ENHANCING STAFF EFFICACY: THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP OVER STUDENT LEARNING

SHANTEL JOANNE MOHRMANN
Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education, University of Lethbridge, 2011

A capstone submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Faculty of Education
University of Lethbridge
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

ENHANCING STAFF EFFICACY: THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP OVER STUDENT LEARNING

SHANTEL JOANNE MOHRMANN

Approved:

_____

Supervisor: Kevin Wood, Ph.D.   Date

_____

Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research in Education: Date
Chris Mattatall, Ph.D.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family for all they have done to support me and for the sacrifices they have made as I embarked on this transformative process. To my partner Chris, thank you for being my sounding board, my motivation, and my safe place. I am incredibly grateful for everything you have done to ensure I was free to follow my passions. To my daughter Emily, please know how proud I am of the person you are becoming. Thank you both for your never-ending faith in me. Knowing I have your trust and confidence means the world to me.

Abstract

Fashioning an environment that supports students and staff to uncover their potential is critically important to supporting student learning and well-being. Leaders who focus on leveraging the power of relationships through building trust, cultivating a collaborative and learning-focused culture, and the empowerment of all staff members enable the conditions for growth and improvement. While effective leaders come in all shapes and sizes, leading in positive, responsive ways that support the building of internal accountability help to establish those conditions that support student learning and well-being. Developing a shared vision and sense of responsibility for student learning ensures staff have a coherent understanding of the purpose of education, while effective professional learning ensures that all staff members are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to best support students. Encouraging staff to engage in collaborative inquiry and reflective practices reinforces a mindset of growth, improvement, and learning for all. Leaders who actively model these practices demonstrate their value and support a healthier, more collaborative school culture.

Table of Contents

Enhancing Staff Efficacy: The Influence of Leadership Over Student Learning

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to become an educator. School was a place where I felt as though I belonged and was valued. I was fortunate to learn from some truly remarkable educators, and those experiences propelled me towards a career in education where I could focus on emulating the teachers from my youth and recreating similar experiences for children in the future. All throughout my schooling I saw the benefits of a school culture that set high expectations for all students; where the staff worked determinedly and collaboratively to support students' academic, social, emotional, and at times physical, needs. Each one of my teachers left a mark on me and I can trace many of my own practices within the classroom to inspirations garnered from them. In grade two I learned the lasting impact of a good story and how fostering a student's love for reading by passionately sharing your own favourites with them can help to ignite something remarkable in children. My grade four teacher had the most effective classroom management based on positive reinforcement and consistent standards. I can still remember thinking it was like magic how she was able to coach our entire class to focus on our learning and take ownership for it. And then there was my kindergarten teacher turned basketball coach turned principal to my own daughter, who personified leading with kindness and empathy. She radiated compassion and acted as though helping others was her mission in life. No problem was too big or too small, and every individual she interacted with left feeling heard and seen.

My secondary education taught me more about independence and thinking for myself, care of many wonderful teachers and coaches. One teacher stressed the importance of standing up for what you believed in and being prepared for an argument with facts and well-researched evidence. Another's word of the day routine stressed the power of language and how a well-

articulated statement could carry the day. The biggest influence out of that stage of my education was the collective sense of commitment that was palpable amongst the staff, and I think a great deal of that was due to the leadership of my principal, basketball coach, and Language Arts teacher. His quiet and calm demeanor set a tone for the staff, and his way of leading from the middle only strengthened the sense of teamwork. There was never a tournament or drama production that went unattended by staff. Even to us students it was clear that the staff were in it together and had built strong relationships on a foundation of trust; they knew that they were a team who were stronger together than apart, and who could rely upon one another. That climate really made the best of a small, rural school with limited resources and the staff demonstrated through their actions how focused they were on student well-being and success. By the time I graduated high school I knew that there was nothing I would rather do with my life than be a part of a school that supported students the way that I had experienced.

Aside from this lesson in the value of teamwork and trust, I saw how both formal and informal leaders were able to influence the commitment, motivation, and efficacy of their staff members in ways that focused on student learning and well-being. My elementary principal demonstrated his commitment to the staff and students through little actions that came together in powerful ways. For the first five years of my school career, rain or shine, my principal would walk to a corner a block away from the school to make sure kids crossed the street safely every morning on their way to school. This small action is an example of how this leader served as a rallying point that kept everyone focused on their shared moral imperative of educating and supporting students. When he eventually retired, it took time for the school community to recentre and navigate the changing contexts that they found themselves in. He had worked tirelessly to create a school climate focused on safety, learning, and trust, and in his absence, it

took time for people to regain that same level of trust and safety in the new administration. Reflecting on my high school administrators, I again am struck by the effectiveness of their approach to support their staff in ways that honoured their competence and professional autonomy. Sir Ken Robinson (2013) argued that, "the real role of leadership in education...is not and should not be command and control. The real role of leadership is climate control, creating a climate of possibility." This idea of fashioning an environment that supports both students and staff to uncover their potential brings together my own positive experiences with education and provides direction for my own approach to teaching and leadership.

Professional Background and History

As I moved into my first teaching position at a small, rural elementary school close to where I grew up, I felt that same sense of commitment and teamwork that I had benefited from as a student. I was fortunate to be welcomed into a staff that looked out for its new members and fostered a sense of shared responsibility for the welfare and achievement of the students within our school. Trust was high between the staff members, and when external problems arose, the team came closer together to address those problems from a place of strength and unity. There was an assumption that each staff member was highly effective in their position and that a team approach was the best way to highlight one another's strengths while offering support for areas of need.

Unfortunately, over time the culture of the school began to shift, and the staff became fractured. Several factors contributed to this decline, but the loss of trust, openness, and shared responsibility that occurred lay at the heart of the deterioration of culture. Where in the past it had been common for the staff to collaborate on problems of practice such as challenging student behaviour or differentiation strategies, a sense that doors were closing effectually stalled the

collaborative approach that had lay at the heart of the school's culture. This experience enhanced my belief in the power of trust and taught me how the loss of trust can lead to a collapse of culture that cannot improve without explicit attention and planning. Since trust is arguably the foundation for cooperative and effective relationships (Hallam et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016), the loss of trust can only have a diminishing effect on the efficacy of a staff. Anton Chekhov (1897) famously wrote through his play Uncle Vanya, "you must trust and believe in people or life becomes impossible." To paraphrase, without trust, effectively supporting student learning and well-being cannot happen.

Guiding Question

Considering my experiences in education, both personal and professional, I have had many questions about the role that leadership plays in supporting students. I have seen school leaders who are charismatic, inspirational, and able to rally their staff around a shared moral purpose. These leaders say all the right things, but the minute they are gone the system falters. There are also leaders whose absence and failure to meet the expectations of others has turned them into a villain of sorts, unintentionally uniting staff against a common enemy. What I have come to realize is that strong leadership does not have to be ostentatious. It does not need to look the same in every school. It may even go unnoticed and can be defined by those actions that may not be seen. What matters most, and what strong leadership should be measured by is the impact it has on student learning and well-being. If, as Robinson (2006) stressed, learning must be central to every job in schools, than a school's efficacy should be measured against student learning. According to Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004, p. 190), "collective teacher efficacy refers to the collective self-perception that teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and

4

communities." Narrowing in on the individual, self-efficacy can then be seen as a person's perceived capabilities, especially around instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement (Zee & Koomen, 2016). These self-perceptions are closely linked to personal motivations for individuals' behaviours and beliefs (Bandura, 1977). And so, I am left wondering, what does an effective leader do to influence staff efficacy, both of individuals and of the staff collectively?

Journey into Leadership – Current Context

As I have become increasingly confident in my own abilities, I gradually stepped into more leadership roles. Initially this was through my participation in the Alberta Teachers' Association. I volunteered for our local's Teacher Welfare Committee and was elected to our Negotiating Sub-Committee. Over the past few years these roles have provided me with insights into our central office leadership as well as the leadership styles of different teachers and administrators through my committee work. My involvement in the collective agreement bargaining process has helped me to better understand the variety of challenges faced by teachers within my division, and my time listening to their needs and concerns has truly helped to expand my awareness of the different contexts encountered by teachers at various sites. This work caused me to see my own leadership potential and provided me with a chance to see myself through the lens of my colleagues. I found my work with the Association strengthened my resolve to improve the education system and ensure that students, especially those who have additional barriers in their way, receive the best educational opportunities possible.

To that end, I eventually took on the role of Learning Support Teacher (LST) for my school. This experience presented more challenges and lessons for me professionally than at any other point in my career so far. The role also provided me with a new perspective on both

individual and collective efficacy in our school and helped me to recognize how important

concepts of efficacy are to supporting student learning and well-being. Stepping into this

assignment allowed me the freedom to exercise my leadership skillset in a more formal way

through the scheduling and management of the educational assistants, oversight of select student

programming across many grade levels, support of individual teachers, liaising with families,

and advocacy work with service providers and division staff on behalf of students and teachers. I

discovered that the LST role required me to work closely with our divisional Inclusive Education

team and involved a more in-depth understanding of the legal frameworks that guide our

profession. My work as LST was also exceptionally humbling as I was forced to acknowledge

the constraints of a school division budget that serves over 8000 students. Navigating the desire

to support students to the fullest extent, while balancing the use of those resources with the

complex requirements of an entire school division, was oftentimes a frustrating experience that

led to feelings of disillusionment with the larger educational system. Eventually I found that

dwelling on the dearth of resources and expertise available to properly fulfill our commitment to

inclusive education was a distraction from the true work of supporting students. My time in this

role forced me to adopt a broader view that necessitated an awareness of the practical limitations

of funding and providing educational services in rural communities under our current provincial

government. A critical moment of insight came to me after reading the work of Maya Angelou

(1994, p. 87). In an essay she wrote, "What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is

change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain." For me

these words transformed the intangible feeling of powerlessness I had been experiencing, into a

more definite motivation to act in the spheres where I could exert a positive influence over

student learning and well-being. The disequilibrium of loosing confidence in a system that I had

always trusted and depended on was the catalyst for my personal transformation, which pushed me to look at and think about leadership differently. Identifying a need for change and improvement in my own context, has helped me to redirect my attention to those things that I can control or have influence over. Working collaboratively with educational assistants and teachers within my own building through my role as LST provided me with a glimpse into what formal leadership could look like for me, and I felt a renewed sense of responsibility to the students and staff of my school.

I think that because of my contrasting experiences and witnessing how a breakdown of school culture can lead to a declining perception of staff efficacy, I feel a strong sense of urgency around the question of how to positively influence individual and collective staff efficacy as a way to improve student learning and well-being. Improving staff performance is key to improving student learning and is a function of staff motivation, staff commitment, staff capacity, and working conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008). As leaders, making changes in these areas has the potential to unlock the capacity of the entire school staff. Leadership practices that support each person to enhance their individual efficacy, while taking steps to improve the collective efficacy of the staff as a whole, must be examined in tandem. The complex system of relationships in schools means that changing one part of the school ripples outward to the whole school community. Recognizing that everyone has a role to play and has something to contribute to the whole reinforces the idea that, "improvement is a continuous developmental process that requires different types of knowledge and skills at successive developmental stages" (Elmore, 2005, p. 135). I have come to believe that cultivating a collaborative, student-focused climate that encourages students and staff to realize their possibilities in ways that benefit student learning and well-being must be at the heart of change and improvement. In this next section I

review the research literature used to situate my question – what does an effective leader do to influence staff efficacy, both of individuals and of the staff collectively?

Literature Review

If student learning is to be the ultimate aim of education, then influencing staff efficacy for the better is of critical importance. Leithwood et al. (2008) stated that leaders improve student learning most powerfully using their influence on teacher competence and efficacy through multiple factors including commitment and motivation. In my experience, school staff want to support students and their learning. There is an agreed upon goal – that of student learning and well-being – yet deciding how best to support that goal can be a difficult path to uncover. School leaders, both formal and informal, must find ways to exert an influence on staff through practices that lead to internalized, critically self-reflective development rather than improvement that is seen as merely an accountability measure. Finding ways to influence and encourage staff improvement that are meaningful, genuine, and sustainable is, in my estimation, the real work of a school leader. In order to skillfully exert that influence, leaders must leverage effective relationships with their staff members that are built on trust and cultivate cultures that enable staff members to increase their self-awareness. Leaders must also act in ways that demonstrate positivity, adaptability, and accountability in order to inspire their staff's growth and improvement. Though there are many approaches to this work, leaders who focus attention on developing a sense of shared responsibility and vision, providing purposeful professional learning opportunities, encouraging collaborative inquiry and reflective practices, all while modelling the importance of those practices, are well positioned to bolster student learning and well-being within their schools.

The Power of Relationships

      First and foremost on the path to improvement is relationships. Relationships are at the heart of the teaching profession and the quality of the relationships within a school community dictate much of what occurs within the school. If "schools can be understood as systems of relationships," then focusing energy on those relationships is a powerful course to influencing staff efficacy and supporting student learning and well-being (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016, p. 9). Staff, students, families, and other community members all have an important part to play in the education of a child. School leaders who see their role as one of service to those relationships have the potential to enact real change for the benefit of student learning and well-being. Brown and Moffett (1999, p. 23) stated that, "everything we do has immediate as well as long-range and often imperceptible effects on the entire system within which we operate." This rings true for the field of education, and if leaders are able to continually re-focus on fostering productive relationships there is no telling what effects will be realized. Additionally, sustained school improvement is strengthened when school leaders establish and facilitate relationships of trust in ways which support the development of the school's professional community, social capital, and sense of collective responsibility (Bellei et al., 2019). Leaders who actively work alongside teachers to cultivate a culture collectively, create a place for belonging that encourages positive relationships as the foundation of a learning culture for all.

Building Trust

      The basis of every healthy relationship is trust and so building trust is a necessary prerequisite for leaders who aim to influence staff efficacy in order to improve student learning and well-being. Bryk and Schneider (2003) outlined respect, personal regard, competence, and personal integrity as four key facets of trust. Leaders who are able to listen genuinely, voice

disagreement with ideas while simultaneously valuing the person, and who act in ways that demonstrate their commitment to the primary concern of children's education and welfare, establish their integrity and respect for others (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Treating others as individuals worthy of trust by acting consistently in ways that allow for the autonomy of staff coupled with an overall emphasis on competence and standards is another way in which leaders can build trust among stakeholders (Bryk, 2010). Leaders who demonstrate an understanding of their role and how that role is perceived by others, can strengthen trust by clarifying the expectations that others have of them, meeting those expectations, and at times even extending beyond those responsibilities (Berg et al., 2018; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Bennis (2010) explained a concept that he referred to as constancy, meaning reliability of actions, as the main determining factor of trust, while Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) found that a culture of trust required persistent, patient, and consistent behaviours.

In a broader sense, building trust between any individuals or groups relies on certain conditions. School cultures centred on trust, positively affect the manner in which adults interact, which by extension influences the learning environment for children (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Emphasizing collaborative tasks that reduce participants' sense of vulnerability, starting with low-risk activities, can build safety and trust while also developing staff efficacy (Bryk, 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Establishing an atmosphere where sharing experiences and values, following norms and protocols for safe conversations, and stressing the belief in one another's competence can all be considered enabling conditions for building trust (Berg et al., 2018).

The benefits of trust in a system cannot be overstated. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) claimed that trust is essential in well-performing schools, and that the need for a

cooperative and interdependent approach to supporting student learning necessitates a foundation of trust. Accordingly, trust magnifies the strengths of a school, and connects strongly to collective efficacy, teacher professionalism, and emphasis on academic success (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Trust in schools has also been proven to be a strong predictor of student achievement and improved overall school performance (Lee et al., 2012). If trust acts as a "lubricant for organizational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement" (Bryk, 2010, p. 26), then without trust, the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization may be hindered (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). When a strong culture of trust is in place, many other benefits become observable. Positive changes are more likely to spread and take hold, the overall sense of risk is reduced leading to a staff who feel safe to explore and experiment while learning from one another, and an overall sense of vulnerability supports a more interconnected approach to school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Cultivating Culture

Although school culture can be a dauntingly complex concept, "the locus of control is within the scope of leadership" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 11). As such, school leaders play an integral role in the cultivation, modification, and protection of elements of a school's culture. A culture that is centred on student learning and well-being is a proven essential for school improvement and is especially important for schools that serve students who have experienced trauma (Bryk, 2010). Encouraging students through a positive, learning-focused culture that sets high expectations for students and staff (Barth, 2001), while relying on a sense of collective responsibility (Cole, 2012) for the learning and well-being of all members of the school community, are crucial components for a successful school culture. That shared focus on and

11

expectation for student learning is hugely important to cultivating the culture of a school (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Cherkowski (2018) posited that teachers are uniquely positioned to notice and nurture the well-being of themselves and others, and are critical to the successful implementation of a strong school culture focused on learning, trust, and well-being.

One key aspect of cultivating a culture that supports student learning and well-being is that it must happen together. Teachers must be present to co-construct the culture of a school so that their unique voice and perspective can be appreciated (Cherkowski, 2018), and to ensure that members understand the shared language of their new culture (Elmore, 2008). Without a shared understanding and collective efficacy, stagnation is likely to occur, and meaningful improvements will be difficult to accomplish (Bryk, 2010). Encouraging teachers to see themselves as part of a larger community where they are needed and will need others in return promotes practices such as the de-privatization of instruction, adoption of a continual learning mindset, open sharing and celebration, as well as the acceptance of a collective responsibility for all students (Cole, 2012). Ultimately, a collaborative culture has the power to create networks of relationships among members of the school community that strengthen the culture, and sustain cycles of improvement by ensuring that the disequilibrium of cultural improvement is balanced by support and collaboration (Dobbs et al., 2017; Fullan, 2006; Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Nurturing a "culture of interconnectedness" (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011, p. 53) allows for the strength and safety of the group to act as a shield for the building of relationships as teachers share expertise and learn from one another.

Another aspect that must be emphasized when cultivating a school culture is the centrality of honesty and trust. If growth is to occur, difficult conversations will inevitably arise. Berg et al. (2018) explained that in order for schools and school cultures to improve, talking

about the things that are not working needs to take place. Further to this point, Barth (2002) stated that the health of a school is inversely proportionate to the number of "nondiscussables"; incendiary issues that everyone is aware of but that are only whispered informally and behind closed doors. Yet by avoiding these topics we "condemn ourselves to live with all the debilitating tensions" that encompass the issue (Barth, 2002, p. 8). A foundation of trust is necessary to have those challenging discussions, and when trust is present it is more likely that a positive learning culture will take root.

Finally, learning must remain the focus of school culture and must be at the heart of the school community. Teachers, students, and families must work together actively as learners to improve student learning and well-being (Barth, 2001; Cole, 2012). Teachers who feel safe and supported to take risks for the benefit of student learning, who depend on one another, and who hold each other accountable for life-long learning will contribute more positively to a school culture that benefits students (Cole, 2012; Elmore, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). School leaders who deliberately address nondiscussables in a non-judgemental and compassionate manner, who consistently redirect attention to students, and who build in structures to support collaboration, set the tone for cultural growth that better enables student learning.

Fostering Self-Awareness and Empowerment

Self-awareness is fundamentally about understanding oneself and the choices we make. In an educational setting, raising the level of staff self-awareness can have myriad effects on the general levels of empowerment and efficacy amongst school staff. In order for educators and other school based staff to improve their practice and enter into the critical reflection necessary to enact true change, staff must first formulate a picture of themselves and their practice. Cranton

(1994) conveyed that crystalizing a view of practice is a precondition for uncovering areas for improvement, and that only through questioning and describing currently held perspectives can an educator come to a self understanding that allows for assumptions, values, and beliefs to be made clear. As the level of self-awareness grows, staff develop a sharper perception of their ability to affect change and learning both as individuals and as a collective, as well as develop a deeper understanding of one's personal limitations and habits of thinking. This increased awareness sparks heightened feelings of empowerment and agency among staff, as well as enhanced internal accountability (Elmore, 2005). This positive form of accountability then drives staff to become more effective in their roles as they become empowered to act.

A key consideration in raising the level of self-awareness of a staff is the collaborative nature of discovering one's own practice and perspective on it. Teachers who commit to common instructional models, observe each other during instruction, and discuss instructional practice and resources, are better able to form their own perception of effective teaching practices (Cole, 2012). These types of collaborative procedures help to raise an individual's awareness of professional practice as well as an awareness of the practice of others. Undertaking awareness raising activities such as these also encourages staff members to assume the competence of their colleagues while learning from one another in ongoing, purposeful exchanges (Fullan, 2006). These exchanges present the added benefit of building leadership capacity while also strengthening the internal accountability of staff members through deepening motivation and ownership at the school level (Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006). As teachers become more self-aware and take more ownership for their own instructional practice and other decisions that affect learning in the school, informal teacher leadership becomes more evident (Gabriel, 2005). Formal leaders who are able to successfully foster self-awareness in their staff can later

encourage teacher leadership with those individuals that they have identified as integral to the sustainable success of the school (Bennis, 2010; Fullan, 2006; Gabriel, 2005).

Raising the level of self-awareness within a school community reinforces trust and helps to clarify further the roles and responsibilities of school community members. Individuals must have a strong understanding of their expectations for others as well as others' expectations for them. There is a mutual vulnerability to collective work around raising self-awareness, where people depend on each other and feel empowered by their efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Staff, including formal leaders, who are able to acknowledge their shortcomings and work diligently to compensate for them, demonstrate an authentic approach to improving self-awareness in ways that support the individual empowerment of staff members as well as a culture of trust and teamwork (Cherkowski, 2018; Elmore, 2005).

Dispositions of Effective Leaders

Theories about styles of leadership are as varied and distinctive as school leaders themselves. Much of the research around school leaders emphasizes specific attributes and approaches that characterize effective leaders, regardless of the type of leader they believe themselves to be. Margaret Wheatley (2017, p. 37) described our time as, "the age of retreat: from one another, from values that held us together, from ideas and practices that encouraged inclusion, from faith in leaders, from belief in basic human goodness." Her words bring to mind the unpredictability and uncertainty we see in the world around us generally, but also the specific changes to education that were triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. School leadership, arguably more than ever before, must be prepared to combat that uncertainty and withdrawal. Several attributes lend themselves to this task, based on the needs that this age of retreat has created. A need for optimism, responsiveness, and reliability is evident, and school leaders must

embody those characteristics in ways that continue to focus on strengthening staff-efficacy and supporting student learning and well-being as much as possible. While these dispositions may express themselves distinctively in different leaders, elements of positivity, adaptability, and accountability are necessary for leaders to guide staff towards the goal of improved efficacy.

Positivity

Positive leaders assume the competence of their staff and see teachers as capable of self-directed learning and inquiry to better their own practices (Cherkowski, 2018). Critical to this idea, is a recognition that school leaders must trust their staff while simultaneously taking charge of creating the conditions for sustainable change and improvement. Fullan and Quinn (2016) stressed that leaders must be the "primary engines" of change and can exert their influence by supporting staff in a coherent manner. Leaders can act as a catalyst for improvement by enabling the conditions, and setting the tone for growth (Leithwood et al., 2008). Distributing leadership to build cultures of collective efficacy and well-being demonstrates positivity through a consideration of the strengths of the staff, a confidence in their ability to rise to the task of leadership, and an application of strategies to empower others, which cumulatively have a great benefit for students (Cherkowski, 2018; Gabriel, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008). Formal school leaders must also recognize that with this added responsibility, teachers may also require added supports to avoid becoming overwhelmed as informal leaders within the school. Leaders can empower staff by demonstrating a confidence and trust in their character as well as their abilities (Murphy et al., 2017).

Positive leaders also see the big picture. Emphasis is placed on teamwork and building collective capacity in a manner that highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within the larger system. Under the direction of a positive leader, staff develop an understanding that

working together to meet each others' needs will prepare them to be better able to understand and address the needs of students (Cherkowski, 2018). Leaders who intentionally focus on the interests and needs of others, who see their role as a professional calling, and who operate within a strong moral framework, demonstrate to their teachers and other school community members their focus on growth over deficits, which together is associated with growth in teachers' professional knowledge as well as improvements to classroom climate and student outcomes (Murphy et al., 2017). With growth and improvement at the forefront, positive leaders understand that "it is important to be heard, but it is also important to be challenged," (Cherkowski, 2018, p. 68) and encourage honesty about matters that need to be changed or improved upon (Lambert, 2005). Uncomfortable conversations may occur but always in the name of growth and improvement. Leaders must also invite challenges from their staff to advance and improve themselves. Ensuring that staff receive an appropriate level of support is another element of positive leadership, because it differentiates the assistance provided to each staff member to make sure that school staff are collectively the strongest they can be (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018).

Most importantly, positive leadership is all about mindset. Lambert (2005) highlighted the effectiveness of leaders who are optimistic, open-minded, and ready to learn from others, which exemplifies the "flourishing mindset" extolled by Cherkowski (2018). Leaders who are able to lead positively by example understand that negativity tends to dominate positivity, and so constantly strive to use language and acts of kindness to improve the lives of others and promote an overall culture of well-being and positivity. Wheatley (2013) spoke about leaders needing the courage to keep their hearts open, and through that act creating the future we all wish to see. Positive leaders find ways to bring people together, support community members who are

struggling, and lift morale by nurturing a climate of positivity and safety (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). As school leaders model and encourage positivity, it follows that organizational cultures which highlight and foster positivity in others will develop (Cherkowski et al., 2020).

Responsiveness

In their discussion of complex systems, Kershner and McQuillan (2016), expressed that highly centralized networks are unresponsive and only serve to maintain the status quo. Seen through the lens of our rapidly changing society, education cannot afford to stagnate. Flexibility and adaptability are key to addressing the increasingly complex needs of students in our schools today, coupled with the increasingly complex demands of the workforce when students leave the school system. Growing divisions and achievement gaps can be seen in our communities due to socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, gender identity, changing norms around parenting, geographic location, and disability, and these divisions only serve to complicate issues around how to best support student learning and well-being (Lehmann, 2016). The choices that leaders make regarding instruction and professional practice provide the opportunity to demonstrate a responsiveness to the contexts in which they work and are a necessary part of leading with adaptability and flexibility (Lambert, 2005). In this light, leaders are not functioning reactively but responsively, taking into consideration the needs and strengths of their staff, students, and the larger community of which they are a part. This sort of flexibility and open-mindedness has been characterized as a highly effective leadership trait (Leithwood et al., 2008). People who see themselves as capable of adapting as needed in different contexts and situations, are more likely to become happy and healthy individuals (Zee & Koomen, 2016), and so it follows that teachers and leaders who behave in responsive and adaptable ways will be better equipped to service the progressively complicated demands of the teaching profession. "Adaptive leadership is a never-

ending process that requires school communities to collectively and consistently evaluate taken-for-granted assumptions about effective teaching, student achievement, and parent involvement, among many other matters," (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016, p. 8).

Leaders who are able to respond to the strengths of their staff and creatively unlock their staffs' potential are better able to enhance the learning of all members of the school community (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). School leaders must also be prepared to respond to the current context of their school population, while simultaneously thinking to the future. Both the current and the future context must be considered in order for change and improvement to take root and flourish. Leaders who are able to approach their contexts creatively, embody the adaptability and imagination needed to think and do things differently in ways that lessen barriers to learning at all levels and provide the conditions, environment, and opportunities for others to also think creatively (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Leithwood et al. (2020, p. 9) claimed that the "ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work." The adaptation by school leaders to the conditions of their school, demonstrates the adaptability and responsiveness that are necessary in our ever changing profession.

Accountability

Although for some the term accountability brings with it negative connotations, Elmore (2005) explained that accountability is a larger concept built of several elements including an individual's sense of responsibility, the collective expectations of the school community members, as well as the formal mechanisms that are employed. Schools with higher internal accountability, defined by Elmore (2005) as the alignment of individual values with the collective expectations of an organization, reinforced by external processes of accountability, are

more effective at meeting their educational goals. Concerns often arise around too much, or the wrong kind of accountability. Teachers who feel as though they are being monitored may experience inhibition to act creatively, take risks, and innovate their practice (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). The aim of accountability should be firmly on ensuring the best learning conditions for students, which often necessitates some freedom for teachers to explore their professional practice, with the role of leadership as one of support to help them become better teachers (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018).

Leaders who purposefully communicate in open ways, and who act transparently support strong internal accountability in their schools (Elmore, 2005). Consistency and reliability are crucial for building trust, and leaders who act in predictable ways elicit trust from their staff. This is especially important in times where emotions may be running high. Donaldson and Mavrogordato (2018) found that leaders who demonstrate consistency and follow through when working on improvement plans with low-performing teachers are much more successful at raising teacher efficacy within their school. For schools to be effective in their primary function of educating children, all practices should be implemented in ways that support student learning and are measured against student learning (Robinson, 2006). This is the appropriate place for accountability; enacting policies and taking actions that help staff to converge around a shared sense of responsibility to students. External mechanisms of accountability such as policy changes can be effective when they change the behaviours of teachers in ways that improve instructional practices and student learning (Robinson, 2006), or lead to creating conditions for increased internal accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). School leaders can support the building of internal accountability in a positive way by aligning their instructional supervision with the

overall goal of instructional improvement and bolstering a work environment that helps to maximize internal accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

If the presence of accountability within a school increases the effectiveness of the staff to meet their educational goals (Elmore, 2005), then the absence of accountability is likely to have the opposite effect. School cultures that epitomize low internal accountability will not realize school-wide improvements, even if individuals may demonstrate growth and improvement (Elmore, 2005). In its simplest terms, accountability is about having to answer for one's own actions and the resulting outcomes of those actions (Møller & Møller, 2009), and so if staff members are not able to take responsibility for their actions, it becomes clear why school-wide improvement is hindered when accountability is lacking. Even more serious than stagnation, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) argued that actual dysfunction in schools can often be traced to a lack of ownership over specific actions. If that lack of ownership rests upon the school leader, it becomes all the more likely that growth in student learning and well-being are no longer the targets for improvement.

Practices to Support Leading for Learning

While there are specific traits that are often associated with strong leadership, even more important than these attributes are the actual actions and practices adopted by leaders. Oftentimes these practices can be seen to symbolize what a leader stands for and what they value most. If a leader aspires to put student learning and well-being first, then there are several practices that lend themselves to that worthy goal. Central to all these practices is the foundation of trusting relationships, a strong collaborative culture, and the encouragement and enabling of individuals to grow and be true to their own professional identities. Leaders who utilize a strong vision and sense of shared responsibility to unify their staff, emphasize and value professional learning by

modelling those practices themselves. Leaders who also enable staff to engage in reflective practices and collaborative inquiry, are better positioned to evoke changes that benefit student learning and well-being.

Vision and Shared Responsibility

A strong school vision functions as a coherent instructional guiding system (Bryk, 2010). The overarching framework that a strong vision provides, ensures that school staff are behaving consistently in ways which ultimately support student learning and well-being. When examining student populations that are marginalized in some way, the pressure to continually improve can serve as a motivating factor for building a stronger vision and reaffirming a sense of shared responsibility for the learning and well-being of the students (Berg et al., 2018). The impetus to serve communities that have been dismissed and derided brings to the surface a moral purpose that can unite staff members to accept and endorse change. Staff who share a belief that you should leave the world a better place than you found it, demonstrate the commitment that is required for sustainable change to occur (Fullan, 2006). As staff rally behind this shared moral purpose of supporting all students, a recognition that the status quo must change can take root and staff can begin to assume the shift in mindset that true change requires (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Creating a shared vision that incorporates the agency of staff members to influence the learning and well-being of students helps to create an environment that harmoniously values all people (Lambert, 2003).

In order to best realize a shared school vision, Brown and Moffett (1999) expressed the importance of staff working together as allies. Collaboration is central to the life and operations of a school, and Berg et al. (2018) found that when staff members had input into decisions, shared responsibility for the collective learning of students, and cooperated through planning,

classroom observations, and professional learning opportunities, school improvement was more likely to be sustained. As staff members come together around a strong vision and sense of shared responsibility, genuine communities of practice form as people engage in collective learning around the moral purpose of serving student needs (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Leaders must be clear, focused, and purposeful in their development of a school vision that functions as a unifying force to counter overload and fragmentation (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

When school leaders are able to develop a strong shared vision for a school, many benefits can be realized. The coherence that comes from a shared understanding and commitment to a school's goals and guiding vision, enhances the efficacy of individual teacher efforts (Bryk, 2010). A common vision can also guide interpersonal interactions in ways that stimulate trust and increase the likelihood that school improvement processes will be more successful (Berg et al., 2018). This common vision is necessary for the overall improvement of student learning and well-being, but allows for individual teachers to maintain distinctive instructional philosophies and approaches (Breault, 2005). Professional learning communities are more effective when aligned around a shared vision and sense of collective responsibility (Dobbs et al., 2017; Lee & Seashore Louis, 2019), and belonging to those learning communities works to reinforce teachers' feelings of a shared collective responsibility for ensuring that all students learn and are supported (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Professional Learning

A major measure of a school's worth is the "quality of faculty, the professional development that supports their learning, and the faculty's capacity to work together to improve instruction" (Bryk, 2010, p. 2). Barriers to productive professional learning can arise surrounding

engagement in professional development opportunities, poor transfer of learning, practical

limitations of time and other resources, as well as attitudes towards change. Cole (2012, p. 4)

found that "the capacity of the profession to engage most if its members in effective modes of

professional learning over the long term has been weak" and that the expectations that both

teachers and school leaders hold for professional development can contribute to the poor transfer

of professional learning to professional practice. Elmore (2008) argued that in order to improve

student learning and achievement, raising the level of the skills and knowledge that teachers

bring to their instructional practice is essential, and so school leaders must be mindful and

strategic about how they present professional learning to staff in order to ensure that a strong and

collaborative learning culture is established within the school for both students and staff.

Professional learning that aligns closely with the self-identified needs of teachers within

their classrooms and the more broadly recognized needs of the school community, leads to more

effective and sustainable professional learning (Dobbs et al., 2017; Harris & Jones, 2019).

Leaders who develop collaborative structures to enable their teachers to engage in meaningful

and ongoing professional learning, promote internal accountability for instructional change and

present opportunities for staff to overcome the practical barriers to effective professional

development (Dobbs et al., 2017). Embedding professional learning into the life of the school

and ensuring that it focuses on topics that are directly related to teaching, leads to more effective

learning for staff that is seen to connect more concretely to teaching assignments (Cole, 2012).

Firestone et al. (2005) found that professional development that focuses on subject-specific

content that is applicable in the classroom, various teaching methods, and differentiation

practices for a variety of student needs, strengthens the knowledge base of teaching staff and is

linked to improved student learning outcomes. Additionally, they noticed that professional

learning that is focused, sustained, provides time for reflection, and incorporates instructional approaches that teachers plan to make use of with students, are more likely to lead to long-term improvements.

Effective professional learning must enable transference to the classroom in ways that facilitate teachers and other staff members to learn together towards mutual goals. High-quality professional development is a key instrument for change (Bryk, 2010), and so should be implemented in ways that maximize the leverage it holds over student learning and well-being. Teacher professional learning that is school-based and school-managed can combat issues around the transfer of learning into the classroom as well as breaking away from the traditional, episodic delivery of professional development by experts (Cole, 2012). Schools where the leader has made explicit attempts to define both effective professional development and effective teaching practices, and then takes steps to hold teachers accountable for implementing improved teaching practices, see an increased level of learning transfer into the classrooms (Cole, 2012). Fostering a belief among staff that, "the purpose of professional learning is to improve not only the effectiveness of the individual teacher but the effectiveness of the school," helps to set the expectation that professional learning should lead to changes in practice and subsequently have a demonstrably advantageous effect on student learning and well-being (Cole, 2012, p. 6).

Barth (2001, p. 23) wrote that, "life under the roof of the schoolhouse is toxic to adult learning; the longer you reside there, the less learning is likely to occur." School leaders who take into account the principles of adult learning, can help to combat this toxicity. Creating professional learning opportunities that take into account the importance of experience to adult learning and which encourage participants to see one another as resources must be central to effective professional development (Knowles, 1980). Providing teachers and other staff with the

chance to actively set the direction of professional learning in ways that support their self-identified needs also supports more successful learning possibilities for adults. School leaders that actively participate in professional learning alongside their staff help to demonstrate the value of learning opportunities, while also setting the tone that continual learning is critical for school improvement (Cole, 2012).

Modelling

One leadership practice that has predominately been shown to support leading for learning is modelling. Individual schools as well as school systems are more effective when leaders learn alongside their staff (Robinson et al., 2008; Timperley, 2011). This simple act of participating in the professional learning of a staff demonstrates that, "continual learning on the part of all educators in the system is expected, demanded, facilitated, and rewarded" (Barth, 2001, p. 26). Leaders who engage in professional learning opportunities and who are perceived by their staff to be actively pursuing growth are putting into action the values of life-long learning and expectations for continual improvement. In order for the growth and improvement of a school to be sustainable, it is crucial that school leaders are on the front line with their teachers during professional learning opportunities and initiatives (Lambert, 2005). Not only does this dynamic participation on the part of the leader demonstrate to the staff and the wider school community that what matters most is learning, it also provides possibilities for leaders to better understand the strengths and needs of their staff, as well as the challenges they are encountering professionally. If leaders are to truly communicate that learning is what matters most, then making their own learning visible is key to getting that message across (Barth, 2001). Additional benefits surrounding the practice of modelling and participation include an increased

perception of collaboration, instructional effectiveness, and communication amongst teachers and both school and system leaders (Adams, 2016).

Inversely, when leaders unintentionally model less desirable behaviours to their staff and school community, challenges to growth and learning become evident. If leaders are unwilling or unable to model risk-taking in their professional learning journey, other staff are unlikely to experiment with new ideas and instructional approaches (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). The demeanor and expectations that leaders demonstrate around professional learning and development activities can contribute to poor transference of that learning into the classroom, negating the benefits of professional learning (Cole, 2012). An additional challenge facing leaders is the time to actively participate in teacher learning (Adams et al., 2019), and so prioritizing a modelling mindset is required by school leaders.

Reflective Practices

At its core, reflective practices are about taking a pause (York-Barr et al., 2005). There are many perspectives on reflective practice but one fundamental tenet that they all share is the importance of taking time to think. Breault (2005) built upon John Dewey's definition of spontaneous reflection as an act initiated by an emotional response to an idea, which is driven by extended periods of time spent thinking about and working with that idea. Educators who are able to remain open to learning through reflection, and who engage in the active, deliberate, and conscious processing of thoughts for examining their professional identity and practice, are better equipped for sustained improvement (Zimmerman & Sommers, 2020). As reflective practices become more intentional and purposeful, teachers are able to challenge their underlying beliefs and engage in deeper critical reflection. This type of critical self-reflection is characterized by a sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and

27

validity of one's own assumptions, using different lenses to ascertain a more comprehensive view of professional practice and professional identity (Brookfield, 2017). To fully realize the benefits of reflective practices, reflection must occur through multiple iterations where reflection and action flow unceasingly into each other.

The benefits of reflective practices are varied. Time spent reflecting and re-examining past reflections raises the level of consciousness among educators (Breault, 2005). This consciousness-raising supports staff to become more purposeful in their professional learning, and more directed about the actions they take to support the learning of their students. As teachers become more self-aware of their professional practice, they "collectively describe how they make a difference for learning, they demonstrate collective teacher efficacy and pass on learning legacies to their students and the next generation of teachers" (Zimmerman & Sommers, 2020, p. 45). Building strong, reflective professional communities within schools by equipping teachers with the collaborative and contemplative skills that enable them to improve instructional practices in ways that directly benefit learners, has the potential to impact the overall improvement of a school (Harris & Jones, 2019). Reflecting collaboratively also presents the additional advantage of encouraging teachers to recognize that everyone holds a unique perspective and understanding of events, and that this subjectivity can actually support further reflection and insights. Through cooperation, staff members can begin to develop a perspective of "consideration of changing viewpoints and letting go of the need to be right or the desire to win" (York-Barr et al., 2005, p. 10). Staff members are mutually able to turn their focus towards learning, which can only happen when reflection occurs.

For leaders who are interested in establishing reflective practices with their staff, it is important to first see these practices as opportunities for personal development (Cherkowski,

2018). While reflection on growth often begins as an individual task, teachers must be challenged to de-privatize their reflective practice and open themselves to collaborative reflection (Zimmerman & Sommers, 2020). Leaders can engage staff members in conversations that invite and promote reflection rather than more closed forms of discussion. Reflective practice can also be cultivated as a powerful norm centered on continual improvement of teaching and learning strategies, leading to higher levels of student achievement (York-Barr et al., 2005).

Reflective practices are not without their challenges. Overcoming the hurdle of collegiality is one such challenge. Zimmerman and Sommers (2020) outlined the pitfalls of discussions that are not focused on reflection. People either agree with one another without offering any constructive feedback or argue and disagree in counterproductive ways. Reflection that occurs individually can also present a missed opportunity. Improvement to instructional practices can only happen when understandings and insights lead to actions or changes in behaviour. Collaborating during reflective practice encourages individuals to delve deeper and consult with colleagues to enhance the level of introspection (Cranton, 1994; York-Barr et al., 2005). An additional, contextual challenge of self-reflection and collaborative reflective practices is the constantly changing landscape of education. Teachers and school leaders are faced with unpredictable circumstances that require responsive decision-making. In an effort to meet the ever-changing demands of education today, we must know ourselves to address these needs (Brown & Moffett, 1999). "To change our practices, to change our beliefs, and to alter our own theories of change, we must slow down and have reflective conversations that allow us to think through possible changes" (York-Barr et al., 2005, p. 2).

Collaborative Inquiry

Collaborative inquiry is defined as a way of thinking and knowing that grows out of learning in collaboration with others (Samaras, 2011). Butler and Schnellert (2012) described collaborative inquiry as a research method that arises from a mutually agreed upon need for change and improvement at the classroom level, which situates teachers at the centre of the change process. Further to their description, their research sought to link teacher professional development, inquiry processes, collaboration, and change to professional practice. Although there are different interpretations of collaborative inquiry as a professional development method, vital to its success are the cyclical and reflective elements of the approach, as well as the situating of both the individual and the team within those cycles of investigation (Adams, 2017). These iterative phases of action and reflection (Schnellert & Butler, 2014), support more sustainable changes to instructional practice and help teachers to continually re-evaluate and re-define their problem, question, and plans for improvement and change. Teachers must be given the opportunity to work with individuals whose perspectives and assumptions differ from their own in order to challenge one another's thinking and create the disequilibrium necessary for change to occur (Breault, 2005; Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Collaborative inquiry can therefore be seen to be a fundamentally more productive and effective type of professional learning for teachers (Dobbs et al., 2017).

The cooperative aspect of the collaborative inquiry model is essential. Breault (2005, p. 246) wrote that, "by seeing and challenging similarities and differences, colleagues can help each other explore more fully the complexity of their work and remind each other that there are no simple solutions to the challenges they face." Working collaboratively to effect changes to professional practice that will reap benefits for student learning and well-being requires

interactions with others in order to change habits and analyze our own thinking patterns and instructional choices. Encouraging meaningful collaboration in professional settings necessitates active listening and more effective, inclusive problem solving (Given et al., 2009). The creativity and resourcefulness of the group is brought to bear on individual teachers' challenges and problems through the process of collaborative inquiry in ways that manifest benefits not only for that individual teacher, but also for the group and by extension the students of the school community. Collaboration encourages individuals to entertain a greater range of responses and ideas, increasing the flexibility and adaptability of the staff (Breault, 2005). Teachers begin to see their problems in connection to those of their colleagues rather than in isolation, creating a sense of community and belonging around addressing issues to better support student learning and well-being. Reflective phases of the collaborative inquiry model are integral to its successful execution. Schnellert and Butler (2014) found that questions for inquiry emerge from the critical reflection of the intersection of theory and practice.

Successful collaborative inquiry initiatives rely upon increased levels of participant involvement, engagement and empowerment (Adams, 2017). Iterations that are focused on exploring answers to relevant, school-based inquiry questions in sustained and collaborative ways are also more likely to be conducive to meaningful learning and changes that will benefit student learning and well-being (Adams, 2017; Adams & Townsend, 2014). More powerful learning for students requires an enhanced approach to teacher professional learning. Collaborative inquiry provides that opportunity because it goes beyond the surface level experiences many teachers often encounter through professional development initiatives (Given et al., 2009). Additionally, implementing collaborative inquiry in ways which support the establishment of norms around trust, sharing, and openness while building in structures to

31

provide time and space for professional reflection provide a consistency to collaborative inquiry that ensures a more coherent overall approach centered on growth and learning (Adams, 2017). The structural, cultural, social-emotional, learning, and process supports that are required for successful implementation of collaborative inquiry necessitate a wholistic approach to professional learning that encompass many aspects of a teacher's professional learning and growth (Adams, 2017; Schnellert & Butler, 2014).

Collaborative inquiry supports a vibrant, collaborative school culture that helps to bring together the various perspectives and variables at work within a school community (Adams, 2017). Research conducted in one Alberta school division found that the implementation of collaborative inquiry led to increased capacity building and enhanced impact on teachers' effectiveness, more productive instructional supervision practices, the promotion of teacher growth, increased leadership confidence, an influence on the reflective practices of staff, and a larger cultural shift more focused on learning and growth (Adams, 2017; Adams & Townsend, 2014).

Leadership Theory into Practice

Discovering ways to foster efficacy among staff has been an area of interest for me since before I could put words to the idea, and it aligns with my perception of my role as an educator. I see my responsibility in the classroom as that of a guide who helps students to be their best and find ways for them to shine and contribute to the larger communities of which they belong. My belief in supporting students to reach their potential was the inspiration for both of my leadership internships. Through my first internship I examined how structured collaboration between educational assistants could impact the building of personal and collective capacity in ways that improved student supports. My second internship was targeted at a small group of the teaching

staff at my school, with a focus on how critical self-reflection could lead to more effective instruction and student support.

Fostering Efficacy Amongst Support Staff

Through my role as LST, I was able to work closely with the educational assistants (EAs) at my school site to implement several new practices aimed at increasing the collaboration between this segment of the support staff as well as increasing overall capacity. Building trust was a critical first step on the path towards increasing EAs' individual and collective capacity through regular support staff meetings and responsive collaborative learning opportunities. Prior to my internship, the EAs at my school site did not participate in any type of staff meeting and many expressed feelings of disconnection from the day-to-day business of the school, relying on weekly emails from the school principal or conversations with their classroom teacher colleagues to garner information. In addition, many of the EAs conveyed a need for more coherent and collaborative professional learning opportunities for the educational assistants. Addressing the barriers that had prevented the EAs from participating in staff meetings was particularly challenging but was ultimately the most valuable change I initiated as many of the support staff later shared how that time contributed to them feeling valued and heard as members of our school community. These meetings provided opportunities for dialogue, the sharing of expertise, and the empowerment of individual EAs to take action without a fear of impinging on other staff members.

The foremost lesson to come from this internship experience was that trust takes time, integrity, meaningful dialogue, and a shared intention. Empowering the EAs to trust themselves and share their expertise openly, contributed to an overall improvement in the collective efficacy of the group. One particular instance was an EA who had an exemplary knowledge base

regarding supporting students with speech and language deficits. Though for years this EA had worked in conjunction with Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) to support students with their speech and language needs, her expertise was never shared widely with other EAs. When it became clear that direct SLP support for students at our school would be dramatically decreased due to several external factors, it was decided that classroom based EAs would need to fill that void if students with speech and language needs were to receive interventions in those areas. Drawing on her many years of experience, training, and knowledge of supporting students with speech and language concerns, this EA was able to outline support plans for specific students she had previously worked with and coached several other EAs on strategies for supporting those students with speech and language deficits in the absence of SLP guidance. Over the course of the school year, she shared her expertise during our regular support staff meetings, diving in deeper with certain EAs to demonstrate strategies specific to the students they were supporting and participating in larger professional development opportunities that were put on by division staff. By the mid-point in the school year EAs looked to her as a leader in the area of speech and language support. Discussions became more and more productive as the level of trust within the group grew, and individuals become more willing to take risks by asking questions and sharing areas where they needed support themselves. As this EA became more comfortable leading, other EAs also started to see themselves as capable and voluntarily discussed challenges they were encountering with students they supported, as well as suggested strategies to try based on their own individual background knowledge and experiences. The interactions during our meetings went from being quite one-sided with myself presenting information to the EAs, to a collaborative discourse where all voices had a platform to be heard and were valued equally by

the group. The level of openness and trust had clearly risen and with it, the sense of both personal and collective capacity.

While before my internship I had positive, collegial relationships with the EAs at my school, I found that through my LST role I needed to cultivate deeper connections with those individuals and was sometimes forced to put our relationships to the test in order to support student learning in the best way possible. Addressing issues around professional conduct and interpersonal conflicts was not something I had anticipated when I undertook my internship and LST role, but those instances provided me with the best opportunities for growth and learning. I experienced how critical trust is when mediating interpersonal conflicts in the workplace and was fortunate to see that when true trusting relationships are established, self-reflection can take place. Navigating through the difficult conversations that can be necessary in these types of situations and finding my own way of leading were essential to my personal growth as a leader. Developing a functional understanding of how I can establish and maintain trusting relationships in a manner that is genuine for me, facilitated my own learning and provided much to reflect on. Ultimately, I learned that as a leader you cannot force change if you wish for it to be authentic and sustained. People must see the need for change and wish for it. Without that internalization, change will falter and peter out.

Building Self-Awareness and Increasing Efficacy Amongst Teachers

Through my second leadership internship I hoped to work closely with a small group of colleagues to learn more about the facilitation of critically self-reflective practices within a collaborative learning community. Originally, I planned to assist my colleagues with, and engage in, journal writing based on reflective prompts designed to increase the level of professional self-awareness. Alongside the journaling, I scheduled monthly meetings to share our musings,

lessons learned, and eventually to start identifying areas of professional practice to target for growth and improvement. Critical self-reflection has long been an area that I valued and though many of my colleagues intuitively engaged in self-reflective practices, it was evident that there was a strong need amongst some staff members for support in this matter. One colleague in particular had expressed reservations about their ability to fulfill the expectations of their role as classroom teacher and had been struggling to do so for several years. They agreed to work collaboratively towards the goal of becoming more self-aware professionally through journaling and dialogue. Another colleague who was moving into a new teaching assignment also volunteered to participate with an expectation that as we journaled and met to discuss our observations, we would also be able to share new perspectives with one another with the aim of improving our practice and becoming more effective in our roles.

Early into this internship the unexpected leaves of both participating colleagues necessitated a shift in the direction of my internship. Fortunately, two other colleagues were willing to engage in explicitly reflective work, presenting both unseen challenges and opportunities for my own leadership learning and development. The focus remained on raising self-awareness through reflective journaling and discussions but from differing starting points. One colleague, an experienced master teacher, used our collaborative learning community as a method to better address the needs of a specific student with a complex learning background. My other colleague used the reflective journal prompts to help hone professional belief statements in connection to their current practice and role. Due to its deeply personal nature, self-reflection will look different for every practitioner, depending on their starting points, needs, and motivations. For both of my colleagues, growth, learning, and improvement was the fundamental goal.

This second internship became an exercise in flexibility and adaptability for me as a leader. I was forced to come to terms with the fact that regardless of the amount of planning and preparation that is done, there are factors outside of your control that can affect the outcomes of an initiative. When the colleagues I had originally planned to collaborate with were forced to step away from their classrooms, it became clear that the emphasis of our newly formed learning community's reflective work also needed to change. Our work was able to move along much quicker and progressed past the initial goal of raising self-awareness towards beginning to engage in critical self-reflection. It was vital that I was able to adapt to this new context and ensure that I was facilitating reflective practices in a manner that would benefit my new participants professionally. Even though I was forced to deviate from my initial plan, the need to adjust as the desires and goals of my participants changed helped me to see in a pragmatic sense how to be more responsive in leading a community of learners.

In addition to learning the practical value of responsive decision-making and flexibility as a leader, my experience also helped me to recognize the importance of meeting people where they are at. During the initial stage of my internship our reflective work was focused on raising the level of professional self-awareness. This need was determined based on conversations with different colleagues around their professional practice and challenges they faced regarding efficacy and improvement. Due to this context, it was clear that our initial focus on raising professional self-awareness before moving into identifying specific areas for improvement would be a productive course to take in order to facilitate critical self-reflection and support increasing staff efficacy.

During the next stage of the internship, the needs of the colleagues who were participating changed completely. The context was now that of two teachers who demonstrated

their competence consistently and felt confident of their abilities. Again, conversations were the basis for ascertaining where they were at and where we needed to go during our reflective collaboration. It quickly became evident that our focus could advance to a more problem-solving approach where our journaling and discussions served as a tool to uncover specific areas of practice that were problematic and could be improved in some way.

Another lesson arising from this second internship was my own understanding of the place for and importance of instructional supervision and leadership. Regrettably many educators and leaders conflate instructional supervision with an arbitrary accountability mechanism to be wielded like a weapon. Even more regrettably, for some this has been their only experience with instructional supervision. Through my work with the Association, I have heard from school principals who had been directed by the superintendent to have at least one teacher at their site under evaluation, regardless of whether this step was necessary. I have also heard from teachers who were put under evaluation simply because they happened to be the newest member on staff and were seen as the easiest target. I have heard from educators who spoke against this practice and were then transferred or dealt with in varying ways in a punitive manner. Although these experiences occurred several years ago with different individuals in both division and school-based leadership positions, the fear and anxiety that festered under that climate does not dissipate quickly. All of this history does not take away from the value of instructional supervision. It does mean that navigating the process in a positive way brings with it exceptional challenges requiring a great deal of trust and openness.

Key Reflections and Insights

Learning is often referred to as a journey, and for good reason. Every experience has provided inspiration for me to reflect upon throughout my Master of Education program. Seeing

these past experiences, whether from my own childhood, my teaching career, or my transition into leadership, through the lens of educational leadership theory has helped to crystallize what I value and identify with most as an educational leader. Listening to others as an act of trust, being present and visible as a leader, communicating openly, and operating transparently, have become critical to my leadership identity.

The Importance of Listening

One of the greatest, most meaningful lessons that I have incorporated into my understanding of leadership throughout the last two years is the importance of listening fiercely. To me this idea encompasses so many aspects of how I choose to live my life and informs my approach to leadership. I have always had a predisposition for talking less, and listening more, but for most of my life this was due to a lack of confidence and struggles with anxiety and self-doubt rather than a valuation of listening for its own merits. The beautiful thing to arise out of my journey, is that I have realized the benefits that come from listening to the thoughts and experiences of others, and the pitfalls that may occur when people are more worried about being heard than hearing others. Interestingly, research has found that people who speak the most are often those who are associated with measures of leadership, communication, and overall contribution to projects (MacLaren et al., 2020). While some studies have found a link between the quality of what is being said and the association with leadership by others, MacLaren et al. (2020, p. 10) found that, "speaking time retains a substantial effect on leader emergence even when controlling for a variety of other variables also known to correlate with leader emergence". As an introvert this information initially startled me and forced me to question whether or not formal leadership was the right place for me. How can I take up space if I must battle my own nature as well as others for airtime? I spent a lot of time thinking about that question and

eventually came to a very freeing realization that my leadership style does not need to be contingent on how loudly or how much I speak in meetings with staff. Just because research has found a connection between quantity of speech and perceptions of leadership characteristics, does not mean that I cannot walk a different path towards leadership. I am a listener, and I can now see how that necessitates my leadership style to differ from the charismatic leaders that have been traditionally touted as the paradigm of leadership.

Truly listening to others contributes to them feeling satisfied and valued (Stimson & Appelbaum, 1988), which leads to higher levels of commitment and increases self-perceptions of agency. In my experience, people can tell when you are genuinely interested in what they have to say, whether they are talking about how they spent their weekend or are struggling with major life decisions. Listening fiercely builds trust and requires an openness and honesty that works as a bridge towards stronger relationships. Noted psychiatrist Karl A. Menninger said, "listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand" (as cited in Bell, 2020). When people feel listened to, they have the freedom to engage in reflection, raise their self-awareness, and begin to see their own value. Feeling heard empowers people to find their own solutions and requires trust on the part of a leader – trust that others can identify their own weaknesses and will seek to improve and grow. Listening inherently demonstrates trust in others and their abilities to reflect and make decisions in the best interest of their students' learning and well-being.

Visible and Active Participation

Being an active and visible presence in the school community is an extension of listening fiercely to others and works to earn trust and respect among members of the school community.

Cherkowski et al. (2020) outlined presence as a state involving listening to others, openness, and planning for shared decision-making. Leaders who intentionally demonstrate respect for the autonomy and judgement of others build more authentic and trusting relationships with their colleagues. These actions contribute to more positive relationships, which in turn support individuals to be more effective in their roles. In my estimation, leaders who are seen by their staff members to be a meaningful part of the day-to-day life of the school, are more likely to garner the personal regard and respect of those individuals. Conversely, when leaders are perceived to be absent from the daily life of the school, commitment and motivation are likely to falter. Leaders need to be seen, and they need to be known in order to be relied upon. When school leaders know their students, families, and staff they are demonstrating the value they recognize in those people. When there is a noticeable absence of administration, morale plummets and school culture suffers.

Leaders who are able to engage authentically alongside their staff, demonstrate their personal commitment to trusting and collaborative relationships, operating transparently, and exercising self-awareness and reflection (Johnson & Voelkel, 2021). When leaders make the choice to, "courageously and willingly step forward to serve," (Wheatley, 2017, p. 38) they open up the possibility of influencing staff efficacy, motivation, and commitment (Leithwood et al., 2008). School leaders can inspire, using relationships as leverage points to improve student learning and well-being. To create enabling conditions that encourage learning and growth, school leaders must act in reliable, consistent, and patient ways. Intentional decision-making (Johnson & Voelkel, 2021) that builds in cooperation and consultation strengthens the influence of a leader's presence, and relies upon the leader's understanding of the school and its context. Leaders who are absent from the routines of their school's life will not have the information

41

necessary to make informed decisions that are responsive to the needs of the staff, students, and larger school community.

Open and Honest Communication

Building from the importance of listening and being an active part of the school community, is a lesson around the consequence of communication. I have learned first-hand how critical it is for a staff to develop a shared understanding and language regarding the everyday workings of the school. Often times assumptions are made regarding the sharing and access to information, with a common pitfall being the assumption that because something has always been done a certain way, then everyone will already have all the information they need to be successful. Whether it is a supervision schedule, a school talent show, or student-led conferences, there are many events that occur within the life of a school that must be understood clearly by everyone involved. When it is assumed that people already know what they need to do to be successful, failures are likely to occur. When staff members are able to communicate a shared understanding using a shared language around their work with students, growth and improvement is more probable (Bryk, 2010).

Another critical aspect of communication is ensuring that all parties are in agreement about their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of others. I have seen how confusion around roles and responsibilities can damage school culture by creating fear and uncertainty. For teachers and support staff, not having a clearly defined role can lead to failures and errors that negatively impact student learning and well-being. Alternately, the absence of clearly defined roles can also lead to power struggles between informal leaders who feel the need to step into roles and take on responsibilities that may not be appropriate or have been designated to another colleague. Rather than uniting staff around a common moral imperative, poor communication of

roles and responsibilities can divide staff members and sow discontent and hostility. When confusion surfaces around the roles and responsibilities of leaders, additional frustrations can arise. When communication is unclear or lacking, staff may feel that they cannot trust their leadership. Leaders who deliberately engage in conversations around expectations, roles, and responsibilities, are able to build trust and influence staff to become more effective (Berg et al., 2018).

Finding My Voice and Leadership Identity

My approach to leadership centres on people. I strongly believe that time spent together, collaborating to solve problems, building a shared understanding, and even distributing leadership responsibilities, strengthens the team and provides a foundation from which to grow and improve. One part of this collaborative approach to leadership is the ability to model hard work, commitment, and open conversations that ensure that student learning and well-being are always at the forefront. Marzano and Waters (2005) found that collaboration increased the efficacy of teachers as well as the trust between members. Another aspect of my approach to leadership is the intentional cultivation of trust by acting in ways that embody honesty, transparency, empathy, and respect. I've come to the realization that we're stronger together but at the same time it is important to recognize that everyone is at a different place in their levels of trust. Staff and students bring their diverse background experiences to how they interact with the world around them and forcing people together before the ready will only serve to thwart the overall aim of supporting student learning and well-being. It is important for all adults on staff to be for kids what they needed as children; to engage with one another in conscientious, open, and responsive ways. Additionally, it is critical to deliberately challenge assumptions and to

endeavor to communicate clearly with others in order to avoid making assumptions about their needs, motivations, and intentions.

With people at the centre of my approach to leadership, comes a need for action-oriented leadership. For staff, students, and family members to trust and continue trusting, it is important that I as a leader demonstrate sustained, and consistent effort that denotes a systematic, coherent approach to decision-making. I've learned that improvement can revert quickly when formal leadership does not uphold the change and so intentionally supporting teacher-lead initiatives to help sustain change is also important. Along those lines, I also believe in assuming the competence of staff and when needed working together to meet the high expectations that I will hold for both staff and students. Oftentimes providing staff members with the opportunity to talk through their struggles and listening without judgement is a sufficient starting point for a plan for improvement. From there, it will be important for me to follow through on such plans and to demonstrate my own commitment to supporting others while simultaneously holding myself accountable for taking the actions required. Ultimately, I see education as a tool for change. Education can be the possibility for students to find a sense of safety and a place where they belong. In the end education and leadership are acts of service to the learning and well-being of students.

Areas for Growth and Continued Learning

Throughout this experience I have uncovered much about myself and the areas that I will need to focus deliberately on to continue growing and learning. These leadership challenges can all be seen through the lens of balance and imbalance. One area that will require my purposeful attention is to balance my desire for harmony and eagerness to please, with an increased comfort with discomfort. I understand how important it is to be honest and to address areas of concern

even when that might be upsetting to myself and others. Stoll and Temperley (2009) found that dissonance is required for learning to occur, and sometimes new ideas or situations can be difficult. Yet that difficulty does not negate the potential benefits that dissonance and disequilibrium can bring. Staying focused on the potential benefits and the necessity of disequilibrium for change will help me to remember that just because a conversation or decision is uncomfortable, it does not mean that it is not the right course of action.

Another area that I will need to be cognizant about, is balancing the sense of urgency to upset the status quo and approach problems from more innovative and creative perspectives, with a need for patience and acknowledgement of peoples' readiness levels. Because of my deep belief in education as an avenue for societal improvement, as well as my time working with students who come from vulnerable or marginalized families, I feel a great sense of urgency around school improvement and increased staff efficacy. Providing time for staff and community members to digest new ideas or initiatives, provide input, reflect upon, and become engaged in meaningful ways will be critical to change that is sustainable with opportunities for renewal and revision.

A common thread through the areas I have identified for growth is an acknowledgement that each person brings to the table an unknowable set of experiences that has shaped them into the person they are today. Continually reminding myself of this will help me to challenge my own assumptions and meet people where they are at. It also serves as a reminder that I cannot change people who do not want to change themselves. By continually refocusing on promoting effective teaching and learning, I hope to encourage creative thinking, risk-taking, and collaboration. Overcoming obstacles to staff collaboration through deliberately making space and time for collaboration and reflection will be critical to my approach. Prioritizing time for

frequent collaborative learning between staff members with clear expectations around engagement and reflection provides the space and time for ideas to develop.

Conclusion

Influencing individual and collective staff efficacy for the better requires continual attention, explicit planning, and most importantly a shared desire for growth and improvement. As my journey into leadership continues, I will move forward in responsive, student-focused ways that celebrate a dual passion for learning and student well-being. Working collaboratively to create a culture that values risk-taking, and creativity will be essential to my approach. By listening to the experiences of my colleagues I hope to create the conditions for a well communicated shared vision to take root, which has the potential to rejuvenate and re-energize staff members and inspire a re-commitment to the shared responsibility of student learning and well-being.

References

Adams, P. (2016). A noticeable impact: Perceptions of how system leaders can affect leading and learning. *EAF Journal*, *25*(3), 39-55.

Adams, P. (2017). Leadership development through action research: The journey of one school district toward collaboration, inquiry, and professional learning. In K. Clausen, & Black, & G. (Eds.), *The future of action research in education: A Canadian perspective*. McGill-Queens University Press.

Adams, P., Mombourquette, C., & Townsend, D. (2019). *Leadership in education: The power of generative dialogue*. Canadian Scholars.

Adams, P., & Townsend, D. (2014). From action research to collaborative inquiry: A framework for researchers and practitioners. *Education Canada*, *54*(3), 12-15.

Angelou, M. (1994). *Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now*. Bantam.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review,* (84), 191-215.

Barth, R. (2001). *Learning by heart*. Jossey-Bass.

Barth, R. S. (2002). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership*, *59*(8), 7-11.

Bell, C. R. (2020). *Inside your customer's imagination: 5 secrets for creating breakthrough products, services, and solutions.* Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Bellei, C., Morawietz, L., Valenzuela, J. P., & Vanni, X. (2019). Effective schools 10 years on: Factors and processes enabling the sustainability of school effectiveness. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *31*(2), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2019.1652191

Bennis, W. (2010). Leadership competencies. *Leadership Excellence*, *27*(2), 24.

Berg, J. H., Connolly, C., Lee, A., & Fairley, E. (2018). A matter of trust. *Educational Leadership*, *75*(6), 56.

Breault, D. (2005). Van Gogh, Gauguin, and impressions from Arles: Inquiry's potential within collegiality. *The Educational Forum*, *69*(3), 240-253.

Brookfield, S. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (Second ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Brown, J., & Moffett, C. (1999). *The hero's journey*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Bryk, A. S. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *91*(7), 23-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171009100705

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership*, *60*(6), 40.

Butler, D. L., & Schnellert, L. (2012). Collaborative inquiry in teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *28*(8), 1206-1220. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.07.009

Chekhov, A. (1897). *Uncle Vanya* (G. Ledger, Trans.) [Play]. Oxquarry Books Ltd. http://www.pushkins-poems.com/VanyaAct2.html

Cherkowski, S. (2018). Positive teacher leadership: Building mindsets and capacities to grow wellbeing. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, *9*(1), 63-78.

Cherkowski, S., Kutsyuruba, B., & Walker, K. (2020). Positive leadership: Animating purpose, presence, passion and play for flourishing in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *58*(4), 401-415.

Cole, P. (2012). Aligning professional learning, performance management and effective teaching. *Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series*, *217*.

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. Jossey Bass.

Dobbs, C. L., Ippolito, J., & Charner-Laird, M. (2017). Scaling up professional learning: Technical expectations and adaptive challenges. *Professional Development in Education*, *43*(5), 729-748. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2016.1238834

Donaldson, M., & Mavrogordato, M. (2018). Principals and teacher evaluation: The cognitive, relational, and organizational dimensions of working with low-performing teachers. *Journal of Educational Admininistration*, *56*(6), 586-601. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-08-2017-0100

Elmore, R. (2005). Accountable leadership. *The Educational Forum*, *69*(2), 134-142. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984677

Elmore, R. (2008). Improving the instructional core. Retrieved from http://teacher.justinwells.net/Downloads/improving_the_instructional_core_elmore_2008.pdf

Firestone, W. A., Mangin, M. M., Martinez, M. C., & Polovsky, T. (2005). Leading coherent professional development: A comparison of three districts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *41*, 413-448. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04269605

Fullan, M. (2006). The future of educational change: System thinkers in action. *Journal of Educational Change*, *7*(3), 113-122. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-9003-9

Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Corwin.

Gabriel, J. (2005). *How to thrive as a teacher leader*. ASCD.

Given, H., Kuh, L., Lee Keenan, D., Mardell, B., Redditt, S., & Twombly, S. (2009). Changing school culture: Using documentation to support collaborative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, *49*(1), 36-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840903435733

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. ASCD.

Hallam, P. R., Smith, H. R., Hite, J. M., Hite, S. J., & Wilcox, B. R. (2015). Trust and collaboration in PLC teams: Teacher relationships, principal support, and collaborative benefits. *NASSP Bulletin*, *99*(3), 193-216. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0192636515602330

Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2019). Leading professional learning with impact. *School Leadership & Management*, *39*(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2018.1530892

Johnson, C. W., & Voelkel, R. H. (2021). Developing increased leader capacity to support effective professional learning community teams. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *24*(3), 313-332. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1600039

Kershner, B., & McQuillan, P. J. (2016). Complex adaptive schools: Educational leadership and school change. *Complicity*, *13*(1), 4-29. https://doi.org/10.29173/cmplct23029

Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*. Cambridge.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lambert, L. (2005). Leadership for lasting reform: High leadership capacity schools. *Educational Leadership*, *2*, 62-66.

Lee, M., & Seashore Louis, K. (2019). Mapping a strong school culture and linking it to sustainable school improvement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *81*, 84-96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.02.001

Lee, M., Walker, A., & Ling Chui, Y. (2012). Contrasting effects of instructional leadership practices on student learning in a high accountability context. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *50*(5), 586-611. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211249835

Lehmann, W. (Ed.). (2016). *Education & society: Canadian perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, *28*(1), 27-42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701800060

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, *40*(1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

Li, L., Hallinger, P., & Walker, A. (2016). Exploring the mediating effects of trust on principal leadership and teacher professional learning in Hong Kong primary schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *44*(1), 20-42. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214558577

MacLaren, N. G., Yammarino, F. J., Dionne, S. D., Sayama, H., Mumford, M. D., Connelly, S., Martin, R. W., Mulhearn, T. J., Todd, E. M., Kulkarni, A., Cao, Y., & Ruark, G. A. (2020). Testing the babble hypothesis: Speaking time predicts leader emergence in small groups. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *31*(5). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101409

Marzano, R. J., & Waters, T. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Møller, J., & Møller, J. (2009). School leadership in an age of accountability: Tensions between managerial and professional accountability. *Journal of Educational Change*, *10*(1), 37-46. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-008-9078-6

Murphy, J., Louis, K. S., & Smylie, M. (2017). Positive school leadership: How the professional standards for educational leaders can be brought to life. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *99*(1), 21-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717728273

Robinson, S. K. (2013, April). *How to escape education's death valley* [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley

Robinson, V. M. J. (2006). Putting education back into educational leadership. *Leading & Managing*, *12*(1), 62-75.

Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(5), 635-674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509

Samaras, A. (2011). *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. SAGE.

Schnellert, L., & Butler, D. (2014). Collaborative inquiry: Empowering teachers in their professional development. *Education Canada*, *54*(3), 42-44.

Seashore Louis, K., & Wahlstrom, K. (2011). Principals as cultural leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *92*(5), 52-56. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200512

Stimson, T. D., & Appelbaum, R. P. (1988). Empowering teachers: Do principals have the power? *Phi Delta Kappan*, *70*(4), 313-316.

Stoll, L., & Temperley, J. (2009). Creative leadership: A challenge of our times. *School Leadership and Management*, *29*(1), 65-78. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.ezproxy.uleth.ca/10.1080/13632430802646404

Timperley, H. (2011). Knowledge and the leadership of learning. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *10*(2), 145-170. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2011.557519

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Barr, M. (2004). Fostering student learning: The relationship of collective teacher efficacy and student achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *3*(3), 189-209. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760490503706

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. (2015). Principals, trust, and cultivating vibrant schools. *Societies*, *5*(2), 256-276. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc5020256

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. Retrieved from https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/

Wheatley, M. (2013). Servant leaders. *Leadership Excellence*, *30*(5), 12.

Wheatley, M. (2017). Who do you choose to be? An invitation to the nobility of leadership. *Leader to Leader*, *2017*(85), 37-41. https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.20304

York-Barr, J., Sommers, W., Ghere, G., & Montie, J. (2005). *Reflective practice to improve schools*. Corwin.

Zee, M., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2016). Teacher self-efficacy and its effects on classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teacher well-being: A synthesis of 40 years of research. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 981-1015. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626801

Zimmerman, D. P., & Sommers, W. A. (2020). Learning conversations. *The Journal of Staff Development*, *41*(1), 44-51.