

Towards an Understanding of Dynamics among Teachers, Teacher Leaders, and Administrators in a Teacher-Led School Reform

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Introduction

Over the last three decades a great deal of professional development planning, implementation, and evaluation has moved towards the classroom (Garet et al., 2008). A major shift in the format of professional development occurred in the 1980s when educators began acknowledging teacher-led professional development as a legitimate way to improve teaching and learning via collaboration among teachers (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). In large part this legitimacy rests on the assumptions there is contextually specific knowledge one can only gain by engaging in the act of teaching in a given context and there are problems only practicing teachers in a given context will recognize and solve using context-specific solutions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In short, the relevance of external consultants in solving problems of practice to improve student learning came to be complemented, and in some instances substituted, by professional development planned, implemented, and evaluated by teacher leaders. As such, teacher leadership, particularly teacher leadership focused around professional development, is an important field of scholarly study.

Although different organizations have embraced teacher-led professional development for decades (e.g., Learning Forward, 2014) teacher leadership seems to be experiencing a renaissance. For instance, prominent national coalitions of educators and scholars in the United States have identified standards for teacher leadership (Teacher Leader Model Standards, 2012), federal funding has been earmarked for the expansion of teacher leadership opportunities (Teach to Lead, 2016), and non-government organizations have become involved in teacher leadership by funding select teachers to create systems-level solutions to educational problems (Centre for Teaching Quality, n.d.) or influence educational policymaking (Hope Street Group, n.d.). Furthermore, the status of teacher leadership has matured to the point that the American

Educational Research Association has formally recognizes this topic as a subset of teaching and teacher education (Schultz, 2016).

Our work contributes to this area of teacher-led professional development research in two main ways. One contribution is the identification of perceptions arising from teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators within the context of teacher-led school reform efforts where professional development and implementation support provided by the teacher leaders is a critical component of the reform. Although previous works have examined how one or two of these role groups perceive teacher leadership (e.g. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; de Lima, 2001) few published works have drawn upon all three perspectives. The absence of any perspective makes it unclear if views expressed by one group are shared across other key role groups to school reforms. Using a dataset of over 200 interviews and focus groups across three urban high schools, we learn that to omit any perspective is to omit an important viewpoint of teacher leadership.

Relatedly, the perceptions of these three role groups within this context hold importance for both scholars and practitioners. While teacher leadership exists in many forms, a low-cost form exists in the context of “school reforms,” which we define as programs designed by, and for, schools aiming to improve student outcomes. Understanding how teacher leadership operates in this context is to understand teacher leadership in its most widespread application (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). By drawing on data from three different high schools we are also able to identify the importance of certain school-level, reform-specific phenomena on the implementation and reception of teacher leadership. Further, by learning about the perspectives of all role groups affected by teacher leadership we gain a much more comprehensive view of how teacher leadership influences, and is influenced by, the perceptions of teachers, teacher leaders, and

administrators. Thus, our work also contributes to the literature by providing insights for both scholars and practitioners on the challenges and strengths of leadership that has been distributed between administrators and teacher leaders in the context of a teacher-led school reform.

We draw upon these three perspectives across three high schools, with each attempting to implement their own school reform, to answer the following research questions: In what ways do teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators experience and respond to teacher leadership in the context of a school-specific reform designed and facilitated by teacher leaders? What tensions arise in this context and how are they shared by each role group? In answering these three questions, we give voice to each of the key role groups in school reforms and highlight the ramifications of distributed leadership in a teacher-led school reform.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we provide the background on distributed leadership and the complexity of distributed leadership for teacher leaders. Then we describe our data and the process in which we coded and analyzed our data. Then we discuss our findings and the themes that emerged in our analysis. Finally we conclude with a discussion of the implications of our research, the limitations of our study, and areas of future research.

Conceptual Framework

Building on the research on the shortcomings of school reforms and leadership in the 1970s and 1980s, researchers find that leadership needs to be inclusive and distributed to address reform implementation fidelity and improve student academic outcomes (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Leithwood, 1994; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Scholars engaged in empirical studies of leadership and school improvement find that there is a positive relationship between

student academic performance and schools that shared leadership (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Others find positive effects of leadership on teacher self-efficacy, satisfaction and teaching practices, some of the very issues that plagued previous school reforms (Harris, 2004; MacBeath, 1998). These findings have pushed researchers to create frameworks to understand how leadership can be reconfigured around the idea of distributed leadership to successfully implement and sustain school reforms (Copland, 2003; Elmore, 2000). In particular, Elmore's work (2000) advanced the idea of reconstructing leadership away from administrative hierarchy and formal roles to those who are at the ground floor and whose daily work is intimately connected to the "technical core" of education: the teachers.

Moreover, during this time, the body of evidence in school improvement indicated that capacity building was a potential mechanism for successful implementation and sustainability (Fullan, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). Hopkins and Jackson (2003) argued that distributed leadership was at the center of this capacity building model. This body of research has led researchers to conclude that "distributed leadership is most likely to contribute to school improvement and to build internal capacity for development" (Harris, 2004, p. 13). Adding to the research on distributed leadership, Bennett et al. (2003) argued that distributed leadership needs to rely on expertise and shared responsibilities. Thus, the scholarly work in the early 21st century posits that distributed leadership is a more practical and sustainable conception of leadership that focuses on capacity building, expertise and group responsibility compared to the more traditional leadership model of a single leader "standing atop a hierarchy" who heroically does it all or compels others to work and participate in a school reform (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003).

As a general concept, distributed leadership is understood as the distribution of leadership among multiple actors in a given context and it focuses on how "leadership practice is distributed

among formal and informal leaders” (Harris, 2004, p. 14). Researchers have also noted that distributed leadership is not the mere division of responsibilities among individuals but rather it “comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers” (Timperley, 2005, p. 2). Likewise, Spillane and colleagues (2004) conceptualized distributed leadership as the interaction of school leaders, followers, and the context. Gronn (2000) said that it was “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise.” In the context of K-12 education, distributed leadership refers to the distribution of leadership primarily among administrators and teachers (Woods et al., 2004). In the years that followed the initial development of distributed leadership and how it was used in school improvement, a plethora of research linked distributed leadership to instructional leadership, school improvement and school effectiveness and is often regarded as a precondition to successful reform and implementation (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Harris, 2003; Muijs & Harris, 2006). However, distributed leadership, like any school reform or structure, is not merely a box of reform structures that work for any and all contexts, but rather, it can provide the foundation for authentic work to take place (Murphy, 2011). In other words, distributed leadership is not necessarily better or worse than other forms of leadership, but the effectiveness of distributed leadership depends on who the leaders are, how leadership is distributed among the leaders, and the interpersonal dynamics among the leaders and followers are of paramount importance, particularly for teacher leaders in a teacher-led school reform (Harris et al., 2007; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Timperley, 2005). This issue of the composition and dynamics of distributed leadership is even more pertinent for teacher leaders in a teacher-led school reform since they play an enhanced role in leading the reform. In short, the empirical evidence has shown that distributed leadership can be used to facilitate school

improvement but there is less evidence of the challenges that arise from the distribution of leadership for teacher leaders.

Complexities of Distributed Leadership for Teacher Leaders

In schools with distributed leadership, teacher leaders already have a heightened role to play in a school reform in comparison to their peers in hierarchical schools, and this elevation is more augmented when the reform is supposed to be teacher-led rather than driven by the district or the school. In the context of school efforts to improve instruction and student learning, Mangin and Stoelinga (2011) argue teacher leaders must possess expertise regarding the development work, be able to facilitate teacher learning processes, and successfully negotiate teacher-teacher social interactions. Given that teacher leaders are often still recognized as typical teachers in some ways, such as retaining their teaching duties or sharing part of the day-to-day responsibilities of shepherding students, prior work finds that a teacher leader should lead their colleagues' professional learning and still be an active participant in implementing changes called for by the reform (Muijs & Harris, 2006). One unique aspect of teacher leadership is that teacher leaders with little formal power usually "pull or push" their colleagues through changes by using extant bonds of trust between themselves and their teacher colleagues instead of pushing or coercing teachers to change as leaders with formal authority may do (Frank et al., 2008; Frank, Zhao, & Borman, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Researchers and practitioners use similar logics to explain the role of trust in teacher-led reforms: as a teacher, a teacher leader can better relate to the ways teachers interpret the aims, legitimacy, constraints, and solutions accompanying development work (Byrne, 1971; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Thus, the role of trust between teachers and teacher leaders is critical to the success of a teacher-led reform. Further, if teacher leadership emerges in a school where authority has historically rested with

administrators, teacher leaders must also hold the trust of their supervisors, who are taking a risk by sharing their influence with teacher leaders (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

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

In the context of a teacher-led school reform, there are teacher work norms that may inhibit group development. In particular, many researchers have documented the strong egalitarian norms present among teachers, enabling the development of strong bonds of trust among teachers and teacher leaders that teacher leaders draw upon to push changes forward (de

Lima, 2001; Hart, 1995; Smylie, 1995). Yet, the aforementioned group development processes predict that conflict is practically guaranteed to arise among teachers and teacher leaders. Since teachers largely determine the legitimacy of teacher leadership (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012; Hart, 1995), these conflicts may lead teachers to distrust teacher leaders, calling into question the legitimacy (i.e., acceptability and appropriateness of the reform as deemed by non-teacher leaders) of the teacher-led school reform goals. Thus, to maintain trust and the social ties teacher leaders often use to push/pull teachers towards change, teacher leaders may avoid conflict, yet conflict is a necessary part of group development. It is for this reason prior work finds that teacher leaders must be able to manage the change process (Lieberman & Miller, 2004).

Additionally, some scholars suggest the boundary between teachers and teacher leaders should be permeable to better preserve egalitarian norms and maintain these important bonds of trust (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Muijs & Harris, 2006). In theory, it may sound easy enough to distribute leadership among teachers and teacher leaders by keeping perceived social boundaries between these two groups permeable but in practice this may be difficult since teacher leaders may downplay their status as experts and avoid providing feedback challenging teacher practices, inhibiting the efficient completion of group tasks, in order to preserve collegiality (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011; McKenzie & Locke, 2014; Silins & Mulford, 2004).

Relatedly de Lima (2001) reviewed the extant literature concerning collegiality and conflict within teacher communities, concluding that productive relationships among teachers need not be identified as friendships but friendly. Friendly relationships, de Lima argues, would permit teachers to challenge one another in ways that would not deviate far from strong norms of collegiality and egalitarianism (de Lima, 2001). Two studies further explored these tensions by

interviewing teacher leaders responsible for developing expertise with an instructional strategy and then helping their colleagues learn how to implement that strategy (Margolis & Doring, 2012; McKenzie & Locke, 2014). These teacher leaders reported becoming very uncomfortable when trying to change their colleagues' practices (Margolis & Doring, 2012; McKenzie & Locke, 2014), as prior works suggested. While the teacher leader perspectives in these two studies reveals the existence of tensions between teachers and teacher leaders, the absence of any non-teacher leader perspectives leaves one wondering about the extent to which these views were shared across role groups. To address this gap, our analysis draws upon interviews with teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators to investigate potential tensions arising between teachers and teacher leaders and how teacher leadership influences, and is influenced by, the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and the teacher leaders themselves. Furthermore, our work also contributes to the distributed leadership literature, providing insights for both scholars and practitioners on the challenges and strengths of distributed leadership in the context of a teacher-led school reform.

Data and Methods

Data for this analysis come from a larger research project examining conditions supporting the scaling up of a teacher-led school reform focused on a set of content-neutral practices aimed at developing student ownership and responsibility for their academic success (SOAR) across three Texas high schools. At the time of the larger study, the district containing these three high schools served over 80,000 students where the majority were low-income or traditionally under-served racial/ethnic groups. Teacher leaders from three high schools, Yearwood, Willow, and Evergreen, participated in the initial development of the school reform

by collaborating with researchers, program developers, and district personnel. It is important to note that the larger project was designed such that teacher leaders were to have substantial control over the reform and its components. In particular, the teacher leaders were responsible for the implementation of the innovation practices, the professional development to the faculty, and the subsequent support to the faculty. We recognize teacher leadership in different contexts can refer to a multitude of teacher behaviors, but in this analysis we use the term “teacher leadership” in a narrower sense, reflecting the use of teacher leadership in the study context. Henceforth, our use of the term “teacher leadership” refers to behaviors related to the teacher-led professional development that occurred in our study context and “teacher leaders” refers to teachers in the study context tasked with designing and leading SOAR. The partnership built buy-in among the local actors and district personnel by using research based on interventions within the district that identified the effectiveness of SOAR-related practices (removed for blind review) and building capacity among the district members and teacher leaders (removed for blind review).

The teacher leaders at the three initial sites were full-time teachers from core content areas and electives. The majority of these teachers volunteered to be a part of the innovation and were paid a small stipend as part of the work. Teacher leaders in Yearwood and Willow were recruited based on their interest in implementing SOAR and leading the school-wide scale-up work, whereas teachers from Evergreen were selected by the principal because they were department chairs. All teacher leaders continued to teach full time while serving as teacher leaders. Table 1 provides further descriptive information on the three innovation schools and the composition of the teacher leaders and their selection.

[Insert Table 1 near here]

Each school team implemented SOAR school-wide during the 2014-15 school year. Each teacher leader team presented their version of SOAR to the faculty and staff at the beginning of the year in faculty meetings, professional development (PD) meetings, and professional learning communities. Moreover, as part of the implementation process, teacher leaders engaged in continuous improvement cycles during which they collected data about SOAR implementation, teacher perceptions about SOAR, and SOAR-related PD. Teacher leaders then refined their existing plans using teacher feedback. The data for this paper comes mainly from this phase of the work.

Two four-day field visits occurred in October 2014 and April 2015. Prior to each field visit teachers and teacher leaders from across academic disciplines and grades, school principals and assistant principals, and teacher focus groups were recruited to participate in interviews and focus groups lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Members of the research team used a semi-structured protocol to interview study participants individually and focus groups. Both the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups use similar protocols and comparable questions. These interviews and focus groups included questions intended to gauge participant understanding of the innovation as enacted in the district as well as their particular school, the supports given to the teacher leaders, the professional development delivered by the teacher leaders, how the teacher leaders supported the teachers, the teachers' willingness to implement the innovation practices, and the teachers' feedback on implementation and support. While research members could deviate from the protocol to probe interviewees on salient issues, research project managers encouraged interviewers to stay close to the protocol. Interviews and focus groups were recorded and interviewers typically wrote down field notes.

In total, we have 45 teacher leader interviews, 135 teacher interviews, 25 administrator interviews, and 17 teacher focus groups (Table 2). Teachers were selected for interviews and focus groups to cover all academic subjects and most non-academic subjects, all grades, and honor/advanced and non-honors classes. To maximize the variations in teachers' perspectives, different teachers were selected in the fall and in the spring. In other words, we selected different teachers from academic and non-academic subjects in honors and non-honors classes throughout every grade in each of the visits to acquire a comprehensive picture of how teachers regarded the innovation and the roles the teacher leaders played. As the innovation was intended as a school-wide reform and not geared at only particular grade or type of students, we wanted to ensure we were capturing a complete picture and not an isolated pocket of perceptions in the school. We did, however, select a few teachers we believed had unique insight into the change processes surrounding SOAR design and implementation. Administrators were selected to cover different roles including principal, assistant principals, college counselors, and support staff; we wanted to learn about perspectives in these role groups to capture how administrators, broadly defined, experienced the innovation. The teacher focus group ranged from two to eight teachers per group, with an average of about four teachers.

[Insert Table 2 near here]

Fieldwork data were transcribed and coded by members of the larger research team following each visit using pre-existing categories based on an improvement science framework selected by the principal investigators (removed for blind review). The coding was iterative with researchers comparing their coding to one another to ensure consistency and accuracy (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following fieldwork coding, the larger research project team wrote summary memos, which were detailed, contained direct quotes, and identified trends and relationships

among the data associated with each *a priori* code. Each memo was reviewed by at least one other member of the research team to confirm that summaries appropriately represented respondents' views and were credible to study participants' experiences. The authors of this paper were members of the larger research team throughout the data collection, coding, memo writing, and peer debriefing processes.

For this paper, we used raw data connected to three *a priori* codes from the improvement science framework: “support to the teacher leaders”, “teacher leaders’ support to teachers”, and “teacher feedback on implementation and support”. These three codes were selected because they directly related to teacher leadership and teacher feedback concerning SOAR implementation. Using raw data from teacher, teacher leader, administrator, and focus group interviews, we employed open coding to identify emergent codes and themes within each of the *a priori* codes by analyzing entire interviewee/focus group transcripts. We coded the same data together in person so we could discuss why certain responses belonged in certain categories such as the distribution of leadership or teacher leaders’ sensitivity to teachers’ needs and constraints. Throughout the initial coding we iteratively refined our own understanding of each category and kept notes concerning potential emerging trends. We then coded all the interviews and focus group transcripts using the iteratively developed codes and emergent themes. Finally, we employed case dynamics matrix analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to examine the influence of pre-existing school conditions, how leadership is distributed and how the dynamics among the teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators vary from school to school. This enables us to identify and trace patterns and themes within and between schools. We believe our analysis yields confirmable representations of respondents’ views since we purposively took note of data sources by role group and engaged in simultaneous coding. We also checked and verified

affirming and disconfirming evidence within and across schools as well as by going back to the summary memos written by the larger research team. Further, we shared our findings with the larger research team to confirm our analyses resonated with what they knew about these schools and study participants. The research team agreed our analyses aligned with their own understanding of the benefits and tensions of teacher leadership as enacted in these three schools.

Findings

Pre-existing conditions

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

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

At Willow, there was also a previous literacy initiative but it was led by the administration. Some of the teacher leaders participated in the initiative but did not lead it. As a result, they did not have as much experience as the teacher leaders at Yearwood, and there was

not a formal structure in place for implementing SOAR. However, there was an established culture of trust and support among the faculty. The teacher leaders knew each other personally and professionally and could rely on each other for support; this culture of trust and support was highly valued by the teacher leaders. Throughout the work, teacher leaders emphasized the importance of these social ties and the need to use their relationships to obtain teachers' input and cooperation.

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

Easing the innovation: Using existing structures and inclusion of teachers in planning

Two challenges common to school reforms, particularly those requiring changes in teacher practices, knowledge, and/or beliefs, are a lack of time and the perceived incompatibility of new practices with teachers' existing work routines, leading to resistance (Coburn, 2004). Not surprisingly, some teachers at Yearwood and Willow explicitly talked about the newness of SOAR and the lack of time teachers wanted before they felt comfortable incorporating SOAR practices into their routines and behaviors. Even when teachers felt PD was done well, some teachers were still unsure about the innovation practices and how to incorporate them into their

daily teaching. Having had similar experiences with prior initiatives as teachers themselves, teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow anticipated these challenges and attempted to alleviate some stress and resistance to implementation by forecasting changes months ahead of the formal implementation launch date. Teacher leaders did this by trying to integrate the innovation practices into existing structures and including teachers in the development process. While these strategies were used in both schools, the degree of usage seemed to vary due to each school's recent school reform history. In contrast, Evergreen teacher leaders had no prior teacher-led school reform experiences to draw upon and this forecasting and easing of innovation practices into teacher behaviors and routines did not occur.

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

current practices. Furthermore, teacher leaders attempted to provide everything teachers needed to implement the lessons, hoping to make implementation as easy as possible. Here is how one Yearwood teacher leader explained this easing process as a whole:

We've talked to the faculty. We have a concept. We'll talk to them about SOAR. We've given them bits and pieces of it. We started at the beginning of last year and before we went off for the summer we said this -- when we come back, we're going to be really focusing on SOAR and this is what it means, and this is what it is. And when they came back to school we did this piece on SOAR and this is the lessons that you're going to be talking about on the second day of school, school wide, about having growth mindset... What has worked for us or what people appreciate is that we have the training, we go through it, if there's any questions they're able to ask us, but we've also provided every single resource that they've needed whether it's the PowerPoint -- Here's the PowerPoint. Here are the copies you need. We do everything for them so that they don't feel like they have to. So people are saying of course, why wouldn't we do it? It's all here done for us. You all have done all the -- You all have done the hard work, of course I'm going to teach a great lesson and you provide me the materials.

Unlike the teacher leaders at Yearwood, teacher leaders at Willow did not necessarily have the same kind of prior knowledge and experience about the challenges of a school-wide reform. However, they did have a well-developed social network among themselves and other teachers, as well as a strong desire to include teachers in the innovation. Teacher leaders at Willow consistently talked about how much they valued teacher buy-in and the need for teacher engagement at their school. Willow teacher leaders encouraged buy-in and teacher engagement by forecasting the innovation, including teachers in piloting the initial prototype, and personally inviting teachers to be a part of the development of the school-wide lesson plans. For instance, a Willow teacher leader said the following about easing teachers into the innovation and including them as part of the process:

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

together as a campus, as opposed to this is what we want to do, you – you do it and don't complain about it. We listened to the positives, we listened to the negatives, and we adjusted.

These teacher leaders purposefully worked to include teachers every step along the way, from the spring before the school-wide year of implementation and all year long during implementation. Consequently Yearwood and Willow administrator and teacher perceptions largely mirrored the teacher leaders' regarding teacher inclusion. A Willow administrator said, "I see teachers collaborating, and I see teachers going to [teacher leaders] and getting more input. So, like we said at the beginning, it's not one person being the holder of all, it's – it really does have to have the whole school on board and the whole school take ownership of it in order for it to keep going and keep lasting." Willow administrators also indicated that including the majority, if not all, of the teachers in the innovation deepened the buy-in from teachers who were the early adopters and also changing the minds of the "naysayers."

Willow teachers agreed teacher leaders were inclusive and that teacher input was consistently sought. Teachers felt welcomed and their feedback was used to refine practices and lesson plans. Both the teachers who participated in a summer retreat and those who did not appreciated how teachers were included in the lesson development process. A teacher had this to say: "I know that there is a team of teachers who volunteer. They volunteered their time this summer to come up with the initial lessons, so different teachers were assigned to different lessons, the ideas for the lessons, they asked all of us, any ideas, what do you think our kids need. So the cool thing about the lessons is that they come from teachers who know our students, what do our students specifically need to work on? And then these teachers who volunteered their time created the PowerPoints, got the information that they needed, et cetera." As a result, multiple teachers indicated that they thought the innovation was teacher-run and teacher-directed

and not handed down from the administration and that there was high buy-in from all the teachers in the school.

Teacher leaders' sensitivity to teachers' needs, experiences, and constraints

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

Teacher leaders at Yearwood were very clear they wanted to provide everything teachers needed to implement the practices and preempt pushback from teachers. When reflecting on what teachers needed to implement SOAR on the second day of school at Yearwood, one teacher leader said that they and their teacher leader colleagues were "trying to be sensitive to [teacher] needs... we're still trying to do all the copies for teachers. We have everything in their boxes ready to go, so with our initiative at least, I feel like teachers know I'm not going to have to do any work. I'm going to have to present it, but I have no pre-work that goes into it." Multiple

teacher leaders expressed the same sentiment. Moreover, after receiving teacher feedback regarding the initial implementation teacher leaders learned teachers wanted more instructions for some lessons and/ or wanted more specificity in the directions. Acting on their desire to be perceived as sensitive to teacher needs, teacher leaders provided a half sheet of instructions for teachers containing specific directions and step-by-step processes. Teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow also made themselves available during periods designated for school-wide implementation to provide in-the-moment assistance to teachers as needed. Teacher leaders were also aware of teacher stress during state testing and tried to make sure teachers were not overwhelmed by additional innovation practices before or within the testing window.

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

In a further effort to increase buy-in teacher leaders invited teachers to present lesson plans, describing how they modified teacher leader provided plans to make them work for their class and their teaching style. Encouraging teacher buy-in and participation required extra work on the teacher leaders' part, oftentimes outside of regular school hours, in order to make it easy for teachers to implement the practices and to make it their own, but teacher leaders felt the work

was justified. One teacher leader said that, “the team has stayed late or come in early, and we've made sure that we have done everything that we can to just not put any extra work on the teachers, and that's really encouraged them to follow along and really buy in to what we're doing, which I've really enjoyed seeing.”

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

In response to Evergreen teachers’ calls for changes in the practices and materials presented in the fall, teacher leaders encouraged teachers to significantly modify the outline of the PowerPoint serving as the primary learning resource for Evergreen SOAR lessons. A teacher leader in Evergreen said, “[PowerPoints were] presented to [teachers] and [they] were given time to revise it and make it their own, so that they can then feel like they had that voice, had some ownership of what we were doing.” However, this effort did not play out as intended since many

teachers said they did not have the time or know enough about SOAR to change the outline without undoing the core goals of the SOAR lesson.

The lack of including teachers in the design process and abdication of responsibility for changing materials in response to teacher resistance suggests that Evergreen teacher leaders did not know how to facilitate group development or foster buy-in. Evergreen teacher leaders did not include teachers in the design process during the fall as did teachers at the other two schools, which may have increased teacher resistance at Evergreen. Additionally, the reaction of Evergreen teacher leaders in response to their teachers' resistance was to tell teachers to revise the PowerPoint themselves, something the Evergreen teachers could not do. Comparing Evergreen to Yearwood and Willow, it seems teacher leaders' sensitivity to teacher needs, and responses to teacher needs, is a function of capacity and pre-existing conditions within the school.

The legitimacy of teacher leadership

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

A precursor to teacher acceptance of their teacher colleagues' leadership was their familiarity with the innovation. If teachers did not know there was an innovation or did not know how teacher leaders had contributed to the development of the innovation, teachers did not

accept the leadership of teacher leaders. However, teachers who believed teacher leaders were hard-working, serving their school as a leader of the innovation in addition to their regular teaching duties, and seeking input from teachers regarding the innovation largely accepted the leadership of their peers. For example, a teacher in Yearwood said, “I know [one teacher leader] works her butt off on [SOAR]...I’m next to [her] so I always see how much time and effort, but I can only imagine the other people are doing the same exact thing. I’m grateful for it. I really am.” This idea of the teacher leaders going the extra mile was voiced differently as “service” when teachers were asked what leadership was and what it entailed.

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

The role of the administrators

Most teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators in Yearwood and Willow, and just under half of those interviewed in Evergreen, believed the innovation was driven by the teacher

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

At Yearwood both teacher leaders and teachers thought administrators were supportive of the innovation while not taking charge of it. One teacher leader summed up the sentiments of all teacher leaders in their building:

Our administrators are definitely more involved this year, which has helped tremendously, because other teachers are seeing them on board now. They're seeing them involved in the process, and then when teachers go to them and talk about the initiative, our APs and principal actually know what it is now, and so they can talk about it and answer questions where I think in the past that didn't happen.

Likewise, a teacher in Yearwood said administrators “absolutely” support SOAR. Specifically, administrators in Yearwood said they support SOAR by telling teachers to implement SOAR during advisory periods. Administrators also said they supported SOAR by placing it on faculty meeting agendas and giving teacher leaders extra planning time to prepare for SOAR; teachers corroborated these claims.

Teacher leaders and teachers at Willow had similar perceptions. One teacher leader in Willow said the principal “trusted us” and that “[leadership] from downtown has been incredibly supportive.” Another teacher leader said, “[administrators] are definitely buying in as well, I believe. Honestly [the principal has] been completely supportive.” One teacher leader said administrators supported SOAR by “constantly checking in. With different pieces of information and checking to see what's going on and [making] sure they are on the same page.” Two different teacher leaders welcomed this sort of administrator involvement because they believed teachers should be accountable for implementing SOAR since it was important for students. However, these same two teacher leaders recognized such administrator involvement might lead teachers to perceive SOAR as administrator driven, undermining the core appeal of the teacher-led school reform. Across all schools, teacher leaders, teachers, and administrators shared this opinion, to a certain extent.

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

Clearly, nearly all study participants believed that too much administrator involvement would undermine SOAR. However, at Yearwood and Willow where teacher leadership had been in place for a longer period of time than in Evergreen, teacher leaders’ views concerning an appropriate amount of administrator involvement became more nuanced. Essentially, many

teacher leaders in these two schools came to believe that unless teachers perceived that administrators were involved in the design and implementation of the teacher-led school reform teachers would reject or resist incorporating SOAR behaviors into their routines. A teacher leader in Yearwood said it was important administrators were not present during PD events, but that there still needs to be some “higher level communication” coming from an administrator. This same teacher leader reiterated how important it was for an administrator to communicate to teachers every few weeks that SOAR was still something that should be implemented, which “helps a lot because it’s not always coming from just the [teacher leaders].”

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

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

Tensions in the status of teacher leaders

As teachers transitioned into roles of teacher leadership we found evidence that tensions arose between teachers and teacher leaders. The first source of tension was between the

preservation of collegiality and the unavoidable conflicts associated with group development, and the second tension concerned the perception that teacher leaders were losing part of their identity as teachers and becoming somewhat like an administrator. These tensions were felt in Yearwood and Willow as the teacher leaders had played a much larger role in the innovation, particularly in presenting PD and implementation support. These tensions were almost entirely absent at Evergreen.

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

We make all of their copies. We email them the PowerPoint a couple of days before. We teach them how to teach the lessons. We have people floating around to make sure that they have everything that they need... Unfortunately, there are some teachers that don't know how to build relationships with their kids, the mentoring relationship with their kids, and so that's something we've struggled with, too, because how do you teach someone to be a — how do you teach someone to be a mentor? Without offending them?

This teacher leader knew how much time and effort they had put into SOAR and ostensibly believed they had adequately addressed most, if not all, obstacles a teacher would face when implementing SOAR, based on their own experiences as a teacher and member of the Willow teacher community in prior school reforms. This teacher leader's disappointment in their colleagues was palpable, yet it did not seem they had given up hope that their colleagues would adopt SOAR practices in their classrooms. Instead, this teacher leader was left questioning how

they might promote positive change among their colleagues without losing a collegial relationship.

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

For example, a teacher at Yearwood said they would “usually ask somebody else, a colleague rather than somebody who is charged with the execution of whatever” if they needed help, signaling that teacher leaders were no longer colleagues. A second teacher in Yearwood said teacher leaders “just stand up there and present it and we're all sitting there, and there's no questions, there's no involvement from the faculty,” as if the people “standing up there” were not members of the faculty with full time teaching duties in addition to being teacher leaders. Another teacher commented that, “I've got friends that are on that committee... the group of teachers that are doing that are the group that were left over from [previous initiative], and they were clubby also, kind of people didn't respond well. I think [this team] is a little bit better in terms of how it's being received by the rest of the faculty, but I don't know that we're all very well aware of what they're actually doing.” Relatedly, teacher leaders were also seen as getting all the credits or being supervisors of other teachers. For instance, at Willow, one teacher in a

focus group went so far as to referred to teachers as “worker ants” and called for equality between teachers and teacher leaders though many teachers did not feel that way.

Discussion

We discuss two prominent themes that emerged from our analysis and are strongly connected to the findings of prior literature: teacher leaders sought to minimize conflicts or “storms” associated with teacher incorporation of SOAR practices into their routines, and the distribution of leadership between administrators and teacher leaders changed the status and normative roles of teacher leaders.

Minimizing the storm. The teacher leaders at Yearwood and Willow anticipated the storm phase (Mills, 1967; Tuckman, 1965; Wheelan, 1994) of a school reform change process and tried to minimize the stress, pressure, and pushback of implementation by forecasting the innovation, incorporating teachers into the development process, providing teachers with materials and resources to implement SOAR to save teachers’ time and effort, and using teacher input to refine SOAR. Our analyses indicate the anticipation of teacher leaders in Yearwood and Willow to minimize the storm was partially due to pre-existing conditions at these two schools. Yearwood teacher leaders had already honed some leadership skills in previous school reforms. While teacher leaders at Willow did not possess such skills, nor have a pre-existing leadership structure to draw upon, a strong social infrastructure built on trust already existed. It was this foundation of trust that enabled Willow teacher leaders to push and pull their colleagues towards school reform goals as prior literature suggests (de Lima, 2001; Hart, 1995; Smylie, 1995).

More specifically, teacher leaders in both Willow and Yearwood prepared their colleagues for the reform by easing the innovation into teachers’ work lives well ahead of

implementation. Willow and Yearwood teacher leaders repeatedly indicated that they wanted to ensure that their colleagues knew implementation was coming, that it was a teacher-led effort and not driven by the administration, and that they could influence the innovation itself. Teacher leaders in both of these schools were sensitive to teachers' needs, knowing how little time teachers could devote to a new reform and how to prepare colleagues for, and support them during, SOAR implementation. Teacher leaders provided the lesson plans, PowerPoints, and copies for the teachers so that they could implement them right away without having to prepare the lessons themselves or make copies for all their students. Teacher leaders reasoned that if teachers were going to implement the lessons, teachers needed everything in their hands in order to do so. Moreover, teacher leaders also knew that they needed to provide in-the-moment support to teachers by being available during schoolwide implementation periods and helping teachers through technical difficulties or misunderstandings.

The sensitivity of teacher leaders in Yearwood and Willow extended beyond the development of teacher skills and professional learning into the socio-psychological. Given the importance of teacher buy-in for implementation, teacher leaders attempted to incorporate teacher input into iterative design process regarding their own professional learning. These attempts at teacher inclusion partially preserve the egalitarian norms and bonds of trust among teachers and teacher leaders, both of which are necessary for teacher leaders to maintain (Darling-Hammond, 2015; de Lima, 2001; Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Both groups of administrators and teachers at Yearwood and Willow thought teacher leaders were considerate of teacher limitations and greatly appreciative of the materials and support provided by teacher leaders. Moreover, the majority of the administrators and more importantly, teachers, thought highly of the teacher-led school reform. Unlike teachers at

Evergreen, who did not voice appreciation for the copies of behavioral forms provided by the teacher leaders and thought that the purpose and rationale of the innovation were unclear, teachers at Yearwood and Willow generally felt that the innovation served a purpose and that the school reform would ultimately help their students. These results highlight the importance of minimizing the storm in a school reform change process (Mills, 1967; Tuckman, 1965; Wheelan, 1994).

Distributed Leadership. The distribution of leadership is not simply a reform structure that works in any context as our analysis illustrates (Murphy, 2011). Our analysis shows that leadership can be reconfigured around distributed leadership to implement and sustain school reforms as prior research suggests (Copland, 2003; Elmore, 2000), but it is not a silver bullet by any means. For instance, the pre-existing local conditions greatly influenced the composition of the teacher leaders and how they approached the innovation and professional development. The members who make up the leadership team, how leadership is distributed, and the interpersonal dynamics among the leaders and non-leaders all influence the implementation and perceptions of the reform as prior literature predicts (Harris et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2007; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Timperley, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Who the teacher leaders are and what they do matter greatly to teachers.

Moreover, our analysis indicates distributed leadership can build internal capacity for development (Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2004) but it often takes some pre-existing capacity to build more capacity (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2001). In other words, growth does not happen in a void. The teacher leaders at Yearwood relied on their expertise from their prior experience while the teacher leaders at Willow used their strong social bonds to forecast and ease the innovation and provide strong professional development for their teachers. Both sets of teacher leaders

leveraged their pre-existing capacity and strengths to implement the innovation. The forecasting and easing of the innovation, the manner in which teachers were initially exposed to SOAR and subsequent supports for teachers greatly affected how teachers perceived the teacher leaders' actions. Teachers thought teacher leaders at these two schools were sensitive to the teachers' needs and constraints and that the teacher leaders were indeed the leaders of the reform. In contrast, most teachers at Evergreen questioned the teacher leaders' actions as well as their legitimacy. It seems the Evergreen teacher leaders lack of expertise and social bonds hindered them from easing the innovation into teachers' work and providing them the supports they needed.

Our analysis also shows that, in the context of a teacher-led school reform, attention should be given to the distribution of leadership among teacher leaders and administrators, a notion also emphasized by other researchers (e.g. Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In a distributed leadership model, administrators are not adjudicating their status and influence; instead, they have to take risks by sharing their influence with teacher leaders, which is not normal and effortless in schools where hierarchies and formal roles are the norms (Elmore, 2000). Administrators then have to play a complex and balancing role in the context of distributed leadership. They have to be supportive of the reform but not in charge of it. Our analysis indicates administrators need to provide time and resources for teacher leaders and affirm their support for the reform, but they cannot be seen as covertly leading the initiative. For instance, at Yearwood and Willow teachers, and teacher leaders, thought that administrators were supportive of the innovation by providing time and resources for the teacher leaders to deliver PD to the faculty. In these two schools, nearly all of the teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators

believed that too much administrator involvement would undermine the innovation, but at the same time, teachers needed to perceive that administrators were supportive of the innovation.

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

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

challenge to distributing leadership for teacher leaders: as the teacher leaders acquire power, the core ties between teacher leaders and teachers may weaken. As administrators have to balance their support for the innovation and their involvement in it, teacher leaders also have to balance the roles as leaders and the social ties between them and the teachers.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to move the literature concerning distributed leadership and teacher leadership as applied to teacher-led school reforms forward by investigating the tensions arising among teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators. By drawing upon over 200 interviews with teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators, we are able to provide a comprehensive, school-wide view regarding teacher-led school reform tensions. Furthermore, the inclusion of non-teacher leader perspectives provides a voice largely omitted from prior analyses.

In the context of whole school reform, teacher leadership is linked with increased ownership, attention to local context, and implementation uptake (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Supovitz, 2008). Attention to local context is important as adjustments to innovations should be made to fit with wide variations in organizational structure, buy-in, and capacity while the local actors grapple with change and implementation (Cohen et al., 2013; Peurach & Glazer, 2012). As illustrated in our analysis, teacher leaders can play a critical role in designing, adapting, and implementing a school reform. Given their contextual knowledge of their school, colleagues, and students, teacher leaders can ease school reforms into teachers' work lives by forecasting the innovation, incorporating teachers in the process, and providing teachers with implementation materials. They know and understand the stress and limitations that teachers deal with on a daily

basis and they are able to leverage that knowledge to support teachers in implementation. The more they are able to use this knowledge, the more they will be able to reduce the struggle and pushback from teachers, and the more likely they will be seen as leaders within their school. However, as teacher leaders gain legitimacy and status as leaders, they can also experience stress in their relationships with their fellow teachers, a source of tensions that must be delicately managed.

As our work addresses some limitations of past research, it also has its own limitations and implications for future research in this area of distributed leadership and school reform. Our analysis highlights the importance of pre-existing conditions and shows that they have strong influence on the teacher leaders, the distribution of leadership, and the reform implementation, but it does not necessarily indicate how researchers and educators can build and develop leadership teams with the capacity to learn and lead others. Future research should consider additional training and development for would-be teacher leaders and schools that have not experienced successful school reforms or have weak social ties. Moreover, if “forewarned is forearmed,” then future research should examine how school reforms that rely on teacher leaders could develop and direct teacher leaders to “minimize the storm” as we have seen its importance in how implementation proceeds and is perceived by teachers. Lastly, researchers and teacher leaders need to be aware of the crucial issue of balancing egalitarian norms and social ties with leadership during a school reform. Future research should consider and even experiment with ways that would enable teacher leaders to lead and yet maintain the norms and bonds of teaching.

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Tables

Table 1 – Descriptive Information on Innovation Schools

	Yearwood	Willow	Evergreen
Student Demographics			
Enrollment	>1500	700-1200	>1500
Percent economically disadvantaged	40-60%	>80%	>80%
Student race/ethnicity			
Hispanic	40-60%	80-100%	80-100%
African American	20-40%	0-20%	0-20%
White	20-40%	0-20%	0-20%
Teacher Demographics			
Number of Teachers	>100	<100	>100
Teacher race/ethnicity			
Hispanic	0-20%	0-20%	0-20%
African American	0-20%	0-20%	0-20%
White	80-100%	60-80%	60-80%
Avg. Years of Exp.	10-12	10-12	8-10
Recent reform history	Teacher leadership team successfully designed and implemented a school-wide literacy initiative; new principal appointed at the start of Phase 2	School-wide literacy initiative was successfully implemented; new principal appointed at the start of Phase 1	Target of school turnaround efforts a few years prior to participating in this work; new principal appointed at the start of Phase 1
District representatives	Two teachers selected by the principal who were members of the existing teacher leadership team	One teacher who was identified as a leader during the literacy initiative implementation; one teacher whose subject assignment was considered relevant for SOAR; both selected by principal	One non-classroom teacher selected by principal to minimize instructional disruption; two classroom teachers selected by principal at facilitator encouragement to appoint additional personnel
Teacher leaders	Six teachers, most of whom were members of the existing teacher leadership team and one assistant principal; recruited by district representatives	Six teachers recruited by district representatives because of perceived interest as early adopters	Eight department chairs selected by principal due to their role on school leadership team

Source: District administrative data, 2012-2013 school year.

Note. Percentages have been rounded and presented in ranges to protect confidentiality.

Table 2. Data Sources

	October 2014	April 2015	Total
<i>Interviews</i>			
Teacher leaders	24	21	45
Teachers	63	72	135
Administrators	13	12	25
<i>Teacher Focus Group</i>			
	9	8	17