlier to go get carts or bring back carts or they lose their break time and so that was one condition and we were negotiating and ultimately we said, "All right, well if adults bring the carts and drop them off, we'll let the last five minutes of class be a grab and go and the students will take the food with them to nutrition rather than spending the last 15 minutes of class." We're supposed to let them take the food and then keep teaching which for various reasons, for most classes just really doesn't work. And so basically the teachers forced a compromise and the district was very upset about this. But ultimately, they went along with it. And most recently, they allowed us, I guess you could say, to no longer do Breakfast in the Classroom at all, mainly because they're getting so much pushback all across the entire district around it over issues of cafeteria staff's working conditions and the amount of food waste and obviously less instructional time. But I do think it's not because we were a pilot school that we were able to push back, it's because we were an organized school. Like any school could have had a union meeting and any school could have made decisions to resist the directive of the district.

Julia and other interviewees attributed the success of the teachers' campaign to end Breakfast in the Classroom to their ability to develop strategy within union spaces before engaging with district administration as well as seeking allies with other workers as union members. Talking points were collectively formulated within union meetings that chapter chairs later used in meetings with district higher-ups as representatives for the rest of the staff. Teachers felt safe pushing back against a district directive because they knew they had protections in their contract and the backing of their fellow union members. And staff at other schools that share the campus and also shared opposition to the Breakfast in the Classroom program acknowledged that it was the strong union culture and structures at the research site that positioned them to be the leaders in this campaign.

Teachers also commented that union staff with pilot school expertise were a valuable resource when encountering issues specific to their site with the collective autonomies. They are able to provide advice and trainings based on the decision-making roles that they have observed teachers exercising at other pilot schools. Even though pilot, educator-run schools are a small part of the larger UTLA movement, they represent the aspirational aims of the larger teaching body who seek to have a greater voice in school and district-level decisions. Therefore, the union is invested in defending teachers' rights and role in governance in pilot schools as setbacks in these spaces would represent a step backward for the rest of the membership throughout the district.

Interviewees also observed that the union's impact on teachers' role in school governance can sometimes be detrimental. For example, the teachers wanted to implement a new evaluation system for themselves that more closely reflected the school's vision. The district's response was that the evaluation system developed at the site could be supplemental to the existing evaluation

system codified in the contract but could not replace it. Teachers at the school shared their displeasure with this result as a great amount of effort had gone into the design of the new evaluation system but teachers decided to abandon it due to the additional time it would take to implement that would take away from other collective priorities. In this case, the contract served as an obstacle to the teachers being able to obtain their preferred outcome because it establishes criteria that were overly prescriptive for the purposes of the school's teachers. This runs counter to the dominant narrative from interviewees of the union collective bargaining agreement serving as a structure that supported their role in site decision-making.

Small, span school. Interviewees emphasized the size and nature of the school itself as a factor that contributes to the strength of the educator-run governance model. High school teacher Jacob spoke about the benefits of being a smaller school in comparison to traditional schools in LAUSD:

The sheer size of the school, so meaning its smallness really contributes to, I think, being a site that lends itself to organizing happening relatively smoothly. At [previous school], we were a staff that was like two hundred teachers and it was year-round, so there were always two thirds on track at one time. So, a third of the workforce was leaving and a third was coming. And so, it was just like being a part of a city. And it was hard to organize that group.

Knowing colleagues more intimately allows teachers to collaborate on a deeper level and makes them more willing to put themselves in vulnerable situations that require a greater degree of trust such as entering into conflict with the district over a collective decision. Conversely, the small size of the staff requires a greater level of dedication from teachers as more responsibilities are spread over fewer individuals. The research site is also distinct from many other pilot schools as a span school which encompasses the TK-12 grade levels. Elementary school teacher Juliana explained how her exposure to the mindset of middle and high school teachers at the school inspired her to change how she approaches curricular decision-making:

I think what happens a lot of times, at least in elementary, teachers are not willing to take those risks and also because we're working class and because we're women. I think a lot about that, about "Why is it that we don't push back?" And here, I'm seeing K-12 and I see how different the middle and high school teachers are and how they say, "No, we're not going to do this." And I'm shocked because we would never, it was always like, "Ok, I guess, we're all stressed out but we're gonna do it." Like the district rolled out ELD curriculum and all this stuff to elementary schools specifically and the high school teachers were like, "Well, why didn't you guys say no? You can say no." And that to me was a revelation. Oh, we can say "No." We can say, "This is too much."

Juliana views the span nature of the school as a contributing factor to teachers overcoming doubts about being active within school governance, especially in opposition to mandates that are being imposed from the district level. If someone was at an elementary school and is not connected to secondary teachers, they might never be aware of how staff at other schools would approach an issue. Middle school teacher Iris also addressed how the span school allows teachers to take a more holistic perspective when engaged in school governance, saying that "what we're doing is we're basically growing a whole bunch of teachers who all know what it means to try to engage in decision-making with pretty different, like a K-12 structure, for example, like people whose student needs are pretty different to yours and both are trying to sort of see that whole picture." She expressed that everyone benefits from having access to a more diverse range of experiences when weighing the pros and cons of a particular decision, something that greater familiarity with other staff through the small size of the school provides in tandem with the span model.

University-assisted. The partnership between the school and its partner university has contributed to a greater teacher role in site decision-making. Through the relationship with the university, the school has received grants that provide release time for professional development, access to leadership trainings and research that reinforces successful practices and provides fresh perspectives to inform improvement cycles. As a teaching school partnered with the university,

the research site receives a regular influx of student teachers in credential and master's programs who are introduced to the educator-run model and integrated into decision-making around the collective autonomies. When student teachers continue on as permanent teachers at the school, they are ready to participate as equals in site decision-making with the experience gained during their credential program. Interviewees also stressed the benefit of the social justice mission of the education department at the partner university aligning with the school's vision. Prospective teachers who are attracted to the partner university's mission can make for good fits at the research site because they are able to assimilate with the culture of the school due shared values that hold collective action to address inequities in high esteem.

The institutional credibility of the partner university also supports the sustainability of the teachers' role in decision-making at the school. Middle school teacher Iris detailed the nuance of this relationship:

[The partner university] is a powerful partner and another one of the reasons why I signed onto this was because I knew that I'd had the experience of the district coming in and just unilaterally sweeping away work that people had done together. And so one thing I said to myself when I got this job was if there's one institution in this city that L.A. Unified is not going to screw with, it's [the partner university] and I felt like it gave us the power to actually see something through and know that in three years or five years, I'm not going to just come through and say, "Well your test scores aren't high enough, so..."

Teachers interested in participating in the educator-run governance model are more likely to choose to leave their previous school in LAUSD and come to the research site if they know that their decision-making role will be secure. While the relationship with the partner university is not the only factor in ensuring the continuity of horizontal leadership, it is a key element of attracting and retaining teachers who have a passion for participating in democratic decision-making in their workplace, especially those that have had negative experiences at previous sites. As other interviewees expressed, there are bumps along the road when people engage in

processes that are new and sometimes messy and therefore it is important to have an institutional partner who will defend the models in place using its capacities for research and advocacy. High school teacher Jacob described another instance when the partner university was a force in protecting teacher decision-making authority over the collective autonomies:

We have our own common assessments and we're the only pilot school in L.A. Unified that gives our own common assessments. And that's one of the original pilot school autonomies. Other pilot schools made attempts at creating their own common assessments but realized it was too hard and it took too much time for something that really didn't resonate with them. And so, they ended up choosing using the district's common assessments. So we got pushback from the district because our common assessment data was appearing on whatever dashboard that our admin would see at these big meetings where administrators are basically kind of shamed into trying to drive up test scores, where various schools' data are public and published in the space where it's district higher ups and all principals and vice principals. So that was a situation where [the partner university] really had to help us make our assessments feel more almost legitimate. Their director of research started writing a lot of reports that she would share with L.A. Unified that would show the validity of our homegrown assessments. So that seemed to help get the district off of our back for the time being.

Teachers wanted to develop their own assessments to more accurately determine how students were achieving in relation to the metrics and goals that they had collectively established. When this practice was put in jeopardy, teachers were able to lean on the support of the partner university to help with advocating with the district on the merits of their approach. Without the partner university, the research site might have gone the route of other pilot schools that are not university-assisted and adopted the district's common assessments. Other interviewees gave examples of the partner university defending the collective teacher autonomies found in governing documents with the district when they came into conflict with policies that were being mandated districtwide. They shared that the university has resources at its disposal such as experts and lawyers that can balance the scales during a power struggle and assist in preserving site policies that arise out of collective decision-making.

Improvement science. One of the areas that the partner university has been able to support teachers' role in decision-making is through implementing improvement science at the site. At the research site, improvement science often takes the form of collectively revisiting the mission and vision of the school and refining practices to be in alignment with shared goals. Going through this process creates a space where teachers are empowered to identify areas of need and design practices to further the aims that have been established. Teachers then implement the plan and have regular check-ins to assess progress and develop appropriate next steps. The cycle is continuous and teachers are the principal drivers of the process within their professional learning communities of departments, dens and divisions. During the Leadership Team meeting that was observed, concerns were expressed about whether all teachers were participating fully in the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) improvement science cycle and whether sufficient time was allocated to do this work. It was evident that teachers felt ownership over the improvement science work and sought to establish structures that would continue to foster a significant teacher role within this space. They identified teachers who were being left out of this work and brainstormed strategies to provide supports to these individuals that would facilitate their full inclusion in the schoolwide PDSA improvement science cycle.

Vice principal Qiana indicated their support for teacher-led improvement science cycles, sharing that they trusted educators to “be able to develop themselves and also speak to what they feel works best by collecting their own data and seeking other professional development and bringing it to school.” Improvement science lends itself to horizontal leadership because all those involved have the agency to seek solutions to problems that are collectively identified. Former elementary school teacher Iris highlighted improvement science as a contributor to teachers' role in decision-making, explaining that “primary teachers came together in these really solid, really

serious collaborative groups where everybody was very committed to the fact that we were going to be co-creating our calendars and assessing curriculum together and making all these decisions together.” By creating a structure in which teachers have authority within the collective autonomies to design practices that take into account student needs, a collaborative culture emerges that cultivates educators supporting each other in strengthening their decision-making roles.

Through the improvement science lens, teachers have the authority to shape structures that influence their participation in school governance. Vice principal Jack provided an example:

When I think about the Leadership Team, one big piece is when we've been looking at planning our professional development and teachers are saying, “Based on the feedback of our colleagues, we need to alter this map that we've already started with and we need to go back and rehit that. I was working with two people in the math department yesterday and they had gone to this training for a year about mastery based grading and they have this whole series of PDs we need to roll out and then the first PD was not really absorbed by the teachers the way that we want it to. In fact, there are a lot of difficulties that came out of that. So, we've gone back to the Leadership Team and we'll be talking about it again today about how we need to change the trajectory of that and expand into a two year roll out versus a one year roll out. And that has nothing to do with the administration - the principal is not saying we need to cover this and this is a mandated topic. It's based on the needs of the teachers and based on the feedback that the other teachers were given from their colleagues that said, we need to alter the course of this professional development plan.

Teachers not only have the ability to plan and lead professional development for their peers but also refine practices based on data. If teachers' role within a process is unclear or not sufficient, this is identified and changes can be made to address this deficiency. Procedures are in place to gather feedback which then guides future implementation. Teachers are more willing to be critical of a process that they had a hand in developing because they are more committed to seeing the initiative through to its successful completion. When the Operations Team meeting was observed, feedback in the form of teacher survey data was used to inform decision-making,

a phenomenon that is built into the structure of collective work at the school from the annual EWA process to professional development. High school teacher Callie commented on how this plays out in practice:

Every major decision that I've seen in my six years here has come from teachers. It's come out of teacher, lead teacher spaces. It's been motivated by the observations and the research of teachers. Through our PDSA cycles and other reflective practices that we use, through collaboration and collective conversations and it's been supported by admin. But there is never any doubt about where it's coming from.

Other interviewees supported Callie's assertion about the feedback component of the improvement science cycle supporting equal teacher and administrator roles within school governance. Administrators help to foster a culture of teacher input driving decision-making which encourages greater transparency from teachers on practices that require refinement. Mutual trust is the foundation for this process to occur in school improvement spaces that can sometimes be contentious, especially considering that the concepts of "school reform" and "data-driven instruction" are often utilized in a way that conflicts with the tenets of the teacher-powered school model.

Interviewees also identified areas in which the structure of improvement science at the school could be improved to promote a greater teacher decision-making role. High school teacher Michelle provided the following critique:

I think that's one of the things that's missing here is this like five year, ten year vision because I think that would then allow a Leadership Team to really sort of stretch out and kind of say "All right, now let's break this up in our sub goals. OK, by the end of this year, let's try to get this far. Don't try to take on too much at once. I think a lot of times we find ourselves pulled in 18 different directions and you end up doing a little bit of all these things as opposed to a couple of things really really well. So, there's a lack of depth that happens.

Middle school teacher Willa echoed these concerns when asked what is needed to support a greater teacher role in school governance at the research site:

Having more spaces for conversations and decision-making. Sometimes we're sort of going through everything like we want to like, "OK. This is what we're doing, this is our professional development," and we don't always have the space to think about like, "Oh yeah, what do we mean by grading practices?" Like we're just kind of going through the motions but we're not actually having those sometimes a little bit more philosophical conversations, but that also help teachers understand why are we doing the work that we're doing or have a say in why we're doing the work. So, I think that's kind of the tension too. We don't always make space for those bigger conversations that I think could also benefit our school a lot. Especially as we're thinking of these big themes and issues.

By implementing a strategic plan with a longer time span and providing space to talk about the motivations behind school initiatives, teachers could see how current work fits into the bigger picture and plan accordingly. With teachers doing school governance work on top of existing instructional responsibilities, they must target their efforts toward objectives that are going to yield the most powerful outcomes. Michelle and Willa make the case that allocating time and resources to develop and refine a long-term plan would provide a holistic perspective that can be used within the improvement science cycle to achieve a more sustainable teacher decision-making role. When teachers are key components of this process, understand the underlying rationale and situate their involvement in the larger vision, this results in the commitment needed to effect changes in the areas that are collectively prioritized.

Cultural Systems

Cultural systems are defined by Archer (1995) as informal schema made up of the organic routines, language (verbal and non-verbal) and norms that govern interactions and access to resources. The following section explores how cultural systems support teachers' participation in site decision-making.

Common values. When one goes on the website of the school, the first thing one sees is the text "IT ALL STARTS WITH A VISION." Scrolling down the page further, one comes across the school's core beliefs: "Language and culture are central to learning and human

development”, “Individuals learn as members of a community that values their participation and is respectful, productive, and inclusive” and “The purpose of schooling is to guide all learners, both students and adults, to think critically about the world around them, to engage as agents of social change, and to promote democratic practices.” Interviewees affirmed that these core beliefs inform the teachers’ role in school governance by providing a shared point of reference that guides decision-making and a theoretical foundation for the educator-run model. They described the process that occurred when the Lower and Upper Schools were founded in which teachers had equal voice in developing the mission and vision that would shape how the school was structured including norms for decision-making bodies. During this time, conversations took place seeking common ground on philosophies of learning, community-building in the classroom and among the staff and values that drive pedagogical priorities. Teachers volunteered or were selected for committees and roles based on their strengths and guiding beliefs. Interviewees also highlighted the impact of shared values on the sustainability of the educator-run governance model as teachers can use the values as criteria for adding new responsibilities into their already busy schedules. High school teacher Callie emphasized that “we have to focus on the things that matter the most. And if we’re going to ask our teachers to put in work outside of their classrooms it has to be in the things that truly support our school vision.”

Student-centered values. The research site’s core belief of a learning community that is “respectful, productive and inclusive” is a contributor to teachers’ role in school governance according to interviewees. School coordinator Rosalie remarked that “our school is extremely student-centered. So being student-centered and always thinking about what is good for the students has really helped us solve problems and kind of focus on problems for the students versus like, ‘This conflict is not working.’” When teachers use the student perspective as the

principal reference when deciding how to work through an issue, the focus shifts to collective problem-solving instead of disagreements between teachers. This helps to keep decision-making horizontal through the employment of a conflict resolution process that does not require intervention by administrators. Teachers have the confidence that they can self-govern and support each other when obstacles present themselves. Vice-principal Jack detailed how student-centered values contribute to democratic decision-making at the school:

It seems like every teacher based decision at this school comes out of student need and teachers study their own work here and they go through these cycles of improvement science basically where they're monitoring and seeing what they're doing and when they're offering up suggestions about how things should go. They take it very seriously. Whereas in some places, we've had teachers who just, and I'm speaking about personal experience at other schools, teachers just didn't want to do the extra work. They felt that that was an inconvenience to them and there was no buy-in and it was about what was best for them. And here I've never heard a teacher say, "well, this works for me." It's always about, we may differ on the way that we think that we're going to support the students, but it always comes from a student needs standpoint and then is about a discussion about how we're going to best achieve that. And so, you know, sometimes we do disagree, but it's done in a manner that's professional and respectful and I believe that teachers feel validated through that process.

The student-centered philosophy at the research site is reflected in teachers' willingness to invest in the additional time associated with their significant role in school governance. When teachers see that their peers share a similar mindset, they are more likely to persist when encountering conflict and seek a resolution based on common goals. Special educator teacher Helen echoed this belief, stating that the student-centered vision "really helps because we all understand that, though we may disagree about grading practices or a curriculum, we all know that our co-worker believes that what they are presenting is for the best or what they think is best for our students. And so, we honor that. That kind of helps to be on the same level." Instead of needing to evaluate the intentions of colleagues, teachers at the school can start with their shared values and trust that their peers are bringing forward proposals consistent with collective objectives.

The democratic decision-making model can be fragile if the foundation of a common vision is not in place to help weather times of conflict. High school teacher Michelle talked about potential pitfalls in maintaining a significant teacher role within site decision-making without transparent shared values:

I feel our biggest obstacle is oftentimes ourselves. There's an assumption that when you're teacher-led, that everybody's on the same page but everybody's not on the same page. There is infighting, there are disagreements about what direction the school should go in including the overall vision at the school at times. Nevermind the nuts and bolts of how that's to happen and it can get very personal and there are times where people have tried to undermine the process and the processes that are in place. So, to me that's the greatest barrier is hypocrisy. I don't know if that's the right way to say it but it's kind of you've got this group of people who say that, "we're all about this and we're all transparent", but then like anything else, there's other stuff going on underneath the surface and it's not necessarily what it looks like or is projected to look like at the top.

Michelle emphasizes the importance of teacher leaders being open about their vision and intentions in order to build the trust needed to collaborate on school-level decisions. If relationships stagnate at a superficial level, it is difficult to develop the shared understandings needed to engage in constructive dialogue about issues facing students. Therefore, the school vision is only valuable as a tool that strengthens teacher decision-making role if it is collectively-held and passes multiple structure tests as it is subjected to interrogation and refinement through cycles of critical examination.

Collaboration. Interviewees indicated that inclusive, democratic decision-making within the areas of teacher collective autonomy at the school is dependent on a culture of collaboration. When the staff is cohesive, teachers support each other in strengthening their roles within school governance. Elementary school teacher Kira explained why she chose to transfer from another school in the district to the research site:

My friend worked here and she said it's a different culture, different dynamic where teachers collaborate and they work together to make decisions around what

they're teaching and how they're teaching. And everybody's already doing balanced literacy and they're explaining what the curriculum was and we got time to work together on it which we had to really fight for at our old school.

Interviewees described schools where they had worked previously in which teachers were pitted against each other by administrators interested in controlling site decision-making through “divide and conquer” tactics. At the research site, teachers and administrators value working together and this is reflected in their shared commitment to creating and sustaining spaces in which democratic collaboration can occur. The culture of collaboration on school-level decisions is supported by individuals such as vice-principal Qiana who originally decided to come to the research site as a founding teacher because “I wanted to be with other colleagues who really were interested in research, who wanted to experiment and innovate, who were open to straying away from the mandated curriculum.”

Middle school teacher Jessica shared that the culture of the school “has been a lot of, ‘You just figure things out on your own and you work with your teammates to come up with stuff together or you depend on the collaboration of your peers to help it be a communal learning process.’” Instead of implementing top-down policies that fail to take into account the unique environment of the school, teachers at the research site engage in educator-run professional learning communities in which they are empowered to collectively problem-solve. Elementary teacher Emma described how she learned to bring issues to decision-making groups to tackle collectively:

We had a lot of activities for sharing ourselves. And being okay with the discomfort of saying what you don't know, saying what you need help with, and that you know that people are actually going to help you. Not just say “I need this, I need that, I need that” and that's it. The words go into the air. Here actually it simmers and it resonates with everybody and everybody will come and be like, “Well, I can help you with this or I could do this,” or whatever it is. And I felt like that was really important for me, coming into the school, just feeling a part of this community.

Emma recounted that when she first came to the school, she was uncomfortable being vulnerable and was reluctant to admit to colleagues that she lacked the answers to all of the problems that she was encountering in the classroom. The culture of collaboration at the school, however, encouraged her to engage more deeply in decision-making spaces where she knew there would be mutual support. When teachers are empowered within the areas of collective autonomy, an attitude prevails in which problems are not isolated to one classroom but instead become collective tasks that are tackled through leveraging the knowledge and experience held by all those involved in the dialogue. Teachers reported that this also promotes sustainability of the educator-run model because work is shared and working groups decide how to approach additional responsibilities that are imposed by the district. Middle school teacher Jessica described how collaboration helps to maintain the role of teachers within school governance:

So, I think because there is a very limited amount of time and people to carry all of the work, that it can feel very unsustainable, that there's always like a thousand things happening at the same time. But, it does feel encouraging in the fact that there's a team of people, for better or for worse, who feel the same way. So, it's not like I'm the only person at my school who is trying to make things better. Everyone is kind of doing what they need to do to help kind of carry that and to work together. So, people aren't necessarily working on projects by themselves, although that does happen, but we have a lot of support with each other.

When teachers see that colleagues share their mindsets on collective work, it provides the motivation needed to persist with handling difficult tasks that go beyond classroom responsibilities. Other interviewees also attributed the phenomenon of teachers staying at the school and strengthening democratic decision-making to a culture that nurtures collaboration and providing aid to one's peers. Structures are in place to facilitate collective work and when conflict arises, teachers cannot give up on each other according to school coordinator Rosalie, “because it's so collaborative, we're always working with each other in different capacities on

different projects.” Interviewees shared that teachers who decide to leave the school might not have been prepared or willing to take on that kind of role. Vice-principal Jack talked about the educator-run governance model being dependent on educators who are dedicated to collaboration:

That's a sense that we get a lot of times here when we interview people is how much they're willing to work with colleagues. And there are teachers that are not as participatory in our school structures, governance or operational or otherwise. And I do feel that that sometimes can be a reason why they move on because they don't feel that they were fit, they weren't ready for that level of engagement and involvement. And that's okay, I would rather have somebody who's committed, who needs a lot of work instructionally, but they're committed to the improvement of the school as a whole because we can help you with instruction and your colleagues are devoted to that. But if you're somebody who's just singular and you want to do your own thing and not really worry about the bigger pieces, there's too much that has to be done. And I think that that's something that I feel the teachers here have, is an awareness of how many pieces are in play. And it's not just the responsibility of the administrators to take care of this, but there is a self-governance that they have to engage in with their colleagues to maintain this work environment.

Teachers at the research site share a desire to collectively take on schoolwide issues and exhibit this when holding each other accountable to engaging in the work associated with an educator-run governance model. They create structures that are responsive to the particular needs of their colleagues regarding collaboration within dens, divisions and departments. Teachers feel ownership of the mission of the school and this translates to a culture conducive to collaboration that is a result of and a contributor to democratic decision-making structures that advance collective priorities.

Creative, persistent, collective problem-solving. When the Operations Team and faculty professional development were observed, teachers were engaged in collective problem-solving as equals with other school staff including administrators. Their willingness to seek creative solutions was evidenced through teachers taking multiple approaches to meeting the needs of

stakeholders. For example, participation in problem-solving on increasing involvement of parents of Upper School students was widespread during the Operations Team meeting, with around two teacher inputs for every one administrator input. Teachers collectively identified what they believed to be the root of the problem and set about devising strategies to tackle this impediment head-on. The persistent and flexible attitude that predominated contributed to a culture that supports a significant teacher role in site decision-making. After one of the meetings ended, teachers decided to stay to continue dialogue on tackling issues identified previously. Elementary school teacher Kira commented the manner in which teachers at the research site adjust to changing dynamics with the budget and school staffing:

We're all trying to work on figuring out, "OK, given that there's more work to do and less time that we're being given to do it, how do we support people so that they can do it and not feel like they're crazy as they're trying to figure it out, which feels really different than other schools to me where it's like "Budget cuts happen and mandates come from the district" and admin is just like, "OK, well you gotta do it. Figure it out. Make it happen." So specifically for us an example from this year would be because we didn't get two days for PDSA or for testing, we figured out how during Wednesday PD time, we could take more time for PDSA. As opposed to doing a whole school PD on something else. Even though there are a ton of things that we could have covered.

Decision-making at the school takes into account teacher needs and sustainability. Instead of implementing a policy that would potentially result in greater stress due to additional responsibilities, teachers were empowered to find a creative solution on the allocation of the professional development schedule that would not sacrifice avenues to achieve other school priorities. The outcome of this process was preserving teachers' role within school governance despite pressures from the district to implement an external mandate. Middle school teacher Willa provided another example of creativity and persistence in collective problem-solving strengthening teachers' participation in site decision-making:

Two teachers didn't want to have to travel. They wanted a space, so they were like, "You need to find a space." Even though the admin was like, "We can't do anything about it." So, you know, the teachers had to figure how to problem solve on their own and be like, "Well, this is what we need." And then admin was like, "OK, we'll get you that room. We'll figure it out." But it's very much like when admin's like, "No," or "We can't," teachers have to figure out a way to creatively do it. And that's when they're like, "OK. We can do that."

When teachers feel ownership of the school-level decision-making process, they will advocate for solutions that address collective needs even in the face of initial opposition to proposed remedies. Drawing from the well of strong relationships with colleagues, teachers are able to seek resources in multiple spaces and use creativity and persistence to find a path toward implementing collective decisions.

Teacher sense of ownership. When educators know that processes for decision-making are teacher-driven, they are more willing to participate in implementing collective decisions. School coordinator Rosalie described the difference between enacting top-down mandates versus practices that spring from grassroots decision-making bodies in relation to special education co-teaching models:

If it was the principal saying, "You have to do this," then the special ed[ucation] teachers are grumpy about it, gen[eral] ed[ucation] teachers are grumpy about it. And then when it doesn't work, which it will not work the first rendition, there's gonna be conflict. It falls apart. So, I think it would have not stuck. We've had several schools come visit our school and see the inclusion program and they all come saying like, "My principal wants us to do inclusion but we don't want to do it and they're forcing us to do it." Then it's not gonna work because it's hard. So, you need teachers to really feel like, "We're gonna do this." And if they don't, then they're not going to do it.

Rosalie explained that the inclusion program at the school originated with special education teachers who are passionate about the model and willing to work through issues with general education colleagues. Teachers at the school owned the decision to implement the program and therefore are not going to allow collective priorities to be sidelined. Principal Lucia also shared

that documenting the collective decision-making process and making it transparent to all staff fosters investment in the vision of the school because everyone can see how practices in place were developed. Lucia related the impact of sharing decision-making authority within the budgeting process on teacher ownership of collective decisions at the school:

That's one example where I can see like this calmness about it. Yeah sort of, "Yeah, this is our process. We own it." I don't own it. I mean I sign off on some things, but you know, I'm not even the chair and I made sure that I wasn't the chair because that was the routine before that the principal's also the chair. And so, the principal would be signing off on things and I just saw there was a huge conflict of interest there of having a process but in the end, I'm the one person signing off on things. But I personally thought that shouldn't be, you should have a parent, a student, a teacher, anyone but the principal confirming that "Yes, this is how we want to use this money, right?" So even things like that, I feel now people feel like, "Oh, yeah. My voice matters."

When teachers take on formal roles of authority within school governance, it makes their equal role in school-level decision-making transparent. Teachers trust the decision-making process and will consequently feel invested in the outcomes of practices that were collectively determined. Teacher sense of ownership over school-level decisions results in educators being persistent in seeking out resources and solutions to issues that present themselves. Elementary school teacher Emma commented that "when we found needs and things that we need to work on, we take proposals to the Leadership Team or to the School Governing Council and, some way or another, we find the funds or we find ways to be able to support teachers to grow in their knowledge." Other interviewees supported Emma's assertion that having full authority over the work in the scope of the collective autonomies within dens, divisions and departments makes teachers committed to being creative and relentless in seeking avenues to achieve shared goals. Rosalie noted that when she obtained decision-making authority within particular programs, she was able to identify problems and felt empowered to refine practices to target specific issues. She talked

about the sense of ownership over school governance giving teachers the impetus to shape structures that guide decision-making:

When we first started, we wrote in our EWA that the operations will take care of staffing and hiring and matrix. So that's just vague language. So then the Operations Team then had to, which consist of teachers, create what that looks like. How many people on an Operations Team, how many teachers, how many...whatever? What are the interview questions? When do we start this timeline? So all of that, they figured it out. And then as we went and teachers are on the staffing committees, they realized, "Hey, we need like a confidentiality clause," because teachers and committees were kind of like gossiping about the interviewing. So, they're like, "Okay, we have to do that." And then last year they changed the interview questions and then they added this thing about like, "We're gonna make sure we call references," because before we weren't. It wasn't a regular practice. So that process has improved as we continue to do it, which is teacher-led.

Teachers have an equal role in decision-making on the Operations Team and took the initiative to codify the composition of the group and improve structures for selecting new members of the governing body. They identified areas that needed refinement and were invested in making necessary changes. Interviewees shared examples of their sanctuary school initiative and immigrant family legal clinic originating from the identification of a problem and the agency to put practices into place that address student needs. Other interviewees reported that teachers who feel ownership over decision-making processes are likewise interested in making their participation in school governance sustainable.

Peer accountability. Essential to maintaining a significant teacher role in school governance is ensuring that collective decisions are carried out with fidelity. If not, teachers lose faith in the decision-making process and their participation becomes less meaningful. School coordinator Rosalie emphasized the importance of honoring group decisions in cultivating a democratic culture with peer accountability. She gave an example from the Lower School:

[In] the elementary school Den Two and Den Three, they do these things called reader identity assessments, RISA. And that's something that they've been doing

for like two, three years. And it's a way for students to look at their data and then to reflect on their cultural linguistic identities. And it requires a level of commitment from teachers because they have to assess and then put it into Schoology and then do these lessons. And that process is definitely not top down, like [principal] has never said, "You have to do this." And [vice-principal] has never said, "You have to do this," so the teachers do it. And it's the lead teacher who makes sure that the data is in. And it's hard because not everyone is on time. Not everyone does it, not everyone really enjoys doing it. But they're holding each other accountable through their meetings and saying like, "Did everyone do it or you didn't do it? Then what do you need? How can we help?"

Rosalie describes a process of peer accountability that is respectful to those involved and that also holds participants to a high level of expectations on implementing collective decisions.

Without the peer accountability mechanism, the intervention that was developed by the team could not be put into practice with fidelity as it relies on full participation to yield data that can be useful to the team. If a teacher struggles with implementation, protocol is in place to assist that team member with appropriate supports. This non-evaluative process is described by Principal Lucia when she stated that “it takes a little bit of or maybe a lot of courage to see that and to own our failures as well and then know that, ‘Wow, that didn't really go very well for the adults or for the students.’ And so again, the shared responsibility needs to be there for you to then do something differently.” When peer accountability is in place in a manner that lifts teachers up instead of tearing them down for deficiencies in implementation, those involved are more likely to be willing to be vulnerable and be open to share issues with colleagues.

With this feedback from teachers, decision-making bodies can then collectively refine practices as part of the process of supporting peer accountability. Principal Lucia also cited peer accountability as a factor that makes her role as a principal at an educator-run school sustainable because responsibility for the outcomes of school-level decisions is shared and stakeholders are invested in continually improving practices. Middle school teacher Iris describes how the consciousness of shared responsibility is adopted by teachers:

When people came on board and started working with us, people would ask, "Well, what do they say we have to do or what do they...?" And it was like we had to help people make a shift of understanding from how they used to operate in other L.A. Unified settings that the "they" was no longer a "they", that the "they" was a "we", and that everything is on the table. So if people feel like an assessment isn't serving us or a material isn't serving our kids or whatever, that it's all under discussion because people are so accustomed to just doing what they're told and what "they" say that we have to do quote unquote in our classrooms. But I guess you started out asking, "What's an example of this?" Everything that we do is an example of it, at least teaching-wise, then there's been a lot of self-governance, managing ourselves, evaluating ourselves.

By transforming from a "they" to a "we", responsibility shifts from administrators to horizontal leadership with a significant teacher role. Peers hold each other accountable for implementing decisions guided by a shared vision as those with equal roles in school governance also carry equal responsibility to see projects through with fidelity. Teachers are provided with the support and guidance that is identified and meted out through collective problem-solving.

Mentoring. When the Leadership Team meeting at the school was observed, the conversation turned to a teacher who required additional support and those present brainstormed possible strategies to assist this individual. With this support, the hope was that this teacher would be in a better position to implement collective decisions. This is consistent with the data from interviewees indicating that mentoring is a cultural system at the research site that supports teachers' role in school governance. Interviewees shared that initially mentoring was organic and not formally structured into transitions between existing lead teachers and incoming lead teachers. The Cognitive Coaching trainings provided through the relationship with the partner university were cited as an important structure that helped teacher leaders gain mentoring skills that they could use to facilitate the growth of other educators' leadership skills. High school teacher Michelle talked about the particular abilities that she feels are critical to instill in her colleagues to support their role in site decision-making:

It can be the social piece of really not understanding how to interact within a group or how to integrate within a group and how to compromise and all those kinds of things and how to facilitate that. So, I think so much of education is housed within the classroom that you need to really train people how to get outside the classroom and then work in this other kind of environment because this profession is very bipolar. It's like you work with people but you don't work with people. And so people need support and training with how to actually work with the other adults.

Michelle identified core skills for collaboration within collective decision-making and seeks to develop these ways of interacting through her mentorship role. She believes that bachelor's and credential programs do not provide sufficient training to be an equal participant within school governance and therefore certain abilities must be explicitly imparted to teachers that are new to the democratic decision-making model. Elementary teacher Emma described how it felt to be the mentee of leadership skills:

I think like with everything else, you learn by watching these extraordinary people here just facilitate meetings, like my lead. I was just like, "How did they do this? How do they know how to do this?" And then after they stepped down, they're like, "You can do it." And I'm like, "I can't do it yet, I just started here and I'm still trying to..." and they're like, "You can do it, you got this." And you know she sat with me and she said, "You can do it. Watch, I'll help you in the beginning." So, I just felt like even though I didn't feel prepared, there were a lot of examples and that they don't just throw you in. They scaffold it for you, "Well, did you see how I did this? Well this is how. Now you're going to try in the next meeting," and it's exactly what I would do with my students like, "Watch me do this. I noticed this when you were reading. You know how to do this. This is wonderful. Now I'm going to show you something that I think could help you. Watch me do it. Now you try it," and so it's like I feel like that whole system was in place for me here too. So even though I didn't feel prepared, I got the support to be prepared.

Emma's mentor employed socio-emotional supports in tandem with providing concrete protocols that could be utilized to run meetings and lead peers in collective decision-making. The lead teacher used a gradual release of responsibility model similar to the instructional protocol of "I do, we do, you do." Emma was positioned to be successful in her new leadership role because she had access to resources through her mentor that would help when encountering challenges

with navigating the new terrain. Although Emma was apprehensive when first embarking on this leadership journey, the mentor's support helped to make her participation in site decision-making more sustainable. Sometimes this assistance from a mentor can take the form of regular check-ins about progress on implementing collective decisions. School coordinator Rosalie explained how she provided a mentorship role for new teachers who were struggling to self-govern at the middle school by coaching them through establishing a vision as a team:

It's just like helping...like living life with people through community. It's like, we're doing it together, we're problem solving together, you're modeling for teachers and you're explaining this is why we do these things. The lead teachers are really in charge of doing that. But I think teachers are really good at supporting each other to make sure that they know this is why we do these things....You can't just learn it in a PowerPoint, even if you have like an orientation or even some book you have to actually live it and then you have to feel the tension, you have to feel the discomfort and then you need a colleague to say, "It's okay, we're still going to step into conflict, it's fine. We're going to figure it out together." They need that partnership or else it won't stick. So, I think our leadership structure does really help.

Rosalie noted that the mentor role can be difficult for lead teachers who have a full load of teaching responsibilities but that there are ways to make the work more manageable. Lead teachers provide a perspective on the theoretical foundation for the educator-run model and its history at the school as well as practical guidance on maintaining democratic decision-making when there is disagreement that must be worked through. Interviewees highlighted the transition between lead teachers that occurs over several meetings characterized by equal participation in debriefs and agenda setting utilizing various protocols. The previous lead teacher remains on the decision-making team and continues to serve as a resource for the new lead teacher on methods to promote inclusive decision-making within the team. Middle school teacher Iris commented on former lead teachers continuing to be mentors to the rest of their decision-making body:

For example, Den 3, which I left, now have a new lead teacher, but then there's two veteran lead teachers on the team plus a totally new teacher and then

somebody who has been teaching at our school for a while but who has changed grade level this year. So the totally new teacher is getting mentoring from one of the former lead teachers and then the current lead teacher is delegating some of the curricular support and study cycle support to one of the other former lead teachers who's on the team and everybody has so much mentoring and facilitating and curriculum experience that the duties can really be shared around in terms of support. So, I feel like as the years progress along and people just get stronger and stronger in those areas, that is a structure that then supports people as they come in and then us to be able to continue doing it.

The participation of former lead teachers helps to ease the transition for incoming leads by allowing for the gradual accruelement of additional responsibilities. Not all dens, divisions and departments at the school benefit from this level of leadership experience within their teams and the ability to provide mentorship varies accordingly. Another resource for new teachers on maximizing decision-making roles is the union space. Interviewees shared that concerns are brought to the larger body and collective problem-solving occurs on integrating and providing support for teachers who are in alignment with the mission of the school but may still need development in key domains of teaching or leadership.

An area for growth with mentorship that interviewees identified is including staff who have significant time commitments outside of school. High school teacher Callie expounded on her difficulties with mentoring new generations of leaders at the research site:

And then a constant struggle is developing other people's leadership. Like I've been division chair for three years and at the end of every year, I've said, "I'm ready to resign. Who's ready?" And every year, everyone's like, "Oh no. I just started grad school. I just had a baby." Etcetera, etcetera. I'm like, "Wow, that's really hard. I have nothing going on in my life like grad school or a baby. Thank God." So, I haven't stepped down because other people are more burdened with other outside responsibilities than I am. But I think it would be helpful if I knew how to develop their leadership and also how to support them. Because when the leadership of your school is just the people with the most time, that's a problem. We need the people who are the most burdened to also be helping to shape our school culture so that it's a school culture that includes them and works for them.

Callie zeroes in on the need to develop mentorship that allows those with constraints on their ability to take on additional responsibilities to still be able to participate in school governance. Without a culture of succession and transition to new leadership, equal teacher voice in school-level decisions becomes less sustainable and power becomes more concentrated in the hands of those who can dedicate time to leadership roles. Other interviewees identified the lack of a common training on abilities that assist with site decision-making as a potential roadblock to a more distributed understanding of the nuances of teacher leadership, something that is particularly detrimental to the small departments in the Upper School that have less individuals to spread responsibilities between.

Organizing skills. Many teachers who were attracted to the research site's social justice mission came to the school with organizing skills that they are able to apply to their participation within site decision-making. Teachers at the research site also organize with parents and community groups through their union and participate in grassroots activism outside the school context, all of which helps to prepare educators for leadership roles. High school teacher Jacob shared that "I would say the other thing that made organizing at [the research site] a lot easier was that, just by the original principal in her opening remarks to recruit teachers and using this language of social justice, really recruited a lot of teachers who had a social justice vision. So, it was also this shared language and knowledge of organizing that made it easy for staff to get on the same page very quickly." Teachers had participated in horizontal decision-making structures featuring consensus in other settings and therefore made an easy transition to the governance structure at the school. From the outset, there was less of a need to cover the basics of democratic decision-making and staff was already conscious of the importance of shared leadership with responsibility beyond your own classroom, as that was the impetus for the decision of many of

the new hires to come to the school. Jacob continued his explanation of the assets that teachers brought to the research site and how that impacted the development of decision-making structures:

It was a kind of perfect storm of all of those, being heavily weighted towards a lot of teachers who had experience in political organizing, who had experience in various aspects, in various parts of the LAUSD diaspora with administrations who were very top-down...And so, there were teachers who had a great distrust for admin and also had experience with organizing at school sites. So, from the get-go, teachers were very quick to create informal meeting spaces that were not part of the formal meeting spaces that the school created. And we kind of had informal conversations saying that we were going to make sure that this was a school that was very teacher and student and parent driven.

Teachers took the initiative to push for language in governing documents that would codify democratic school governance based on their experience at other schools with administrations who had consolidated decision-making power. Through constructive dialogue about how to enact democracy in schools, teachers had begun the process of coalescing on shared values that would later be reflected in the school's core beliefs.

Vice-principal Qiana stated that teachers at the school have “the know how to get the buy in from their fellow colleagues and then they know how to present, bring it to the table to all the different committees and use that process to get something brought up or passed and approved.” Teachers at the research site are able to apply abilities that they have cultivated in other spaces to supporting their decision-making role within school governance. They are able to work with diverse stakeholders to arrive at a consensus that is acceptable to all and are able to navigate the different levels of decision-making at the research site to move a policy from the development stage through implementation. Interviewees gave examples of teacher organizing skills being critical to shepherding the sanctuary school policy and immigrant family legal clinic past multiple barriers to realization. Teachers worked to bring other schools within the complex onto

the initiatives as well as feeder middle schools. High school teacher Callie remarked that “we tried to use ourselves as a base of strength to help facilitate grassroots organizing to fight for this at other schools.” Through this work, teachers strengthened their own decision-making role at the site as a result of their ability to build coalitions of partners with shared interests.

Teachers are also able to use organizing skills to amplify their decision-making voice and authority in response to developments that run counter to their common values. When the district wanted to remove staff from the site, teachers organized, involving parents, students and school board members and were able to bring about the withdrawal of the decision. Another example provided was that of a probationary teacher who was going to be dismissed from the school until teachers collectively intervened. Callie described teachers being able to use their organizing abilities to mount a successful campaign:

While many of those teachers agreed with admin's concerns about the person's practices as a teacher, teachers united together to support that person and they insisted that there be a plan of support because they were like, "We believe in every teacher's capacity to change and we believe in supporting people to get better to the extent that those people really want to do that process." And I remember there was a day where even the office staff, every single person was wearing shirts about this potential of this person being fired and they were like, "We're not going to stand for it."

Teachers at the school rallied behind this individual and worked with other staff to build consensus on that educator remaining at the site. They knew which actions would be persuasive and ended up achieving their objective due to the knowledge and experience that they were able to apply to the situation. Interviewees also maintained that their organizing abilities help to preserve their significant role within site decision-making because they would be able to blunt an attack on the collective autonomies if threatened by the district or union seeking to go in a different direction.

Continuity of personnel. Another factor that promotes the continued existence of the educator-run governance model at the research site is the institutional memory represented by the significant number of founding and veteran teachers at the school. This is in comparison to other pilot schools where high rates of turnover led to a weakening of norms that promote teachers' role within site decision-making. High school teacher Callie commented on this phenomenon:

At the previous school that I was observing at, there was a lot of turnover. The Elect-to-Work Agreement was kind of a joke because there was so much turnover that people were always new and no one was really in a position to fight for something that truly represented teachers.

Teachers who have operated for years within a framework that features equal teacher voice and authority in school governance are not going to quietly relent on those ideals. They play a vital role in cultivating the next generation's appreciation for the value of shared leadership within the areas of collective autonomy. Callie also shared more about the ability of experienced teacher leaders to provide valuable perspective to those new to inclusive decision-making:

I think the fact that we have teachers who have been here for years, we have a lot of veteran teachers, is very helpful because they're able to give a perspective of what it takes to stay in this job. Year in, year out, while raising a family, while organizing outside of school or pursuing other passions. And as an outsider looking at the process at some of the other academies here, it seems like since there isn't that same cohesive culture, since there's a lot of new teachers, and since there's turnover, people are much more likely to be like, "OK, these are the expectations. Yeah, I can handle it. That's what I was hired for." And not feel like they're in a position to reimagine or like they have the processes and shared vision to do that reimagining work.

Veteran teachers help to foster the sustainability of the significant teacher role in site decision-making by offering their insight on mechanisms and supports that make the additional responsibilities manageable. Teachers agreeing to take on leadership positions are doing so with the transparency provided through the lens lent by more experienced colleagues and are therefore more likely to persist in their role when difficulties arise within their school governance work.

Theme 3: Structural and Cultural Systems that Hinder Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making

Legal and District Policy Constraints

During the Leadership Team meeting that was observed, teachers wrestled with the logistical issues of including staff members in school governance that had off-site administrators who are not accountable to the shared decision-making structures at the research site. Navigating the complicated relationship with the district was a constant theme of interviews as staff described the detrimental effect that district policy exerted on teachers' ability to exercise full authority on school-level decisions. School coordinator Rosalie described the ways in which bureaucratic systems can limit the decision-making role of teachers at the research site:

LAUSD is very bureaucratic. [The partner university] is also very bureaucratic. UTLA is also bureaucratic in its ways. So being sandwiched in these three big systems that are also very hierarchical and very bureaucratic, sometimes we feel like it's hard to be a circle in a square peg kind of a thing because you're in the school and you're like, "It's all from the ground up and we honor teacher voice" and then the district says, "You have to do this PD. You have to search these students. You have to do these drills."

Although teachers have mechanisms to push back against mandates from the district that are not aligned with the school's vision, the bureaucracy and its disconnect with the site presents an obstacle that must be overcome. Vice-principal Qiana outlined how the district often does not build local control or flexibility into its plans that would support a significant teacher role in decision-making. The complexities of multiple unions with multiple contracts and several schools housed on the same campus results in a situation in which teachers wanting to implement a practice that is centered in site priorities and student needs but possibly being obligated to modify or scrap a plan in response to mandates from other district institutions. Middle school

teacher Iris outlined how this can play out with staffing and limit teachers' role in determining school-level outcomes:

There have been some situations that have been beyond our power like when for a couple of years there were layoffs and the district would send us a displaced teacher, for example. We've had a few situations where they've sent us people that we sort of have to accommodate, but that's not part of our regular kind of hiring process. That's just part of being part of a huge weird district. But as far as our regular staffing, when we have openings and we set up our hiring committee, all that is totally equal between admin and teachers.

Even though the teachers' role in staffing is codified in governing documents, the district's need to place staff supersedes teacher preferences on the composition of site staff. Other interviewees described similar obstacles to implementing curriculum that deviates from district models or flexibility in standardized testing of particular populations of students. Iris mentioned that "a lot of times we have conceded because it's a waste of our energy in a lot of situations to try to push back, especially since most of the time, we feel like we have the big majority of what we need, kind of in place, and there's some areas where we just kind of want to just not make waves."

High school teacher Michelle talked about the calculus that Iris outlined in which teachers make a conscious decision to relent on decision-making authority in one aspect of school governance in order to preserve the role within other spheres of influence:

I think some of the absolute obstacles are out of our control. I think because funding is limited and resources are limited. Having to stay within state law or sometimes there's district policy that there's a little bit of a push-pull with how much can we get away with pushing back on. And when do we sort of have to take our lumps because there's a bigger battle to fight out there. And so, I think those kinds of regulations, especially when you're at a place that's actually trying to push against that all the time, can definitely be obstacles.

Although teachers have the skills and willingness to advocate for their collective priorities, they may be forced by district politics to withdraw from conflict over asserting their ability to make decisions within the areas of collective autonomy. Vice-principal Qiana described other

situations when teacher preferences on implementation of site-level practices are hamstrung by the district's legal interpretation of the MOU that governs its oversight of the school. Vice-principal Jack shared that "there will be certain things where it's like, look, this is something that's against Ed Code. The principal doesn't have any discretion. We have to implement this particular outcome." In this case, teachers' role in site decision-making is limited by the laws that govern education in California. Teachers can push as far as possible within the boundaries established and sometimes beyond but have limited capacity to engage in disputes with the district or state if it is an issue that is isolated to one school.

Job descriptions are another limiting factor to teacher authority in school governance. Elementary school teacher Kira described the impact of job descriptions on evaluations and dismissal:

In these situations, ultimately it comes down to admin because that's part of their job. They can get input from people but ultimately it's their call. In terms of evaluation stuff, that's one of their responsibilities with admin.

Teachers have pushed for a greater role in staffing and evaluating peers, but are reliant on administrators delegating authority, as the district places ultimate decision-making power in the hands of administration in some of the collective autonomies. This can potentially be an existential threat to the educator-run governance model and therefore educators must be constantly vigilant in defending their roles within site decision-making in multiple arenas.

Budget Constraints

The school budget is another structural system that hinders teachers' participation in site decision-making by limiting options for creative problem-solving. The budget that the school receives is fixed and is distributed in alignment with school priorities. Special education teacher

Julia described how limitations in the school's budget provide restricted parameters for decision-making:

Well, we definitely face serious budgetary constraints, so we may have certain priorities for certain ideas of how we want things to be and they're just not possible. And so, for example, if we had class sizes that are much higher than what we want them to be, that impacts how successfully we can support English language learners or students with IEPs and we might try to implement something through professional development and it's not super successful or we get pushback because of the overall conditions of the school that we have limited control over.

In this situation, none of the options on the table were ideal for teachers. Any of the routes available would result in sacrificing on one of their core objectives. Teachers must choose the best of substandard options and try to find other avenues to achieve goals outside the budgeting process. Vice-principal Qiana shared another example of budget constraints forcing tough decisions on teachers within the annual revisiting of the Elect-to-Work Agreement (EWA):

And so I think the EWA is something where every year, it's like an upheaval because it kind of feels like an unearthing, like people question everything...And it's one of those things where I feel like we talk about the actual issue but sometimes it's like what's underneath it? And what's underneath it, what I've noticed, is just the ails of education that just start coming up, you know like class size. I'm like, "We don't have control over some of those decisions around funding and for class-size ratio. We've already decided to pay X amount of positions out of our budget to keep the number of staff and the ratio as what it is. Is it ideal? No, but could we spend more? I mean we could but that means we won't have these other things and so I think sometimes I feel like that process, it kind of brings up things that seem out of our control and probably are out of our control but get discussed because we get to discuss certain things that's on the EWA.

Even though teachers sought to reduce class size and hire more teachers to better align their work with the school's mission, the budget limits their ability to go this route without giving ground on other priorities. Teachers described responding to budget shortfalls by making collective decisions to take on additional work but cautioned that this can jeopardize the sustainability of the educator-run governance model. Trainings for lead teachers on mentoring are another budget

line item that can be expanded but that would result in proportionate cuts in other areas that support teacher decision-making role. When release days have been cut from the budget, teachers lost time for improvement science and professional development work that are an essential space for refining and implementing collective decisions. Interviewees affirmed that they make do with limited resources knowing that a full realization of their collective vision requires budget parameters that take student needs into account.

Lack of Preparation

Many of the teachers interviewed expressed a desire to have received more preparation for their decision-making role at the school. Vice-principal and former founding teacher stated that “I would say the teacher ed program [at the partner university] prepares teachers with strong pedagogical background. I don't think it prepares you to be a teacher leader in the school because that's not really the mission there.” She added that teacher credential programs focus more on preparation for cultivating relationships with students than with colleagues. Other teachers wished that their credential programs had more training on how to collaborate with peers on leading professional development with each other. When asked if she was prepared for her decision-making role at the research site, middle school teacher Willa responded:

Absolutely not. I mean in my teaching program, the focus was very narrow in terms of like, “This is curriculum.” Like we're just going to imagine that you're going to come into this perfect school and you're just going to be able to teach all these things and you don't have to do anything additional, but it's just the reality is still disconnected sometimes from the teacher program. It's like we're never even prepared to think of ourselves as like, “Oh we're actually agents of a larger school system.” It's kind of more of like, “You are the teacher in the classroom. You can totally provide hope for these students and that's the farthest form of impact that you're going to have as a teacher.” Which I think, yes, absolutely we should definitely try to be like that teacher who inspires students and supports them in so many ways. But I think there's so much more to our role as a teacher. Like what are we doing in terms of the school? And if you are doing a great job in your classroom but the rest of the school is like a disaster, why are we not going to tell teachers, “Do something about that too.” Right? I get that the workload is a lot,

but I just think it's so interesting, even in the social justice program, we need to see students as agents of change. But we never have those conversations about like, "You should model how to be an agent of change within your own school." So, I still went in as a lead like, "OK I'm just gonna go with it and I'm just going to see what people did before me and try to see what I can do to improve." But it was never like, "I have these skills," or "I can be a teacher-leader." It was more like, "I'm going to figure it out," you know?

By deciding not to prioritize skills and mindsets that teachers need to be leaders within site decision-making, credential programs put teachers at an initial disadvantage that must be overcome. In order to confidently lead change efforts at a school, teachers need advocacy and organizing skills that they can employ to bring peers on board and persist through challenges encountered in collective decision-making. While they can develop abilities through mentorship, training and experience, teachers' lack of preparation for decision-making roles within credential programs becomes a deficit that must be remedied instead of their schooling being a potential asset that strengthens their participation in site governance.

Mistrust

Another manner in which prior experience can be detrimental to teachers' role in school-level decision-making at the research site is when teachers view collaboration with other stakeholders through a lens acquired from negative interactions at previous workplaces. Middle school teacher Iris described how mistrust can make it harder for teachers to make progress toward shared goals within school governance:

And then another challenge is just how historically adversarial the relationship has been between teachers and admin in this district, that a lot of teachers come in just kind of assuming that they need to take an adversarial attitude. And I totally get that because I was out there in that district and it's like that, but for people to kind of unlearn that stuff when they get with us and realize that actually everybody really is on the same team and you don't have to assume that decisions are being made in order to leave you out or in order to deprofessionalize you, which is how it works in the rest of the district. That's been an obstacle that we've worked with because sometimes people want to challenge stuff and it's just like,

"You don't need to challenge this." What you need to have happen is you need to understand the entire basis for the decision-making that happened.

While a critical perspective can be beneficial to the decision-making process as teachers identify areas for improvement, skepticism without commitment to collective problem-solving can throw a wrench into efforts to effect positive change on school-level issues. When mistrust presents itself, lead teachers can engage in an onboarding process with new staff to integrate them into the democratic decision-making culture at the school. While teachers at the research site have tools at their disposal to address mistrust amongst colleagues, tackling this impediment to decision-making requires time and energy that take away from other collective priorities. Other interviewees shared examples of one issue monopolizing teacher time within decision-making due to colleagues arriving from schools with insufficient educator role in site governance and lacking trust in administrator transparency and willingness to share leadership.

Teachers did report, however, that the schoolwide culture at the school is one of respect for teachers as professionals who are capable of maintaining a significant role in site decision-making. Counselor Danielle explained how trusting teachers to apply their knowledge and experience yields positive outcomes within collective problem-solving:

I think there's just a real feeling of trust here. One of the things that [former principal] imparted in us our first year was we really have to trust each other and give each other the benefit of the doubt. And I find as a staff we're at our best when we do that. Like any long-term relationship, there's moments where it's less prevalent than it should be. And even I have to check myself sometimes like, "Okay. Am I behaving emotionally or am I giving them the benefit of the doubt?" And so, I've gotten a lot better at doing that because a lot of times, when we don't, it's our own personal insecurities. It has nothing to do with the other person. But when we do that is when we function the best. That's when we can each put out our own ideas and get the best responses and so some things develop then in a very organic way as a result. But that level of respect is really important. And I think it kind of permeates into other areas of our school. I think that might be one reason why there's just a feeling of respect overall here for the most part.

Danielle details the potential of trust to contribute to conditions conducive to democratic collaboration in which teachers have equal voice and authority. When mistrust prevails, teachers cannot fully advance shared goals because their effectiveness is dependent on relationships with other stakeholders. By establishing mutual trust, teachers create an environment that fosters vulnerability and openness, providing the ideal circumstances for deeper dialogue and collective problem-solving.

Summary

These findings detail the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an educator-run school. Qualitative data compiled through interviews, observations of decision-making meetings and gathering of site documents clarified how structural and cultural systems shaped and are shaped by teachers' participation in site decision-making. Themes that emerged from the data were (1) the role of teachers in site governance, (2) structural and cultural systems that support teachers' participation in decision-making, and (3) structural and cultural systems that hinder teachers' participation in decision-making. Analysis of the themes and categories that surfaced from the data shed light on the relationship between formal, prescribed decision-making authority and the dynamics of educator-run school governance in practice.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview of the Study

This study explored the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance at an educator-run school. In this study, teachers' role in school governance was operationalized using the Teacher-Powered Schools areas of collective autonomy that cover a broad range of school operations including: (1) selecting colleagues, leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff; allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions), (2) evaluating and coaching colleagues, (3) determining the site budget, (4) determining the learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology) and professional development, (5) setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year) and work hours, (6) setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.), and (7) determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures. Dahl's (1989) criteria for the depth of decision-making practices was also employed as a lens for analysis including (1) equal voice and authority over full scope of school operations, (2) equal access to information needed to make democratic decisions (enlightened understanding), and (3) full and equal participation in the decision-making process. Finally, using Archer's (1995) definitions, structural systems or formal schema are conceptualized as the policies and responsibilities provided by contracts and governing documents, while cultural systems or informal schema are made up of the organic routines, language (verbal and non-verbal) and norms that govern interactions and access to resources.

To determine how structural and cultural systems impact teachers' role in site decision-making, the following research questions were utilized:

RQ: What is the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school?

1. What is the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in decision-making at an educator-run school?
 - a. How do structural and cultural systems support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making?
 - b. Do teachers shape structural and cultural systems that mediate site decision-making? If so, how?
2. Are there differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff in school governance?

To delve into these questions, interviews, observations and the gathering of site documents were conducted. Interview transcripts were open coded to highlight themes relevant to areas of teacher collective autonomy and the factors that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In order to fully explore the research questions, fieldnotes from observations and analysis of gathered documents were used to triangulate with themes that arose from the interviews. Themes that emerged after the first round of open coding were grouped according to the research question and sub-questions.

Discussion of Findings

This study revealed key findings on the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school and the structural and cultural systems that support or hinder teachers' participation in school-level decision-making. The following sections will detail the relationship between prescribed authority and site democratic decision-making dynamics in practice and how this informs three areas of focus for the sustainable implementation of the educator-run governance

model: (1) rotating leadership, (2) targeted distribution of resources, and (3) managing relationships with governing institutions.

Systems that Promote Rotating Leadership

Rotating leadership emerged from interviews and observations as a key component driving the sustainability of the educator-run governance model due to its role in democratizing decision-making through distributing voice and authority broadly amongst the teaching staff (Grubb & Flessa, 2009; Harris, 2003). Systems that support rotating leadership are a culture that assumes significant teacher participation in school-level decisions, mentoring of new leaders and protocols that facilitate horizontal decision-making.

At the research site, a culture permeates the organization that nurtures the expectation that all stakeholders are capable of leading. Although some are initially uncomfortable assuming roles of greater participation in school governance, they are surrounded by colleagues who voice collective values of bottom-up decision-making. Teachers understand that the strength and sustainability of their empowerment within school-level decisions is reliant on transitions between leaders as veterans step down and new staff take their place. When teachers see smooth and regular rotations in leadership, they reported being motivated to take on positions of greater responsibility. Even before teachers take on greater decision-making roles within school governance, the culture that prioritizes teachers' voice and authority fosters opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful dialogue around key areas of collective autonomy. Navigating the challenges of problem-solving critical issues with colleagues provides the real-world training that teachers need to feel confident rotating into school leadership positions.

Veteran teachers assist the transition to new leadership by serving in a mentor role and coaching colleagues through the process. Lead teachers have defined responsibilities to support

peers in dens, divisions and departments in cultivating their collective leadership abilities. Mentors create environments in which problems in individual classrooms are seen as opportunities to build ones' leadership capacity by collaborating on potential solutions. Through this non-judgmental coaching relationship, mentees are prepared to engage with lead teachers and other staff in collaboration on school-level decisions. Lead teachers inculcate skills such as agenda-setting and facilitation through modeling meeting procedures and walking mentees through methods to tackle the challenges they experience in school governance. Interviewees expressed that gaining experience with decision-making protocols with the guidance of veteran and lead teachers made them less apprehensive about taking on positions of increased responsibility within the school (Kerchner & Mulfinger, 2010; Gajda & Koliba, 2008).

Having decision-making protocols in place such as the Fist to Five consensus method and improvement science protocols like the process map, fishbone diagram and diver diagram help facilitate transitions to new teacher leaders as a solid foundation is already established that is familiar to educators. For those who are anxious about taking on a greater role in school-level decisions, protocols are a map that helps one move through new terrain and act with greater assurance. Grassroots teacher leaders in LAUSD helped to introduce democratic decision-making protocols to their colleagues and educators also benefited from Adaptive Schools trainings that focused on specific protocols that could be implemented in governing bodies. Trust building protocols such as check-ins and community circles assist in integrating new teacher leaders into decision-making groups by creating the conditions that allow them to be vulnerable by seeing others doing the same. Even though protocols for collaborating with peers were not a feature of the teacher credential programs of those interviewed, they are essential to decision-making interactions at a school with collective leadership at its core. Protocols democratize

decision-making spaces by giving veteran and new leaders alike the tools they need to participate with equal voice and authority, thus supporting rotating leadership as a key component of the educator-run governance model.

Systems that Impede Rotating Leadership

Rotating leadership is a contributor to the sustainability of the significant teacher role in site decision-making at the school by ensuring that there is a constant flow of educators with the energy and ability to take on greater responsibilities. There are, however, factors in place at the school that are detrimental to rotating leadership including lack of preparation and the time commitment involved in formal leadership roles.

When teacher credential programs do not adequately prepare new teachers to be leaders in school governance, an obstacle that must be overcome is placed in the path of educators who seek more voice and authority in school-level decisions. Many interviewees expressed that teacher credential programs focused on tools to develop relationships with students and less so with abilities that aid leading collaboration with peers, which aligns with research on the topic (Bond, 2011; Kahne & Westheimer, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Rotating leadership requires teachers who see themselves as agents of change in a larger system versus solely with students in their own classroom. While the research site has systems in place to nurture leadership mindsets within the teaching staff, they must collectively invest finite time and energy in addressing the lack of preparation in school governance that characterizes many teachers who start at the school. Trainings provided through the school on leadership skills were seen as critical to the preparation of new leaders but are not currently universal, limiting the capacity of some dens, divisions and departments to transition lead teachers.

Another way in which limited time negatively impacts rotating leadership is when teachers have existing commitments that hinder their full and effective participation in site decision-making (Bierly et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2017; Harris, 2003). Lead teacher meetings at the school are every other week on Friday afternoons and often this is not enough time to adequately cover all items on the agenda. There is a stipend for lead teachers, but this is not a sufficient incentive for some to sacrifice time with family or other priorities such as graduate degrees. Lead teachers have the same course load as other educators and must plan meetings and professional development on top of their instructional responsibilities. Interviewees expressed that this limits the pool of educators who can commit themselves to the greater demands on their time associated with being a lead teacher. In response to this limiting factor, some suggested modifying structures at the school to allow for more voices to be integrated into all stages of site decision-making regardless of personal commitments which would mitigate an impediment to the sustainability of rotating leadership.

Targeted Distribution of Resources Supporting Sustainability of Educator-Run Governance Model

Teachers' ability to determine how resources such as release time and the school budget are targeted and utilized is essential to preserving the integrity of the educator-run governance model. When teachers have authority to direct resources to support common goals, they are invested in seeing collective decisions through the full cycle of implementation, reflection and refinement, a phenomenon that has been widely observed by researchers (Farris-Berg et al., 2012; White, 1992). Teachers are willing to share responsibility for school practices that they had an equal role in prioritizing through the school budget and defining how funds will be employed to support a particular outcome.

When the school budget is within the purview of teacher leaders, they can direct funds toward fulfilling instructional goals that are teacher-driven. Having the capacity to directly impact the classrooms where teachers do the bulk of their work fosters teacher commitment to the school and shared vision. Budget surveys are completed by staff at the school which democratize the budget decision-making process by making collective priorities transparent. If teachers want to move in a particular direction on learning programs, they have equal voice and authority within governance over staffing to support this aim. Teachers can also apportion school budget funds for additional release time in which teachers can set the agenda and focus on professional development aligned with curricular objectives. Finally, lead teachers who facilitate team planning on learning programs are supported in taking on additional responsibilities through a yearly stipend.

Authority within the area of collective autonomy of professional development is supported by teachers' capacity to determine when and how release time is utilized. Teachers at the school have the ability to target release time for collaborating on instruction, improvement science study cycles and other areas that directly impact student outcomes. When the budget is allocated for substitute teachers that allow educators to meet collectively during school hours, teachers ensure that this inclusive space is efficiently utilized and teacher-driven. On Wednesdays, meetings are scheduled during a shortened day and the Leadership Team determines how professional development is integrated into the agenda. With sufficient time dedicated to collective problem-solving, staff can engage in a more meaningful, iterative dialogue that yields carefully refined practices with greater commitment from stakeholders. Teachers have identified when there has not been sufficient time in the weekly schedule for collaboration on pressing issues and have successfully advocated for additional time to be

allocated. While interviewees expressed that the current amount of structured time dedicated to professional development is not sufficient to fully carry out all elements of their collective vision, teachers are willing to be flexible, persist and work within structural constraints that they had equal voice and authority in shaping.

Distribution of Resources as a Barrier to Sustainability of Educator-Run Governance Model

Sometimes, however, no amount of teachers' participation in site decision-making can overcome barriers imposed by the structure of the school budget. When this is the case, teachers' collective priorities must be shifted or scaled back to fit the parameters determined by student daily attendance and other sources of funding. Interviewees gave examples of class sizes being higher than ideal for implementing particular curricular goals due to limited numbers of teachers being allocated to the site or collective study cycle release days being reduced. Teachers respond to budget constraints by adding responsibilities to their already packed schedules and while this may be a temporary workaround, it is unsustainable over time as it limits the number of teachers who can maintain significant roles in school-level decision-making. Through their union, teachers are advocating for statewide increases in funding that provide sufficient resources to fully implement site goals. Interviewees expressed an interest in budgeting for additional prep periods dedicated to lead teacher responsibilities such as coaching if the total budget of the school was increased to support this aim without needing to sacrifice funding for other critical areas of need.

Managing Relationship with the District

The research site's relationship with the school district is structured by its MOU and also by the nature of interactions between administrators and other site leaders with key district decision-makers. The school district has the capability to impede collective teacher priorities and

therefore the ability of school staff to deftly manage the relationship with the district is an important contributor to maintaining the strength of the educator-run governance model. While the district is generally supportive of pilot schools with teacher authority in school-level decisions, sometimes the district has competing agendas that take precedence over respecting the autonomy of an individual school site. When this happens, administrators can serve as a vital bulwark against attempts by the district to impose policies that run counter to the site's collective vision (Grubb & Flessa, 2009; DeMatthews, 2014; King et al., 1996; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Administrators are in a delicate position because they do not share the same rights and protections that teachers are guaranteed with their collective bargaining agreement and can potentially face severe consequences if it is deemed that they acted in a way that does not align with district priorities. At the research site, administrators believe in the educator-run philosophy as a best practice that democratizes decision-making and elevates the voices of those who possess knowledge and experience gained from working closely with students and families. Administrators must balance defending the autonomy of decision-making outcomes at the school with the need to manage the relationship with supervising staff at the district. Tipping the scale too far in either direction can jeopardize the entire educator-run governance model at the site. If administrators are too forceful in advocating for the preservation of teacher-driven practices at the expense of competing district initiatives, superiors from outside the school can attempt to take action to neutralize teacher preferences and role in site decision-making. If site administrators are hesitant to push back against district personnel who are opposed to teachers' collective objectives, teachers who see their collaborative work being stifled might waver in their commitment to participation in school governance. Interviewees shared that ideally teachers,

administrators and other stakeholders such as parents and students are united in their defense of practices that emerge from democratic decision-making at the site and advocacy becomes a collective effort that is more likely to sway skeptics at the district level.

An impediment to the sustainable role of teachers in decision-making can be their inconsistent role when engaging with district decision-makers. Responsibilities outside the job description of teachers such as engaging with administrators at other sites and making personnel decisions are reserved for site administrators. While teachers' voice is included in dialogue on contentious issues that impact the implementation of teachers' priorities, this participation is sometimes through representatives and not comparable to the equal voice and authority that teachers benefit from within site decision-making. When teachers have collective power to guard against intrusions by the district in the implementation of their shared objectives, sometimes they choose to sacrifice one priority for the sake of preserving another. This strategy is used reluctantly and sparingly, however, because if employed frequently, it slowly chips away at teacher confidence in the integrity of their participation in site decision-making. As district representatives often interpret collective autonomies to the detriment of teacher role in school governance, educators must invest time and energy that could be dedicated to other collective projects in championing their school governance model.

Implications for Expanding the Educator-Run Governance Model

When more voices are included in school-level decision-making, the policies and practices that emerge are more nuanced due to the multiple lenses employed in the collaborative conversation. The educator-run governance model benefits from the application of educators' knowledge and experience gained working closely with students and families to collective problem-solving that yields decisions tied to existing needs. Findings from this study explore the

structural and cultural systems that support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making and shed light on factors that would facilitate or impede the expansion of the educator-run school governance model.

Schools with democratic governance structures such as those identified by Teacher-Powered Schools are a small but growing segment of the national public school landscape and findings from this study suggest that contributors to the expansion of educator-run schools include the pilot school model, labor and community schools movements and coalitions with families and community allies. Efforts to extend the educator-run school model to more sites can be hampered by political forces aligned against democratic site decision-making and traditional mindsets on the roles of teachers and administrators.

Supporting the Expansion of Educator-Run Schools

As a pilot school within LAUSD, the research site benefits from autonomy to innovate with its governance structure and modify sections of the teachers' contract through its Elect-to-Work Agreement. Teachers at the school are active union members who have the same rights and protections as other educators in the district. The pilot school concept that was pioneered in Boston before Los Angeles supports the sustainability of the educator-run model by providing flexibility to tailor the school's model to meet community needs such as the dual language programs at the research site and also attract and retain teachers committed to a common vision through the provisions in the union contract (Tung et al., 2006). Many of the pilot schools in Boston and LAUSD are teacher-powered and were started by teams of educators committed to employing a governance structure that would yield better student outcomes through democratic collaboration within the areas of collective autonomy. The pilot school model is a promising avenue for like-minded union educators in other districts to take as it can be enacted through a

contract provision or a memorandum of understanding. Once pilot educator-run schools are secured and producing desired results, the potential exists to scale out elements of the model to other schools in the district such as teacher purview over curriculum, assessments, evaluation and staffing.

One result of UTLA's historic strike in January 2019 was winning an article in their contract that funds an additional 30 community schools in the district with shared leadership. Schools that previously had limited teacher decision-making role in key school-level areas can apply to be converted into educator-run community schools that emulate the research site's governance model. The community schools strategy is gathering momentum nationwide and is a strategic priority for the National Education Association that is carried out through grants to local unions to build coalitions and mount campaigns. Teachers from the research site are part of the district's community schools consortium where they are co-constructing a set of common guiding principles and sharing best practices between member schools. This is a space in which staff at the research site can play a mentorship role in articulating the educator-run model to newer schools in the consortium as an essential element of the shared leadership community schools pillar (Frankl, 2016; Oakes et al., 2017). Within the community schools consortium and the Teacher-Powered Schools network, the research site has an opportunity to share structural and cultural systems that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance and provide assistance to other schools at various stages of implementation of the educator-run model.

For educator-run schools to gain more widespread support, there needs to be greater public understanding of their mission to democratize site decision-making by uplifting the voices of not only teachers, but other stakeholders such as parents, students and community members. The research site's union parent liaison, elementary teacher Emma, works to find common issues

for teachers and parents to collectively advocate for such as the need for more janitors at the school. During UTLA's strike, twice as many people showed up to rallies as the number of members in their union and parent and community support was integral to moving the school board on their demands for sufficient staffing to provide the services that students deserve (Dingerson, 2019). Expanding the educator-run governance model to a larger segment of public schools would be facilitated by similar labor-community-family coalitions that view democratic decision-making within the areas of collective autonomy as a non-negotiable. This situates advocates for educator-run schools as members of larger historical and global movements for educational equity and democratic workplaces.

Challenges to the Expansion of Educator-Run Schools

While advocates of a more significant teachers' role in school governance are well-organized and influencing greater adoption of the model, powerful forces are arrayed against the expansion of worker decision-making authority. Neoliberal education reformers view union educators and their political muscle as obstacles to the implementation of an agenda that includes the privatization of public education through charter schools and the centralization of power at the top of the leadership hierarchy within organizations (Webb et al., 2009). Union, educator-run schools represent a direct threat to the interests of these reformers through the example they provide of practices being developed organically at the grassroots level with democratic collaboration instead of implementing top-down, one-size-fits-all mandates. Educators at the research site described many instances of struggles with those who sought to reduce teacher role in school-level decisions or neutralize collective priorities. Their experience with defeating opponents of horizontal leadership as part of larger coalitions with families, community allies

and fellow union members is instructive for other schools and groups of educators who are facing the same challenges.

Even though the models of shared leadership and site based management have a long history in education reform circles, the large majority of public schools have hierarchical governance structures and the educator-run schools movement is still relatively small in comparison (Ingersoll, 2012; Duffett et al., 2008; Sparks & Malkus, 2015; Teacher-Powered Schools, 2017). As some interviewees at the research site recounted, initially the idea of taking on additional governing responsibilities such as determining the composition of staff and evaluating peers on top of already time-consuming instructional duties is intimidating. Administrators also expressed concerns that sometimes educators who advocate for shared authority are not willing to accept commensurate shared responsibility when collective decisions do not achieve intended outcomes. To achieve greater acceptance of the ideals of educator-run schools, a shift in mindset of teachers and administrators is warranted that goes beyond the traditional thinking on the roles of a worker and boss. If stakeholders are able to see each other as equal partners committed to implementing a collective vision through iterative problem-solving that requires trust, vulnerability and persistence to push through moments of conflict, their example and its dissemination to a wider audience can fuel the expansion of the educator-run governance model.

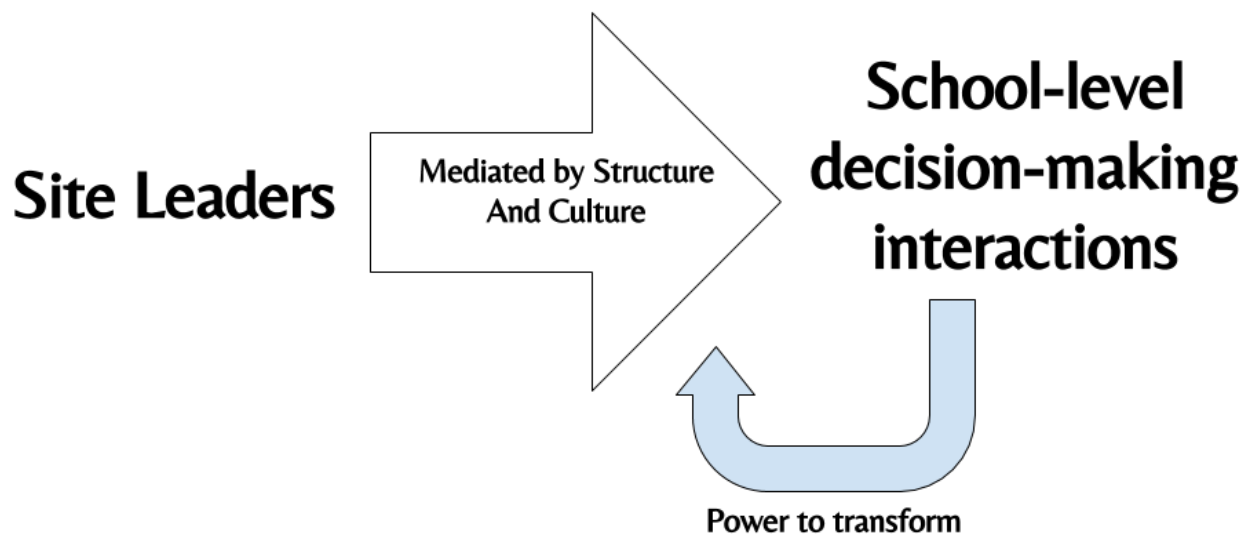
Implications for Interaction between Structure, Culture and Teacher Role in Site

Governance

Changing mindsets around the capacity of teachers to maintain a significant role in site governance is a prerequisite to thinking beyond the constraints imposed by existing systems. Critical realist social theory holds that the structural and cultural systems that compose the

medium that guides decision-making interactions are shaped by the practice of agency in a mutually constitutive relationship (Archer, 2000). While there is a tendency to view structural systems as fixed, empowered actors driven by a collective vision have the ability to change the rules of engagement and mold systems to meet the unique needs of their constituencies. The findings from the research site demonstrated that teachers regularly refused to accept the status quo and found creative solutions to move past obstacles that others considered to be insurmountable. The shaping of structural and cultural systems by teacher leaders occurred in many spaces including but not limited to the union, participation in leadership bodies, professional learning communities and through engagement with parents and community organizations. When acting in coalition with other key stakeholders that shared their democratic, student-centered values, teachers at the pilot school consolidated the collective power needed to bend systems to their will in the service of common objectives.

Figure 1: Power of Interactions to Transform Structural and Cultural Systems Conceptual Model



(Sewell, 1992; Archer, 2000; Spillane, 2012)

Implications for Future Research

This study detailed the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school and the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' participation in school-level decisions. Findings suggest that governing documents that support significant teachers' role in school-level decisions are the pilot school agreement and especially the Elect-to-Work Agreement with its annual teacher-driven revisiting and refinement. Governing bodies that promote significant teacher participation in site decision-making at the research site are the Leadership Team, Operations Team, dens, divisions and departments which feature educator-led decision-making processes. Representative leadership, rotating leadership and protocols assist in democratizing decision-making at the school by providing transparent structures to guide selection of leaders and horizontal collaboration. Cultural systems that support significant teachers' role in school-level decisions are common values, collaboration, sense of ownership, peer accountability, mentoring and organizing skills. Systems that hinder teachers' participation in school governance are legal, district and budget constraints, lack of preparation and mistrust. When decision-making interactions were observed, educators were able to overcome some of the impediments listed above by harnessing mutual respect and shared accountability with administrators and peers to persist through conflict and pursue a common vision.

As the case study was conducted at a single school site, further research is warranted to shed light on whether the structural and cultural systems identified play a similar role in supporting or hindering teachers' participation in decision-making at other sites. The research site has been in existence for over 10 years and added an Upper middle and high school a few years after the opening of the Lower School. This unique configuration and progression of events would suggest that research on other educator-run schools with less years of operation, different

grade spans and distinct missions might yield alternative systems that impact teachers' role in school-level decisions.

The structure of the Leadership Team is not a universal feature of educator-run schools and is dependent on administrators who are comfortable sharing decision-making power. While administrators with this mindset are not unique to the research site, additional research on governing bodies at other educator-run schools would provide insight on structures that facilitate a significant teacher role in site decision-making in relation to other actors in these spaces. In order to create more sustainable models for empowering teachers in school governance, structures for democratic decision-making should be immune to the effects of variations in the personalities of the leaders involved. By studying schools that represent a wide spectrum of decision-making structures, a unifying grounded theory of democratic collaboration can be synthesized through identifying commonalities that support significant educator participation in school governance in practice.

This study was carried out in the build up to UTLA's historic strike that the teachers at the research site actively participated in organizing. There was a palpable sense of anxiety over the potential outcome of their collective action but an even greater sense of solidarity between educators at the site and between teachers, families and community allies. Those interviewed made ready connections between the culture of educator empowerment at their site and the larger demands of their union for greater teacher and community voice in district decision-making processes. Research at other educator-run schools with lower levels of union engagement would provide a more nuanced understanding of how greater teacher participation in school-level decisions can be enacted with or without the benefit of the vibrant movement for democratic school governance that the research site supports as a critical node in the network.

Conclusion

The rise of neoliberal reforms in the United States has created an environment that has pushed K-12 schools to become more hierarchical and less democratic spaces, especially those serving urban, high-poverty populations. Students most in need of targeted interventions developed by teams of educators empowered to collectively problem-solve are those least likely to learn in schools with horizontal decision-making structures. There is an impetus for the expansion of the educator-run governance model that secures equal voice and authority in school-level decisions to those who work closest with students and families. Gaining an understanding of the dynamics of cultivating structural and cultural systems that support teachers' participation in site decision-making and neutralizing systems that hinder teachers' role in school governance is a potent strategy for scaling out the tenets of democratic collaboration even to institutions that do not identify as being "educator-run." As the model is potentially expanded to more school sites, the student outcomes associated with a significant teacher role in school-level decision-making should also be evidenced on a greater scale including greater academic achievement and graduation rates, sense of belonging, collaboration, critical thinking and empowerment (Ingersoll et al., 2017; Lee & Smith, 1996; Ouchi & Segal, 2003; Farris-Berg et al., 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Rubinstein, 2014; Ingersoll, 2003; Dewey, 1975; Higgs & McMillan, 2006).

Employing a qualitative approach, this study identified the UTLA teachers' union and the partner university as key allies in promoting the sustainability of the educator-run model. Teachers gained leadership skills through participation in union activities that they applied to their governance work at the research site. Issues that arise from day-to-day work at the school are often dialogued first in union spaces and collective proposals emerge that give educators

greater weight in decision-making bodies. Teachers feel more confident defending positions that are contested when they know that the process of collective problem-solving yielded the commitment of their fellow union members.

The partner university, working through the university-assisted community school model (Quartz et al., 2017), has been able to facilitate grants over the years that provide resources such as release time and trainings needed to create spaces for democratic collaboration and skills to lead horizontal decision-making. Student teachers from the partner university are integrated into the educator-run governance model and gain knowledge and experience that, when they continue at the research site, prepare them to meaningfully engage in interactions around school-level decisions. When the collective decisions that emerge from teachers' participation within the areas of collective autonomy has been challenged by district representatives, allies at the partner university have worked through multiple channels to advocate for respecting the integrity of the site's decision-making process.

Mentoring and continuity of personnel were determined to be cultural systems that supported a significant teacher role in school governance. Trainings supplied through the relationship with the partner university gave lead teachers concrete methods for guiding the decision-making process with their teams and developing their colleague's leadership skills. Mentor teachers also engage in the socio-emotional work of encouraging peers to persist in collaborative problem-solving through fostering confidence and comfort with vulnerability. Regular check-ins with lead teachers give mentees opportunities to express concerns with implementing collective decisions and workshop issues in a safe space before engaging with larger decision-making bodies. Finally, lead teachers help mentor the next generation of leaders

by easing their transition into their new role through modeling governance abilities such as agenda-setting and facilitation.

A major contributor to the sustainability of the educator-run governance model at the research site is the continuity of personnel at the school including teachers and administrators. A substantial number of those who founded the school and are passionate about democratic decision-making have chosen to stay at the school, strengthening the institutional memory that is leveraged when problems arise and no clear path to resolution is evident. Veterans of democratic collaboration are able to provide insight into protocol that would suit a particular decision-making interaction and are torchbearers for the expectation of teacher leadership, leading through their example of collectively persisting through challenging moments and, in the process, fortifying the teachers' role in school governance.

From student teachers to seasoned administrators, the staff of the research site and their institutional allies are the living embodiment of the quote from the anthropologist Margaret Mead that urged us to “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” By pursuing the ideal of equal teacher role within site-level decision-making, the research site resisted the prevailing momentum and forged a new path alongside allies in the educator-run schools movement, continuing to inspire and influence educational changemakers dedicated to the values of democracy and equity.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER LEADERS

Exploring the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance

Date	
Time of Interview	
Place	
Interviewer	
Participant	
Title	
School	

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship between decision-making structures and teachers' role in school governance.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

Our interview today will last approximately 30 minutes to one hour during which I will be asking you about your experience working at this school.

[review aspects of consent form]

*You completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ____Yes
____No*

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recording or keep something you said off the record. Your interview data will be kept confidential. I will be the only one who will listen to and transcribe the information you provide. The audio will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than May 2019.

If no: *Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.*

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I will be more than happy to answer your questions.

The following sources were used to inform interview questions:

Teacher Collective Autonomy Survey (Farris-Berg et al., 2012).

Motivation to influence one's school or community, socio-political behavior, perceived control and participatory behavior (Ozer & Douglas, 2013)

Motivation and critical action (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016)

Problem-Solving Efficacy (Baker & Brookins, 2014)

Semi-structured Interview Questions

These questions will be asked during interviews with teacher leaders. Questions are ordered by importance and not all questions will be covered during the interview. Follow-up questions for each area of collective autonomy are included and will be asked when interview participants give examples related to that area.

RQ: What is the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school?

1. What is the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in decision-making at an educator-run school?
 - a. How do structural and cultural systems support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making in an educator-run school?
 - b. Do teachers shape structural and cultural systems that guide site decision-making? If so, how?
2. Are there differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff in school governance?

I would like to start by learning a little about your background and what attracted you to work at this school.

1. How long have you been teaching and how did you start teaching?
2. Tell me about what attracted you to work at this school.

I'd like to learn more about the decision-making role of teachers at your school.

3. Were you aware before you came to this school about the role of teachers? If so, was this a factor in your decision to work here? Why or why not?
4. How would you describe the decision-making role of teachers at this school? Can you give an example?
5. How does the decision-making role of teachers at this school compare with other settings where you have worked?

6. Do teachers have the ability to change the structures that guide decision-making? If so, can you give an example?
7. Who are others that have an important role in site decision-making? Do teachers have an equitable decision-making role in comparison? Can you give an example?

I am also interested in the teacher decision-making role in practice at your site.

8. Can you describe an instance when you had influence over a school-level decision?
 - a. Was there pushback from administration or other staff when you advocated for a particular course of action? If so, how did you overcome this?
 - b. What was the outcome?
9. Could you draw a map of how a school-level decision is made?
 - a. Can you indicate where you participate in this process?
 1. Ask questions with decision map as a conversation piece.
 2. Can you describe a time when you participated at this step?
 - i. Did your idea move forward? Why or why not?
 - ii. How was your idea received by non-classroom staff?
 - iii. What was your decision-making role at this step? How did this compare with non-classroom staff? What did the decision-making interactions with non-classroom staff look like?
 - iv. What was the role of other teachers?
 - A. (If there is a difference in roles) What do you think accounts for the difference in roles?

I would also like to learn about factors that support or hinder teachers' role in decision-making at your school.

10. What supports the role of teachers in school-level decisions at this school? Can you give an example?
11. What challenges have you experienced in participating in school-level decision-making? What obstacles have you had to overcome?

I would like to end by asking you to reflect on what others could learn from your experience.

12. Were you prepared for your role in school-level decision-making before working here? Why or why not? What do you wish you knew more about?
13. What advice would you give to educators at other sites who are looking to implement a greater teacher role in school-level decisions?

Areas for follow-up questions for each question in the protocol

- a. *Whether or not teachers experience collective autonomy over:*
- b. *Factors that support or hinder teachers' role in:*
- c. *Teachers' role in shaping cultural and structural systems that influence:*

Selecting colleagues, leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff; allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions)

- Is there autonomy to determine the composition of school staff? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
 - How are leaders determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
 - Is there a process for dismissal? If so, what is the teachers' role?

Evaluating and coaching colleagues

- What is the teachers' role in evaluation of colleagues and leaders?
- Does coaching or mentoring occur at this school? If so, what is the teachers' role in the process?
- Are teachers in this school willing and able to hold each other accountable? If so, how?

Determining site budget

- Do teachers have a voice in determining how to allocate the site budget? If so, how?
 - Can you give an example of your participation?

Determining learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology), professional development

- How is the learning program determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
- What helped you learn about educator-led school governance?
 - How is democratic governance communicated or taught to new teachers?
 - Is there intentional cultivation of skills needed for democratic governance amongst the teaching staff? If so, how?
 - What training is required for teachers to take on responsibilities traditionally handled by administrators?

Setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year), work hours

- Is there autonomy to set school hours?
 - Length of the school year?
 - Work hours?
 - What is the teachers' role in this process?

Setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.)

- Are teachers included in setting school goals? If so, how?

- What is the teachers' role in determining the disciplinary protocol? Can you provide an example?
- How is the vision for parent/community determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?

Determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures

- Is data used to evaluate progress toward school goals? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
- Is there autonomy to determine internal assessments of student academic progress? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SITE ADMINISTRATORS

Exploring the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance

Date	
Time of Interview	
Place	
Interviewer	
Participant	
Title	
School	

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to better understand the decision-making role of teachers in school governance.

Your interview data will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will listen to and transcribe the information you provide. The audio will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than May 2019.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

The following sources were used to inform interview questions:

Teacher Collective Autonomy Survey (Farris-Berg et al., 2012).

Motivation to influence one's school or community, socio-political behavior, perceived control and participatory behavior (Ozer & Douglas, 2013)

Motivation and critical action (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016)

Problem-Solving Efficacy (Baker & Brookins, 2014)

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Questions such as these will be asked during interviews with site leaders.

RQ: What is the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school?

1. What is the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in decision-making at an educator-run school?
 - a. How do structural and cultural systems support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making in an educator-run school?
 - b. Do teachers shape structural and cultural systems that guide site decision-making? If so, how?
2. Are there differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff in school governance?

I would like to start by learning a little about your background and what attracted you to work at this school.

1. What attracted you to work at this school?
2. Were you aware before you came to this school about the role of teachers? If so, was this a factor in your decision to work here? Why or why not?

I'd like to learn more about the decision-making role of teachers at your school.

3. How would you describe the decision-making role of teachers at this school? Can you give an example?
4. How does the decision-making role of teachers at this school compare with other settings where you have worked?
5. Do teachers have the power to change the structures that guide decision-making? If so, can you give an example?
6. Do you support teachers' participation in school-level decision-making? If so, how?

I am also interested in the teacher decision-making role in practice at your site.

7. Can you describe an instance when teachers had school-level decision-making influence?
 - a. Was there any pushback from administration or other staff when this particular course of action was advocated?
 - b. What was the outcome?
8. Could you draw a map of how a school-level decision is made? Can you indicate where you participate in this process?
 - a. Ask questions with decision map as a conversation piece.
 - i. Can you describe a time when a teacher participated at this step?
 - A. Did the idea move forward? Why or why not?
 - B. How was the idea received by non-classroom staff?
 - C. What was the teacher decision-making role at this step? How did this compare with non-classroom staff? What did the decision-making interactions between teachers and non-classroom staff look like?

I would also like to learn about factors that support or hinder teachers' role in decision-making at your school.

9. What supports the role of teachers in school-level decisions at this school? Can you give an example?
10. What challenges have teachers experienced in participating in school-level decision-making? What obstacles have teachers had to overcome?
11. Who are others that have an important role in site decision-making? Do teachers have an equitable decision-making role in comparison? Can you give an example?

I would like to end by asking you to reflect on what others could learn from your experience.

12. Are teachers prepared for their role in influencing key areas of school-level policy and practice at this school? Why or why not?
13. What advice would you give to educators at other sites who are looking to implement a greater teacher role in school-level decisions?

Areas for follow-up for each question in the protocol

1. *Whether or not teachers experience collective autonomy over:*
2. *Factors that support or hinder teachers' role in:*
3. *Teachers' role in shaping cultural and structural systems that influence:*

Selecting colleagues, leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff, allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions)

- Is there autonomy to determine the composition of school staff? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
 - How are leaders determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
 - Is there a process for dismissal? If so, what is the teachers' role?

Evaluating and coaching colleagues

- What is the teachers' role in evaluation of colleagues and leaders?
- Does coaching or mentoring occur at this school? If so, what is the teachers' role in the process?
- Are teachers in this school willing and able to hold each other accountable? If so, how?

Determining site budget

- Do teachers have a voice in determining how to allocate the site budget? If so, how?
 - Can you give an example of your participation?

Determining learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology), professional development

- How is the learning program determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
- What helped you learn about educator-led school governance?
 - How is democratic governance communicated or taught to new teachers?
 - Is there intentional cultivation of skills needed for democratic governance amongst the teaching staff? If so, how?
 - What training is required for teachers to take on responsibilities traditionally handled by administrators?

Setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year), work hours

- Is there autonomy to set school hours?
 - Length of the school year?
 - Work hours?
 - What is the teachers' role in this process?

Setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.)

- Are teachers included in setting school goals? If so, how?
- What is the teachers' role in determining the disciplinary protocol? Can you provide an example?
- How is the vision for parent/community determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?

Determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures

- Is data used to evaluate progress toward school goals? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
- Is there autonomy to determine internal assessments of student academic progress? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?

APPENDIX C: SITE DECISION-MAKING INTERACTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Exploring the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance

Date	
Time of Observation	
Name of Group/Committee Observed	
Meeting Location	

The purpose of these observations is to explore the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teacher decision-making role in school governance. Specific examples of criteria are listed below. These are provided to guide the researcher and should not be considered the only possible manner in which the nature of structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in school governance could be evidenced.

RQ: What is the role of teachers in site governance at an educator-run school?

1. What is the relationship between structural and cultural systems and teachers' role in decision-making at an educator-run school?
 - a. How do structural and cultural systems support or hinder teachers' role in site decision-making in an educator-run school?
 - b. Do teachers shape structural and cultural systems that guide site decision-making? If so, how?
2. Are there differences in decision-making role between teachers and non-classroom staff in school governance?

Teachers' role in decision-making in comparison to non-classroom staff

- Teachers' voice and authority in school governance that can be leveraged to impact all key areas that influence school success
 - Teachers' voice in decision-making
 - Is the input of all participating teachers weighed equally by the other decision-makers?
 - How many times does the group incorporate the idea of an individual into final decision?
 - Who is leading the meeting? How much time to teachers talk in comparison to non-classroom staff?
 - Teacher decision-making authority over full scope of school operations

- Are there any key areas of school operations that are beyond the scope of teacher authority? How is this addressed in the meeting?
 - Are there differences in the decision-making role of teachers across the full scope of school governance?
 - How do teachers interact with non-classroom staff in school governance? What are the differences in decision-making roles?
- Teachers' role in all stages of the decision-making process
 - Are participating teachers included in the conversation and decision at all stages in the process?
 - How many times does each teacher participate? What is the nature of this participation?
- Teachers' access to financial and student outcome data and sensitive information about personnel during decision-making process

Factors that support or hinder teachers' role in school governance

- Structures and practices that support and hinder teachers' voice and authority over full scope of school operations
 - When are teachers able to influence final decisions about key areas of school operations?
 - When are teachers prevented from influencing final decisions about key areas of school operations?
- Role of teachers' expertise and knowledge of social, political and economic factors in student communities during decision-making process
 - How is this incorporated? Is it superficial or an integral part of the group's decision and school practices that result from meetings?

Teachers' role in shaping cultural and structural systems that guide site decision-making

- Teacher consciousness of their role in site decision-making
- Continual, iterative refinement of full and equal teacher participation in site decision-making process through reflection and accountability mechanisms
 - Formal and informal processes that promote or hinder teachers' voice in decision-making
 - Do teachers have a role in shaping formal and informal decision-making structures?
 - Space for reflection on teachers' role in school governance
 - How frequently does this occur? What is the nature of this conversation?
- Communication and cultivation of expectation and value of teacher full and equal participation in school governance
 - Is this instituted as part of the regular process? If so, how?
- Teacher sense of responsibility for full and equal participation in site decision-making
 - Is this explicit in meetings? If so, how?

1. Whether or not teachers experience collective autonomy over:

2. Factors that support or hinder teachers' role in:

3. Teachers' role in shaping cultural and structural systems that influence:

Selecting colleagues, leaders, transferring and/or terminating colleagues, setting staff pattern (including size of staff; allocation of personnel among teaching and other positions)

- Is there autonomy to determine the composition of school staff? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
 - How are leaders determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
 - Is there a process for dismissal? If so, what is the teachers' role?

Evaluating and coaching colleagues

- What is the teachers' role in evaluation of colleagues and leaders?
- Does coaching or mentoring occur at this school? If so, what is the teachers' role in the process?
- Are teachers in this school willing and able to hold each other accountable? If so, how?

Determining site budget

- Do teachers have a voice in determining how to allocate the site budget? If so, how?

Determining learning program (including teaching methods, curriculum, and technology), professional development

- How is the learning program determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?
- How is professional development determined? What is the teachers' role in the process?

Setting the schedule (of classes, of school hours, length of school year), work hours

- Is there autonomy to set school hours?
 - Length of the school year?
 - Work hours?
 - What is the teachers' role in this process?

Setting school-level policies (including disciplinary protocol, homework, etc.)

- Are teachers included in setting school goals? If so, how?
- What is the teachers' role in determining the disciplinary protocol?
- How is the vision for parent/community determined? What is the teachers' role in this process?

Determining whether to take, when to take, and how much to count district assessments, assessing school performance according to multiple measures

- Is data used to evaluate progress toward school goals? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?
- Is there autonomy to determine internal assessments of student academic progress? If so, what is the teachers' role in this process?

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