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## A Case Study Of Teachers' Perceptions On Teacher Leadership As A Model For School Improvement In SIG Schools

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A Case Study of Teachers' Perceptions on Teacher Leadership  
as a Model for School Improvement in SIG Schools

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A DISSERTATION

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The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

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**ABSTRACT**

Developing teacher leadership in a rural, geographical isolated SIG school is a difficult task toward school turnaround. This research explored the impact of teacher leadership on the School Improvement Grant (SIG) process, the development of teacher leadership model standards, and the school improvement evaluation process through the qualitative method of case study analysis. This single case study was conducted at one designated SIG funded school in central West Virginia. The case study focused on understanding the impact teacher leadership had on the implementation of the SIG school improvement process. This study was based on 14 participant interviews that were transcribed and entered into NVivo. Coding cycles were then conducted on the transcribed interview data. The results of this case study were the development of five major themes that were established as teacher leadership model practices in SIG schools. These themes included *collaboration, distributed leadership, positive culture, teacher buy-in and teacher leading teachers*. This data allowed the research to recommend the creation of an online SIG school improvement network that would provide a SIG school a network of collaboration among SIG School to promote and develop teacher leadership model practice as an additional means of school improvement.

**Keywords:** *Teacher leadership model, School improvement, turnaround model, teacher leadership model, SIG school improvement model*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The lack of teacher leadership and the positive impact of teacher leadership as a means for school improvement is a major problem for rural low performing schools in central Appalachia. In order for poverty stricken schools to become high performing schools, teacher leadership needs to become a topic that is more thoroughly researched and developed as a part of the school wide improvement process especially in School Improvement Grant (SIG) funded schools. After more than 10 years since NCLB was enacted and nearly 5 years since the SIG program received significant financial backing, educators still know little about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools (Player & Katz, 2016, p. 676). Understanding how the effectiveness of the current SIG funded schools are implementing their grant and how teacher leadership structures are developing within the school is imperative to the overall success of the school improvement efforts in rural, poverty stricken areas of central Appalachia.

This research focuses on investigating the School Improvement Grant or (SIG) models for school improvement and if teacher leadership could be used as an alternative or addition to current school improvement models in SIG funded schools. This research uncovers teacher leader perceptions of the SIG grant and if teacher leadership impacts the effectiveness of the SIG grant model in their rural and geographically isolated region of Appalachia. This research examines the development and practice of teacher leadership that could be used as a possible addition or alternative to the current SIG school improvement models promoted in this region. According to The Guidance on School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965 or (ESEA) (Appendix, A). SIG funding is awarded to enable the states to provide sub grants to local educational agencies for the purpose



of providing assistance for school improvement consistent with section 1116 (p. xi.) Section 1116 uses standardized assessment scores and other state indicators to measure if the Local Education Agency (LEA) that qualifies for funding is reaching their yearly annual progress goals. Section 1116 provides the requirements for identifying, measuring and sustaining funding for SEA's and LEA's to access school improvement funds from the federal level. From that grant funding, State Educational Agencies (SEA) allocate 95% of SIG funding to (LEA). These grant funds are highly competitive and focus on school improvement. In rewarding sub grants upwards to \$600,000, the SEA must give priority to LEA's with the lowest-achieving schools that demonstrate the greatest need for the funding.

In West Virginia, the schools that qualify for this funding are designated as priority schools. The SEA provides this designation to the lowest achieving and highest need schools. According to the guidance document, the SEA also focuses on the strongest commitment to ensure the funding is used to provide adequate resources that enable the lowest achieving schools to meet their goals of improvement and restructuring under section 1116 (p. xi).

This research identifies teacher leaders' perceptions of the SIG grant and if teacher leadership could make this grant more effective in rural, geographically isolated parts of Appalachia. It is important to examine teacher perceptions of the SIG school improvement models and the effectiveness these models to better understand if the grant participants feel successful and if so why. It is also important to examine if there are alternatives or additions to the current models that could enhance the quality of the SIG improvement models for rural areas such as central Appalachia. Investigating Teacher leadership development and practices is an example of an alternative that could be effective in rural SIG schools.

Teacher leaders face incredible responsibilities, with these responsibilities there are great challenges (Shillingstad, McGlamery, & Gilles, 2015 p. 15). To overcome these challenges, both teacher leaders and administrators can promote a model of teacher leadership that will serve all stakeholders as a navigation device through the school improvement process. This research will identify the teacher leader's perceptions of the impact of teacher leadership on the SIG models for school improvement and the effectiveness those models. The research also explores whether the development of teacher leadership in SIG funded schools may be a possible alternative or addition to current models.

Going beyond the impact of teacher leadership, this research will analyze how teacher leadership shapes the school improvement process in SIG schools. Through the lens of teacher leaders, this research identifies the effectiveness of the current SIG models within their school and analyze those models with a framework that connected to teacher leadership development, practices and evaluation. According to the United States Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Education awarded \$505,756,000 in School Improvement Grant funds in the year 2014 for school improvement efforts for the nation's most struggling schools. According to a document published in March of 2015 by the U.S. Department of Education titled *Guidance on School Improvement Grant under Section 1003(g) of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, there are only a few models for school improvement that are outlined for the school improvement process. The purpose of this research is to analyze these models by involving teacher leaders within the school as participants of the study, identifying the current effectiveness of the implementation, and examine if the development and practices of teacher leadership could promote a sustained model for improvement after grant funds evaporate.

Teachers leading school improvement work are sometimes reluctant to think of themselves as teacher leaders (Fairman & Mackenzie 2015). Researchers such as York-Barr and Duke (2004) maintain a strong influence on the development of teacher leadership by conducting ongoing research into this topic. This research project combines efforts from leading researchers through the fields of teacher leadership and school effectiveness turnaround models such as provided by the Title I funding of SIG and examines teacher leader's perceptions of how teacher leadership effects the school improvement process.

The SIG process is based on enacting change from within the LEA by providing a model for school improvement. To make this model permanent and productive, the change should begin with transforming teacher leaders within the designated school. The current school improvement models are closely related to transformational leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on building a vision, providing motivation to followers, enacting intellectual reflection, and providing support to all stakeholders (Bresicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015, p. 100). This research study connects the notions of transformational school turnaround models to the development of teacher leadership in SIG schools, the school's effective implementation of the SIG and if the development of teacher leadership could provide or enhance a sustaining model for growth in rural poverty-stricken Appalachian schools. This research will investigate how leadership practices transform individuals to become natural leaders from their SIG improvement process. Guided vision which is very important implementing a transformational model of change, is one characteristic that all leaders seem to share (Warren, 2009, p. 33). This research will focus on understanding the impact teacher leadership has on the SIG process through case study analysis that examines teacher leadership and the SIG improvement process through the lens of teacher leaders. This study will investigate how teachers perceive the current SIG model implementation,

the effectiveness of the SIG implementation and questions whether practices relevant to teacher leadership models could serve as an alternative or an addition to the current SIG grant models of school improvement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the heart of poverty-stricken Appalachia where SIG schools exist, there is a lack of quality teacher leaders to use current SIG improvement models as the primary approach to school improvement. There is a combination of geographical isolationism, poverty, and the lack of teacher leadership and leadership structures within the low performing schools which is causing them to be hard to turn around using current SIG improvement models. This lack of resources could be a root cause of many underperforming schools in states such as West Virginia beyond just the SIG schools. So the question becomes what impact does effective teacher leadership have on SIG funded schools in an area of the United States where funds and resources to support high quality teacher leadership and development are so limited? How are teacher leaders identified in SIG schools? What are the key effective model practices of teacher leadership in SIG schools? How do teacher leaders evaluate teacher leadership to sustain teacher leadership development in a cost effective manner when looking past SIG funding? These are central questions at the heart of this research. More importantly, how can teachers, administrators and teams measure effective teacher leadership in a way that guides them toward leadership improvement and school wide efficacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Many of these questions need to be answered to fully understand the problem. Moreover, an explanation of what a SIG school is and the process in which schools are identified in West Virginia has to be outlined.

Being classified as a SIG school in West Virginia means that the school is also classified as a priority school. These are schools with the lowest standardized test scores according to the

West Virginia General Summative Assessment and are in the bottom 5 percent of schools according to the test. Being classified as a SIG school provides struggling schools with some financial assistance for school improvement. However, one of the main problems with the SIG process is the models for school improvement do not connect well with rural consolidated districts. One reason that these models may not work is the lack of qualified teachers located in the area and the geographical isolation from the rural and mountainous terrain. Not only can these schools ill-afford to lose qualified teachers, they are spread out too far apart to join forces for restructuring school improvement models. Models that are available, such as the turnaround model, provide interventions by removing the principal and up to fifty percent of the staff after one year of implementation, according the SIG guidance document (Appendix, A). These models are used not only as an intervention in struggling schools but also to restructure the school to enhance growth. Other models such as the school closure model simply close struggling schools as the main intervention. The SIG guidance document is set up to have some flexibility; however, LEAs that are rural and lack funding may also lack qualified teachers in the located area. Geographically isolated models such as school closure may not be an option. In an area where school leaders already struggle to fill teacher positions, increase revenue or have extreme rural and poverty-stricken communities, understanding how teacher leadership impacts the SIG process, the effectiveness of implementation of teacher leadership model practices should be investigated. Educators need to understand if current models have been successful and if alternatives such as developing teacher leaders within these schools could be an additional step taking to sustain growth in the poverty stricken rural SIG schools.

Research shows that leadership models with a local wisdom approach are effective in improving teachers' performance (Ismail, Mahmud, Samad, & Syam, 2015, p. 69). When local

teacher leaders are active in teacher leadership development, they positively influence teachers' performance. However, additional research suggests that many teacher leaders are at or near retirement age. The Baby Boomer population is at retirement age, and many young teachers are not having a positive, developmentally appropriate experience of easing into school wide leadership roles due to the lack of veteran teachers to use as mentors. As of 2010, almost fifty percent of teachers in the United States are reaching retirement age (Pucella, 2014). More important than lack of numbers, leadership roles within the schools are starting to change shape from one "great man" to a multilayered complex leadership model (Harris, Day, & Hopkins, 2002, p. 1).

In October of 2013, the United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the Rural Education Nation Forum. He relayed the message to all who attended from the Ohio Department of Education that challenges facing small-town districts are real and urgent. The communities are isolated and they suffer from shrinking tax bases. There is a shortage of teaching talent especially in areas such as special education and STEM. Lack of funding affects leadership, professional development, and the overall development of teacher leadership and could be one of many reasons schools in rural regions remain under-performing.

Current educational initiatives that mandate growth in student achievement require the distribution of leadership beyond a single individual to a more complex layer of leadership that trickles down through the school's context into the classroom (Fullan, 2007; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lieberman & Miller 2005; Timperley, 2005; York-Barr & Duke 2004). This research looks at teacher leadership through the lens of teacher leaders within a SIG school by conducting interviews with individual teacher leaders and surveying teachers about the impact that teacher leadership has had on implementation of the selected SIG model, the effectiveness of

their school improvement model and their view of teacher leadership model practices as a possible addition or alternative for a sustained model. More specifically, this research provides feedback from teacher leaders within a SIG school about the impact teacher leadership may have on implementing and sustaining SIG models for school improvement, the effectiveness of the grant, how it was implemented and alternatives such as the development and practice of teacher leadership model practices as means for sustaining school improvement efforts. Teacher leaders informed the findings of this research, and their understanding their perceptions of teacher leadership in SIG schools is a significant portions of the findings for this project. The SIG process is currently outlined by the SIG Guidance Document (Appendix A). The SIG Guidance document is very important to the LEA and outlines how LEA's should restructure schools and provide school improvement models. It is imperative to understand this document and its references to Section 1116 and how the SIG school improvement models works to understand this research.

School leaders are in a constant struggle to find the "Magic Bullet" for student success and school-wide efficacy. Some of the rationale for focusing on teacher leadership is employee participation and growth when they interact and improve from within the greater context of their organization (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 258). This research is connected with the idea that poverty stricken, rural areas can implement change from within local schools or districts using teacher leadership as one way to have a greater impact that can be sustainable and maintained within the organization. The research is directed to teachers, school leaders, district administrators, and researchers who are interested in school improvement efforts and transformational leadership in schools that receive SIG funding. The goal of the study is to reveal how effective teacher leadership impacts current SIG models being implemented and if teacher

leadership and transformational leadership development might change the SIG implementation to develop a school improvement model that is devoted to not only school turnaround but teacher leadership development and sustainment in rural poverty-stricken SIG funded schools.

There is growing evidence that leadership influences academic success in schools (Coddard, 2010). The gap in current research limits understanding of how teachers perceive the impact of teacher leadership on the current model. Investigating teacher leadership in SIG schools along with understanding how leadership is identified and measured for success helps identify how future SIG funded schools can develop and sustain school improvement models that are closely related to current initiatives. By understanding how teachers could better serve as leaders within SIG, school leaders can better manage SIG grants and gain more efficacy and sustain school improvement models, specifically for rural areas of Appalachia.

There is a need for deeper understanding of how teacher leadership and the development of leadership structures from within a SIG school could strengthen current SIG improvement models. This insight provides an in depth look, through the lens of teacher leaders, about what approaches are effective and what types of leadership need further developed for students to have a greater success rate in rural, poverty-stricken parts of Appalachia. These teachers will examine how effective teacher leadership impacts the current SIG model of school improvement and if the development and practice and evaluation of teacher leadership could have a positive impact to their current school improvement efforts.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore whether teacher leaders feel that the practice and development of teacher leadership has a positive impact on the current SIG process. Are teacher leadership and model practices an alternative or additional sustainable school improvement



process that could be used by SIG school in rural, poverty stricken parts of central Appalachia? In the United States and Canada, the notion of distributed leadership or teacher leadership is well developed and grounded in research evidence. This model of leadership implies the redistribution of power and realignment of authority within the organization (Harris & Muijs, 2003, p. 2). However, one researcher argued that the literature available about teacher leadership offers little direct information on the development of teacher leadership (Li, 2015, p. 436).

This research will analyze the effectiveness of current SIG models and how teacher leaders in SIG schools perceive teacher leadership and the development of teacher leadership from within the SIG school improvement process. The research will explore how teacher leaders are identified, what are the current key practices or dimensions of teacher leadership and how teachers evaluate the teacher leadership process. Furthermore, this research may provide insight on how instructional leaders can foster teacher leadership and sustain the transformational process after School Improvement Grant funds are exhausted.

The school improvement process is heavily based around accountability and compliance. Schools across the country are generally judged from one standardized test score. This research will report on the relationship between current SIG School and their perceived effectiveness of their SIG model of improvement and the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA) Scores. Making correlations between qualitative and quantitative data could identify possible areas of improvement for the implementation of the SIG grant in future schools. This research will also examine the correlation between the perceptions of teacher leadership structures and practices to the WVGSA.

There is nothing controversial about the idea of effective leadership having a positive impact on student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Whalstram, 2004, p. 5). The purpose

of this study is not to make the claim for one style or one theory of teacher leadership. On the contrary, the purpose of this research is to explore multiple dimensions of conceptual frameworks related to the effectiveness of the current implement SIG and teacher leadership model practices to investigate a model that can be implemented by teachers and administrators as a means of school wide improvement in SIG schools. Leithwood (2004) explained the basics of successful leadership. These basics include setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization (p. 8). This research highlights how teachers and administrators carried through these important basic steps while measuring effectiveness of teacher leadership's impact on the SIG school improvement process, developing and practicing key dimensions of teacher leadership, and measures for success.

### **Research Questions**

What drives this research are some basic questions that evolved from the close examination of the SIG guidance document. Theme 1: The impact of teacher leadership on the current effective implementation of the School Improvement Grant process for rural, poverty-stricken schools of central Appalachia. Theme 2: The development of teacher leadership and model practices as an alternative or addition to current school improvement initiatives. Theme 3: Evaluation, what has worked and what have been the challenges of current models. Investigating these themes will provide insight from the perceptions of teacher leaders that are participating in the SIG School improvement process and are defined as school leaders. These basic research questions are open ended that will serve as a guide to formulated common themes in the research and practice of teacher leadership in SIG schools.

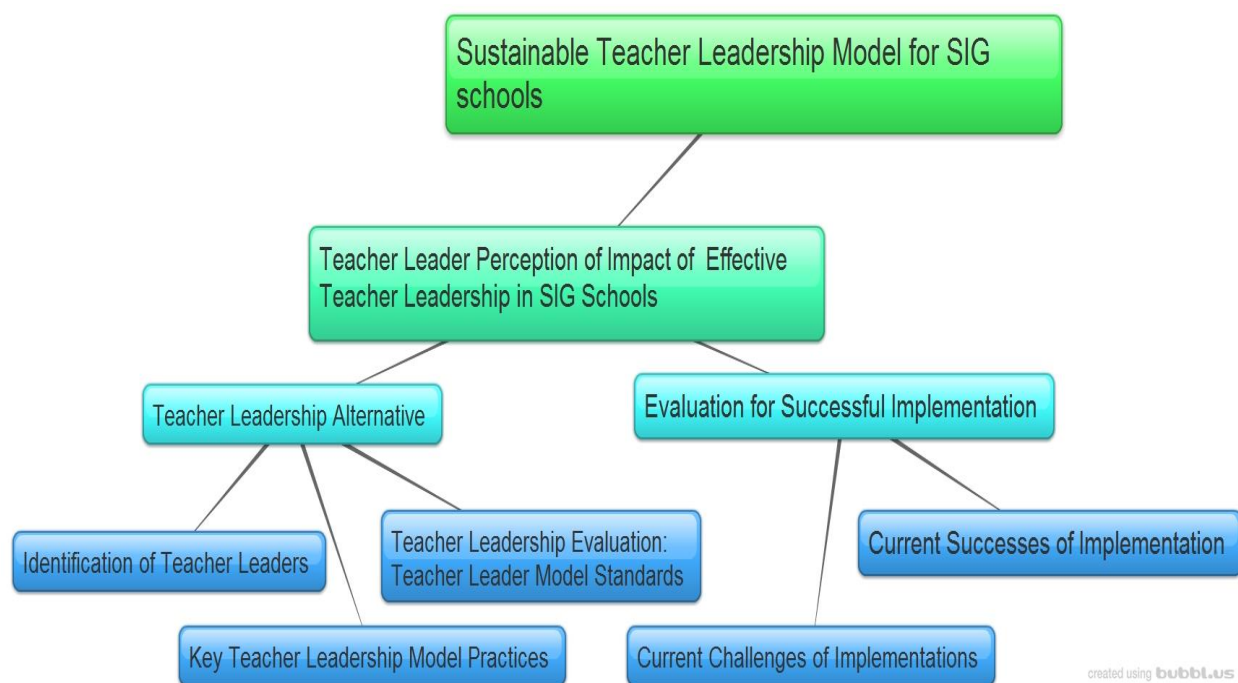
1. Does teacher leadership influence the effectiveness of the current SIG grant as implemented?

2. How could teacher leadership development and model practices be used as an alternative or addition to the current SIG model implemented?
3. Is the SIG model of school improvement an effective model without the presence and development of teacher leadership model practices and evaluation?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this research is based on the above stated themes. These themes are strongly focused on the impact of teacher leadership and the effectiveness of the SIG process. This framework investigates effective implementation of the SIG grant, sustainable teacher leadership model practices and the evaluation as a school improvement strategy for SIG schools. Below is a graphic organizer that represents the main topics of this framework and how they interact.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Graphic Organizer



This conceptual framework was developed to serve as a model for the school improvement process specifically in SIG schools that is focused on the effectiveness of current implementation and teacher leadership. One important criteria of this framework is the Teacher Leadership as an Alternative criterion. This is an important piece of the overall framework and includes the development of teacher leaders, the key teacher leader model practices and teacher leadership evaluation through The Teacher Leader Model Standards framework. The Teacher Leader Model Standards (Appendix B) can be used to guide the preparation of experienced teachers to assume leadership roles such as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, school team leaders, and data coaches (Harrison & Killion, 2007). These standards provide a leadership model for

teachers to follow when forging their own leadership skills “Within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 1). It is clear that teacher leaders are very important. The Teacher Leader Model Standards consist of seven domains describing the many dimensions of teacher leadership. When analyzing the guidance document by the U.S. Department of Education, teacher leadership is a missing part of the school improvement process. This is a very important oversight and limits potential for school improvement in SIG recipient schools. Lack of recognition of teacher leadership is even more alarming because of the large amount of United States tax dollars that are being appropriated for the SIG funded schools. The Teacher Leader Model Standards outline domains that create a school wide evaluation process for teacher leadership. When looking at each domain, the connection is made with quality teacher leadership and how teacher leadership may be defined. This is the type of transformational evaluation process that should be practiced by teachers.

To know about change is to know about inertia, which is to say that sometimes the status quo needs to change. School leaders can’t wait for success, they have to kick start it (Fullan, 2009). This perspective is directly connected to the work of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. These standards are closely related to transformational process and the development effective SIG school improvement models that can be used as an alternative to the classic SIG Turnaround Model. The Turnaround Model outlines ways to remove the struggling employees as a part of the SIG process. The SIG document fails to address sustainable teacher leadership development from within the school. Finding out how to better understand the SIG process through the lens of teacher leaders provides the need to better understand all SIG school improvement models.

If teacher leadership plays an important role in making the SIG models of improvement more effective, teachers will need leadership development. Through a thorough search of literature, an identification or development framework was found in a dissertation by Sanocki (2012) that described the process of becoming a teacher leader. His framework was developed based on themes that were derived from York, Barr and Duke (2004). More specifically, the work focuses on how teacher leaders are identified within schools. This conceptual framework graphic organizer serves as a component of the development of teacher leaders and could be used to direct the process for becoming a teacher leader in SIG schools. This is the beginning framework for finding and fostering teacher leadership. That there are teacher leaders in all schools is not hard to conceptualize; leaders exist among all groups. On the other hand, it is harder to figure out is how to motivate and develop those teacher leaders. Based on the research of York, Barr and Duke (2004) the following graphic organizes a framework that finds and develops teacher leaders in a few distinct ways. Internal inputs are depicted as teachers who are self-motivated and sometimes just take on teacher leadership roles within the school. An example of external input would be a principal assigning a leadership role to a given individual. Both result in the development of teacher leadership skills.

Figure 2. Sanocki's 2012 Conceptual Framework Graphic Organizer

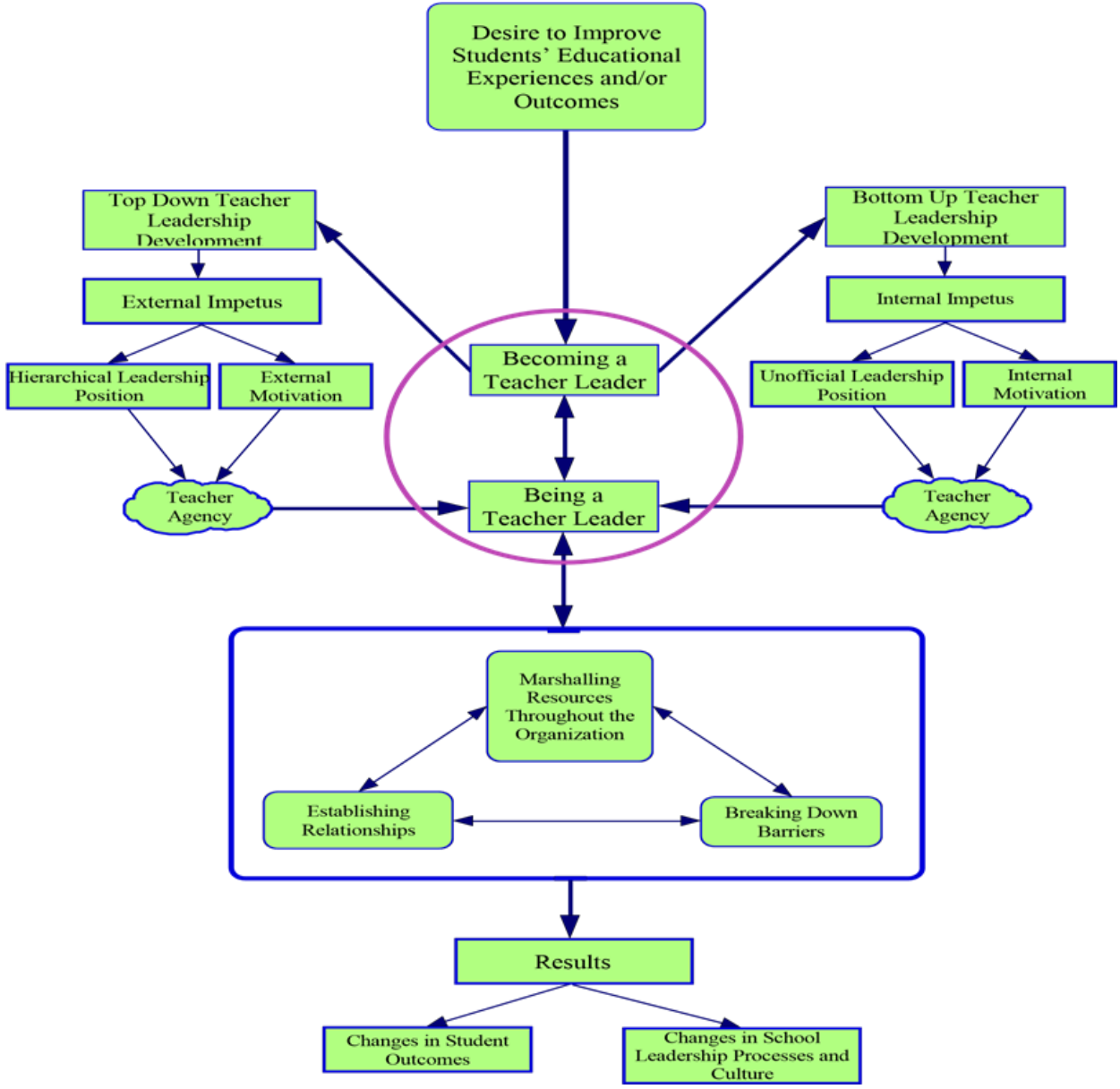


Figure 2. Represents external and internal impetus for the development of teacher leadership

The final part of this research about teacher leadership is the teacher leader model practices in a SIG school. These practices include all dimensions of teacher leadership and structured practice in SIG schools. Examples of these practices and structures are included in The Teacher Leader Model Standards and the key dimensions of teacher leadership is based on

Harris's (2002) work *School Improvement: What's in it for the Schools?* This author outlined four dimensions of teacher leadership. The first of these dimensions is devoted to the ways in which teachers translate principles of school improvement into practices in the classroom. This is the brokering stage. The second dimension focuses on participative leadership where all teachers feel they are a part of the change. The third dimension is the mediating role; teacher leaders are an important source of expertise and information. Lastly, the fourth dimension is all about building relationships. Close relationships among stakeholders where mutual learning takes place is the focus of this dimension.

The overall strength of this conceptual framework is fact that it guides the researcher to discover what impact teacher leadership has on the SIG grant, if the SIG is working effectively as currently implemented, and if it the framework connects with the idea that teacher leadership could be used to enhance the implementation to sustain school improvement efforts.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope**

One major assumption for this research is that all participants are teacher leaders and have some experience as a positional teacher leader. Another assumption is that the participants in this study are already designated teacher leaders by their colleagues and can provide insight on teacher leadership. A few more assumptions are that all participants are located in a rural poverty-stricken area and that they have had minimal training in becoming a certified teacher.

This study's limitations include the small sample population of teacher leaders due to the remote and rural location of sample population. A more formal limitation is that the teacher participants have been participating in a teaming model that might reflect the practice of teacher leadership. Participating in a leadership team is reflective of teacher leadership and could possibly be reflected in the interview questions. Another limitation of this study is that it is



based on the lens of teachers only, and doesn't consider other stakeholders such as school and district leaders, students, and parents. A final limitation that needs brought forward is that this study was conducted in a low performing priority school in West Virginia. This could amplify the effect of schools needing teacher leadership because of their low performance status.

This study took place during the 2015-16 school year in three designated SIG schools in West Virginia. These schools have a population of less than 700 students and no more than 40 fully certified teachers each. This study was conducted with individual teacher leader volunteers from the school's leadership team who have been identified as teacher leaders. The study examined the effectiveness of the currently implemented school improvement model in the designated SIG School by surveying a sample population of teacher leaders within the school. The research investigated if teacher leadership development model practices might be used as an addition or alternative to current model and uncover how the SIG improvement model is being evaluated.

### **Rationale and Significance**

The underlying purpose of this research relies on understanding if the SIG grant as it has been implemented in the designated SIG School has been effective and if teacher leadership was used to promote sustaining the school improvement effort after SIG funding was utilized. Teacher leaders offered some insight on how teacher leaders were identified and developed, what teacher leader model practices were effective, and how teacher leaders were effectively evaluated to enhance current SIG school improvement models or use as a sustainable model for when SIG funds are no longer available. These teacher leader perceptions will be used as a sustainable means for school improvement in underperforming rural, poverty-stricken schools as a way to enhance or sustain current SIG models or as an alternative to current School

Improvement Grant improvement models. This study is focused on benefiting rural schools that are not benefiting from current SIG school improvement models such as the turnaround model which is heavily based on staff turnover. These are SIG schools that are isolated by geography and limited with the lack of resources provided by local tax bases and lack of qualified teachers. The findings of this study could be used in the construction of a better defined sustainable teacher leadership model practices for schools with similar geographical and demographical makeups to start utilizing as a part of the improvement process. This could have a significant impact on how school improvement is viewed and practiced by teachers and administrators in rural geographically isolated SIG schools. Making sense of the impact of teacher leadership, the SIG models and the model's effectiveness that are outlined in the guidance document, supports the rationale for this study. Some of these models include removing 50 percent of the struggling teachers within the school. Although this could be an effective model in some schools, it is very hard to implement in other schools that are located in areas that don't have a large qualified teacher population. When it seems impossible to replace up to 50 percent of staff, the turnaround model and a school closure model are both out of the question. SIG funded schools have to find a model that works in such remote and poverty stricken areas that promotes a self-sustaining practice such as teacher leadership.

### **Definition of Terms**

Understanding terms associated with teacher leadership and research in SIG funded schools is very important. Because of how vast the topic teacher leadership has become, it is essential to review the following terms as they are defined below.

Dimensions of teacher leadership: Key steps or processes that are central to the development of teacher leadership practices. This can include shared leadership, distributed

leadership and or the key dimensions of teacher leadership based on Harris's (2002) work *School Improvement: What's in it for the Schools?*

**Teacher Leader Model Standards:** A set of teacher leadership standards that includes seven domains created by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium following standards format similar to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC).

### **Conclusion**

It is essential to evaluate the impact teacher leadership has on the SIG school improvement effort. The development of teacher leadership is intriguing because it is based more on relationships and the development of sustainable teaching practices instead of a compliance based stance on "canned" school improved products. Research suggests that teacher leaders are advantageous to support other individual teachers and school (Harris, 2003). Meaning that schools greatly benefit from having and sustaining teacher leadership. This research also indicates that there are a number of barriers to overcome for genuine teacher leadership activity to take place. To define and understand barriers and commonalties among teacher leaders will strengthen the argument that teacher leadership is important in current education initiatives for SIG funded schools. To understand how teachers in underperforming, poverty-stricken schools view teacher leadership will provide some insight on how effective teacher leadership can impact SIG funded school when funding is no longer available. Teacher perceptions of effective implementation of the SIG school improvement model and teacher leadership model practices could serve as a navigation device for professional learning and development in SIG schools as a part of a sustainment model. This research will examine the SIG process for effectiveness and explore teacher leadership as an addition or alternative to the current model. The next step is to analyze literature associated with defining, developing and improving teacher leadership

specifically in SIG funded schools and understand what models of improvement currently exist and how teacher leadership may have an impact on current SIG models.

The following chapters will include a literature review that focuses on defining the SIG school improvement models. This review of the literature will define topics such as teacher leadership, frameworks for developing teacher leadership, model practices, key dimensions and how teacher leadership may be evaluated. This literature review will be followed up by connecting teacher leadership and the SIG school improvement models with a methodology chapter that will focus on outlining how this study will be executed.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on teacher leadership in SIG funding schools and related topics that are important in defining and evaluating teacher leadership model practices. The bodies of literature used for this review focus on the SIG guidance document and other associated research. However other bodies of literature found within focus on teacher leadership, Sanoki's (2012) dissertation and the Teacher Leader Model Standards. These bodies of literature formulate the structural framework of this literature review process. Other related topics explore teacher leadership in differentiating contexts but the research consistently reflects back to how these topics compare and contrast to what the SIG guidance document outlines as the models of school improvement that should be implemented in SIG schools.

Teacher leadership is a concept that is continually evolving which makes it difficult to define. The following literature review provides insight for defining teacher leadership, connecting teacher leadership to topics such as distributed leadership, collective leadership, transformational leadership and the school improving process. This literature review identifies a framework for finding teacher leaders within a school and how teacher leadership key dimensions have an impact on learning. Through the literature review, teacher leadership evaluation is analyzed using the Teacher Leadership Model Standards. This review dives into the School Improvement Grant funding process and the types of school improvement models used in this process. This literature review examines teacher leadership specifically the pros and cons associated with teacher leadership and model practices, covers many key dimensions on the topic of teacher leadership, explores some opposing viewpoints about teacher leadership, and outlines the importance of addressing this topic for future research purposes specifically when developing a model for SIG schools to use in a high poverty geographically isolated school.

When conducting research on the topic of teacher leadership, many additional topics were presented through search queries. Sometimes these related topics were discovered from the research topics associated with teacher leadership when searching for related articles and books. For this literature review, a simple search query was used to find all related topics. The key terms included in this search were teacher leadership, teacher leadership model, distributed leadership, collective leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, school improvement, teacher efficacy leadership structure, School Improvement Grant, SIG Schools, and the dimensions of teacher leadership. With this criteria, dissertations, eBooks, EBSCO HOST, ebrary, Google books and Internet resources were searched for scholarly articles.

This literature review is integrative and based on the exploration of the vast base of resources that are available dealing with the topic of teacher leadership. According to Torracco (2005), the integrative literature review is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated. The goal of this literature review is to explore the topic of teacher leadership, and investigate teacher leadership identification, key dimensions, and evaluation and model practices within School Improvement Grant schools. This literature review has been developed by connecting themes that are related to the conceptual framework of the study at hand.

This research focuses on investigating teacher leadership in SIG funded school and understanding the effective teacher leadership model practices that could serve as a cost effective way to improve schools in rural communities that take part in the SIG funding from the federal government. This research integrates common themes that have emerged from the conceptual framework; the goal of this research is to obtain data from the teacher leader perspective and to

investigate what effective teacher leader model practices work in SIG funded schools. York-Barr and Duke found that the concept of teacher leadership is becoming more embedded in the practice of school improvement (2004, p. 255). Understanding teacher leadership is not enough; this research identifies different concepts associated with not only the impact of teacher leaders in SIG funded schools but also the identification, development, evaluation and the key effective teacher leader's model practices that are important to teacher's leaders for school improvement. The current SIG models of improvement seem to connect with restructuring schools and providing a new leadership platform instead of developing leadership from within the school that currently exist.

### **Defining Teacher Leadership**

Defining teacher leadership is difficult because there are so many different researchers that define it in so many different ways. This is a topic that has been explored by many different researchers over the past several decades. Despite the expansion of teacher leadership roles, the field of education has not established an agreed-upon definition of teacher leadership or set clear guidelines for professional practice (Swanson, 2011 p.12). In order to define teacher leadership, one has to turn to the literature review. Teacher leadership is important because leadership roles within the schools are starting to change shape from one "great man" to a multilayered complex leadership model (Harris, Day & Hopkins, 2002, p. 1). This multilayer process is the basis of teacher leadership. Defining what a teacher leadership looks like within the school is complex; they are described usually as classroom teacher (Nappi, 2014, p. 30). However, these teachers have been described by many different authors in many different ways. Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) viewed teacher leaders as individuals who are, aspiring to lead school reform while other authors such as Killion and Harrison (2006) defined ten roles of

teacher leaders as: “resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach and or catalyst for change” (p. 5).

### **School Improvement Models in SIG Funded Schools.**

No matter what the definition is, teacher leaders practice many different dimensions and effective model practices of leadership within the school’s context. Teacher leadership goes beyond simply working within a team of teachers. This role is multi-layered and very complex. Teacher leaders are assuming more of the leadership role within the school, which makes understanding and developing teacher leaders a critical component of the school improvement process (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 255). This system wide internal approach goes beyond a single definition to a more broadly classified framework or model for improvement. However, when looking specially at the U.S. Department of Education School Improvement Models outlined in the document published in March of 2015 by the U.S. Department of Education titled “Guidance on School Improvement Grant” under Section 1003(g) of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Appendix A), the teacher leadership process is not defined or implemented as a school wide model for improvement. This document is a source used to outline this research and dig deep into the school improvement process provided by the U.S. Department of Education and compare each model with the practices and dimensions of teacher leadership. Some of the models include the School Turnaround Model, The Restart Model, School Closure Model and the Transformation Model. Attached is (Appendix, A) which illustrates figures and definitions that outline the required components of these SIG models of school improvement by the Guidance document. The following figure provides a brief description of the SIG school



improvement models outlined by the SIG guidance document (SIG Guidance Document P. Xi-18).

Figure 3. Description of SIG school improvement models

***School Turnaround Model Required Components according to the document***

- (1) Replace the principal and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates;
- (2) Using locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students,
  - (A) Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent; and
  - (B) Select new staff;
- (3) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school;
- (4) Provide staff ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies;
- (5) Adopt a new governance structure, which may include, but is not limited to, requiring the school to report to a new "turnaround office" in the LEA or SEA, hire a "turnaround leader" who reports directly to the Superintendent or Chief Academic Officer, or enter into a multi-year contract with the LEA or SEA to obtain added flexibility in exchange for greater accountability;
- (6) Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically

aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards;

- (7) Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students;
- (8) Establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time; and
- (9) Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

(School Improvement Grant Guidance Document p. 4-16)

#### *Defining the Restart Model for Improvement*

According to the SIG Document the Restart Model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected through a rigorous review process. A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school. This model is based on closing and restarting schools as a part of the improvement process.

#### *The School Closure process as a part of the SIG Improvement Process*

School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available. The Guidance document outlines this is a school improvement model and that federal tax dollars can be used for closing schools for the school improvement process.

#### *The Transformation Model is similar to the Turnaround Model*

With respect to elements of the transformation model that are the same as elements of the

turnaround model, the definitions and other guidance that apply to those elements as they relate to the turnaround model also apply to those elements as they relate to the transformation model. Figure 2 outlines specific differences in the Transformation Model.

*Necessary Components of the Transformation Model*

- (1) Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.
- (2) Implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation and support systems for teachers and principals, designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement, that —
  - (a) Will be used for continual improvement of instruction;
  - (b) Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels;
  - (c) Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources), such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys;
  - (d) Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis;
  - (e) Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and
  - (f) Will be used to inform personnel decisions.
- (3) Use the teacher and principal evaluation and support system described above to identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing the transformation model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove

those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so; and

(4) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the school, taking into consideration the results from the teacher and principal evaluation and support system, if applicable.

### **Teacher Leadership Connection to SIG Funding**

The SIG funded improvement models do not provide a framework for defining, developing effective model practices, understanding, or evaluating teacher leadership. According to the Guidance Document, most of the models deal with structural analysis of personnel and the school within the community. My current position as principal of a Turnaround Model SIG school leaves me with an understanding of how these models may not be the best models for schools located in areas such as central, rural, poverty stricken Appalachia where the workforce is not trained and the distance between consolidated schools is too far to simply close schools and combine. The aforementioned school locations present challenges when implementing improvement processes that rely on replacing qualified individuals or shutting down the school. When thinking about how to improve schools in an area such as this, one has to think about development of teachers and leadership from within the local community and population. More of a system wide or community wide approach to improving the school proved to be noteworthy. With this thought, more literature about teacher leadership was conducted. This additional layer of research focuses on developing and defining effective model practices and the evaluation process of teacher leadership.

### **Teacher leadership defined as a system wide approach to leadership**

Much of the literature related to teacher leadership suggested that it is more of a framework not defined by an individual yet more of a system wide approach to school improvement. Teacher leadership in broad terms is defined as specific roles and responsibilities that incorporates the talents of effective teachers and deploys them in the service of students in a way that creates a system of school improvement (Curtis, 2013, p iii). One common theme found among differing literature associated with teacher leadership is that teacher leadership can have an impact on school improvement process. So the question becomes why is this not a central improvement model utilized for SIG schools?

To gain some insight with the latest trends of leadership in education teacher leadership, teacher leadership model, teacher leadership practices, teacher leadership evaluation, distributed leadership, collective leadership and transformative leadership was searched. A general definition of leadership highlights these points: leadership is about direction and influence. Stability is the goal of what is often called management. Improvement is the goal of leadership (Leithwood, 2011, p. 4). All of the above stated topics play a part in providing a direction for leadership and the improvement of an organization. Some basic leadership structures need to be in place for teacher leadership to come to the forefront of the improvement process. This is an important concept when thinking how school improvement schools identify, practice and evaluate teacher leadership and promote school improvement.

To understand teacher leadership as an improvement process for school success, one has to identify key dimensions of teacher leadership. There are many different dimensions that influence teacher leadership and develop teacher leadership as a school improvement process. These dimensions relate to the development and practice of effective teacher leadership. It is

critical to understand the key dimensions of teacher leadership in order to explore what effective teacher leaders model practices might be effective for the school improvement process in SIG funded schools.

### **Dimensions of Teacher Leadership for the SIG Improvement Guidance Process**

The following concepts have been identified during the literature review process when searching for teacher leadership. These concepts deal with individual teachers and practices that teacher leaders possess. All of the following concepts are very closely related to teacher leadership and effective model practices; in fact, many of these concepts play a defining role in understanding teacher leadership as a means for school improvement in SIG schools.

#### **Action Research.**

Action research is a dimension or model practice that directly links to effective teacher leadership. Teacher leaders are effective because they are self-motivated to complete ongoing research and develop their practices in the classroom and as a part of the leadership structure within their school. Case studies are very important factors in this type of action research. The following book outlines the importance of the action research process for teacher leaders:

*Teacher Leader Stories: The Power of Case Methods*, by Swanson, Elliot and Harmon (2011).

This book is dedicated to the importance of case methods to support teacher leaders. This book identifies how case studies can specifically help teacher leaders with their own professional growth. How do case studies and the reflective process help one to become a teacher leader?

According to the authors, it is the reflective process that leads to professional growth.

Understanding the individual strength and weakness and obtaining professional development for weak areas: this is a practice that is common among teacher leaders. Teachers that complete action research are making adjustments to their practice. This is a very important dimension of

leadership. To be able to research and change one's practice quickly is a skill that many teachers do not possess. Teacher leaders search out instructional techniques, research them, and put them to the test in the classroom. Action research is usually completed collaboratively and within the context of school improvement (Ferrance, 2000). Action research is a systematic means of self-improvement. Moreover, action research often occurs collectively involving principals, teachers and colleagues. This key dimension of teacher leadership is critical especially when connecting teacher leadership to professional development.

### **Transformational Leadership.**

One of the most important concepts informing effective teacher leadership is transformational leadership (Collay, 2010, p. 34). Furthermore, transformational leaders strive to change the culture by engaging members in vision development (p. 34). This is when teacher leaders become active throughout the development of the school improvement process. Working with all formal and informal stakeholders to develop and implement a shared vision using the shared or distributed leadership process, teachers directly impact their schools. This process seems to be a missing piece when looking at the Transformation Model of improvement according to the Guidance document for SIG funded school. The shared process required for implementing sustainable change is not promoted as a primary means of the Transformation Model. Being a transformational leader goes hand in hand with being a good teacher leader but there is little emphasis placed on teacher leadership within the SIG improvement process. The idea of transforming as a group could be the most rational idea for school improvement for schools that are geographically isolated and high poverty. This may reflect a lack of interest from qualified individuals and the lack of funding resources provided to these schools.

**Collective Leadership.**

One of the key practices of effective teacher leadership is collective leadership.

Collective leadership refers to the extent of influence that organizational members and stakeholders exert on decisions in their schools (Leithwood, 2010, p. 11). This type of leadership focuses on attention from all sources of leadership including the contributions of administrators, teachers, parents and students. Teacher leaders are a very big part of this type of leadership structure, however, to identify how teacher leadership affects school wide improvement, one has to consider many key concepts associated with teacher leaders. Going beyond the classroom and joining teacher teams and committees within the school, for example, allows teacher leaders to interact collectively. Collective leadership is one example of a key practice of teacher leadership. The SIG improvement process does not directly put emphasis on collective leadership and shared decision making as a major of any school improvement models that are outline in their guidance document. However, the SIG guidance document does not outline a process for understanding or developing a shared or collective process for teacher leaders or administrators to use for school improvement.

**Distributed Leadership.**

Another key model practice of teacher leadership that seems to be directly linked to effective teacher leadership is the distributed leadership process. The distributed leadership framework is dependent on teacher leaders (Sheppard, 2010, p. 3). This form of leadership is a democratic form of leadership that relies heavily on formal and informal leaders to help drive the decision making process (p. 3). This is a key part in the development of teacher leadership skills. Driving the decision making processes about curriculum and instruction and helping lay the foundation for school improvement through the creation and implementation of a new school



vision is one way that teacher leaders can impact school growth. Larsen and Rieckhoff (2013) found that continued emphasis has been placed on developing structures for sharing leadership and allowing others to be active in the decision making process (p. 3). However, the SIG school improvement process focuses first on removing the school leaders and some of the staff. This type of model may be necessary in some schools; however, there is little connection between removal of staff and the democratic principles of distributed leadership Goodwill. This approach does not emphasize shared leadership within the school improvement models outlined in the guidance document.

One key point about the distributed process that needs clarification is the fact that just because a school leader formulates a team, it doesn't mean that team can solve student achievement problems. The leadership team or distributed team has to be productive and effective to transform change. An English study by Bush and Glover (2012), outlined the importance of quality veteran leaders that make up the distributed leadership process. A distinctive feature of the nine case study schools in this research is the long service of most of their leadership team members. The implication is that effective team work takes time to develop, and that "quick fix" solutions to inadequate team work are inappropriate (p. 6). This research connects with the idea that teacher turnover is a major problem and that teacher leaders are seasoned leaders. The development of these leaders in geographical locations such as Central West Virginia seems to be a valuable direction for school improvement leaders. Removing up to fifty percent of the staff as outlined in some models is not viable in very rural settings, whether they meet the criteria as fully qualified or not.

Successful schools depend on dedicated members to conduct leadership processes within the school. If that framework is not in place, then the distributed leadership process won't be as

successful. However, not all schools have a staff of veteran teachers that can lead the decision making process, leading to one of the current research questions. What impact does effective teacher leadership have on SIG funded schools? To understand this question, one has to turn to teacher leaders that are currently working in SIG schools. Other questions emerge when finding teachers to answer these research based questions. How are teacher leaders identified within SIG funded schools? Some researchers have outline ways to identify teacher leadership in different ways. All of these developing themes lead to finding what effective teacher leadership model practice may be effective in the school improvement process for SIG funded schools.

### **How teacher leaders can be identified and developed**

Research identifies ways teacher leadership may be identified and developed from within the organization. Sanocki (2013) provided a framework for the process of becoming a teacher leader in his dissertation based on the work of York, Barr and Duke (2004) (see Figure 3). This process includes two different types of motivations that provides the driving force for teachers to take on teacher leadership roles. The first of these motivations are internal, as Sanocki (2013) referred to these as *bottom up* teacher leaders. These teachers are self-motivated to become teacher leaders, choosing leadership actions from the drive to become a better teacher. On the other side of the framework are externally motivated teacher leaders. These are individuals whom an administrator might encourage to take on a teacher leadership role. Both types of motivation are very important when understanding teacher leadership and how a framework for developing teacher leadership may be used for the SIG improvement process.

Moving on with the literature review process, there seems to be a lack of information and research conducted about finding and developing teacher leadership within the school and district context. Identifying teacher leadership that is already taking place is a task that can be

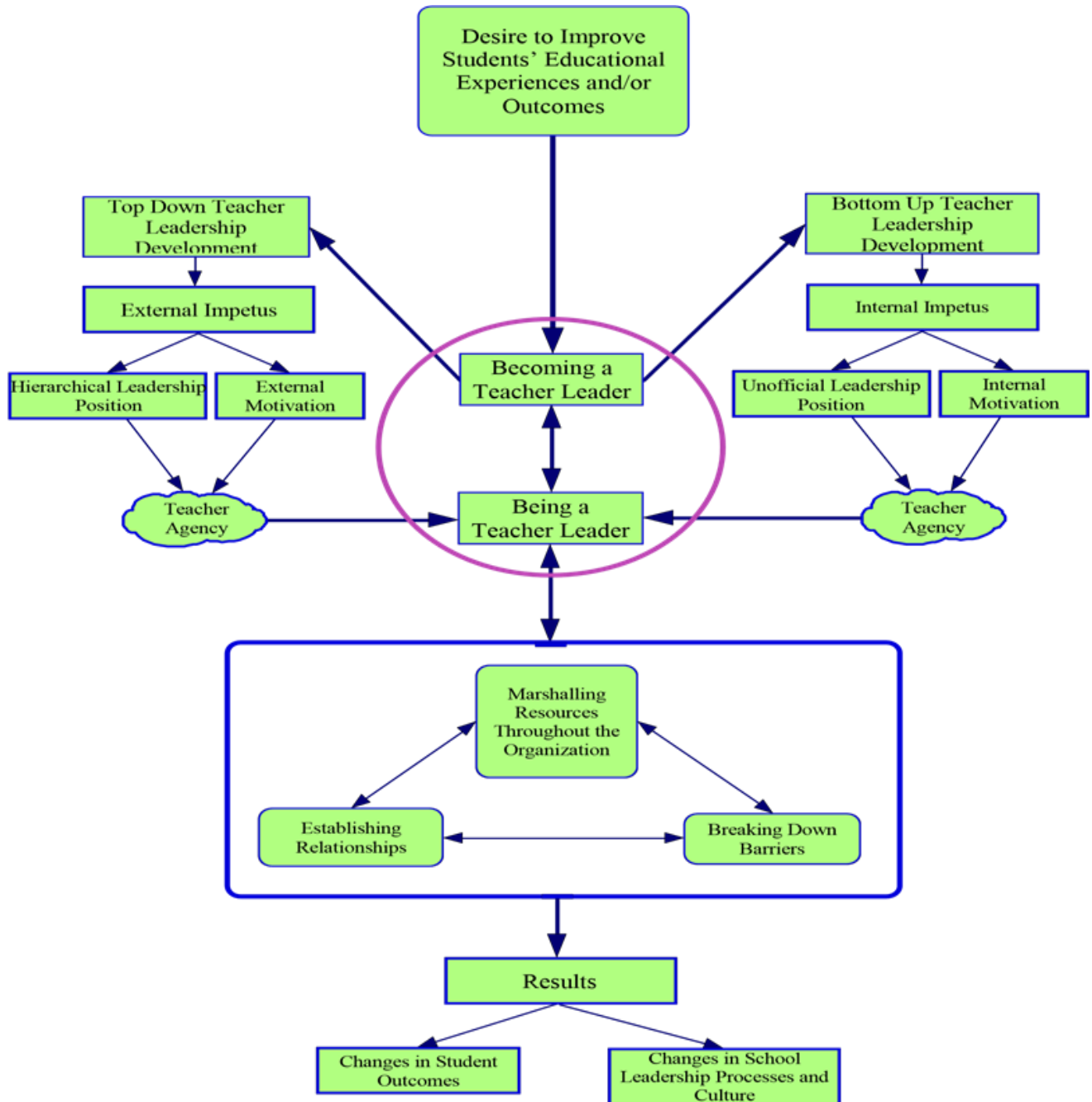
completed in many different ways (Sanocki, 2013). School and district leaders can make the connections with many different dimensions and effective model practices of teacher leadership that identify effective teacher leaders that practice or incorporate multiple dimensions of teacher leadership into one or more categories of their teacher leadership practices. However, teacher leaders, who may not exhibit typical characteristics of teacher leaders, are not easily identified. Turning to the literature, it is clear that the progression in becoming a teacher leader is not well defined. The problem of identifying teacher leadership speaks for the need of further study (Sanocki, 2013). Further research in SIG schools needs to be conducted to specifically understand how teacher leadership and model practices are identified in SIG schools

Understanding that there is a clear need for a progression for identifying teacher leadership a literature search revealed that Sanocki (2013) dissertation does provide a conceptual framework for understanding the progression of becoming a teacher leader. Sanocki (2013) made it clear that his framework is not intended to be a simulation of the process for becoming a teacher leader, his study provides descriptors and waypoints that help identify teacher leaders in a progression (p. 10). Based on the work of York-Barr and Duke (2004), which suggests that teacher leadership is not necessarily vested in a formal hierarchy or role description (p. 263). This research goes past formalities of positional leadership and looks at the waypoints that might be identified specifically when thinking about teacher leadership and the progression teachers take to become teacher leaders. Sanocki (2013) outlined the framework with two different emphases in identifying teacher leaders: a top down approach and a bottom up approach. The *top down* approach is when the principal or administrator provides the motivation to establish a teacher leader and the *bottom up* approach is when a teacher leader is intrinsically motivated to take on a role. The bottom up approach happens if a teacher is seeking to solve some type of

achievement gap in their own class (p.12). The Sanocki framework delineates current and future teacher leaders' progress which promotes measures for identification and support within teacher leadership initiation. Understanding how teacher leaders are identified is a valuable part of the current research and needs to be researched further. The bottom up approach relies heavily on the teacher leader's innate instinct to become a leader from internal motivation.

Developing an understanding of how teacher leaders can more quickly and effectively take on leadership roles could have a great impact on schools that receive SIG funded schools. There is a need to investigate how effective teacher leaders perceive the identification and development process in SIG funded schools. To better understand how identifying teacher leaders is currently being practiced in SIG funding schools could lead to better leadership development in the future.

Figure 3.1 Sanocki's (2012) Framework for developing teacher leadership (p.11)



### Evaluating Teacher Leadership as means for improvement in SIG schools

Evaluating teacher leadership goes beyond the norm of teacher evaluation. The act of evaluating teacher leadership is not the same as simply evaluating a teacher. Because of the

complex nature of teacher leadership, evaluation of teacher leadership is also complex. However, according to the Guidance on School Improvement Grant under Section 1003(g) of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, most school improvement models outline evaluations of individuals on a more regular basis.

Understanding how effective teacher leaders are evaluated in SIG schools could be very important to the school improvement process. When conducting a literature review, the Teacher Leader Model Standards emerge as a means for evaluating effective teacher leadership. The Teacher Leader Model Standards are a set of standards developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. The Teacher Leader Model Standards can be used to guide the preparation of experienced teachers to assume leadership roles such as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, teaching facilitators, mentors, school team leaders, and data coaches and overall teacher leader (Harrison & Killion, 2007). These standards are concrete in nature, outlining seven specific domains of teacher leadership.

These domains connect and intertwine the dimensions of teacher leadership. The lack of information on how to evaluate teacher leadership in the SIG guidance document leads to a major gap in evaluation process of effective teacher leadership. To better understand how effective teacher leadership is evaluated, teacher leaders in SIG schools need to identify how the SIG improvement process has developed the evaluation process and how LEAs have implemented the program. Research questions emerge from the literature review such as how do effective teacher leaders measure teacher leadership in SIG schools? Do they use a set of standards such as The Teacher Leader Model Standards or is there a process outlined by the SIG

school improvement models at all? Teacher leader's perception of teacher evaluation is a perception that needs to be investigated in current SIG School.

### **Teacher leadership: some conflicting views of key components to an effective teacher leader**

Some critics feel the rise of power through the distributive leadership process is a questionable practice. Some even question the scope in which formal leaders use this practice to gain insight about teacher leaders. Selling out to distribute leadership might mean a commitment to a new world order (Lumby, 2013, p. 12). In fact, Lumby further suggests that distributed leadership, while originally introduced to educators as merely a lens to better understand leadership, has grown into a theory and frequently prescribed practice which promotes a fantasy apolitical world in which more staff are supposedly empowered, have more control of their activity and have access to a wider range of possibilities (p.12). Although another article has suggested that, there is little evidence to support distributed leadership's achievement of such outcomes (Lumby, 2013, p.13). Knowing that distributed leadership is such an important practice of teacher leadership Lumby's research promotes the idea that this process might just be a fantasy in the minds of teacher leaders.

Other skeptics reject distributed leadership as leadership's flavor of the month, claiming that, instead of an enlightened and newly democratic approach to leading in an increasingly complex educational environment, it is traditionally hierarchical management designed for contemporary organizations (Corrigan, 2013, p. 1). The rhetoric contained in this argument is that distributed leadership is based on forwarding the notion of hope and what could be, not what is (Corrigan, 2013, p. 2).

Distributed leadership and teacher leadership parallel in meaning; however, it is hard to find any merit in these statements. Posing the question, what would leadership look like if

leadership was not distributed among teachers? This would be a starkly different than the current leadership landscape, with little hope for teacher leaders to grow into school and district wide leaders. This type of top down approach could have a great impact on school improvement efforts.

### **Presenting the Problem: Synthesizing Findings of Key Literature**

The problem is not in proving whether teacher leadership is good for school improvement, the answer to that question is documented in the literature. The question becomes, how can SIG schools identify teacher leadership model practices and promote those practices and reach their goals toward school improvement? How is teacher leadership being evaluated; are there teacher leader model practices which prove to be essential in preparing effective teacher leaders? Finally, how does teacher leadership impact SIG funded schools? Understanding that SIG schools face enormous challenges is essential in understanding how teachers may perceive different school improvement models

#### **The Lack of Teacher Experience.**

In 2009, the USA today published an article that was based on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) studies about retirement age teachers. The 2009 report indicated that, more than half the nation's teachers are Baby Boomers ages 50 and older and eligible for retirement over the next decade (p. 5). This study warned that a retirement "tsunami" could rob schools of valuable experience (Der Bedrosian, 2009, p. 5). Looking closer at the report, the NCTAF's analysis of 20 years (six cycles) of SASS data clearly demonstrates an alarming reality: Almost half of the teaching workforce is made up of Baby Boomers who are at or near retirement. These teachers are most likely teacher leaders that make of the majority of the school's population. In 1976, when young Baby Boomers were flooding into the ranks of



teaching, the average teacher age was 36; in 2007-08 it was 42 (SASS data). The United States now has the oldest teaching workforce in more than half a century. The number of teachers over age 50 has increased from about 530,000 in 1988 to 1.3 million in 2008. Connecting this reality with the SIG school improvement process and with probable teacher leaders retiring, one can make an argument that it is imperative to understand what effective teacher leadership model practices are and what impact they have on school improvement. Understanding how teacher leaders identify teacher leadership, practice, and model teacher leadership is important to schools such as SIG schools that could have a low number of teacher leaders.

Carroll (2010) described the conundrum in the following analysis of the SASS data by Ingersoll. NCTAF indicates that the most common age modal for teacher retirement is age 59 (p. 7). It is imperative that researchers address the problems of teacher leadership specifically for SIG schools, as they are in remote areas of the United States that don't have access to a large workforce of experienced teachers. Simply hiring new teachers to keep the pipeline supplied is no longer a viable solution. Employing teachers doesn't mean they will inherently be teacher leaders. That is why it is important to understand how teachers value teacher leadership and the model practices they value. Today's teachers do not stay on the job as long as earlier generations did (Carroll, 2010, p. 9). It is crucial to understand and model teacher leadership to teachers that might not be teachers for forty years.

Knowing that there are many teachers leaving the profession because of retirement is alarming; it is also alarming that new teachers may not stay in the profession as long as past generations. Incredible advantage is held in understanding what makes an effective teacher leader. This is especially important to SIG schools where teacher leaders are so valued. Investigating effective teacher leadership and the impact on SIG funded schools should offer

insight on how these schools may be more effective in developing models that are alternatives to models outlined by the SIG guidance document. Funding is an obstacle for effective teacher leadership.

How can school wide leaders develop teacher leadership from within their organization for sustained school improvement? This is especially difficult in poverty stricken school districts where the lack of funding impedes the development of future teacher leaders. There is an undeniable relationship between poverty and underachievement (Leithwood, 2010, p. 26). Leithwood further explained that poverty is the number one reason for school failure (p. 28). Research has documented that poverty, ethnic diversity and the combination of both are factors that correlate with school failure (p. 29). Furthermore, another factor contributing to school failure is weak leadership. SIG improvement models do provide the necessary models to address weak leadership. Weak leadership is a common theme among failing schools (p. 29). It is apparent that weak leadership, even in SIG schools, includes staff as well as the principal leader of the school. In terms of leadership development, many rural schools simply do not have the funds to send many new young teachers to training or provide other support for them to develop as teacher leaders. SIG schools currently offer little comprehensive leadership teacher training. Research on the need to develop teacher leaders from within SIG schools is not prevalent. SIG schools and districts, where funding is a major obstacle, foreseeably benefit from teacher leadership endeavors while implementing the suggested modeled practices.

#### **Teacher perceptions of their own leadership and why evaluation is important.**

Many teachers believe they are already teacher leaders, as indicated by studies. Some teachers believe they are taking on active leadership roles within the school, when the fact is they are not. A 2013 study showed that, actual teacher leadership practices in schools are lower than

what the teacher expected, and they have more expectation of formal leaders than actual teacher leadership (Kiranh, 2013, p. 185). Teachers see themselves as leaders taking on leadership duties and have the expectation that others will see their leadership as well. However, in this study, teachers' actual leadership was lacking compared to what others expected. This assumption by teachers and principals presents small schools such as rural schools another obstacle in developing teacher leaders. Many teachers may already think that they are actually teacher leaders (Kiranh, 2013, p. 185). The need for young teachers to evaluate their own leadership skills is a major topic that needs to be discussed by future research. Teachers need a way to measure their own teacher leadership ability and also look at teacher leadership within the context of the school. Measuring teacher leadership is a critical part in the understanding effective teacher leadership model practices that can be used for school improvement and overall teacher leadership expansion within schools and districts. Further research on how teacher leaders perceive teacher leadership and model practices associated with teacher evaluations could be productive in understanding how SIG schools use teacher evaluation for school improvement.

**Many young teachers need a leadership structure.**

One key finding in the literature review process is the presence of many young teachers in the workforce. With the Baby Boomer population retiring, there is a need for development of a young workforce. There will be many demands on new teachers to learn quickly about the profession and become leaders within their schools. *Not too Young to Lead* by Pucella (2014) reports on a study that analyzed young teachers' roles in the leadership process. It provides a framework on what makes good leaders. This framework includes a guide for young teachers. Beginning teachers can be more effective followers when they have an awareness of this

relationship and the need for their active participation in the school. Young teachers need the structure of a leadership framework and examples to follow. Those who learn to follow well will also likely learn to lead well (Pucella, 2014, p. 16). Unfortunately, in many schools in rural and poverty stricken areas these types of teacher leadership programs for young leaders do not exist. Teacher leaders within SIG funding schools can outline how effective teacher leadership model practices are developed for teachers just entering the profession. This is an important perception for SIG school leaders. Knowing how teachers perceive leadership structures and development could offer some insight on how these structures could be further investigated and developed to promote rapid growth in SIG schools. Understanding effective teacher leadership model practices could serve as a scaffold to young teachers in becoming effective teacher leaders. This process includes a progression for young teachers to follow along with dimensions of effective model practices for teacher leadership to evaluate their progress.

### **Teacher Leadership as a School-wide Core Belief.**

Many SIG schools do not have a developed teacher leadership structure. The lack of such a structure is a major cause of a lack of active teacher leaders. A 2010 study facilitated by 18 masters' level students at the University of Indiana showed the need to foster teacher leadership. This study found that teacher leadership can only flourish in a school culture that embraces teacher leadership (Halterban, 2010 p. 368). Teacher leadership has to be a school goal, a part of the culture to be a successful school wide. This is sometimes dependent on the school leader, such as the principal and district wide leaders, that promote and allow teacher leadership to flourish. For SIG schools, this type of leadership development is vital to research as part of a current improvement models. Another study shows that many district wide leaders are supportive of teacher leadership. A research study of 24 district level superintendents identified that many

leaders do value teacher leadership as one of the main components to school improvement. A qualitative study conducted by Wells (2012) indicated that 60 percent of participants in the district level study responded that they wanted to promote teacher leadership (p. 5). However, this research also showed that there are many obstacles to this goal. For example, teacher unions have blocked district leaders from developing teacher leaders (p. 7). Moving forward with teacher leadership and developing an understanding of teacher leadership model practices to improve teacher leadership programs, SIG schools could face many obstacles that may be unforeseen by leaders, hence, the critical need to understand these topics through the perspectives of teacher leaders within SIG funded schools.

### **What Research Lies Ahead: Summarizing for Clarity**

Understanding how organizations can enhance their own innovation is crucial for the organization's competitiveness and survival (Hoch, 2012, p. 150). In relation to this current research scope, the topic of teacher leadership in a rural poverty stricken SIG schools is a topic that has not had much research conducted in order to find possible solutions to problems that currently exist. A great need exists to conduct research about how teacher leaders in SIG funded schools perceive the effective model practices of teacher leadership, how these practices are identified developed and evaluated, and most of all, what impact these effective practices have on SIG schools. Many studies suggest that distributed leadership, which is a key component to teacher leadership, enhances student achievement at a fast pace for positive change (Torrance, 2013, p. 9). This generally held assumption has been the finding of many studies related to effective teacher leadership.

This study focuses on how teacher leadership practices such as distributed leadership impact SIG schools through the scope of teacher leaders within the organization. The literature

review indicates that there are relevant gaps in the literature that justify conducting research on understanding effective teacher leadership in SIG schools and the impact from these practices on the school improvement process.

In Chapter 3, a formal case study investigation is outlined. In this chapter the methodology is presented. This explanation of how the study will be conducted is followed by the final chapters in this research. The final chapters analyze, through qualitative methods, teachers' perceptions of effective teacher leadership in SIG schools, how these teacher leadership practices are identified and developed and what impact they have on the SIG school improvement process.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This research case study is focused on the impact of teacher leadership and if teacher leadership is important to the school improvement process in SIG funded schools. In order to develop an understanding of how teacher leadership development may benefit schools that have similar demographics make up and geographical locations, this study was conducted in one secondary high school setting in central West Virginia. This case study examined teacher leader perceptions of why teacher leadership was important to the school improvement process not only for overall school improvement but connected to the School Improvement Grant process outlined by the United States Department of Education. Yin (2014) recommended using a case study methodology when trying to understand a specific situation. For this research, teacher perceptions of the school improvement process are a key detail to the research, mainly because the research is located in a school that has been classified as a priority school by the West Virginia Department of Education. A priority school designation is classified as a school performing in the lowest 5% of schools in the state of West Virginia according the General Summative Assessment which is a modified version of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

This case study's conceptual framework was based on developing teacher leadership as a model for school improvement, particularly in low performing poverty stricken schools. Case studies require an intensive analysis and descriptions of a single unit bound by space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). This study focused on teacher leaders in SIG funding priority schools in West Virginia. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) School Improvement Grant or (SIG) will be the single unit that will benefit from developing an understanding of how teacher leadership can impact school improvement. This study outlined what model practices influence the effectiveness of the SIG grant. Findings of this case study can

inform teachers, principals, district level leaders and the WVDE school improvement specialist on the development of a comprehensive teacher leadership model in a (SIG) school and what components of that model development might be important for future (SIG) schools.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions for this case study have been broken down into three themes. The following themes acted as a guide to create a set of interview questions that was conducted by individual teacher leaders in a SIG funded school. These themes were used to develop an interview protocol (see Appendix, C). The interview protocol is comprised of open ended questions that were asked of interview participants and coded for data findings. Below is a list of research questions used to develop the interview protocol (Appendix C)

1. Does Teacher Leadership Impact the effectiveness of the current SIG grant as implemented?
2. How could teacher leadership development and model practices be used as an alternative or addition to the current SIG model implemented?
3. Is the SIG model of school improvement an effective model without the practice and development of teacher leadership model practices and evaluation?

### **Overview of Methodology**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop an understanding of how teacher leaders perceive teacher leadership in the context of school improvement in a SIG funded school. One way this case study was informed was by interviewing 15 teacher leaders from one high school in central West Virginia. A series of questions were created drawing on themes identified in the literature review that could develop a better understanding of teachers' perception of teacher leadership and the impact teacher leadership has on the school



improvement process. Additional data regarding teacher certification, years of experience, race, age and gender will also be collected (See Appendix D). A school improvement diagnostic was conducted by the school district and the West Virginia Department of Education. Teacher recommendations from this diagnostic was included into this case study analysis. Two years of the WVDE General Summative Assessment data or (GSA) were collected and analyzed to provide correlational analyses to student achievement. As a part this study, a culture survey typology was conducted with all teachers participating. This typology survey was analyzed to identify themes, patterns and recommendation for improvements.

### **Setting.**

The setting for this case study research is a single secondary high school near the center of West Virginia, a designated School Improvement Grant funded school that is classified as a priority school by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). The school serves a population of 596 total students and has a faculty of 35 teachers. The comprehensive high school that offers both high school classes and career and technical classes. This mostly working class community has only one consolidated secondary high school. Each of the demographic trends have remained consistent over the last several years. No major changes in student or community population have taken place previously to the study. The school staff has been unable to increase student achievement for the past five years and now is designated a school improvement school and receives a School Improvement Grant (SIG) that is part of Title I federal funding. This grant provides funds outlined for professional development and training of teachers. According to a document published in March of 2015 by the U.S. Department of Education titled *Guidance on School Improvement Grant under Section 1003(g) of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, there are only a handful of school improvement models that are recommended for

the school improvement process. One SIG process implemented at this school is referred to as the Turnaround model outlined by this document. According the guidance document, the Turnaround Model focuses on replacing teaching staff at the SIG school site. However, because of the geographical location and lack of resources, the school participating does not have a qualified replacement force and therefore is struggling with the current improvement model.

Steps to improve student achievement have been outlined by the West Virginia Department of Education that meet the requirements of the SIG grant. One step that has been a central focus of the school improvement process is the development of a leadership team. The leadership team consists of one teacher per content area, three members at large and the faculty senate president. This team meets weekly and guides the decision making processes at the school. The leadership team was selected by the staff to represent the staff as one unit. This took place during faculty senate; members of the leadership team were nominated and then elected for a one-year term by their teacher peers. “Novice teachers in urban or rural settings sometimes find unique challenges” (Catapano & Huisman, 2013 p. 259). A challenge this school faces is few teachers to serve as mentors or teacher leaders. This lack of experienced teachers was due to the enormous turn over in staff after the designation of priority schools by the West Virginia Department of Education. The findings from this study are imperative to providing information about leadership development to the current staff serving on the school’s leadership team and working as teacher leaders within the school. This study provided knowledge that may help these teachers overcome their challenges in a (SIG) school.

#### **Participant sample.**

This study incorporated both purposeful sampling and random sampling. Purposeful sampling was use to find and locate a study site that was currently in the SIG school

improvement process. This purposeful sample was identified by the principal investigator as a study site. Purposeful sampling is used when researchers intentionally select individuals to learn about or understand a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). For this case study, purposeful homogeneous sampling is being utilized to represent SIG schools in rural and geographically isolated parts of the United States.

After the purposeful selection of the site study school. Individual participants were selected through random sampling. This process was completed by sending out a recruitment letter to all teachers within the site study school. Teachers could then either opt-in or out of the research. The criteria for participation is very simple. To qualify for the study, participants had to identify themselves as a teacher leaders and be willing to participate in all forms of data collection. Teacher participants were a mix of male and female participants, all identified themselves as White, and ranged in age from 25-65. All subject fields at the school were represented by a participant leader. These fields included English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Related Arts, Fine Arts, Career and Technical (CTE) Industrial and CTE professional. There were a total of 15 teacher leaders who participated. This study focused on obtaining data from these randomly chosen teacher leader participants. The research is focused on understanding their perceptions of teacher leadership, the impact teacher leadership has on the successful implementation of the SIG grant and what teacher leadership model practices are effective in SIG schools.

### **Data.**

The overall content of the research questions informed much of the data collected in this study. Participant interviews questions guided the data collection process. Creswell (2012) outlined varied qualitative data collection categories. These categories include observation,

interviews and questionnaires, documents and audiovisual materials. Of these categories, this study included interviews, observations and a demographic survey questionnaire.

The interview protocol consisted of one-on-one semi-structured, in-person interviews that were recorded for transcription. The interviews were conducted with participants using ten open-ended questions grounded in research literature and specific to the concerns of why teacher leadership is important to the school improvement process.

Another form of data collection utilized in this case study was participant observations that specifically took place during the participant's chosen teacher leadership activity (Appendix G). The study participants also observed activities other teacher leaders conducted to learn, to evaluate how these activities are connected to the development of teacher leadership, the key dimensions, model practices of teacher leadership and how the activity is measured or evaluated. These activities took place during team meetings, professional development sessions, collaboration activities and or classroom practices of teacher leadership. The participant observers assumed the role of an "inside" observer who actually engages in activities at the study site (Creswell, 2012 p. 214). Each participant included one observation of a leadership task gathered as a field notes. The process provided insight on what participants observe in the field and what participant's value as important teacher leadership activities. The observations included a teacher leadership model practice such as co-teaching or professional development and how that practice was identified, a description of the practice as an observer and how the observer evaluated the practice. The participant observation included descriptions of the model practices and reflective notes.

The data were obtained through a structured observation process. This data included teacher leader perceptions of teacher leadership activities, the length of activity and how many

participants were included. Participants did not receive training on teacher leadership models because the data focused on a fill in the blank observation form (Appendix G) which provided a complete description of the leadership activity. Teachers identified, through observation, the effective teacher leadership practice or development for each part of the observation. Because this observation is recorded on a “fill in the blank” form, teachers did not need to receive training on how to fill out the participant observation. The themes represented on the form: what was the impact of effective teacher leadership model practices have on the SIG process? The second theme reflected how the effective teacher leadership practice, object or instruction was developed? Finally, how was this effective practice connected to evaluation? “Because case study focuses on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon” (Merriam 2009, p. 43), observations from within the site are a representation of what the participants observe and value as effective teacher leadership practices and might offer some perceptual differences than interview data alone.

### **Analysis.**

This Case Study data analysis consisted of transcribed interviews. These interviews and interview notes were analyzed and coded. Participant demographic information was compiled in a spreadsheet. For validity and reliability purposes, each participant reviewed all demographic, observation and interview data that was included as data for this study.

WVDE General Summative Assessment data and the Schools Benchmark Assessment Data were analyzed for the whole staff to identify differences in characteristics of the teacher leader participants. This data was used to make comparisons between the sample and the general staff.

Finally, participants' observations were included in the data analyses. These observations provided insight from a teacher leader's perspective and were used to identify similarities in the content between interviews and demographic information and teacher leadership model practices.

### **Participant Rights.**

In order to keep teacher leader participants' identities confidential during the research process, aliases were provided and used. During data analysis and the observation process, all names used were removed to protect the identity of all participants in the sample. Participants were asked to participate in an approximate forty minute to one-hour long interview. Any names provided during this time were removed from the transcripts. This practice was carried out during the participant observation. All participants were encouraged to complete the research once agreeing to be a part of the case study. However, all participants understood that they could opt out of the study at any time during the course of the study. All participants were encouraged to answer all interview questions. The participants were made aware that, if they did not feel comfortable with a certain question, it was not a requirement to answer. Participants participated in a short follow up data review to check their transcripts for errors and provide input into the data analysis process of this study. There was no financial gain for any participant that participated in this study.

### **Potential Limitations.**

This case study analysis was meant to represent a group of individual teacher leaders elected to the leadership team at the site study SIG designated school. Because there are few participants leading the school improvement process, the population size of the participants in this study is small. The overall goal of the study was to understand the role of the teacher leader

in a (SIG) school through the eyes of the teacher leader. However, the population of the sample could be viewed as a limitation that could reflect the potential accuracy of the study.

Another limitation is that this study took place in the same site in which the researcher works, although extreme caution was used in order to protect participants from biases. Fellow participants and researchers might see research conducted within one's own organization as biased. Purposeful effort was put into limiting the influence of researcher's opinions in the development and possible findings of the study.

One more notable limitation is the questions were set up to be open ended. Open-ended questioning allows for teacher participants responses to vary greatly from one interview participant to the next. The data will represent a range of viewpoints because all participants have their own unique perspective of teacher leadership.

#### ***Limiting Case Study Bias.***

Limiting bias in this case study research was a priority to the principal researcher. Because the principal researcher is directly tied to the study site some bias control measures were put in place to control and limit bias during the data collection and analyzation process. The first bias control was the creation of a well-defined case study that used random sampling techniques to secure participant. Information on this study was sent out to all teachers and the population that was study was based on what teachers opted-in to the case study. Although much qualitative research involves the use of purposive sampling, a random approach may negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants (Shenton, 2003, p. 65). While bias is created by allowing participants to opt-in to this case study, such bias does not limit its usefulness.

Another form of bias control that was used during the data analysis portion of the research was data triangulation. Triangulation may involve the use of different methods,

especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for much qualitative research (Shenton, 2003, p. 65). This case study used demographic data, participant observation data and individual interviews to triangulate findings. Going beyond the individual interview and using multiple forms of supporting data adds to the credibility of the final results of this research.

One final method that of controlling bias is use of member checks. This research is based on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and the impact of teacher leadership in SIG funded schools. The principal researcher used a set of member checks to ensure what participants share is portrayed accurately. One way to do this is to have the teachers conduct a participant observation. Another way the investigator ensured data was representative of participants' experience was the final data check that was completed by each participant. This is a follow-up data review session in which the participant checks all demographic, observation and individual interview data and signs off that it is valid and true data. Member checks are considered the single most important bias control that can be made to bolster a study's credibility (Shenton, 2003, p. 68).



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research is focused on understanding teacher leader perceptions of the impact of teacher leadership in SIG funded schools. This case study analysis explored teacher perceptions through the utilization of a semi-structured interview process. The research findings revealed five major themes and eleven subthemes that could be used as an additional or an alternative to SIG funded school improvement models. These themes are teacher leadership model practices that were perceived by participants as major factors for school improvement. The data collection process started with an opt-in/out recruitment letter (Appendix H). This letter was sent out to all the teachers in the selected secondary SIG funded school. As a result, 14 of the proposed participants completed all parts of the data collection process. This process started with the submission of the informed consent to participate, followed by the demographic and semi-structured interview process. At this point, the participants obtained (Appendix G) the Participant Observation Data Collection Sheet, which they completed one observation on a teacher leadership activity. Finally, after submitting all data teachers completed the follow-up data review (Appendix I) and verified all of the data they had submitted was valid.

This case study analysis resulted in five major themes and eleven subthemes that emerged from the data. The themes that emerged are teacher leadership model practices that can be implemented in current or future SIG funded schools to spark school turnaround. The themes were established using two coding cycles and conducting a final coding frequency query that resulted in the establishment of the themes and subthemes. This chapter provides a narrative description of the data results from the above stated data sources. The method used to obtain this information is referred to as pattern matching. For this single-case study analysis, a type of

pattern matching utilized was *explanation building*. Explanation building is an analytic technique of pattern matching that analyzes the case study by building an explanation of the case. (Yin, 2014, p. 147) This type of analysis is used to explain a phenomenon by connecting casual links of how or why something happened. One main goal of the research is to understand what teacher's perceptions of the impact of teacher leadership has on a SIG funded school and discover connecting themes to the current framework that can be further investigated and develop ideas for further study. In order to build the narrative explanation, different types of coding were employed.

First and second cycle coding was employed to obtain the final data results. The first cycle coding was focused on using the initial or open coding process and the descriptive coding process. Initial coding consisted of breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts examining these parts for similarities and differences, while conducting a theoretical open analysis of the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2013, p. 81). While implementing this data analysis, all transcripts were printed and the interview recordings were listened to while conducting the open coding process. The descriptive coding process was then integrated into this first cycle of coding. The descriptive coding process focuses on summarizes in short phrases the basic topic of the qualitative data being analyzed (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70). During this process each transcript was again printed and the recording of the interview was played back many times so the researcher could identify major topics that could eventually be grouped in like categories. By printing transcripts and manually listening to the recording of the transcript, highlighting words and phrases that repeated or were connected to the conceptual framework the topics of this qualitative analysis started to emerge.

The second cycle of coding was completed via the use of pattern coding. Pattern coding utilized explanatory codes that identify emergent themes in qualitative interview data (Saldaña, 2013, p.152). Pattern coding pulls together a lot of material into a more meaningful unit of analysis. This was completed by importing all transcripts into the NVivo software. By using pattern coding, nodes were developed in NVivo by analyzing similar codes to create a pattern. From these common nodes, themes and subthemes in the research emerged.

### **Data Analysis Method**

Data in case study analysis is typically extensive (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 31). This case study was developed to have many different data sets including interview transcripts, demographic survey data and participant observation. Data analysis consisted of collecting and organizing all three data sets for this research project and using the NVivo software for inductive coding and making connections between repeating themes to create an explanation of results. The first step was to gather and analyze all the demographic information. All Demographic Data Collection Sheets (Appendix D) were collected and entered into an Excel data base. Averages were created for gender, ages, years of teaching experiences, highest level of education obtained and number of years worked in current setting. Next, all participant observation data was compiled and put into a spreadsheet. Averages were created for the length of observation, number of teachers involved, number of administrators involved, number of students involved and the number of parents involved in the leadership activity. Finally, the transcribed interviews were analyzed via the NVivo coding software using first and second cycle coding techniques.

During the first cycle of coding, an inductive open coding approach was utilized. This initial coding was used to break the data down into parts for further data analysis. The inductive process reflects frequently reported patterns that emerge from qualitative data (Thomas, 2003).

There are many authors that report using a “general inductive approach” (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Dey, 1993 as cited in Thomas, 2013). This approach was used to discover teacher’s perception of the impact of teacher leadership as it relates to the three themes that made up the original conception framework for this study. First cycle coding can range from the magnitude of a single word to a complete paragraph or page of text coded (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). During this stage in the coding process, each interview recording, participant observation and transcript was reviewed and coded by highlighting existing patterns in the raw data. The initial coding process was coded manually on printed transcripts using initial and descriptive coding techniques by highlighting, circling and handwriting the initial set of codes, then importing and conducting the descriptive coding process in NVivo software. The first cycle coding resulted in a total of 197 codes based on repeating patterns that emerged from the data. The data was then imported into NVivo for a second cycle of coding.

The second cycle of coding began with review of first cycle nodes that were highlighted and selected in NVivo software program, creating parent nodes that could be used as reference points based on results from the first round of coding. Coding more frequently during the second cycle, 377 new code references were created. From these code references, patterns started emerging using the second cycle coding method of pattern coding. The second cycle codes were then put into parent node categories. There were forty established parent nodes based on the 377 code references that eventually resulted in the development of the 5 major themes reported on in the results of this research. Next, a code frequency query was conducted and provided a list of like pattern nodes. From the nodes that had a high coding frequency, like patterns emerged, categories, themes and subthemes began to take shape. Based on the number of code references of the parent nodes, five major themes emerged from the data. **Presentation of Results**

The following section will be devoted to presenting the results from all forms of data collected for this case study analysis. The data presented resulted in the analysis of multiple data sets including demographic data, participant observation data and interview transcripts to develop themes that developed from patterns within the data. These themes were transferred into visual and narrative data results.

### **Demographic Data Results**

Demographic information was collected by having each participant complete the Demographic Data Collection Sheet (Appendix D). The data included ethnicity, gender, years teaching experience, highest level of education, gender and number of years taught in current setting. The sample population all reported their ethnic background was white. Age was broken down into nine categories. Of the 14 participants, 22% reported they were in the 22-27 age group, 7% reported they were 27-33, 22% reported they were from 32-37, 14% reported they were from 37-42, 7% reported they were from 42-47, 7% reported they were from 47-52, 21% reported they were from 52-57 and the next two categories 57-62 and 62+ had no participants. The average age of participant was 40 years old. The evidence indicates that participants were very much evenly distributed across all age groups until the age of 57. There were no participants represented from the age group above 57 years of age. The majority of participants were under the age of 37 resulting in a young population for participants.

Figure 4. Participants' Age Chart

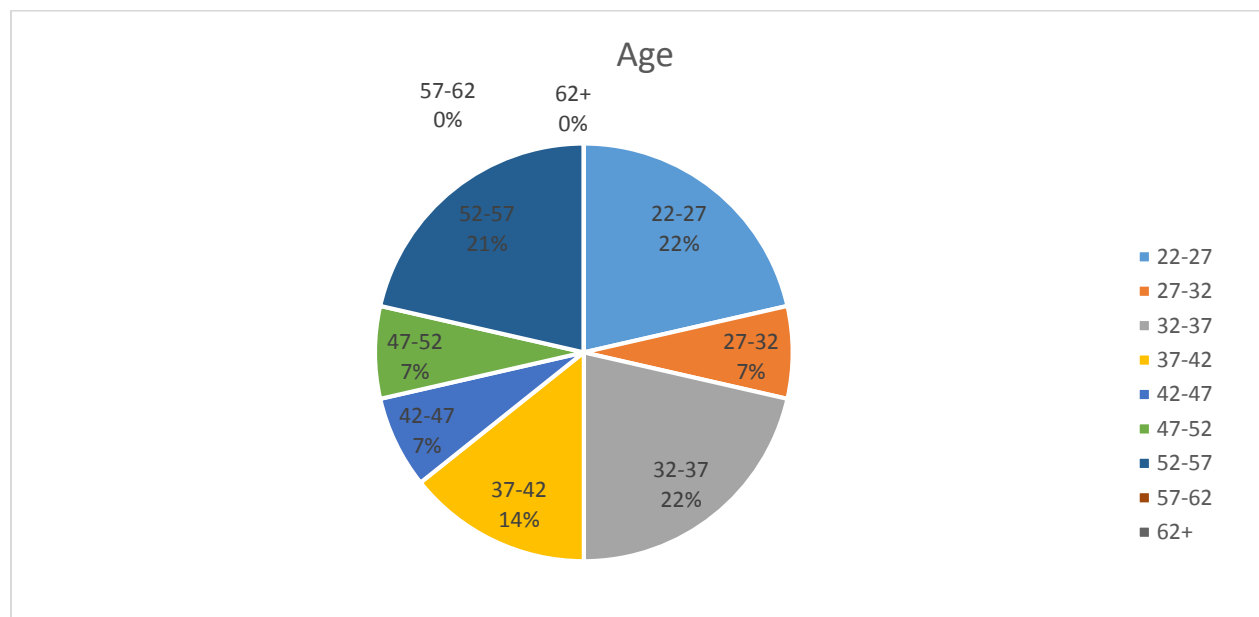


Figure 4. reflects the age categories surveyed and the percent of participant in each category

The participants also reported on their years of teaching experience, the demographic data collection sheet (Appendix D) had nine categories that each participant could select including: 0-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, 20-25 years, 25-30 years, 30-35 years and 35+ years. The results for years of teaching experience reflect that there were 4 teachers with 0-3 years of experience, 2 teachers with 3-5 years of experience, one teacher with 5-10 years of experience, 4 teachers with 10-15 years of experience, one teacher with 15-20 years of experience, one teacher with 20-25 years of experience, no teacher with 25-30 years of experience, one teacher with 30-35 years of experience and no teacher with 35+ years of experience. The years of teaching experience reflect that 79% of total participants had fewer than 15 years of teaching experience. The evidence indicates that almost one-third of all participants that participated in this study had less than 3 years teaching experience.

Figure 5. Participants Years of Teaching Experience

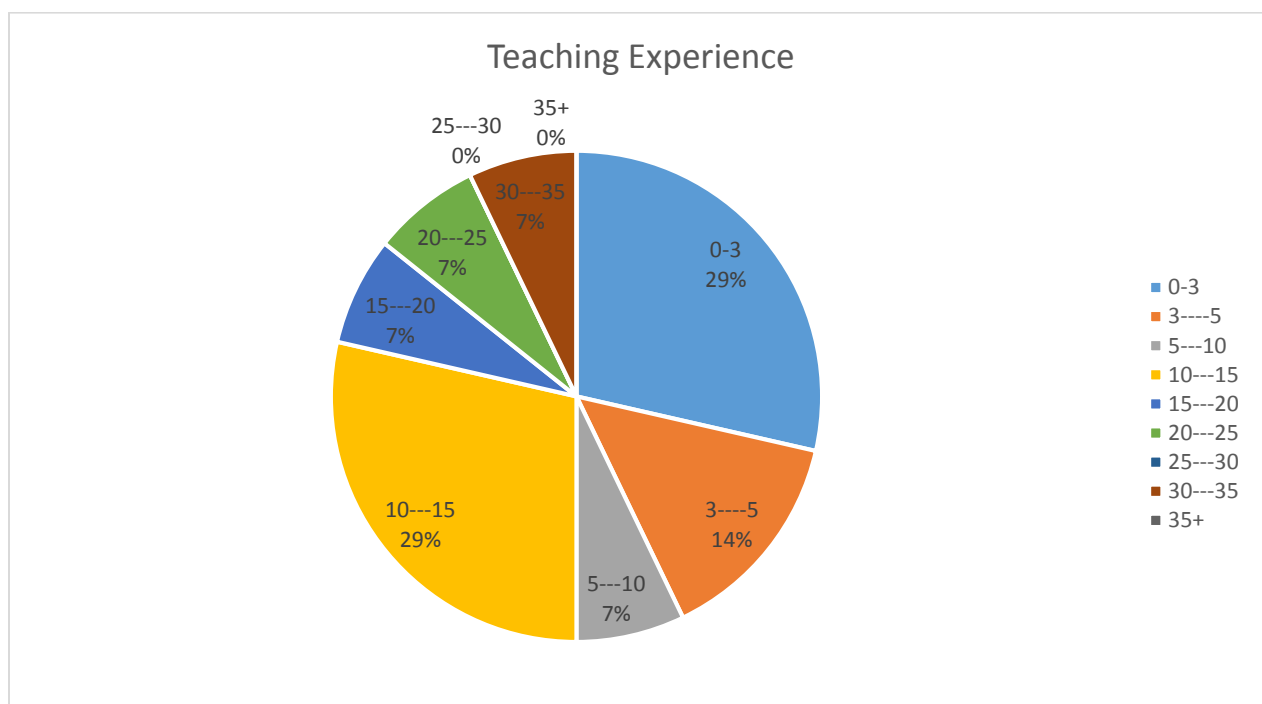


Figure 5. Represents the years of teaching experience and the percent of participants that participated.

Next on the demographic survey, teachers reported on their highest level of education obtained. There were also nine categories to select from including Bachelor's Degree (BA), BA+15, BA+30, Master's Degree (MA), MA+15, MA+30, MA+45 and Doctoral Degree. 3 teachers reported they had a BA degree, 3 teachers reported they had a BA+15, no teachers reported they had a BA+30, 3 teachers reported they had a MA degree, 2 teachers reported they had a MA+15, 3 teachers reported they had a MA+30, no teachers reported they had a MA+45 and 0 reported a higher degree. As reported, 57 % of teacher participants reported they had a master's degree or higher as their highest level of educational experience obtained.

Figure 6. Participant Highest Level of Education Obtained

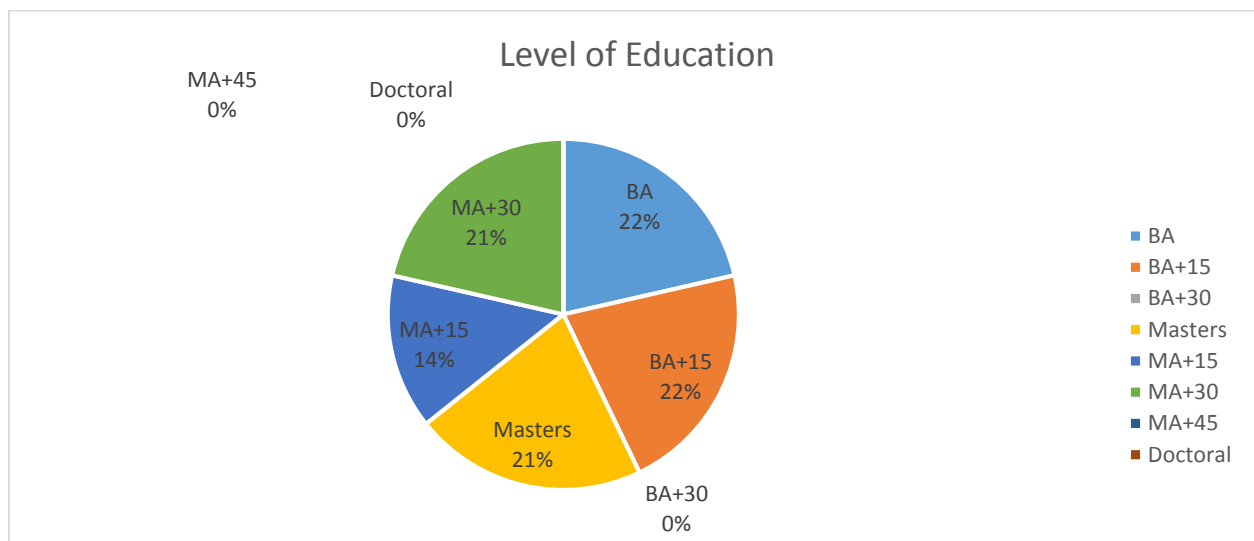


Figure 6. represents the participant's highest level of education obtained by the percent in each category

Gender data was obtained and analyzed reflecting 5 males and 9 females participating in this study. The females represented the majority of participants with 64% of participants being female. 36% participant's reported as male.

Figure 7. Participant Gender

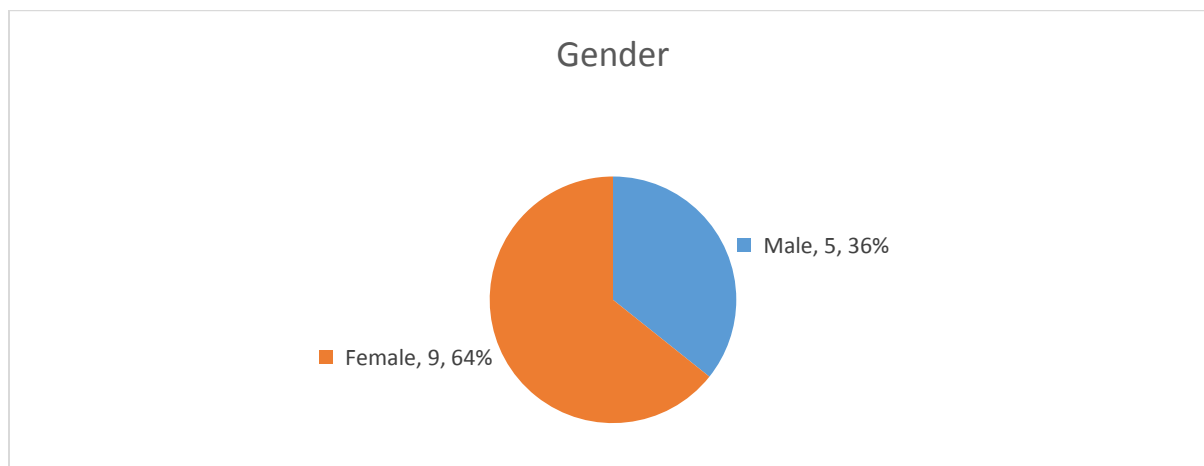


Figure 7. represents the number and the percent male and female participants.



Number of years teaching in current setting was also reported on in the demographic survey. There were 7 categories that participants selected from representing their years in their current setting. The categories included 0-3 years, 3-5 years, and 10-15 years, 15-20, years, 20-25 years and 25+ years. 8 teachers reported 0-3 years of teaching experience in current setting, 0 teacher 3-5, 2 teachers 5-10 years, 1 teachers 10-15 years, 2 teachers 15-20 years, 1 teacher 20-25 years and 0 teachers 25 + years. The participant's survey reflects that 58% of teachers in this SIG funded school had 0-3 years of teaching experience. Below is a group of pie charts that represent visual results from the Demographic Data Collection Sheet (Appendix D).

Figure 8. Participants Years Worked in Current Work Setting

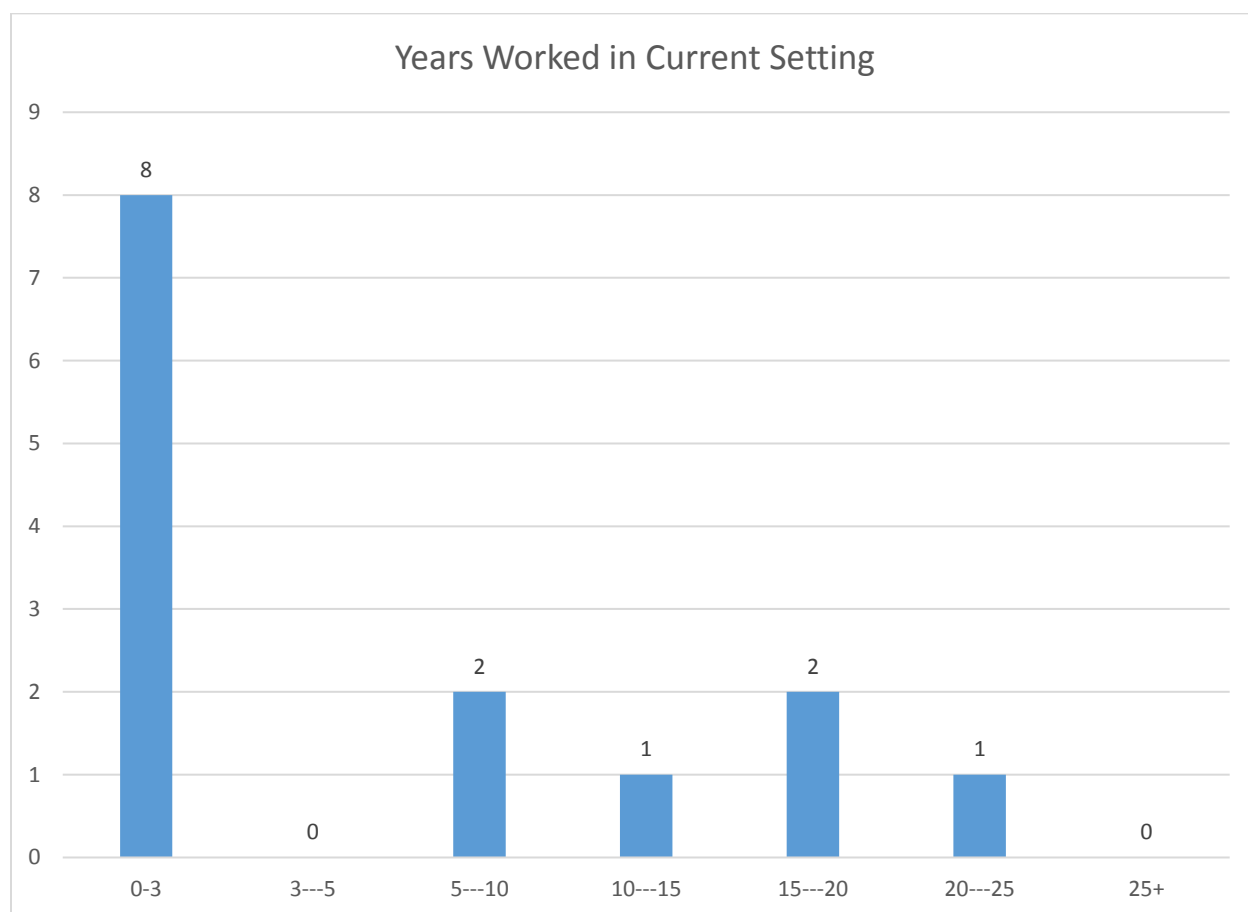


Figure 8. represents the participants' years worked in their current work setting.

## **Results from Participant Observation**

Participant observation data was collected by each person participating in this study. The goal of the observations was to collect data on what teacher leadership activities the teacher participant perceived as important. Because case studies take place in a real-world setting, creating the opportunity for direct observation yields some relevant social or environmental conditions. Such observations serve as another form of evidence for case study analysis (Yin, 2014, p. 113). The participant observation was a structured observation that contained multiple data collection sections that were connected to the overall conceptual framework. The first section was the main data collection portion of the observation. The data collected in the “fill in the blank” section of (Appendix G) included the length of observation, data of observation, location of observation, number of teachers involved, number of administrators involved, number of students involved and number of community members involved. The next section was the selection of the type of activity this teacher leadership activity identified by the teacher participant. This section included collaborative planning, co-teaching, team leader/ facilitator, providing PD, goal/ project planning, evaluation, data analysis, technology facilitator, sharing of instructional strategies, culture building, extracurricular activity, co-curricular activity and another category. Included in this category was a written description of the activity. The next section of the observation was a prompt to circle how the activity was developed, in this section the teacher could circle internally motivated or externally motivated. If participants were determined to be internally motivated to take on the teacher leadership activity, they initiated the activity without the motivation from a peer or their administrators. If they were externally motivated to take on the activity, they may have been assigned by an administrator or lead teacher to participate in the activity. This section also included a description of how the activity

was developed. Finally, the last section was to circle how the activity was evaluated. This section included formally evaluated by administration, evaluated by survey, evaluated by peer teacher reflection, data collected on activity, teacher self- evaluated, evaluated by summative data and a category for not evaluated. This section also provided the observer with a description section where they could write field notes on how the activity was evaluated.

Results from the length of observation category resulted in the average observation time reflecting 45 minutes. It is worthy to note that one observer had a very lengthy observation of 180 minutes. This substantially raised the overall average of the length of observation time. Most teachers reported they observed for around 30 minutes. This data suggests that most participants took less than 30 minutes to complete their observation.

Figure 9. Length of Observation

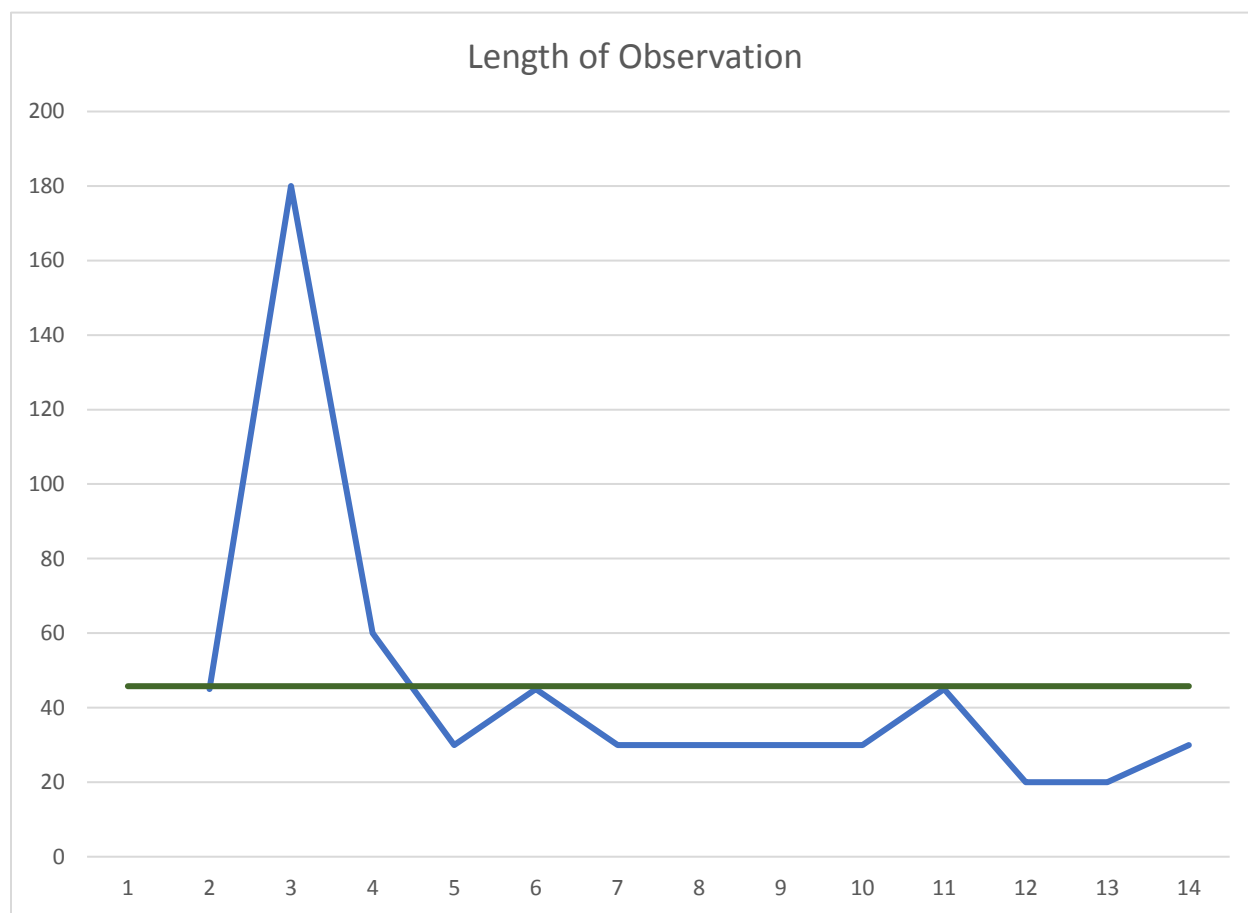


Figure 9. represents the total length of the participant observation with an average of 45 minutes.

### Participant Observation Data Results

The following participant observation overview data includes a table that represents the number of teachers involved, number of administrators involved, number of students involved, and number of parent and community members involved in the observed teacher leadership activities as reported by the participants' observation data. This data was put into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed to develop averages for each category, the following tables represents a visual of all the data associated with the above state categories. The average number of teachers that were involved in leadership activities was 7. This number reflected many teachers

participating in each observed teacher leadership activity, most teacher leadership activities included many teacher leaders not just one teacher being a leader. The number of students participating in the observed teacher leadership activity averaged 78.46. High numbers of students were reported by many participants during their observations. The average administrators observed active in the teacher leadership activities observed was 0.69. This low number was reported across all participant observation. The average number of parents and community involved in the teacher leadership activity resulted in 2.69 parents. This category was repeatedly low during the participant observation.

Table 1. Average Number of Teachers, Students, Administrators and Parents Observed

<u>List of Observed Groups</u>	<u>Average Number</u>
Number of Teachers Observed	7.07
Number of Students Observed	78.46
Number of Administrators Observed	0.69
Number of Parent and Community Observed	2.69

One goal of the participant observation was to explore what teacher leaders valued or perceived as an observable teacher leadership activity. Table 4.7 represents what teacher leadership activities were observed during the participant observation and the frequency the activity was observed by each participant. Some noteworthy results from this data include the number of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Each of these activities involved many students and went beyond the classroom. Thirty-five percent of all observed teacher leadership activities were reported in these two categories, with 21% resulting from extracurricular activities. Another noteworthy result from the participant observation data was that 21% of all leadership activities observed were teachers culture. Below is a table that represents all participant observation and the percent of observed activity frequency for each category.

Table 2. List of observed teacher leadership activities and frequency observed

Leadership Activity Observed	Percent Observed Activity Frequency
Providing PD	7.1%
Co-Teaching	7.1%
Team Leader	7.1%
Collaboration	14.2%
Goal/Project Planning	7.1%
Evaluation	0%
Data Analysis	0%
Technology Facilitator	0%
Sharing Instructional Strategies	0%
Culture Building	21.4%
Extracurricular Activity	21.4%
Co-Curricular Activity	14.2%

Connecting the results of the participant observation to the overall conceptual framework, the section provided valuable data to determine whether teachers were self-motivated or if they were motivated to take on teacher leadership activities by other variables such as a recommendation from an administrator. The goal was to understand the development of the teacher leadership activity. The results of the participant observation were that participants observed 64% of teacher leadership activities were internally motivated with a total of 9 observations considered internally motivated by the teacher leader. Thirty-six percent of the observed activities were considered externally motivated. Below is a chart that represents the percentage of internally and externally motivated teacher leadership activities observed by participant observers during the data collection process. These data are important to formulate

connections about how teachers with very little teaching experience value teacher leadership activities. Do they see taking on teacher leadership activity because of internal motivation as important to the development of teacher leadership or do they see external motivation as the means to develop teacher leadership? The evidence indicated that, even though many of these teachers did not have a lot of teaching experience, they valued internally motivated leadership development. This type of leadership development even with especially with young teachers should be promoted in SIG funded schools to promote teacher leadership.

Figure 10. Leadership Development Chart

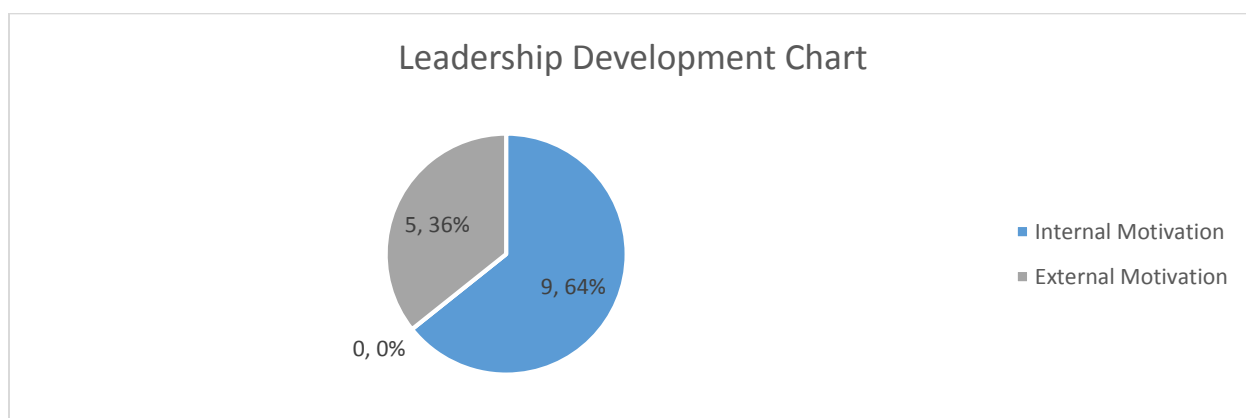


Figure 10. represents the percent of internally and externally motivated teacher leadership activities observed during the participant observation process.

The final data participant observers reported on was how teacher leadership was evaluated during their teacher leadership activity observation. The results were based on 8 categories that described how the leadership activity was evaluated, including: formally evaluated by administration, evaluated by survey, evaluated by peer teacher reflection, evaluated by summative data results, evaluated by collecting data, teacher self-evaluated, not evaluated and

an “other” category. The data indicates that 14.2% of the observation were formally evaluated by an administrator, 0% were evaluated by survey, 57% were evaluated by peer teacher reflection, none were evaluated by summative data, none were evaluated by collecting data on the activity, 0% were teacher self-evaluated, 21% were not evaluated and 7.1 were described in the other category. These responses reflect that teacher peer reflection was the dominant form of evaluation that teachers used during their participant observation. Below is a table that represents the evaluation method and percent of frequency observed. This table indicates that teacher leaders at the study site evaluated each other by peer teacher reflection. These types of informal reflection represent teacher collaborating with each other and evaluating how teacher leadership model practices work and what’s effective.

Table 3. Teacher leadership activity evaluation method and the percent frequency observed

Evaluation Method	Percent Frequency Observed
Formally Evaluated by Administration	14.2%
Evaluated by Survey	0%
Peer Teacher Reflection	57.1%
Summative Data	0%
Data Collected on Activity	0%
Teacher Self-evaluated	0%
Not Evaluated	21.4%
Other	7.1%

### Interview Data Results

This case study analysis included data from 10 semi-structured interview questions. Each participant was assigned a participant identification number upon the return of the Opt-in/ Opt-out recruitment letter (Appendix H). The participants then completed the Informed Consent for



Participation in Research (Appendix F). This document followed the University of New England's guidelines to participate in research. The interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes in length. Interviews were conducted in person and recorded using a voice recording device. Voice recordings of the interviews were then sent to an online transcription company. Completed transcripts were then sent to the researcher via email. The researcher then set up a follow-up meeting with each participant and reviewed all forms of data including the demographic survey, the participant observation, and the interview transcripts.

The transcripts were then evaluated in two data collection coding cycles. Saldaña (2013) describes a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.3). The first cycle of coding used an inductive approach and obtained almost 200 initial codes. The methods used for the first cycle coding included manually highlighting words, sentences, phrases. The main methods of coding used for the first cycle of interview data were initial and descriptive coding. Descriptive coding is described as “Topic Coding” and is employed to summarize in short phrases (Saldaña, 2013, P. 70). The transcripts were then entered into NVivo Software and second cycle of coding started by creating and grouping code references. Of the almost 200 nodes, 40 initial parent nodes were established. Some examples of the parent nodes are teacher ownership, student buy-in, collaboration and distributed leadership.

Pattern coding was used during the second cycle of coding. Patter Coding is used after the initial coding process to develop themes and subthemes (Saldaña, 2013, p. 153). Codes that were limited in frequency were eliminated and codes that had multiple references and sources were then created as a parent node. The creation of these nodes allowed the development of five major themes and 11 associated subthemes which emerged through a frequency query. The

themes and subthemes that emerged will be reported on by using a table as a visual and then a descriptive narrative with each resulting theme and sub-theme. Aliases were used during this process to protect the identity of the research participants. Below is a table that represents the themes that emerged during the second cycle of coding and their associated code frequency.

Table 4. Code frequency of major themes

Major Theme	Number of Sources	Number of References
Collaboration	62	86
Distributed Leadership	31	53
Positive Culture	45	55
Teacher Buy-in	23	53
Teachers Lead Teachers	25	54

One major theme that emerged through the first and second cycles of coding was collaboration. Collaboration had a total of 62 sources and 86 references upon the completion of the second cycle of coding. Sources indicate the different places the code was observed throughout all the transcripts. References would be the amount of times that collaboration was coded among all the sources. This theme had the greatest number of sources and references when compared to other themes that emerged. Collaboration was teacher leadership model practice that was most frequently observed and valued by teacher participants.

Distributed leadership had a total 31 sources and 53 references. This theme had the second highest frequency and was perceived as a very important teacher leadership model practice by all the participants. Positive culture, another prolific theme in this study, had a total of 45 sources and 55 references. This theme was based on a shift in teacher attitude and was established as a teacher leadership practice that was imperative to school turnaround. Teacher Buy-in emerged as a major theme with 23 sources and 53 references. This theme seemed

essential for the above stated themes to make an impact. Finally, Teachers lead teachers emerged from the participant interview transcripts as a major theme related to teacher led professional development with 25 sources and 54 references. This theme was based on a practice that the teacher leadership team was implementing that the teachers perceived as effective and a path for SIG school turnaround.

These five major themes resulted in 11 associated subthemes. Below is a table that represents the 5 major themes and the 11 subthemes that are associated with the major themes. These subthemes emerged through the second cycle of coding and are included in the number of sources and references of the five major themes.

Table 5. Themes and subthemes that emerged from second cycle coding

Major Themes	Subthemes
Collaboration	Shared Strategies
Distributed Leadership	Leadership Team Teacher Teams Student Leadership
Positive Culture	Use of Social Media Internal Motivation Celebrating Success
Teacher Buy-In	Shared Vision Evaluation of Success
Teachers Leading Teachers	Teacher Led Professional Development  Teacher Led Transformational Change Through  Available Resources

### **Collaboration**

Data indicated that collaboration was the most sourced and referenced theme that emerged during the coding process. Participants seem to value collaboration when connecting to the three themes of the conceptual framework which include the impact of teacher leadership, the

development of teacher leadership and the evaluation of teacher leadership. Collaboration emerged throughout interview responses as a way to promote, develop, and evaluate the effectiveness of teacher leadership.

Collaborative work among teachers means sharing, working as a group: ‘what the group has done, what they are working on, the sharing of information and who is responsible for what activity (Forte & Flores, 2014). The interview transcripts indicated that this type of collaboration is perceived by teachers to be very important to the overall improvement process in SIG funded schools. After being asked what teacher leadership model practices are effective in SIG funded schools, Participant 3 responded with collaboration as being one of the very important practices.

Collaboration, yeah. I don't know what we would call it, but just getting the chance to go and observe other teachers in the classroom. That's a teacher leadership role to better yourself and see what other people are doing and share ideas.

Other participants viewed collaboration going past one's own school to collaborating with other successful SIG funded schools. Participant 5 shared his opinion that he thought it was important to reach out to other successful SIG funded school and borrow ideas from them and collaborate on what works in their school to have an impact on one's current SIG funded school. Participant five shared,

I think when you find a SIG funded school that is performing well, other schools could look at their improvement model and basically borrow a lot of the ideas and adapt it to their own school to try to improve their school sharing strategies.

Sharing strategies from teacher to teacher through the collaborative teacher team process was valued by teacher participants as an effective way to develop and promote teacher leadership in SIG funded schools. Other literature suggests that teachers turn first toward their teams for

support in problem areas (More, Johnson, Reinhorn & Simon, 2016, p. 25). Teacher leaders sharing effective strategies leads to a culture of collaboration and problem solving which is important to the school improvement process. Participant 13 provides some supporting evidence of the effectiveness of teachers active in sharing strategies: Participant 13 said.

I've notice that in our trainings as of recently, teachers have also become part of the training process. Teachers have been teaching teachers, showing the skills that they are proficient in, and sharing those skills and practicing those skills with other teachers empowers not only that teacher, but allows them to share the skills that they do well.

This type of strategy sharing supports a culture of collaboration and effective problem solving that can spark growth among school staffs, and these practices can have a great impact on the overall implementation of the SIG grant.

### **Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership developed as a major theme with 31 sources and 53 references during the coding process. The term *distributed leadership* can be used in many different forms. For this research, the term is used to describe many different ways teacher leadership is distributed in the SIG funded school. The teacher leadership team is one way of distributing power; teacher curriculum teams is another way. The term distributed leadership was introduced to shift the unit of analysis in the study of leadership from one individual leader to an examination of the “patterns or varieties” of leadership distributed across the organization, including engagement in collaborative or “concerted” action (Gronn, 2002, p. 424). The distribution of leadership goes beyond one team of teachers working on school improvement.

Participant 1 explained that it is a multiple team effort that distributes power and communication.

Participant 1 stated,

I think when teachers come together within different types of meeting forms like the leadership team or meeting just with other teachers, they can get a lot accomplished.

They can talk about what problems the school has and how they can fix the problems. It's really just all about communication.

Participant 3 suggests that the leadership team and distributed process is essential. However, the need for more committees in problem areas would be a positive move toward the school improvement effort. Participant 3 suggested,

The leadership team is more than essential, and I think we should have more committees as well. I think committee's own students' behavior, committee's own student achievement, committee's own student rewards, would make a big difference.

The distributed leadership process is valued by participants as a way to promote, develop, sustain and evaluate teacher leadership in SIG funded schools. The main distribution of power in this SIG funded school is the utilization of the leadership team.

### **Leadership Team.**

Teachers that participated in this study emphasized the importance of the leadership team. This team is comprised of teacher leaders from within the curriculum teams to help drive the decision making process for school improvement. Participant 6 explained that the leadership team distributes not only leadership tasks such as what is planned for activities in teacher teams and school functions, this team relays all communication to teacher teams. This type of

distributed leadership allows the teachers to get the same message and be a cohesive unit.

Participant 6 stated,

When we have these leadership team meetings, we're taking topics back from those leadership team meetings to our departments, and telling what's going on in our leadership team meetings and then that way we can address each class. Each grade level is being told what's going on and how we're doing it. That way we can do a better job of fixing our problem areas within the school.

More evidence suggests that the leadership team and the distributed leadership process allows teachers to take ownership of how school improvement is happening within their school.

Participant 5 stated the following,

I don't know if it's the same for all the teachers, but myself, personally, you do become more involved because of the fact that you feel like your input is well received by the leadership team itself. I think a lot of the teachers, myself included, have been able to put ideas in front of the leadership team. Sometimes, they're rejected, sometimes they're put down as a good idea and has expanded on to the leadership team. It makes us feel like we're taking ownership in it.

This participant reflects that teachers on the leadership team keep an open mind and are working on suggestions brought to them from other staff members. They use surveys and other means of communication to find areas of concern and fix those problems. This open communication platform has created an avenue for the leadership team to solve problems by using teacher leadership and distributed leadership. Participant 5 explained,

Like I said, a lot of our teachers who are on the leadership team, are very open minded. They take suggestions from other teachers and take them to the leadership team. Also,

our leadership team uses surveys a lot of times to get information from the other teachers, and that's brought up at the leadership team also, so I think they do a pretty good job with that.

Evidence suggests that the distribution of power, the use of the teacher leadership team, and other teacher teams has a positive effect on this SIG funded school, the implementation of the SIG grant and the development of teacher leadership. Participant 7 conveyed this message by stating,

I think when we're working together, we all have the same goals, we've set out goals and set out guidelines for those goals, and we're meeting those goals. We're just part of the team. When I talk about the team, we're in leadership, but I'm talking about the whole staff. I think that our teacher leaders and our administrative leadership are going back and taking our information and passing that on to their colleagues, and I think that we're, as a whole, and again I mean the whole school, staff all the way from the janitors all the way to the bus drivers, to everything, I think that we're finally striding towards the right direction.

### **Teacher Teams.**

A subtheme related to the distributed leadership process that should be discussed as a means to promote and develop teacher leadership in SIG funded school is the use of teacher teams. In this SIG funded school, the teacher teams are made up of curriculum teams that share a common planning. More and more principals are being encouraged to distribute leadership to increase schools' organizational capacities, and enhance student growth and learning (Klar, Huggins, Hammonds & Buskey, 2016, p. 111). For this SIG funded school, teachers perceived



the teacher team as a very productive step toward school improvement. Participant 2 provides evidence of just how effective the teacher teams are. She stated,

I think our group collaborations within our departments, I think those help immensely.

We're able to bounce ideas and we're able to have this exclusive block of time where we are together with like-minded goals.

These type of collaborations are scheduled and teachers have a purpose for working together.

Evidence indicates that participants valued their team membership and that collaborating with a team kept them in communication. Other research points out that teacher teams increased teacher collaboration and created academic, social and cultural coherence across curriculums and grade levels. (Johnson, Reinhorn & Simon, 2016, p. 28). Volunteer teacher leader participants that participated in this study valued their teacher team as a means to promote teacher leadership and as a teacher leader model practice. Participant 8 valued her curriculum content team and the team's effectiveness so much that she noted that co-curricular teams such as a 9th grade team would be another step toward school improvement in this SIG funded school and further the teacher team development. Participant 8 said,

I believe the content teams are extremely effective. I think if we could get co-curricular teams to work, and I know planning is a huge issue, but I think if we could get leaders from co-curricular areas to work with each other, I think that would be a very positive thing for this school.

Participant 8 also provided supportive evidence that teacher teams were essential to the collaboration process. This participant suggested that team teaching and teacher teams sharing curriculum and promoting each other's ideas from class to class has made the educational

experience for the students more cohesive, positive and a model practice that could improve test scores. Participant 8 stated,

I think team teaching is something great. I think that the more you can get involved with other classrooms, I think that a lot of standard classes go hand-in-hand with, I teach CTE classes. There's two or three ways to always do something, and a student might not understand it one way and comes to another class and then if you talk about those things, it's something you can incorporate in each class, it makes it better. I just think of being open with everybody is helping around here. Team teaching, collaborating, I think that having our leadership meetings with our English Departments, and our History Departments, everybody's being on the same page. I think all that stuff is making a more positive environment, and actually you're not going from one class to another and being confused now. Everything's kind of co-existing together, so I think that that's part of why our leadership is so much better, and hopefully our scores are so much better this year.

This particular SIG funded school provided teachers with collaborative planning periods for teacher team collaboration time. This time was valued by the participant's as one major step toward the improvement process.

### **Student Leadership.**

Student leadership was also expressed as being very important to the overall effectiveness of the school improvement process for SIG funded schools. Teacher participants spoke of involving students in the leadership process. The thought of valuing students as leaders and decision makers seemed important to participants. Participant 4 concluded,

I think when teacher leadership gets to a certain point where it's doing its job almost flawlessly, I think it's time to bring in some students, and to have student and teacher leadership teams, where things are discussed. I think it's important that the students go back and tell the facts to the peers. I think they will.

According to this participant, it is essential for SIG funded schools to work out a teacher leadership structure that eventually involves the development of a student leadership structure that can focus on a shared vision. This vision infiltrates teacher leaders vision for student leaders and their peers.

Several participants pointed to student leadership having a positive impact on the school improvement process. Not simply a single student leadership team such as student council, but many different distributed types of leadership opportunities for student leadership were recognized. One participant speaks of clubs that are offered in the school as having a positive impact because the clubs develop student leaders that are important to the school improvement process. Participant 6 stated,

To me clubs is a way that every student can be reached... Especially in an area like we have here where lower socioeconomic students feel like when they come to school they don't have opportunities that some students do in other places. I think with the idea of clubs and teachers all being part of clubs is a way to get everybody involved leadership.

Evidence indicates that teachers feel student leadership plays an important part of the school improvement process. Leadership is not about oneself. It is about others. The distillate of that realization is captured in the philosophy of the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute: "To serve is to live." Leaders who serve are ambitious for the work, the cause, the movement, the mission—not themselves (Bowman, 2013, p. 62). In this study, teachers not only see themselves

as leaders but see the students as leaders too. The participants seem to value the student voice and the development of student leadership as a means to develop and promote teacher leadership. Evidence suggests that teachers value student leadership opportunities. The involvement of student leaders is important to the development and promotion of teacher leadership. The connection between teacher leaders and student leaders develop together. With more internally motivated teachers taking on more leadership roles, more students are internally motivated in taking on leadership roles and this leads to a positive culture of improvement for SIG funded schools.

### **Positive Culture.**

The development of a positive culture was a theme that was engrained and repeated across all participants and through all themes. This major theme evolved during the coding process as a descriptor that participants connected to the impact, the development and the evaluation of teacher leadership in SIG funded schools. With every question asked during the interview process, teacher participants connected positive culture or simply being positive as one of the main reasons for school improvement in a SIG funded school. This unexpected response prompted a deeper examination of the transcripts to figure out what exactly teacher participants perceived as important about having a positive culture or for individuals to be positive. Participant 2 explains how remaining positive influences the students,

I think teacher leaders have the most important and the greatest impact. They are the direct link to the students. They can impact the daily. If they do not embrace things positively in order to change the school, then the students never will.

This participant goes on to state that a positive culture can reflect higher student achievement levels. Participant 2 stated,

Culture has been huge in our school and I think that by teachers embracing a better culture students are embracing it, and then we see achievement levels rise.

Other research also suggests a great connection between school culture, teacher leadership and school effectiveness. School culture is one of the most important and complex aspects of education (Demir, 2015, p. 623). The teachers described different variations of how they perceived a positive culture. Some teachers stated that it was more positive to see teacher leaders leading their own process of continuing education. Participant 3 stated,

It's a more positive model within our school to see teachers leading the process versus seeing people from outside agencies trying to lead the process. It's been much more value put into it with a pretty good response.

Participant 3 also states how talking positive and being positive has had an impact on test scores. He stated,

I think we all feel pretty positive about this year's testing. The students are talking about. You just kind of get a feeling when the kids are talking about it and it's in a positive way that's going to affect us in a positive way. It's no more just whining and complaining about it, guessing and moving on. Kids are really taking it seriously.

Being positive, talking positive, thinking positive and feeling positive all were conveyed during the interview process as a model practices for school improvement in SIG funded schools and ways to develop teacher leadership. This process is about having pride in fixing the problem at hand from within. Participant 5 described this practice as improving the total attitude of the school even athletics. He stated,

The total attitude of the school to me seems like it's changed. It's been more positive even with athletics. I think what it boils down to is the teachers are beginning to take a little more pride in their school, and that in the end rubs off on the students.

Developing a positive culture that is based on the distributed process and student input is reflected in some of the perceptions on how teacher leadership and model practices can be developed and promoted in SIG funded schools. One model practice that developed as a subtheme of positive culture was the use of school promotion through social media.

### **Social Media.**

One prominent subtheme of positive culture is the use of social media to develop and promote teacher leadership and a positive culture within the school. This subtheme was perceived by participants as being one way this SIG funded school turned their culture around and connected not only with teachers, but with students, parents and community members. The participants put a heavy emphasis on staying positive on social media and using it as a tool to highlight school's successes. Participants also stated that it can help squash the negative publicity a struggling school gets from within their community by highlighting and celebrating the accomplishments of the school's successes. Participant 7 stated

If you can get on social media and you can see that first hand, then you go wow, our school really is changing. I think that's part of what's changed us is that we've had so much bad publicity in social media, that we're striking back towards those people that aren't that positive, and we're the positive ones and they're the negative ones. I think that I feel like, I don't stay on social media on the negative side of it, but I feel like just from hearing people and hear talk in the school, that our social media page is doing great, people that are seeing are broadcasts know what we do, we're sending it out to social

media, people in the community are seeing everything as far as what the kids are doing, what they're accomplishing, everything. It's just a positive feedback and it's just escalating. It just keeps growing.

Other participants indicate that the positive use of social media has inspired the community to be more positive. This has created a culture of teachers wanting to be highlighted and showcase their work as a teacher leader on social media. One participant perceives social media as one of the most valuable steps toward school improvement. Participant 3 said,

I think one of the biggest things that we've done is with the social media. I think that is shared with a lot of our people within the county are seeing things that are going on and we're getting a positive look now on the school. People are interested in the school. I think that also makes you want to step up as a teacher leader because people are talking about it and you want to be a part of that process. Now we have other schools that are seeing things that we're doing and it's only going to help us out because teachers at other schools are, "If they can do that we can do that too." If they're stepping up on their end it's only going to help us in the long run. Kids are going to be more prepared or ready to go. It's just part of this process. Everybody is going to own it.

There is much evidence that emerged that supports the use social media in a positive and that this use can have a major impact on the school improvement process in SIG funded schools by inspiring teacher leaders and promoting a positive school culture. Teachers leaders used social to express their activities and social media promoted teacher leadership within the school.

### **Internal Motivation, Going Beyond the Classroom.**

There is evidence to support leadership development that goes beyond the classroom which is a very important step toward school improvement and the development of teacher

leaders. Teacher participants perceived internal motivation to become a teacher leader and take on improvement tasks by all teachers an important step toward school improvement. Participant 4 describes in one sentence how she became a teacher leader and how she values stepping up to take on task. Participant 4 said,

Yes, somebody has to do something. If nobody will. I am somebody, I will do it.

Other participants stated that internal motivation is very important to not only teacher leadership development but the overall success of students. To see teacher activity engaged during and after school in activities associated with the school is valued by participants. Teachers perceived that there is a connection between school improvement success and being internally motivated to go beyond the classroom and get involved in every aspect of the school culture in a positive way.

Participant 3 stated some supporting evidence,

After school activities. Just giving up time to come in and help make sure the students are successful in various activities after school. There's lots of avenues you can step up and be a teacher leader.

A high level of involvement instills a sense of commitment and a group desire to transform the school in a positive way (Shields, 2010). This correlates with the perceptions of teacher participants. To be internally motivated and take on a high level of commitment that goes far beyond the classroom, leads to the development of teacher leaders and promotes the school improvement process in SIG schools.

### **Celebrating Success.**

As stated previously, celebrating success on social media is one way to spark teacher leadership and school improvement in SIG funded Schools. However, participants of this study conveyed that celebrating success should be deeply engrained in the school culture of a SIG



funded school. Teachers and students need to know that their hard work is paying off. Participant 4 discusses the importance of celebrating small successes. She stated,

I think there has to be some sort of recognition, some sort of pat on the back for teachers who are going out of their way to improve the school. Not that we should, we shouldn't always need that. Sometimes a good job is done just because you should do a good job, because personal pride. Sometimes also, when you go that extra mile, and you work that hard, you do need someone to say, 'You know what? You did a really good job.'

One way to promote teacher leadership and develop new teacher leaders may be to celebrate the successes of current teacher leaders and inspire other teacher leaders toward the same level of leadership.

Other participants stated that celebrating successes of students and rewarding students can even have a positive impact on discipline. Participant 5 referred to the positive behavior intervention and support program as having a very positive effect on the school. Participant 5 stated,

Some of the things that the school itself has come up with through the leadership team. Positive behavior intervention support program that we did, that this been done in the school I think has had a very positive effect on the school itself as far as the discipline within the school.

Celebrating the accomplishments of teachers and students alike promotes teachers and student leadership and has a positive impact on SIG funded school. Some of the ways this school accomplished this is through a student and teacher reward program, celebrating successes on social media and the creation of a positive behavior and intervention support program (PBIS).

### **Teacher Buy-in**

A major theme that developed through the second cycle of coding was the development of teacher buy-in. This term refers to teachers sharing the same vision and goals toward school improvement efforts. Teacher buy-in was described by participants in many different ways. One example participant 3 explained that buy-in is stepping up and solving the school's problems.

I feel it's very important because we've seen that until teachers own the process, we're not going to get the results we want. We need the teachers to buy in. We, all of the staff, have to understand that they are a part of the process and it's not somebody coming in and teach us how to do this. It's step up and down the situation and go with it.

Participant 3 goes on further to explain that teacher leadership is connected with buy-in and teacher ownership. She explained

I think it's very important, because I think when people are leaders, they're invested in what they're doing. If they're all just followers and taking orders, they don't care quite as much. When they're part of the driving force, then more gets done, and people care more.

Participant 10 described teacher buy-in as having everyone on board with school improvement ideas and curriculum and promoting growth through teacher leadership and teacher buy-in to school improvement initiatives.

I think teacher leadership is a key component to schools that are in this school improvement processes because the teachers are your first line of defense, so to speak, and if your teachers are all on board with whatever types of programming or suggestions that are coming down from the county office then that's going to be your avenue for change. As the teachers come on board with this process, that's going to help things move forward.

There is evidence that suggests teacher leadership development and teacher buy-in are essential to overall school improvement in SIG funded schools. This level of teacher commitment is needed in low achieving schools to promote school improvement initiatives and spark student achievement growth.

### **Developing Shared Vision.**

A subtheme of teacher buy-in is developing a shared vision. This practice is an important step in setting the path for teachers to follow as one group. Setting goals working on those goals as a staff and obtaining success creates a culture of teacher leadership, teacher buy-in and promotes a shared vision. Participant 7 stated how this process works,

I think when we're working together, we all have the same goals, we've set out goals and set out guidelines for those goals, and we're meeting those goals. We're just part of the team. When I talk about the team, we're in leadership, but I'm talking about the whole staff.

Having the entire staff buy-in to a shared vision develops all teachers as teacher leaders. All teachers are working for one goal, as a team, in a distributed process. This leads to the promotion of teacher leadership and an overall model practice for SIG funded schools.

### **Evaluation of Success.**

During the interview process, it was clear that teachers understood that in SIG funded schools standardized test scores was the main formal evaluation of the school's overall success. Many teachers when asked how teacher leadership was measured replied with standardized test scores. However, they suggested that there is more than just measuring standardized test scores. Participant 12 stated,

Well, from what I would gather a lot of it's based on test scores and how well students are achieving because that's how we got put onto that label as a SIG school because we had students that were underachieving the state minimum, I guess. I think that's part of it. I think a lot of it is evaluation from state and county officials that determine if we're improving, staying the same or going down. I mean, evaluation is, I guess you have the data portion that's all numbers and then you have the portion of is everyone doing what they're supposed to doing the best then can.

Participant 10 further explained that evaluation is a set of formal and informal results. She suggests that the evaluation process should identify the success with not only formal but informal measurements such as student participation in school events and the morale of the students and teachers. There is evidence that suggests teacher leadership and teacher buy-in can be measured in informal ways. Participant 10 explained,

A lot of it rides on our test scores, so that's one measure. Our test scores are measured, we look at community involvement; we look at attendance; we look at, maybe not formally, but we look at a lot of things like student participation in activities and the moral of the students and teachers here as well. There are a lot of information measurements too, but I guess the success or failure is basically tied to the more formal measures like test scores and attendance and graduation and rate and those things.

Participant 4 explained in similar detail about how the school has formal benchmark assessments such as the General Summative Assessment and STAR benchmark but staff can also evaluate school success through student award ceremonies and other school activities. Participant 4 stated,

By testing. We look at our General Summative testing. We have STAR benchmark testing now. We do award ceremonies. You see kids getting recognized. Other kids want to be recognized so it makes them achieve more, they're trying harder.

Developing a way to evaluate the success of a SIG school is important not only as a school improvement process but for the promotion and the development of teacher leadership and model practices in struggling schools.

### **Teacher Leading Teachers**

Teacher leading teachers was a reoccurring topic that emerged through the interview process that eventually turned into a major theme of this research. Teachers at this SIG funded school promoted the use of teachers providing teachers with professional development and teacher leaders leading the staff through the school improvement process. Participant 2 referred to this practice as being “highly effective”. She stated,

I think teacher-led PD is highly effective in our school. I think we respond better to real life professional development, which comes from being taught by our own.

Participant 3 elaborated and provides evidence that teacher leading teachers creates a positive model for school improvement. Participant 3 said,

It's a more positive model within our school to see teachers leading the process versus seeing people from outside agencies trying to lead the process. It's been much more value put into it with a pretty good response.

Teachers leading teachers through the school problem solving activities and teacher leadership in general create an atmosphere of school improvement that can be sustained. Participant 3 further explains that teachers leading teachers can replace using SIG funding on professional developers

and sustain a culture of improvement that can be sustained and promoted and shared in other schools. Participant 3 explained,

Okay. It just goes back to teachers leading teachers. Using the resources that you already have versus going out and paying big money for resources that you might not necessarily need because you have staff that can help in that process. I don't think it's just within our building. I think we can reach out to other schools and use them and they can use us.

Look at data and again it just comes back to owning the process.

There is evidence that suggests that in this SIG funded school, teachers leading teachers through the problem solving process of school improvement, vision development, and curriculum development had a great impact on teacher leadership development and is promoted by teachers as a teacher leadership model practice that should be promoted to other struggling schools.

### **Teacher Led Professional Development.**

A subtheme of teacher leading teachers is teacher led professional development. Teachers in this school not only wanted their own teachers to lead professional development. They viewed this as taking ownership of what they were learning and as a tool to better the implementation of what was be presented on. Participant 3 explained that teachers could even lead professional development on unknown topics. This explanation mirrors the action research process, participant 3 explained,

Even if it's something that you've never done before you can go research a topic, work it out, bring it. Maybe you have a group and you go and locate that information and study it together and then bring it back to the whole staff, versus bringing outside agencies in.

Participant 9 explained that teacher led workshops would be a good step, even if teachers had to find the time after school or before school to learn from other teachers. She explained,

I think that we could have teacher-led workshops. You can maybe do them after school, which is really hard, or do them prior to school and have people do the ace writing and/or MDC, LDCs, those kinds of things. There's other things out there, too, that are good.

The outcome from this subtheme is the evidence that teachers valued teacher led professional development. They felt comfortable learning from each other and were more willing to share what worked and what would not work. They were more likely to buy-in to the initiative if they provided the professional development. They gained a level of trust by using this practice.

### **Teacher Led Transformational Change Through Available Resources.**

Understanding how school improvement can be sustained over time was an important step in this research process. One outcome of that emerged as a subtheme of teachers leading teachers was the promotion of transforming change through the resources that are available within the school. These resources are the teacher leader's skills and areas of expertise. These resources are teams that work as a cohesive group and that can provide professional development to struggling groups. Teachers explained this in many different ways. Participant 3 explained this as a means to not relying heavily on spending. He stated,

Well, first you got to look into what you have. Look at your teachers, look at their capabilities. Some teachers are going to be strong in some areas, and some teachers are not going to be as strong in some areas, but they'll have things that they can bring to the table. Use them as your resource, and not have to spend any money outside of the school.

Participant 3 explained what how he perceives this process and what teachers may do to have sustained growth.

Say for instance we have a continuing education (CE) day and we a sit down, brainstorm, our problem areas, this is where we're lacking, how can we take care of this?

Looking at some improvement models there and then assigning little mini teams to, ‘Okay, you guys go and research or work on how can we improve attendance rates? Or how are other schools attempting this with attendance? Or graduation rate. What are some things we can do to help that out?’ Then another team goes and they work on that. This type of research and development is using teacher leaders for the skills they possess as professionals. Teacher participants perceived this as an important step in the overall success of a SIG school and a way to promote teacher leadership that could sustain school improvement after SIG funding and outside help fades away.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this case study research was to explore teachers’ perception of teacher leadership as a model for school improvement in a SIG funded school. The results from the demographic survey, the participant observation, and the semi-structured participant interview all provided data essential data that has been presented in Chapter 4. Teacher leadership plays a critical role in schools that dramatically improve student performance. However, despite many well-intentioned efforts, teacher leadership initiatives rarely become a lasting part of the way schools and districts organize (Hawley, 2016, p.18).

Teachers in this SIG funded school value teacher leadership as a means to promote positive culture, collaboration, distributed leadership, teacher buy-in and teacher leading teacher through the school improvement process. The evidence in the demographic survey represented a young teacher staff. However, the participant observation data showed that even though the participants were young that they valued internally motivated teacher leader activities. The participant observation also indicated that peer teacher reflection was the evaluation method that was utilized the most by teacher leader participants. Evidence indicated that participants value



each other's feedback and that they use peer reflection as their main means of evaluation. Five major themes emerged as effective teacher leader model practices. Those themes were:

Of those five themes, collaboration had the highest code frequency. There is evidence that suggest that collaboration is an underlying theme that promotes teacher leadership. All other themes emerged from collaborating with others. The following chapter will examine the three main research questions and develop results based on the above mentioned data, provide an interpretation of the findings, recommendation for action, recommendations for further study and a final conclusion of research.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate through the lens of a teacher leader the impact of teacher leadership, how teacher leadership develops, how teacher leadership is evaluated and what model practices can be used as an addition or alternative to the current SIG funded school turnaround model. After more than 10 years since NCLB was enacted and nearly 5 years since the SIG program received significant financial backing, researchers still know little about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools (Player & Katz, 2016, p. 676). This

research focused on what teacher leaders perceived as quality teacher leadership model practices and what impact these practices have on the school improvement process in a SIG funded school.

Permission from the school district to conduct research was obtained and participants were provided the opportunity to opt-in to the study. As a result, fourteen semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded to obtain data that resulted in five major themes and eleven related subthemes. The following section will provide a narrative description of the principal investigator's findings, connecting results from the data collection process to the three main research questions and conceptual framework.

This study was guided by three main research questions:

1. Does Teacher Leadership impact the effectiveness of the current SIG grant as implemented?
2. How could teacher leadership development and model practices be used as an alternative or addition to the current SIG model implemented?
3. Is the SIG model of school improvement an effective model without the practice and development of teacher leadership model practices and evaluation?

Interpretations and conclusions were developed by analyzing demographic data, organizing and analyzing participant observation data, and by coding 14 transcribed interviews using two coding cycles in the coding software NVivo.

### **Interpretations of Findings**

Upon the conclusion of analyzing the demographic survey, data results indicated that the participants of this study were relatively young teachers. After closely analyzing the participant observation, there is strong evidence that indicates that young teachers value self-motivated teacher leadership. This evidence was obtained from analyzing the demographic survey and the

participant observation. The data from the participant observation also indicates that teachers perceive peer evaluation as the main means of evaluating teacher leadership activities, this data emerged from the participant observation. Much more data emerged specifically about what teacher leaders perceived as effective teacher leadership model practices. The themes included: Collaboration, Distributed Leadership, Positive Culture, Teacher Buy-in and Teachers Lead Teachers. Interpretations were made by connecting research questions to the five major themes and subthemes that emerged by coding the transcribed interviews and by data obtained from the participant observation.

**Question 1: Does Teacher Leadership Impact the Effectiveness of the Current SIG Grant as Implemented?**

All teacher leaders that opted in and participated in this study stated that teacher leadership had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the SIG process. Many participants reflected that collaboration, distributed leadership, and a positive culture were very important factors in the development of teacher leadership and the school improvement process. Other teachers felt teacher buy-in and teachers leading teachers were also very important to the effectiveness of the SIG grant and the school improvement process. All five major themes emerged as evidence regarding the first research question, indicated by the following.

***Collaboration.*** Evidence suggests that participants value collaboration as a teacher leadership model practice and shared that this practice is essential to the development and implementation of the SIG funded school improvement process. Teacher participants reflected that they had time built in for collaborative planning and that it was very important to them that they had this time devoted for collaborating their peers. Findings indicate that collaboration is a key component to being in communication which was valued by many teacher participants in

this study as having great impact on a SIG school. One teacher stated that, “it’s really all about communication.” The participants reflected that through collaboration, either being on leadership team or participating in teacher team collaboration, “teachers can get a lot accomplished when they work together.” Evidence suggests that collaboration was engrained in many other major themes such as distributed leadership, positive culture and teachers lead teachers.

Evidence reflects that teachers believe collaboration is more than a scheduled meeting. It reflects a positive culture with teachers talking to other teachers, sharing strategies, and solving complex problems which, as a result, positively impacts the SIG funded school improvement process. Sharing strategies emerged as a subtheme that was highly effective as a model practice to promote teacher leadership in SIG schools. Other evidence reflects that collaboration is important to all stakeholders. The participant observation data reflects that the number of teachers that participated in the teacher leadership activity that was observed by participant observers averaged 7 teachers involved per activity. This evidence suggests that teacher participants valued teacher leadership activities that included the collaboration of many teachers. This type of collaboration indicates that teacher participants perceive that teacher leadership is more than just sharing strategies. It is collaborating with many teachers to solve complex problems and provide learning experiences for students that go beyond the classroom.

***Distributed Leadership.*** Distributed leadership emerged as a major theme in this research that is connected to the overall effectiveness of the implementation of the SIG grant. There is much evidence that supports distributed leadership being a very important factor in the overall success of the school improvement process in SIG schools. A practice that emerged as being a highly effective model practice that impacted the implementation of the SIG grant and the school improvement process was the development of the school leadership team. This team was a

guiding force for this SIG funded school and provided a platform for collaboration that had a significant evolved as a subtheme in this research. Other evidence supports that teacher teams is also a very highly effective model practice that has a great impact on the implementation of the SIG grant and the school improvement process. Teacher teams also emerged as a subtheme in this research. Teachers in this study viewed their teacher team as their first line of defense, and that planning and sharing with their peers was not only essential to the implementation of the SIG grant, but was regarded as being necessary to having a positive school culture based on mutual trust and support.

Evidence in this study suggests that the distribution of power should go beyond school administrators to formulate teams that not only include teachers but also include students and community stakeholders to impact the shared decision making process. Student teams emerged as a subtheme of distributed leadership. Teachers in this case study reflected that student leadership was valued and that students participating in the process of school improvement was important to the overall success of the SIG process.

***Positive Culture.*** All participants described the impact of positive culture on the school improvement process. This major theme was interwoven in the fabric of school improvement. Many teachers suggested that having a positive outlook and creating a positive culture had the greatest impact on the implementation of the school improvement process. The data reflects that having a positive culture greatly encourages the development of teacher leadership which has a great impact on SIG schools. Teacher participants reflected that just having a positive attitude or staying positive had a great impact on the overall improvement of the school. Participant interview data suggested that the use of social media could have a great impact to the development of teacher leaders and the overall culture for improvement that could greatly impact

the implementation of the school improvement process. From the supporting evidence social media developed as a subtheme from positive culture that supported the implementations of the improvement process in SIG schools. The use of social media was a connecting subtheme of positive culture that should be noted as an unforeseen practice that was highly noted by most participants as having a great impact on the overall implementation of the school improvement process.

Other evidence suggests that teachers need to be internally motivated to take on teacher leadership roles. Data indicates that teachers valued going above and beyond the call of duty and taking on new leadership roles as being a teacher leadership model practice that is highly effective and has a major impact on the implementation of the school improvement process. The participant observation data indicates that teacher participants valued the importance of being internally motivated to take on teacher leadership roles. The participant observation data reflected that 65 percent of all observed leadership activities were internally motivated by teacher leaders. Teachers perceived taking on leadership roles and being internally motivated to be a teacher leader as essential to the successful implementation of the school improvement process.

Much supporting evidence indicates that having a positive culture is celebrating success. Teachers that participated in this study promoted celebrating success. Celebrating success emerged as a subtheme that was perceived as an effective model practice that impacted the implementation of the school improvement process and promoted teacher leadership. There were many ways teachers highlighted as means to celebrate success. One way they promoted this practice was through the positive use of social media; another was to create student and teacher awards and incentive programs. Teacher interviews indicated that positive behavior and

intervention support programs made a considerable difference in reducing negative behaviors and sparked positive growth toward school improvement. The practice of celebrating success was valued by all participants as a means to promote successful implementation of the school improvement grant process and as a teacher leadership model practice that was highly effective in SIG schools.

***Teacher Buy-In.*** There was great evidence that supported that having teachers buy-in to the overall school improvement process was very important to the overall successful implementation of the school improvement process in SIG funded schools. This sort of buy-in from teachers was promoted as having the same vision, sharing goals and working toward those goals and evaluating success through formal and informal measures. Teachers in this study felt that working together and creating a shared vision had a great impact on the successful implementation of the SIG grant. Developing a set of shared goals and promoting multiple ways to evaluate these goals were promoted as effective model practices to promote teacher leadership and impact the implementation of school improvement models. Both of these topics were developed as subthemes of this research. Developing a shared vision with all stakeholders was valued by many participants of this study. Going beyond test scores and focusing on formal and informal means of evaluations was also important. Teachers suggested that evaluation based on teacher buy-in, morale, student by-in and other informal means of evaluation should be considered for the success implementation of school improvement models.

***Teachers Leading Teachers.*** Teachers leading teachers was promoted as an effective model practice for school improvement in SIG funded schools. Evidence suggested that teacher participant valued teachers leaning professional development and professional learning. Both teacher led professional develops and using available resources from within the school were

valued by teachers as having a great impact on the effective implementation of the SIG grant. Evidence indicates that teachers should be leading the process of school improvement. Teachers that participated in this study viewed learning by peers as more important than learning from experts. Teachers believed in teacher led professional development. They promoted the idea of teachers leading teachers through action research and development to create a sustained culture of school improvement. Many teachers suggested that using teachers and available resources to transform change within the school had a larger impact than experts from outside the LEA trying to inform the change taking place. Teachers in this study supported the idea of fixing the problem yourself and creating local experts. This idea supports the idea that the development of teacher leaders has a great impact on the effectiveness of the SIG process.

**Question 2. How could teacher leadership development and model practices be used as an alternative or addition to the current SIG model implemented?**

There is evidence that suggests that teacher leadership can be developed within a SIG school by promoting the five major themes that emerged from axial coding process. The five themes that evolved during the coding process can be seen as an alternative or an additional practice that can be promoted in SIG schools as a way to successfully implement the SIG process and promote teacher leadership. Each of these resulting major themes indicates that teacher participants perceive each theme as a highly effective model practice that develops teacher leadership within a SIG school.

*Development of Teacher Leadership Through Collaboration.* Development of teacher leadership can be promoted and practiced through the use of sharing strategies among teachers. Evidence suggested there are many different ways teachers can practice sharing strategies. Some of the different techniques they highlighted as being effective are scheduled team collaboration



time, teacher leadership team and teacher led professional development. Evidence suggests that promoting collaboration time among teachers in various ways has a positive impact on the development of teacher leadership in SIG funded schools and could be used as an additional strategy in SIG schools to promote and sustain school improvement efforts.

***Development of Teacher Leadership Through the Distribution of Power.*** Teachers leaders that participated in this study revealed that the distribution of power was essential in promoting teacher leadership and a model practice that should be noted as an additional practice that is effective in school improvement. Teacher participants provided evidence that this can be accomplished by promoting a teacher leadership team, collaborative teacher teams, promoting student leadership teams and by promoting a shared vision created by all stakeholders. Teachers in this study connected teachers buy-in to the school improvement process by having a direct connection with decision making process. One way to do this is making shared decisions. Teacher participants stated that the leadership team made these shared decisions and was effective at developing teacher leaders by promoting collaboration among many stakeholders.

***Development of Teacher Leaders Through Positive Culture.*** Promoting teacher leadership through developing a positive culture was a constant theme that was promoted by all participants in this study. Staying positive, talking positive, having confidence and pride in the work of all teachers was valued as a means to promote teacher leadership and an effective alternative practice of teacher leadership that should be promoted in SIG schools. The use of social media as a positive school culture promotion device was seen as a new approach toward the development of teacher leadership that was highly effective. Teachers viewed this approach as internally motivating teachers to take part in teacher leadership activities and become a part of

the positive movement. This type of teacher leadership development promotes celebrating successes in a positive way through social media and the use of informal evaluation.

***Development Through Teacher Buy-In.*** There is evidence that supports developing teacher leadership relies on teacher buy-in. Teachers in this study suggest that teacher buy-in relies heavily on creating a shared vision and setting goals together. This type of teacher leadership model practice should be promoted to spark growth in SIG schools. Teachers at this school solved problems by creating shared visions in teacher leadership team and their curriculum teams. This teacher leadership model practice is closely connected to collaboration and distributed leadership. All of the resulting themes connect with the idea that developing a shared vision by using multiple stakeholders is an essential teacher leadership model practice that can be used as an additional school improvement technique that can have a positive impact on teacher leadership development and the overall success of school improvement in SIG funded schools.

***Development Through Teachers Leading Teachers.*** Having teachers lead the process of school improvement in struggling schools is another alternative school improvement process that evolved from this research. Teachers valued being led by individuals they trust. Teachers indicated that they wanted to solve their own problems and they bought-in more to the school improvement process when they could take control and be a part of the solution. One major teacher leadership practice that was promoted as an alternative school improvement technique was the use of teacher led professional developments. Interview data indicates that teacher led professional development developed teacher leaders and impacted the school improvement process in a positive way. This practice should be considered as way to promote teacher

leadership and be used in SIG funded schools as a way for teachers to buy-in to the school improvement process.

**Question 3. Is the SIG model of school improvement an effective model without the practice and development of teacher leadership model practices and evaluation?**

There is substantial evidence that was presented in this research that suggests that the SIG process of school improvement should use the development of teacher leadership as a model practice to promote school improvement and spark immediate turnaround in struggling schools. These practices are based on a set of five major themes that resulted from the evolution of eleven subthemes in the axial coding. It should be noted that these teacher leadership model practices evolved with the successful implementation of the school improvement process in the SIG funded school that was being studied. Teacher participants viewed these practices as effective and the techniques they valued as teacher leadership practices that had a positive impact on school improvement in their school.

*Transformation through teacher leadership and evaluation.* Creating a sustained culture of school improvement was the next essential step for this SIG funded school. Teachers in this school emphasized going beyond the classroom, not getting paid for afterschool teacher leadership activities such as teacher leadership and using multiple means of evaluation. Becoming their own agents of transformational change through the promotion and the development of teacher leadership model practices such as the five major themes that were presented above were essential in maintaining a positive school culture that was established during the SIG process and based on the distribution of power and the collaboration of teacher leaders. Teachers in this study perceived evaluation as going beyond the standardized test. They recommend focusing on celebrating successes, evaluating the morale of teachers, student

participation and the culture of collaboration and transformational change as informal means of evaluation that were important to the success of the school improvement process.

The evidence indicates that there is symbiotic relationship between teacher leadership and the successful implementation of the school improvement process in SIG funded schools. This relationship relies on the practice and implementation of teacher leadership model practices that emerged as major themes and subthemes of this research. Evidence from this research indicates that the SIG school improvement process is less effective in the absence of additional and alternative teacher leadership model practices that can help spark a culture of transformational change and sustained improvement.

### **Implications**

Transformational leaders are able to pinpoint problems in the current structure and make the necessary changes (Martin, 2016, p. 269). But what happens when this type of leadership does not exist or is unable for some reason to take place in a SIG school? Findings suggest that an organization cannot make changes for many different reasons. This is one of many outcomes struggling SIG schools face. The lack of transformational leadership in the form of teacher leadership is a major problem for rural, geographically isolated SIG schools. This study focused on understanding from a teacher's perspective what teacher leadership model practices work in SIG funded schools and how SIG funded schools may utilize these practices during the school improvement process. This section will focus on how this study impacts recently designated SIG schools, current SIG schools and the current site study school.

### **Recently Designated SIG Schools**

Schools recently designated as SIG funded schools are faced with a major challenge of school turnaround. These schools are usually struggling with school culture and many other

factors that have a major effect on school morale. The evidence in this study indicates that developing a strong positive school culture may be the first step toward a sustained school improvement effort. Transformational leadership manifests a strong potential to inspire followers to higher levels of enthusiasm, dedication, commitment and extra effort that drive the organization to excellent performance (Marques De Lima Rua, Costa Araujo, 2016, p. 46). This study reflects that a strong commitment toward improving the schools culture through staying positive, going beyond the classroom and putting forth the extra effort toward school improvement. Five major themes provide specific examples to newly classified SIG schools of alternative or additional school improvement ideas that are based on the development of teacher leadership and teacher leadership model practice. Of the five major themes, eleven subthemes emerged as very specific teacher leadership model practices that have worked in a rural, geographically isolated SIG school. Findings from this study could have a positive impact on schools that are stuck in the decision making process and don't know what model for improvement to use.

### **Implications for Current SIG Schools**

For current SIG schools that are not having success with their school improvement efforts, this study outlines specific models for school improvement that could be effective at creating a positive school improvement effort. Evidence suggest that obtaining teacher buy-in toward a shared vision is a difficult task in a SIG school. This research connects the five major themes, and provides current struggling SIG schools with model practices that could be shared and promoted as an alternative or an additional school improvement model for struggling

schools. In fact, findings suggest that other SIG schools should share information, collaborate and adapt models that have been proven to work in other SIG schools. This research provides a toolkit of teacher leadership models that should be shared and adjusted based on the SIG schools need. This study highlights specific teacher leadership model practices that could be developed as a framework or SIG funded schools to utilize in their school improvement efforts.

This research was focused on understanding what teacher leaders perceived as teacher leadership model practices that had an impact on the school improvement process. The conclusion of this research will provide the current SIG site study school with the direction of what teacher leadership model practices are viewed as effective and how they may expand their efforts to see even more rapid school turnaround. Findings suggest that participant teacher leaders have a firm belief in teacher leadership and the promotion of teacher leadership. The results from this case study analysis will allow the teacher leadership team and teacher teams focus on what works well and how to expand their efforts toward school improvement using teacher leadership model practices that were categorized through major themes in the research.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The following recommendations for action are based on the 14 transcribed interviews and participant observation that were analyzed and coded during the data analysis process.

1. Create an online collaborative network among SIG schools nationwide to promote teacher leadership models for school turnaround efforts.
2. To create a SIG school improvement teacher manual for struggling schools to use as a resource that is created by the schools that participate in the nationwide SIG school improvement

network. This manual can provide a toolkit of techniques that work with schools and that are sustainable after SIG funding is gone.

3. Develop a SIG school evaluation tool that allows schools to measure how they are performing in categories such as collaboration, distribution of power, school culture, teacher buy-in and teachers leading transformation change.
4. Develop a leveled teacher leadership incentive program that rewards teachers and promotes teachers to be internally motivated to take on teacher leadership activities. This incentive program should be universal so all school that are SIG School can participate in obtaining levels toward becoming a transformational teacher leader.
5. Create a SIG School teacher leadership manual for LEA's to follow that includes district level implementation guide and principal implementation guide to promote teacher leadership model practices.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the literature reviewed, the participant observation and the 14 transcribed interviews below is the recommendation for further study.

1. Literature suggest that after more than 10 years since NCLB was enacted and nearly 5 years since the SIG program received significant financial backing, researchers still know little about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools (Player & Katz, 2016, p. 676). There is much need to investigate what techniques have a positive impact on school improvement models. Therefore, a further study that focuses on teacher leadership model practices that are effective across the nation in SIG schools is greatly needed to pinpoint what teacher leadership practices are essential to leading to school turnaround in SIG funded schools.

2. Studying school culture and how it relates to teacher leadership and school improvement would be another recommendation of further study. Evidence presented during the interview process indicated that creating a positive culture was essential to the development of teacher leaders and the overall school improvement process. Further study is needed to understand the effects of developing a positive culture and the impact toward SIG school improvement process.
3. More research is also needed to understand the phenomenon happening with social media in schools. The teachers in this study indicated this was a major step toward successful implementation and evaluation of the school improvement process and the development of teacher leadership. A quick search of the literature provided very few results in understanding how social media can turnaround schools.
4. More research is needed on the subject of teacher led professional development. This technique was regarded as one major school improvement effort that developed and promoted teacher leadership in SIG schools. After an initial search on the topic the need for further expiration was evident.

### **Conclusion**

This case study was focused on understanding the impact of teacher leadership on the SIG process and if teacher leadership model practice could be a possible alternative or additional model to use to promote school turnaround in SIG funded schools. There is evidence that suggests that teacher leadership has a great impact on the school improvement process for SIG funded schools. The evidence suggests that there are many teacher leadership model practices



that should be promoted to sustain a positive culture of collaboration, distributed leadership, teacher buy-in and teacher leading teachers through the transformation process.

Teachers that participated in this study provided insight through observing teacher leaders and transcribed interviews. These participants informed the results and from those results five major themes and eleven subthemes emerged as teacher leadership model practices that can be promoted as high quality practices in SIG funded schools. These interconnected practices affirmed the hypothesis that teacher leadership has a profound impact on the school improvement process in SIG funded school.

Furthermore, many unknown teacher leadership practices such as teachers promoting leadership on social media and teachers leading teachers through the use of teacher led professional developments provided the principal researcher with new models of teacher leadership that can be easily adopted as free of cost. These types of sustainable teacher leadership model practices can be used to sustain growth long after the SIG funds run out.

This study provided teacher leaders the opportunity to participate in the process of change, informing results and drawing conclusion for future school improvement models. This change process is the transformational process. By being a part of this research, teacher leader participants outlined new ideas for the successful implementation of the SIG funded school improvement process and provide a list of major themes that can be promoted as teacher leader model practices. By doing this, participants provide the teacher leader perspective that will contribute to the working knowledge of research in the field of educational leadership, teacher leadership, school improvement and SIG funded schools.



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## Appendix A

### School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

#### PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program is authorized by section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Under section 1003(g)(1) of the ESEA, the Secretary must “award grants to States to enable the States to provide subgrants to local educational agencies for the purpose of providing assistance for school improvement consistent with section 1116.” From a grant received pursuant to that provision, a State educational agency (SEA) must subgrant at least 95 percent of the funds it receives to its local educational agencies (LEAs) for school improvement activities. In awarding such subgrants, an SEA must “give priority to the local educational agencies with the lowest-achieving schools that demonstrate — (A) the greatest need for such funds; and (B) the strongest commitment to ensuring that such funds are used to provide adequate resources to enable the lowest-achieving schools to meet the goals under school and local educational agency improvement, corrective action, and restructuring plans under section 1116.” The regulatory requirements implement these provisions, defining LEAs with the “greatest need” for SIG funds and the “strongest



commitment” to ensure that such funds are used to raise substantially student achievement in the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State.

The Department published in the Federal Register a notice of final requirements for the SIG program (final requirements) on February 9, 2015 (80 FR 7224). The final requirements make changes to the SIG program requirements and implement language in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, that allows LEAs to implement additional interventions, provides flexibility for rural LEAs, and extends the grant period from three to five years. Additionally, the final requirements make changes that reflect lessons learned from four years of SIG implementation.

Prior to the publication of the final requirements, the requirements for the SIG program were set forth in 75 FR 66363 (Oct. 28, 2010). The Department issued guidance to provide assistance to SEAs, LEAs, and schools in implementing the requirements on January 20, 2010, and updated that guidance to include addenda that were released in February, March, May, and June 2010, respectively (collectively, FY 2009 guidance).

Since the issuance of the FY 2009 guidance, the Department has made numerous revisions, most recently, on January 27, 2014, updating questions C-7, H-19a, I-15, I-16, I-24a, and J-9 and including three new questions—E-3a, E-3b, and I-16a.

## A. INCREASED LEARNING TIME

A-31. What is the definition of “increased learning time”?

“Increased learning time” means increasing the length of the school day, week, or year to significantly increase the total number of school hours so as to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and provision of enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, such as physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.

A-31a. To meet the requirement for providing for increased learning time as part of the implementation of a turnaround or transformation model, must an LEA include all three components of increased learning time?

Yes. The definition of “increased learning time” requires additional time for instruction in core academic subjects, additional time for instruction in other subjects and for provision of enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, and additional time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development. Accordingly, to fully implement either the turnaround or transformation model, an LEA must use a longer school day,

week, or year to provide additional time for all three types of activities as part of the LEA's comprehensive needs-based plan for turning around the entire school. Although all three components must be included, the Department expects that, in determining precisely how to use increased learning time, an LEA will focus on, and give priority to, providing additional time for instruction in core academic subjects for all students and for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development, since these components of increased learning time are most likely to contribute to the overall SIG goal of improving the performance of the entire school.

A-32. Does the definition of "increased learning time" include before- or after-school instructional programs?

Research supports the effectiveness of well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year. (See Frazier, Julie A.; Morrison, Frederick J. "The Influence of Extended-year Schooling on Growth of Achievement and Perceived Competence in Early Elementary School." *Child Development*. Vol. 69 (2), April 1998, pp.495-497 and research done by Mass2020.) Increasing learning time by extending learning into before- and after-school hours can be difficult to implement effectively. It is permissible under the definition in A-31 so long as LEAs using before- or after-school programs to implement the requirement for increased learning time closely integrate and coordinate academic work in school and out of school. To satisfy the requirements in Section I.A.2(a)(1)(viii) of the turnaround model and Section I.A.2(d)(3)(A)(i) of the transformation model for providing increased learning time, a before- or after-school instructional program must be available to all students in the school.

The fact that increased learning time may be provided during before- and after-school hours does not alter the requirement that an LEA provide additional time for all three components included in the definition of increased learning time (i.e., instruction in core academic subjects, instruction in other subjects and provision of enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, and time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development). However, an LEA's decision to conduct one of these activities during before- or after-school hours does not obligate the LEA to conduct all of these activities during those hours. For example, an LEA might provide time for instruction in subjects other than core academic subjects and for provision of enrichment activities before or after school, but provide additional time during an extended regular school day, week, or year for instruction in core academic subjects and for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development. Indeed, in light of the overall goal of the SIG program of improving student academic achievement in persistently lowest-achieving schools, the Department encourages LEAs to provide additional time for instruction in core academic subjects during an extended regular school day, week, or year.

A-32a. May an LEA use SIG funds to pay for the portion of a teacher's salary that is attributable to providing increased learning time beyond the regular school day, week, or year?

Yes. Both the turnaround model and the transformation model require an LEA to provide increased learning time, which is generally defined as "using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for" instruction in core academic subjects; instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities; and teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development. See sections

I.A.2(a)(1)(H), I.A.2(d)(3)(A)(i), I.A.3 of the final requirements. Because a school must operate a schoolwide program in order to implement either of these models, the LEA must provide the school all of the non-Federal funds it would otherwise receive in the absence of the SIG funds. ESEA section 1114(a)(2)(B). These non-Federal funds include the funds necessary and sufficient to provide the school's regular instructional program—i.e., the program the school provides during the regular school day, week, or year. If this requirement is met, the LEA may use SIG funds in the school to support the extra costs of providing increased learning time beyond the regular school day, week, or year. See A-32b. For example, the LEA may use SIG funds to pay the pro-rata share of a teacher's salary that is attributable to a longer school day, week, or year and is necessary to implement a turnaround or transformation model, even if the teacher is providing instruction in core academic subjects during the increased learning time.

A-32b. How may an LEA determine what costs are attributable to providing increased learning time beyond the regular school day, week, or year?

To determine what costs may be attributed to providing increased learning time beyond the regular school day, week, or year, an LEA must first define its regular school day, week, or year. An LEA might do so in any one of several ways. The LEA might determine the length of the school day, week, or year in its schools that are not implementing a turnaround or transformation model and, therefore, are not required to provide increased learning time. If all its schools are implementing a turnaround or transformation model, the LEA might determine what length of school day, week, or year is necessary to comply with State law. If State law does not require a specific minimum number of instructional hours, the LEA might determine what amount of time is necessary and sufficient to provide its regular instructional program. Then, the LEA may use

SIG funds to pay for additional costs to provide increased learning time under a turnaround or transformation model over and above what it would otherwise be required to provide. If, however, the LEA provides increased learning time in all of its schools—i.e., both those that receive SIG funds and those that do not—the LEA would need to support the additional costs in all schools, including SIG schools, with non-Federal funds in order to meet the requirement in section 1114(a)(2)(B) of the ESEA. See A-32a.

A-32c. May an LEA use SIG funds to offset transportation costs associated with providing increased learning time?

Generally, providing transportation to students in order for them to attend school is a regular responsibility an LEA carries out for all students and, thus, may not be paid for with Federal funds unless specifically authorized. However, an LEA may use SIG funds to cover transportation costs if the costs are directly attributable to implementation of a school intervention model, are reasonable and necessary, and exceed the costs the LEA would have incurred in the absence of its implementation of the model.

As required under the turnaround and transformation models, providing increased learning time, by definition, means using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours for instruction and teacher collaboration and making it available to all students in a school (see A-31 and A-32). If an LEA provides transportation to students in order for them to attend school, those same costs would generally be incurred to transport students even if their school day has been extended. As such, the costs of transporting those

students generally may not be paid for with SIG funds. To the extent, however, that providing increased learning time requires an LEA to incur additional costs that are directly attributable to the increased learning time and that exceed those costs that it would normally incur to provide transportation to students in order to attend school, the LEA may be able to use SIG funds to cover the incremental transportation costs, provided those costs are also reasonable and necessary to carry out one of the seven school intervention models. Such costs would need to be included in the LEA's proposed SIG budget and reviewed and approved by the SEA. In addition, the LEA must keep records to demonstrate that such costs are directly attributable to its implementation of a school intervention model as well as reasonable and necessary and that it has charged only incremental transportation costs to its SIG grant.

A-32d. Must an LEA provide a minimum number of hours to meet the requirement in the turnaround and transformation models regarding providing increased learning time?

Although research supports the effectiveness of increasing learning time by a minimum of 300 hours, the final requirements do not require that an LEA implementing either the turnaround model or the transformation model necessarily provide at least 300 hours of increased learning time. An LEA has the flexibility to determine precisely how to meet the requirement to establish schedules that provide increased learning time, and should do so with an eye toward the goal of increasing learning time enough to have a meaningful impact on the academic program in which the model is being implemented.

A-32e. What does it mean for a before- or after-school instructional program to be “available to all students” in a school?

As is discussed in A-32, to satisfy the requirements in Section I.A.2(a)(1)(H) of the turnaround model and Section I.A.2(d)(3)(A)(i) of the transformation model for providing increased learning time, a before- or after-school instructional program must “be available to all students” in the school. For a before- or after-school program to meet this requirement, the school must offer all students an opportunity to participate in the program, and the school must have sufficient capacity and resources to serve any and all students who choose to accept the offer to participate. A program is not available to all students if, for example, the school has sufficient capacity to serve only some of the students who seek to enroll in the program, nor is it available to all students if it is offered to only a particular group of students, such as students in need of remedial assistance. Further, to be available to all students, a program must be accessible to all subgroups of students, including students with disabilities and English learners (ELs).

Student growth

A-33. What is the definition of “student growth”?

“Student growth” means the change in achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time. For the purpose of this definition, “student achievement” means—

For grades and subjects in which assessments are required under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA, a student’s score on such assessments and may include other measures of student



learning, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition, provided they are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.

For grades and subjects in which assessments are not required under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA, alternative measures of student learning and performance, such as student results on pre-tests, end-of-course tests, and objective performance-based assessments; student learning objectives; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.

A-34. Why is it necessary to define “student growth” for purposes of SIG grants?

Under the requirements in Section I.A.2(d)(1)(A)(ii) of the transformation model, the LEA must implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals, designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement that, among other things, use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including ELs and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources), such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys.

## B. TURNAROUND MODEL

B-1. What are the required elements of a turnaround model?

A turnaround model is one in which an LEA must do the following:

Replace the principal and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates;

Using locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students,

Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent; and

Select new staff;

Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school;

Provide staff ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies;

Adopt a new governance structure, which may include, but is not limited to, requiring the school to report to a new "turnaround office" in the LEA or SEA, hire a "turnaround leader" who reports directly to the Superintendent or Chief Academic Officer, or enter into a multi-year contract with the LEA or SEA to obtain added flexibility in exchange for greater accountability;

Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards;

Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students;

Establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time; and

Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

B-2. In addition to the required elements, what optional elements may also be a part of a turnaround model?

In addition to the required elements, an LEA implementing a turnaround model may also implement other strategies, such as a new school model or any of the required and permissible activities under the transformation intervention model described in the final requirements. It could also, for example, implement a high-quality preschool program that is designed to improve the health, social-emotional outcomes, and school readiness for high-need young children or replace a comprehensive high school with one that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The key is that these actions would be taken within the framework of the turnaround model and would be in addition to, not instead of, the actions that are required as part of a turnaround model.

B-3. What is the definition of “staff” as that term is used in the discussion of a turnaround model?

As used in the discussion of a turnaround model, “staff” includes all instructional staff, but an LEA has discretion to determine whether or not “staff” also includes non-instructional staff. An LEA may decide that it is appropriate to include non-instructional staff in the definition of “staff,” as all members of a school’s staff contribute to the school environment and are important to the success of a turnaround model.

In determining the number of staff members that may be rehired, an LEA should count the total number of staff positions (however staff is defined) within the school in which the model is being implemented, including any positions that may be vacant at the time of the implementation. For example, if a school has a total of 100 staff positions, only 90 of which are filled at the time the model is implemented, the LEA may rehire 50 staff members; the LEA is not limited to rehiring only 45 individuals (50 percent of the filled staff positions). (See G-1c for additional information on how an LEA should determine the number of staff members that must be replaced when taking advantage of the flexibility to continue or complete interventions that have been implemented within the last two years.)

B-3a. The response to B-3 states that “staff” includes “all instructional staff.” Does “all instructional staff” mean only teachers of core academic subjects or does it also include physical education teachers and teachers of other non-core academic subjects?

“All instructional staff” includes teachers of core academic subjects as well as teachers of non-core academic subjects. Section I.A.2(a)(1)(B) of the final requirements requires an LEA to

measure the effectiveness of “staff” who work within the turnaround environment. As is stated in B-3, an LEA has discretion to determine whether or not to include non-instructional staff, in addition to instructional staff, in meeting this requirement. An LEA may decide it is appropriate to include non-instructional staff in the definition of “staff” as all members of a school’s staff contribute to the school environment and are important to the success of a turnaround model.

B-4. What are “locally adopted competencies”?

A “competency,” which is a skill or consistent pattern of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be effective in a particular job or role, is a key predictor of how someone will perform at work. Given that every teacher brings a unique skill set to the classroom, thoughtfully developed assessments of such competencies can be used as part of a rigorous recruitment, screening, and selection process to identify educators with the unique qualities that equip them to succeed in the turnaround environment and can help ensure a strong match between teachers and particular turnaround schools. As part of a rigorous recruitment, screening and selection process, assessments of turnaround teachers’ competencies can be used by the principal or district leader to distinguish between very high performers and more typical or lower-performing teachers in a turnaround setting. Although an LEA may already have and use a set of tools to screen for appropriate competencies as part of its normal hiring practices, it is important to develop a set of competencies specifically designed to identify staff that can be effective in a turnaround situation because, in a turnaround school, failure has become an entrenched way of life for students and staff, and staff members need stronger and more consistent habits in critical areas to transform the school’s wide-scale failure into learning success.

While each LEA should identify the skills and expertise needed for its local context, in addition to reviewing evidence of effectiveness in previous teaching positions (or other pre-service experience) in the form of recommendations, portfolios, or student outcomes, examples of locally adopted competencies might include acting with initiative and persistence, planning ahead, flexibility, respect for and sensitivity to norms of interaction in different situations, self-confidence, team leadership, developing others, analytical thinking, and conceptual thinking.

The value and utility of turnaround competencies for selection are dependent on the process by which an LEA or school leader or team uses them. In addition to assessing a candidate's subject knowledge and mastery of specific instructional practices that the turnaround school uses, using a robust and multi-tiered selection process that includes interviews that ask about past practice in the classroom or situational scenarios, reviewing writing samples, observing teachers in their classrooms, and asking teachers to perform job-related tasks such as presenting information to a group of parents, are all common techniques used to screen candidates against turnaround competencies.

Note that these are merely examples of a process and set of competencies an LEA might measure and use in screening and selecting staff to meet the unique needs of the schools in which it will implement a turnaround model.

B-5. Is an LEA implementing the turnaround model required to use financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible conditions as

strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a turnaround model?

No. The specific strategies mentioned in this requirement (see B-1(3)) are merely examples of the types of strategies an LEA might use to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a school implementing the turnaround model. An LEA is not obligated to use these particular strategies, so long as it implements some strategies that are designed to recruit, place, and retain the appropriate staff.

B-6. What is job-embedded professional development?

Job-embedded professional development is professional learning that occurs at a school as educators engage in their daily work activities. It is closely connected to what teachers are asked to do in the classroom so that the skills and knowledge gained from such learning can be immediately transferred to classroom instructional practices. Job-embedded professional development is usually characterized by the following:

It occurs on a regular basis (e.g., daily or weekly);

It is aligned with academic standards, school curricula, and school improvement goals;

It involves educators working together collaboratively and is often facilitated by school instructional leaders or school-based professional development coaches or mentors;

It requires active engagement rather than passive learning by participants; and

It focuses on understanding what and how students are learning and on how to address students' learning needs, including reviewing student work and achievement data and collaboratively planning, testing, and adjusting instructional strategies, formative assessments, and materials based on such data.

Job-embedded professional development can take many forms, including, but not limited to, classroom coaching, structured common planning time, meetings with mentors, consultation with outside experts, and observations of classroom practice.

When implemented as part of a turnaround model, job-embedded professional development must be designed with school staff.

B-7. Does the requirement to implement an instructional program that is research-based and aligned (vertically and with State standards) require adoption of a new or revised instructional program?

Not necessarily. In implementing a turnaround model, an LEA must use data to identify an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned as well as aligned with State academic standards. If an LEA determines, based on a careful review of appropriate data, that the instructional program currently being implemented in a particular school is research-based and properly aligned, it may continue to implement that instructional program. However, the Department expects that most LEAs with Tier I, Tier II, priority, or focus schools will need to



make at least minor adjustments to the instructional programs in those schools to ensure that those programs are, in fact, research-based and properly aligned.

B-8. What are examples of social-emotional and community-oriented services that may be supported with SIG funds in a school implementing a turnaround model?

Social-emotional and community-oriented services that may be offered to students in a school implementing a turnaround model may include, but are not limited to: (a) safety programs; (b) community stability programs that reduce the mobility rate of students in the school; or (c) family and community engagement programs that support a range of activities designed to build the capacity of parents and school staff to work together to improve student academic achievement, such as a family literacy program for parents who need to improve their literacy skills in order to support their children's learning.

If funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources to support the planning and implementation of the services and the LEA has engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment, SIG funds might be used to hire a coordinator or to contract with an organization to facilitate the delivery of health, nutrition, and social services to the school's students in partnership with local service providers. SIG funds also might be used for (1) professional development necessary to assist teachers, pupil services personnel, other staff, and parents in identifying and meeting the comprehensive needs of students, and (2) as a last resort when funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources, the provision of basic medical equipment, such as eyeglasses and hearing aids.

An LEA should examine the needs of students in the turnaround school to determine which social-emotional and community-oriented services will be appropriate and useful under the circumstances. Further, like all other activities supported with SIG funds, any services provided must address the needs identified by the needs assessment the LEA conducted prior to selecting the turnaround model for the school and must be reasonable and necessary. (See I-30.)

B-9. May an LEA omit any of the actions outlined in the final requirements and implement its own version of a turnaround model?

No. An LEA implementing a turnaround model in one or more of its schools must take all of the actions required by the final requirements. As discussed in B-2, an LEA may take additional actions to supplement those that are required as part of a turnaround model, but it may not implement its own version of a turnaround model that does not include all of the elements required by the final requirements. Thus, an LEA could not, for example, convert a turnaround school to a magnet school without also taking the other actions specifically required as part of a turnaround model.

## C. RESTART MODEL

C-1. What is the definition of a restart model?

A restart model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected through a rigorous review process (see C-5). A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school (see C-6).

C-2. What is a CMO?

A CMO is a non-profit organization that operates or manages charter schools by centralizing or sharing certain functions and resources among schools.

C-3. What is an EMO?

An EMO is a for-profit or non-profit organization that provides “whole-school operation” services to an LEA.

C-4. Prior to submitting its application for SIG funds, must an LEA know the particular EMO or CMO with which it would contract to restart a school?

No. Prior to submitting its application, an LEA need not know the particular EMO or CMO with which it would contract to restart a school, but it should at least have a pool of potential partners that have expressed an interest in and have exhibited an ability to restart the school in which the LEA proposes to implement the restart model. An LEA does not need to enter into a contract prior to receiving its SIG funds, but it must be able to provide enough information in its

application for the SEA to be confident that, if awarded SIG funds, the LEA would in fact enter into a contract with a CMO or EMO to implement the restart model.

C-5. What must the “rigorous review process” used for selecting a charter school operator, a CMO, or an EMO include?

The rigorous review process must include a determination by the LEA that the selected charter school operator, CMO, or EMO is likely to produce strong results for the school. In making this determination, the LEA must consider the extent to which the schools currently operated or managed by the selected charter school operator, CMO, or EMO, if any, have produced strong results over the past three years (or over the life of the school, if the school has been open for fewer than three years), including:

Significant improvement in academic achievement for all of the groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA;

Success in closing achievement gaps, either within schools or relative to all public elementary school and secondary school students statewide, for all of the groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA;

High school graduation rates, where applicable, that are above the average rates in the State for the groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA; and

No significant compliance issues, including in the areas of civil rights, financial management, and student safety.

The purpose of the rigorous review process is to provide an LEA with an opportunity to ensure that the operator will use this model to make meaningful changes in a school. Through the rigorous review process, an LEA might also, for example, require a prospective operator to demonstrate that its strategies are evidence-based and that it has the capacity to implement the strategies it is proposing. In determining whether a charter school or CMO has significant compliance issues, through the rigorous review process, an LEA should ensure that the charter school or CMO has sufficient internal controls and oversight to properly administer Federal education funds.

C-6. Which students must be permitted to enroll in a school implementing a restart model?

A restart school must enroll, within the grades it serves, all former students who wish to attend the school. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that restarting the school benefits the population of students who would be served by the school in the absence of “restarting” the school. Accordingly, the obligation to enroll any former student who wishes to attend the school includes the obligation to enroll a student who did not actually previously attend the school — for example, because the student was previously enrolled in grade 3 but the school serves only grades 4 through 6 — but who would now be able to enroll in the school were it not implementing the restart model. If the restart school no longer serves a particular grade or grades that previously had been served by the school, the restart school is not obligated to enroll a student in the grade or grades that are no longer served.

C-6a. May an EMO or CMO with which an LEA contracts to implement a restart model require students or parents to agree to certain conditions in order to attend the school?

Yes, under the restart model, a provider may require all former students who wish to attend the restart school to sign student or parent/student agreements covering student behavior, attendance, or other commitments related to academic performance. In other words, a decision by a student or parent not to sign such an agreement amounts to an indication that the student does not wish to attend the school implementing the restart model. A provider may not, however, require students to meet, for example, certain academic standards prior to enrolling in the school.

C-7. May a restart school serve fewer grades than were previously served by the school in which the model is being implemented?

Yes. An LEA has flexibility to work with providers to develop the appropriate sequence and timetable for a restart partnership. Thus, for example, an LEA could allow a restart operator to take over one grade in the school at a time.

If an LEA allows a restart operator to serve only some of the grades that were previously served by the school in which the model is being implemented, the LEA must ensure that the SIG funds it receives for the school are used only for the grades being served by the restart operator, unless the LEA is implementing one of the other SIG models with respect to the other grades served by the school. For example, if the school in question previously served grades K-6 and the LEA allows a restart operator to take over the school only with respect to grades K-3, the LEA could

use SIG funds to serve the students in grades 4-6 if it implements a turnaround model or school closure, consistent with the final requirements, with respect to those grades.

Note that, similarly, an LEA has the flexibility to develop the appropriate sequence and timetable for implementing a turnaround, transformation, or closure, such that, for example, an LEA may implement any of those models in one grade in a school at a time. Just as with the restart model, if an LEA implements a turnaround, transformation, or closure for only some of the grades that were previously served by the school in which the model is being implemented, the LEA must ensure that the SIG funds it receives for the school are used only for the grades in which the model is being implemented, unless the LEA is implementing one of the other SIG models with respect to the other grades served by the school. The Department strongly encourages LEAs to provide those students in grades not implementing a SIG model the opportunity to transfer to a higher-performing school.

C-8. May a school implementing a restart model implement any of the required or permissible activities of one of the other SIG models?

Yes. A school implementing a restart model may implement activities described in the final requirements with respect to other models. Indeed, a restart operator has considerable flexibility not only with respect to the school improvement activities it will undertake, but also with respect to the type of school program it will offer. The restart model is specifically intended to give operators flexibility and freedom to implement their own reform plans and strategies.

C-9. If an LEA implements a restart model, must its contract with the charter school operator, CMO, or EMO hold the charter school operator, CMO, or EMO accountable for meeting the final requirements?

Yes. If an LEA implements a restart model in a Tier I, Tier II, priority, or focus school, the LEA must include in its contract or agreement terms and provisions to hold the charter school operator, CMO, or EMO accountable for complying with the final requirements. An LEA should bear this accountability requirement in mind at the time of contracting with the charter school operator, CMO, or EMO, and should consider how best to reflect it in the contract or agreement.

C-10. May an LEA use SIG funds to pay a fee to a CMO or EMO to operate a restart model?

Yes, but only to the extent the fee is reasonable and necessary to implement the restart model and to the extent it provides a benefit to improve the academic achievement of students. An LEA, thus, has the responsibility, in entering into a contract with a CMO or EMO, to ensure that any fee that is part of the contract is reasonable and necessary. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.403 (to be allowable under a Federal grant, costs must be “necessary and reasonable for the performance of the Federal award”). See also 2 C.F.R. § 200.405 (“a cost [may only be charged to a Federal program] in accordance with relative benefits received”). In making this determination, the LEA must ensure that there is a direct relationship between the fee and the services that the CMO or EMO will provide using SIG funds and that those services are necessary to implement the SIG model in the school being restarted. It may not be reasonable, for example, for a CMO or EMO to charge a flat percentage of the SIG funds available, irrespective of the services to be provided,



particularly in light of the significant amount of SIG funds that would be available to a school for five years. For example, if a CMO or EMO normally charges a fee of five percent of gross receipts to operate a school, it may not be reasonable to calculate that percentage on the additional \$10 million in SIG funds that could be available, absent a very strong demonstration that its costs for providing services increase commensurately with the amount of SIG funds available. Moreover, the LEA must be able to demonstrate, as part of its commitment to obtain SIG funds, that it can sustain the services of the CMO or EMO and any attendant fee after the SIG funds are no longer available (Sections I.A.4(a)(12) and II.A.2(c)) and include a budget for each school it intends to serve that identifies any fee (Section II.A.2(e)).

In addition, an SEA has the responsibility, in reviewing and approving an LEA's application to implement the restart model in one or more of its Tier I, Tier II, priority, or focus schools, to consider the LEA's capacity to implement the model, including the reasonableness of its SIG budget and its ability to sustain the model after SIG funds are no longer available, and may approve the LEA's application only if the SEA determines that the LEA can implement fully and effectively the model. See Sections I.A.4(b) and II.B.2(b).

#### D. SCHOOL CLOSURE

D-1. What is the definition of "school closure"?

School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

D-1a. How important is it for an LEA to engage families and the community in the LEA's decision to close a school under the school closure intervention model?

It is extremely important to engage families and the school community early in the process of selecting the appropriate school improvement model to implement in a school (see H-4a), but doing so is particularly important when considering school closure.

It is critical that LEA officials engage in an open dialogue with families and the school community early in the closure process to ensure that they understand the data and reasons supporting the decision to close, have a voice in exploring quality options, and help plan a smooth transition for students and their families at the receiving schools.

D-2. What costs associated with closing a school can be paid for with SIG funds?

An LEA may use SIG funds to pay certain reasonable and necessary costs associated with closing a Tier I, Tier II, priority, or focus school, such as costs related to parent and community outreach, including, but not limited to, press releases, newsletters, newspaper announcements, hotlines, direct mail notices, or meetings regarding the school closure; services to help parents

and students transition to a new school; or orientation activities, including open houses, that are specifically designed for students attending a new school after their prior school closes. Other costs, such as revising transportation routes, transporting students to their new school, or making class assignments in a new school, are regular responsibilities an LEA carries out for all students and generally may not be paid for with SIG funds. However, an LEA may use SIG funds to cover these types of costs associated with its general responsibilities if the costs are directly attributable to the school closure and exceed the costs the LEA would have incurred in the absence of the closure.

D-3. May SIG funds be used in the school that is receiving students who previously attended a school that is subject to closure in order to cover the costs associated with accommodating those students?

No. In general, the costs a receiving school will incur to accommodate students who are moved from a closed school are costs that an LEA is expected to cover, and may not be paid for with SIG funds. However, to the extent a receiving school is a Title I school that increases its population of children from low-income families, the school should receive additional Title I, Part A funds through the Title I, Part A funding formula, and those Title I, Part A funds could be used to cover the educational costs for these new students. If the school is not currently a Title I school, the addition of children from low-income families from a closed school might make it an eligible school.

D-4. Is the portion of an LEA's SIG subgrant that is to be used to implement a school closure renewable?

Generally, no. The portion of an LEA's SIG subgrant for a school that is subject to closure is limited to the time necessary to close the school — usually one year or less. As such, the funds allocated for a school closure would not be subject to renewal.

D-5. How can an LEA determine whether a higher-achieving school is within reasonable proximity to a closed school?

The school to which students who previously attended a closed school are sent should be located “within reasonable proximity” to the closed school. An LEA has discretion to determine which schools are located within a reasonable proximity to a closed school. A distance that is considered to be within a “reasonable proximity” in one LEA may not be within a “reasonable proximity” in another LEA, depending on the nature of the community. In making this determination, an LEA should consider whether students who would be required to attend a new school because of a closure would be unduly inconvenienced by having to travel to the new location. An LEA should also consider whether the burden on students could be eased by designating multiple schools as receiving schools.

An LEA should not eliminate school closure as an option simply because the higher-achieving schools that could be receiving schools are located at some distance from the closed school, so long as the distance is not unreasonable. Indeed, it is preferable for an LEA to send students who previously attended a closed school to a higher-achieving school that is located at some distance

from, but still within reasonable proximity to, the closed school than to send those students to a lower-performing school that is geographically closer to the closed school. Moreover, an LEA should consider allowing parents to choose from among multiple higher-achieving schools, at least one of which is located within reasonable proximity to the closed school. By providing multiple school options, a parent could decide, for example, that it is worth having his or her child travel a longer distance in order to attend a higher-achieving school. Ultimately, the LEA's goal should be to ensure that students who previously attended a closed school are able to enroll in the highest-performing school that can reasonably be offered as an alternative to the closed school.

D-6. In what kinds of schools may students who previously attended a closed school enroll?

The higher-achieving schools in which students from a closed school may enroll may include any public school with the appropriate grade ranges, including public charter schools and new schools for which achievement data are not yet available. Note that a new school for which achievement data are not yet available may be a receiving school even though, as a new school, it lacks a history of being a "higher-achieving" school.

## E. TRANSFORMATION MODEL

E-1. With respect to elements of the transformation model that are the same as elements of the turnaround model, do the definitions and other guidance that apply to those elements as they

relate to the turnaround model also apply to those elements as they relate to the transformation model?

Yes. Thus, for example, the strategies that are used to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in a turnaround model may be the same strategies that are used to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in a transformation model. For questions about any terms or strategies that appear in both the transformation model and the turnaround model, refer to the turnaround model section of this guidance.

E-2. Which activities related to developing and increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness are required for an LEA implementing a transformation model?

An LEA implementing a transformation model must:

Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model;

Implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation and support systems for teachers and principals, designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement, that —

Will be used for continual improvement of instruction;

Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels;

Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth (see A-33) for all students (including ELs and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats

and sources), such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys;

Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis;

Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and

Will be used to inform personnel decisions.

(3) Use the teacher and principal evaluation and support system described above to identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing the transformation model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so; and

(4) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the school, taking into consideration the results from the teacher and principal evaluation and support system, if applicable.

E-3. Must the principal and teachers involved in the development and design of the evaluation system be the principal and teachers in the school in which the transformation model is being implemented?

No. The requirement for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that “are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement” refers more generally to involvement by teachers and principals within the LEA using such systems, and may or may not include teachers and principals in a school implementing the transformation model.

E-4. Under the final requirements, an LEA implementing the transformation model must remove staff “who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.” Does an LEA have discretion to determine the appropriate number of such opportunities that must be provided and what are some examples of such “opportunities” to improve?

In general, LEAs have flexibility to determine both the type and number of opportunities for staff to improve their professional practice before they are removed from a school implementing the transformation model. Examples of such opportunities include professional development in such areas as differentiated instruction and using data to improve instruction, mentoring or partnering with a master teacher, or increased time for collaboration designed to improve instruction.

E-5. In addition to the required activities, what other activities related to developing and increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness may an LEA undertake as part of its implementation of a transformation model?

In addition to the required activities for a transformation model, an LEA may also implement other strategies to develop teachers’ and school leaders’ effectiveness, such as:



Providing additional compensation to attract and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in a transformation school;

Instituting a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development; or

Ensuring that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority.

LEAs also have flexibility to develop and implement their own strategies, as part of their efforts to successfully implement the transformation model, to increase the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. Any such strategies must be in addition to those that are required as part of this model.

E-6. How does the optional activity of “providing additional compensation to attract and retain” certain staff differ from the requirement to implement strategies designed to recruit, place, and retain certain staff?

There are a wide range of compensation-based incentives that an LEA might use as part of a transformation model. Such incentives are just one example of strategies that might be adopted to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills needed to implement the transformation model.

The more specific emphasis on additional compensation in the permissible strategies was

intended to encourage LEAs to think more broadly about how additional compensation can contribute to teacher effectiveness.

E-7. Which activities related to comprehensive instructional reform strategies are required as part of the implementation of a transformation model?

An LEA implementing a transformation model must:

Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards;

Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) in order to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students; and

Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (for example, regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to implement successfully school reform strategies.

E-8. In addition to the required activities, what other activities related to comprehensive instructional reform strategies may an LEA undertake as part of its implementation of a transformation model?

In addition to the required activities for a transformation model, an LEA may also implement other comprehensive instructional reform strategies, such as:

Conducting periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective;

Implementing a schoolwide “response-to-intervention” model;

Providing additional supports and professional development to teachers and principals in order to implement effective strategies to support students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and to ensure that limited English proficient students acquire language skills to master academic content;

Using and integrating technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program; and

In secondary schools—

Increasing rigor by offering opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework, early-college high schools, dual enrollment programs, or thematic learning academies that prepare students for college and careers, including by providing appropriate supports designed to ensure that low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework;

Improving student transition from middle to high school through summer transition programs or freshman academies;

Increasing graduation rates through, for example, credit recovery programs, re-engagement strategies, smaller learning communities, competency-based instruction and performance-based assessments, and acceleration of basic reading and mathematics skills; or

Establishing early-warning systems to identify students who may be at risk of failing to achieve to high standards or to graduate.

E-9. What activities related to increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools are required for implementation of a transformation model?

An LEA implementing a transformation model must:

Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time; and

Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

E-10. What is meant by the phrase “family and community engagement” and what are some examples of ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement?

In general, family and community engagement means strategies to increase the involvement and contributions, in both school-based and home-based settings, of parents and community partners that are designed to support classroom instruction and increase student achievement. Examples

of mechanisms that can encourage family and community engagement include the establishment of organized parent groups, holding public meetings involving parents and community members to review school performance and help develop school improvement plans, using surveys to gauge parent and community satisfaction and support for local public schools, implementing complaint procedures for families, coordinating with local social and health service providers to help meet family needs, and parent education classes (including GED, adult literacy, and ESL programs).

E-10a. How should an LEA design mechanisms to support family and community engagement?

To develop mechanisms to support family and community engagement, an LEA may conduct a community-wide assessment to identify the major factors that significantly affect the academic achievement of students in the school, including an inventory of the resources in the community and the school that could be aligned, integrated, and coordinated to address these challenges. An LEA should try to ensure that it aligns the family and community engagement programs it implements in the elementary and secondary schools in which it is implementing the transformation model to support common goals for students over time and for the community as a whole.

E-11. In addition to the required activities, what other activities related to increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools may an LEA undertake as part of its implementation of a transformation model?

In addition to the required activities for a transformation model, an LEA may also implement other strategies to extend learning time and create community-oriented schools, such as:

Partnering with parents and parent organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, other State or local agencies, and others to create safe school environments that meet students' social, emotional, and health needs;

Extending or restructuring the school day so as to add time for such strategies as advisory periods that build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff;

Implementing approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment; or

Expanding the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or pre-kindergarten.

E-11a. What are examples of services an LEA might provide to create safe school environments that meet students' social, emotional, and health needs?

Services that help provide a safe school environment that meets students' social, emotional, and health needs may include, but are not limited to: (a) safety programs; (b) community stability programs that reduce the mobility rate of students in the school; or (c) family and community engagement programs that support a range of activities designed to build the capacity of parents and school staff to work together to improve student academic achievement, such as a family

literacy program for parents who need to improve their literacy skills in order to support their children's learning.

E-12. How does the optional activity of extending or restructuring the school day to add time for strategies that build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff differ from the requirement to provide increased learning time?

Extra time or opportunities for teachers and other school staff to create and build relationships with students can provide the encouragement and incentive that many students need to work hard and stay in school. Such opportunities may be created through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities as well as structural changes, such as dividing large incoming classes into smaller theme-based teams with individual advisers. However, such activities do not directly lead to increased learning time, which is more closely focused on increasing the number of instructional minutes in the school day or days in the school year. (Page. Xi- 18 of SIG guidance document)

## Appendix B

### Teacher Leader Model Standards Domains and Functions

#### Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student

The teacher leader understands the principles of adult learning and knows how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust, and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning.

#### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Utilizes group processes to help colleagues work collaboratively to solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict, and promote meaningful change;
- b) Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating, and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning;
- c) Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, build ownership and action that supports student learning;
- d) Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges; and
- e) Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages to promote effective interactions among colleagues.



## Learning Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices and improves teaching and learning. The teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers' ongoing learning and development.

### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning;
- b) Facilitates the analysis of student learning data, collaborative interpretation of results, and application of findings to improve teaching and learning;
- c) Supports colleagues in collaborating with the higher education institutions and other organizations engaged in researching critical educational issues; and
- d) Teaches and supports colleagues to collect, analyze, and communicate data from their classrooms to improve teaching and learning.

## Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge

to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

## Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals;
- b) Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning;
- c) Facilitates professional learning among colleagues;
- d) Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning;
- e) Works with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning;
- f) Advocates for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning;
- g) Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning; and
- h) Uses information about emerging education, economic, and social trends in planning and facilitating professional learning.

#### Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice based on student results. The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure instructional practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission, and goals.

#### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Facilitates the collection, analysis, and use of classroom- and school-based data to identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization, and school culture;
- b) Engages in reflective dialog with colleagues based on observation of instruction, student work, and assessment data and helps make connections to research-based effective practices;
- c) Supports colleagues' individual and collective reflection and professional growth by serving in roles such as mentor, coach, and content facilitator;
- d) Serves as a team leader to harness the skills, expertise, and knowledge of colleagues to address curricular expectations and student learning needs;
- e) Uses knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the

Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe; and

f) Promotes instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.

#### Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement

The teacher leader is knowledgeable about current research on classroom- and school-based data and the design and selection of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and collaborates with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies

#### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Increases the capacity of colleagues to identify and use multiple assessment tools aligned to state and local standards;
- b) Collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring, and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice and student learning;
- c) Creates a climate of trust and critical reflection in order to engage colleagues in challenging conversations about student learning data that lead to solutions to identified issues; and
- d) Works with colleagues to use assessment and data findings to promote changes in instructional practices or organizational structures to improve student learning.

## Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

The teacher leader understands that families, cultures, and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.

### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Uses knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in the school community to promote effective interactions among colleagues, families, and the larger community;
- b) Models and teaches effective communication and collaboration skills with families and other stakeholders focused on attaining equitable achievement for students of all backgrounds and circumstances;
- c) Facilitates colleagues' self-examination of their own understandings of community culture and diversity and how they can develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students;
- d) Develops a shared understanding among colleagues of the diverse educational needs of families and the community; and

e) Collaborates with families, communities, and colleagues to develop comprehensive strategies to address the diverse educational needs of families and the community.

#### Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

The teacher leader understands how educational policy is made at the local, state, and national level as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning, and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.

#### Functions

The teacher leader:

- a) Shares information with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning;
- b) Works with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students;
- c) Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students, to secure additional resources within the building or district that support student learning, and to communicate effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members;

d) Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals; and

e) Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions Sample

#### Theme 1: Impact Teacher Leadership on School Improvement Grant schools

1.1 What impact does teacher leadership have on the school improvement process for schools identified as low achieving schools?

1.2 How should low performing SIG funded schools promote teacher leadership?

1.3 How do teachers currently participate in teacher leadership for the school improvement process?

1.4 Do you feel that effective teacher leadership is important to the school improvement process and if so why do you feel that way?

#### Theme 2: Development of teacher leadership in (SIG) Schools

2.1 How have you become a teacher leader in a SIG funded school? Explain the process. Is this the same for all teachers in your schools?

2.2 How do teacher leaders in SIG schools perceive their role in leadership development from within a rural poverty stricken school?

#### Theme 3: Leadership Model Practices and Evaluation

3.1 What teacher leadership model practices are effective in SIG funded schools?

3.2 What is the evaluation process that is used in SIG funded schools, how is success or failure measured?



3.3 How could teacher leadership model practices be shared or promoted to sustain school improvement efforts in SIG funded schools?

3.4 What would a sustainable school improvement look like after SIG funding runs out? How could this be accomplished in your school?

**Appendix D**

## Demographic Data Collection Sheet

Participant Identification#: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete demographic data below

Circle the best indicator for you ethnicity:

White      Hispanic      Latino      Black or African American      Asian

Pacific Islander      Native American      Other:

Circle the best indicator for your age:

22-27      27-32      32-37      37-42      42-47      47-52      52- 57

57-62      62 +

Circle the best indicator for your years of teaching experience:

0-3      3-5      5-10      10-15      15-20      20-25      25-30

30-35      35+

Circle the indicator that best represents your highest level of educational experience:

Bachelor's degree (BA)      BA+ 15      BA+30      Master's Degree      (MA)

MA+15      MA+30      MA+ 45      Doctoral degree

Select the best indicator for your gender:

Male      Female

Select the best indicator for the number of years you have worked in the current setting:

0-3    5-10            10-15            15-20            20-25            25+

Provide a written description of your certification:

## Appendix E

### Research Interview Protocol

Participant Interview # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

#### Beginning Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today in this research study that will provide insight on teacher leadership and how it relates to the SIG process. My name is Tony Minney, I am currently a graduate student attending The University of New England studying Educational Leadership. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation, I am conducting a research study about teacher leadership and the SIG process. I am interviewing many teacher leaders over this semester to gather data about teacher leadership and the impact it has on the SIG improvement process. Participants will be asked to fill out a demographic data sheet so that demographic data can be analyzed and reviewed as a part of the data collection process. Each interview will consist of ten semi-structured open ended question that participants will answer. The interview's will be recorded and coded for possible data results. If at any time you would like to discontinue the interview or research process please feel free to do so.

Participants will also conduct one field observation on a teacher leadership model practice or activity and collect field notes to submit as a part of the data collection process. Finally, we will conduct a follow up interview to review all data and demographic materials. All of this information will be confidential and remain confidential throughout the research process and beyond.

At this time I would like to remind you to sign the informed consent to participate in this study. I am the official lead research investigator, you and I will need you to sign and date the written consent to participate and certify that we agree to begin the interview. You will receive one copy of the research and data that is obtained through the research process. I will keep the other under lock and key totally separate from your responses. I truly appreciate your participation.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

## **Appendix F**

### **Informed Consent to Participate**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study is to investigate teacher leadership and the impact that teacher leaders have on the School Improvement Grant Process. Researching specifically how teacher leaders are identified, developed and evaluated to impact the SIG improvement process. The goal of this research is to provide a better understanding of how teacher leadership may be used to promote a sustain school improvement model in SIG schools.

#### **The Process of Collecting Data**

The process for collecting data will be in three separate forms concluding with a follow up data review interview. The first form of data collection will be based on obtaining demographic information about the participant and their related work. The participant will fill out a demographic survey questions that will be used to inform the researcher and the findings. The next data collection step will be the participant interview, the participant will be interviewed

by the researcher and data will be collected for coding purposes. This semi-structured interview will focus on the participant answering ten open ended questions about teacher leadership and the SIG process. This interview should not take more than one hour to complete. The third form of data collection will be the participants conducting a formal structured observation of a teacher leadership model practice or activity. The participant will be provided an observation outlining and provide field documentation about teacher leadership as a form of data collection. Finally, a brief follow-up interview will be scheduled with participants to go over data that has been collected for validity purposes.

#### Research Participants Agreement Terms

I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education Leadership at The University of New England.

I understand that my participation is voluntary.

I understand the process for collecting data and will participate to the best of my ability in all parts of the data collection process.

I understand that I will not try to influence data of other participants or find out the identity and or how they participated in this research study.



I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by The University of New England.

I understand that I will not be identified by name or any other way in the interview process and in the final product.

I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher under lock and key.

I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher have been made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this informed consent to participate.

I understand that the data I will provide are not be used to evaluate my performance as a teacher in any way.

I understand that there are no known risks involved in conducting this research.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any them with no adverse repercussions.

Participants Assigned Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Teacher Leadership Model Practice or Activity Structured Observation Data Collection Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Identification #: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions for observer: Participants will observe a teacher leadership model practice or activity and complete the field observation data collection sheet. Participants may review the Teacher leader Model Standards and Sanocki's Framework for developing teacher leaders to inform the observation.

Protocol for observation:

Don't use any identifying information such as names during the observation. Use aliases or simply refer to the teacher as the teacher or teacher one or teacher two.

Ask the teacher questions to better inform the correct response. You may ask if the activity is self-motivated or assigned by the principal.

Stay on task, this observation is meant to provide a snapshot of a teacher leadership activity no more than 30 minutes of observation is required.

Schedule your observation with the teacher, don't just walk into the classroom for an observation. Ask the teacher if you can be an observer.

As soon as observation is complete return observation data collection sheet to the head researcher immediately or keep under lock and key until researcher is available.

Never share data results of observation to anyone except the lead researcher.

Clarify any confusion with lead researcher before the observation begins.

Refer back to the Teacher leader model standards and Sanocki's framework provided for questions

Observation data overview:

Length of observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of teacher's Involved: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Administrators Involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students Involved: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Parents or Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the correct leadership activity or response that you as a participant are observing and rank your opinion of the top three most important teacher leadership activities by simple writing a 1, 2 or 3 beside activity:

Collaborative Planning

Co-Teaching

Team Leader/ Facilitator

Providing PD      Goal / Project Planning      Evaluation      Facilitates Data Analysis

Technology Facilitator      Sharing of Instructional Strategies      Culture Building

Extracurricular Activity      Co-Curricular Activity      Action Research      Other:

Provide a description of teacher leadership model practice or activity:

Circle the correct prompt below, how was the teacher leadership activity developed? Using Sanocki's framework, circle the best framework description below for teacher leadership development.

Internally motivated activity

Externally motivated activity

Provide a description of how teacher leadership activity was developed:

How was the activity evaluated, circle the correct evaluation option below:

Formally evaluated by administration

Evaluated by survey

Evaluated by peer teacher reflection

Data collected on activity

Teacher self-evaluation completed

Evaluated by summative data

Not evaluated

Other:

Describe how teacher leadership model practice or activity was evaluated:

Field Notes or additional comments:

## Appendix H

### Opt-in/Opt-Out Recruitment Letter

Dear teacher leader,

I am writing to tell you about a current case study being conducted at your school. Developing a Teacher Leadership Model for SIG Schools: A Case Study Analysis of Teachers Perceptions on Teacher Leadership as a Model for School Improvement in SIG Schools is a case study that has been initiated by Tony Minney to investigate teacher leader perceptions of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) process and how teacher leadership has impacted the implementation of the grant and school improvement process. You were identified to be a participant in this study because you are a current faculty member at the case study site.

The purpose of this study is to explore if teacher leaders feel that the practice and development of teacher leadership has a positive impact on the current SIG process and if teacher leadership model practices is an alternative or additional, sustainable school improvement process that could be used by SIG schools in rural, poverty stricken parts of central Appalachia. More importantly for BCHS, the findings from this case study research could provide a framework for school improvement after the SIG school improvement process is completed. You may be eligible for this study if you are a teacher at Braxton County High School, serve on the leadership team and or if you are a current principal or district level leader in Braxton County Schools.

It is important to know that this letter is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary. Whether or not you participate in this study will have no effect on your relationship with the principal investigator, Braxton County High School or Braxton County Schools

1. If you would like to learn more about this study, please check box #1 on the enclosed form and return in the pre-paid envelope.
2. If you do not wish to hear about this study and do not wish to be contacted again about this study, please check box #2 on the enclosed form and return in the pre-paid envelope.

If you would like to talk to the principal investigator directly or have questions about the study, please call at (304-494-2315) or email at [tdminney@k12.wv.us](mailto:tdminney@k12.wv.us).

If we do not receive your reply by May 15, 2016 we will consider that you do not want to participate in this case study analysis. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tony Minney, Principal Investigator



## Appendix I

### Follow-Up Data Review

**Please read over all attached documents and confirm if all data collected by the principal investigator is accurate and valid. Upon the completion of the reviewed attached data, please check if the data is accurate by answering the yes or no checkbox's and return your response in the pre-paid envelope provided.**

#### List of Data attached:

- Interview Transcript
- Appendix D Demographic Survey
- Appendix G Participant Observation

**Yes**, the data attached was accurate, complete and valid to use as a part of the case study analysis that I participated in.

Participants Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**No**, the data that is attached is not accurate and or valid and should not be included in this case study analysis

Participants Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered **no**, please provide a written response to identify the inaccurate or invalid data.

Participants comment on data collected:

