

RURAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER LEADERSHIP:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By

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Abstract

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The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine rural high school teacher leader perceptions of roles, characteristics, and skills as well as identifying the various motivations these teacher leaders have for assuming teaching and leadership roles in rural schools. Specifically, the study explores the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward various roles of teacher leaders in rural high schools, including the experiences and motivation for teaching and leading in rural high schools in Washington State. The following research questions guided this inquiry: How did teacher leaders and administrators perceive the characteristics and roles of teacher leadership in schools? What motivated teacher leaders to teach in rural schools? What motivated teacher leaders to assume leadership roles in rural schools? What perceptions of support or hindrances from administrators, community members, and colleagues did the teacher leaders faced when assuming leadership roles? Addressing these questions through the use of phenomenological interviews with three rural schools in Washington State provided insight into the motivations for teachers teach in rural schools, motivations to take on leadership roles, and teacher leader perceptions of teacher leader characteristics, teacher

leader roles, supports and hindrances from community members, administrators, and colleagues. Currently, there is a lack of research in the area of rural schoolteacher leadership; therefore, it is the intention for this study to help fill some of the gaps in current rural school research.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jack and Mary Ann Ashlock and my loving husband, Jason Huston. Without their continued support and guidance I could not have achieved this dream.

Chapter I

Introduction

This is a qualitative phenomenological case study that examines the roles of teacher leaders in three rural Washington State high schools. Because of the lack of rural school research in the area of teacher leadership, this study aims to advance research on teacher leader perceptions of teacher leadership characteristics, skills, roles, and motivations for teaching and leading in rural schools.

Rural schools in Washington State make up 57% of school districts. According to research conducted by the Rural Education Center, in the 2008-2009 school year rural schools had the highest on-time graduation rate in the state with an average of 70.3% compared to all schools in the state with 59.8%. Rural schools face many challenges including large geographic locations, cultural isolation, financial stringency, leadership, and community members who wear multiple hats (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Farmer, 2009). While rural schools face many challenges, they also have many potential advantages. Bauch (2001) stated, "One of the advantages they have is that their schools are set in a community context that values a sense of place and offers a unique set of conditions for building social capital important for helping students succeed in school" (pp. 204-206). Furthermore, because "Rural schools require more efficient and effective use of limited human and financial resources," (Hickey & Harris, 2005, p. 12) many administrators are embracing the idea that teachers are leaders.

Included in this chapter is the background of the study on rural schoolteacher leadership. In order to give context to this study, a short discussion of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the methods used are discussed in this chapter.

Background

Researchers have traced the first formal educational experiences of students as far back as Plato. When Plato recalled the teachings of Socrates to large crowds, the idea of teacher leadership was born (Reeves, 2008). According to Reeves (2008),

Even though 21st century educators are fond of the new . . . [,] contemporary authors are disingenuous if they fail to recognize the shoulders on which they stand. Names we know—Diderot, Kant, and Locke from Europe—and teachers whose identities we infer from archaeological records from Africa, Asia, and South America all testify to the truth that teaching and leadership are inseparable qualities. (p. 1)

Because teaching and leadership are often seen as inseparable qualities, the roles of teacher leadership are evolving in schools across the United States. Teacher leadership is often part of the overarching term *educational leadership*, which has emerged in the last three decades and is seen in various types of literature including that of school reform (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). According to Tyson (1993) “Most superintendents and principals are still wedded to patriarchal notions of leadership, but some are beginning to learn that teachers are experts on certain matters and should be partners rather than subordinates in the running of schools” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001, p. 9). According to research by the Institute for Educational Leadership (2001), teacher leaders are seen as those who take a stand that goes beyond classroom instruction to “seek and find challenge and growth” (p. 4) and who do not seek “teacher power,” (p. 4), but rather

strengthen and promote the climate of collegiality among staff (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001).

As the roles of educational leadership have evolved over the course of the last thirty years, definitions of teacher leadership are also advancing (Shantz, 1996; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) defined teacher leaders as those who “lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). This definition not only encompasses what leadership *is* but how leadership *functions* in schools. Katzenmeyer and Moller provided examples of how leaders function in schools, which show that leadership is more than a skill or characteristic; it is a role that goes beyond the classroom and extends into the collegial relationships and taking responsibility for leadership decisions.

The definitions and roles of educational leadership have evolved over the course of the last decade, (Shantz, 1996; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and educational and teacher leadership functions have evolved from the one-room schoolhouse organizational leader to the formation of unions and participation as union representatives to various forms of distributed leadership roles and administrative teams (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). In addition to Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) definition of teacher leadership above, researchers have identified teacher leaders as individuals who

1. Possess qualities that motivate them to lead and teach such as enthusiasm, life-long learning, interest in school improvement, and more (Geijsel, 2007).

2. Desire to lead and influence others through collaboration for improvement (Geijsel, 2007; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002).
3. Are open-minded to change and a willingness to learn from others (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001).
4. Engage in formal and/or informal leadership roles (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002).
5. Possess knowledge of child development, curriculum, and pedagogy.
6. Possess a team spirit and commitment to the school, its community, families and students (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Mitgang, 2008).
7. Possess empathy, respect, and dedication to students, community, and education (Geijsel, 2007; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001).
8. Possess a desire to grow through leadership experiences both inside and outside of the classroom (Hickey & Harris, 2005).

Teacher leaders can offer a “vigorous and magnetic environment in which the leader and his/her followers raise each other to higher and higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978; Wenig, 2004). Moreover, when teacher leaders surface in school settings and create positive leadership experiences for others, an environment emerges that stimulates and builds up an organization or community in such a manner as to allow the leader to strive to meet the needs and wants of its members while fostering high levels of performance (Wenig, 2004). While it is important that teacher leaders possess the qualities listed above, it is important to note that with each of these the teacher leaders need the support, guidance and encouragement of the administrators to be successful. This makes even the most non-formal teacher leadership roles important in the school and could be considered administrator-sanctioned teacher leadership roles.

According to researchers, terms including distributed leadership (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002; Timperley, 2005), transformational leadership (Anderson, 2008; Northouse, 2013; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002) and situational leadership (Graeff, 1983; Lave & Wenger, 1991) are becoming synonymous with methods for how with the support of administrators teachers transition into teacher leaders. Distributed leadership is the belief that “leadership is best considered a group quality” by which participants assume shared leadership roles and functions (Menon, 2011, p. 3). According to Menon (2011), distributed leadership can contain distribution of leadership roles and tasks that add to existing leadership practices, or leadership practices that are collaborative in nature and where the sum of the work creates a interdependent dynamic product. Timperley (2005) stated that “distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organizational roles, but rather it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers” (p. 2). For example, when teachers and leaders work in collaboration to think through and solve specific problems, they are engaging in distributed leadership practice (Menon, 2011; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). In this case, the roles of leader and follower are dictated by the problem or situation and who is best suited to lead rather than a tradition hierarchical role, such as the principal.

Transformational leadership first debuted in the area of leadership theory during the 1980's (Northouse, 2013). According to Northouse (2013), “Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” (p. 185). Transformational leaders have the ability to engage individuals or groups of people by fostering connections that in turn raise the levels of motivation (Northouse, 2013). In relation to school settings, when leaders

have the ability to build connections and relationships with their peers and other staff members the leader may be more in tune to the desires and intentions of those following him or her. These occurrences may encourage both the leader and follower to learn from the occurrence and to reach his or her fullest potential (Northouse, 2013). Anderson (2008) stated,

Teacher leaders influenced these schools to the point that, in some cases, the entire organization was transformed. The decision-making context in schools having likely support for transformational teacher leadership and prototypes is apparent in the PLC [professional learning communities] context with decision-making styles that are highly interactive or distributive leadership. (p. 9)

In the study, Anderson (2008) explained how each school did have teacher leaders who took on non-formal leadership roles and it was their ability to transform the thinking of their fellow staff members through the use of various avenues that created a successful transformational leadership model.

In contrast to the other forms of leadership, situational leadership is a term coined by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) that describes the way leaders adapt their style to the situation and the maturity of followers or colleagues (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Northouse, 2013). More specifically, Northouse (2013) conceived that the premise of situated leadership “is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership. From this perspective, to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations” (p. 99). Situational leaders are continuously assessing the needs and skills of their colleagues and adjusting the “degree to which they are directive or supportive to meet the

changing needs of subordinates” (Northouse, 2013, p. 99). Four styles of situated leadership guide leaders in determining the type that will best suit the situation: telling, participating, selling, and delegating (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The telling style is suited towards followers and subordinates who are unable or unwilling to perform a task without specific instructions and direction (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The participating style dictates that the leaders share his or her ideas with the followers and subordinates and listens to opinions while maintaining control and direction. The end result is often a collaborative decision making process (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The selling style asks that the leader “sell” his or her ideas to the followers and subordinates by persuading them to complete the specific task(s) (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Finally, the delegating style is where the leader delegates the task to the followers and subordinates without providing guidance, instructions, or interference. This style allows the followers to use their judgment and knowledge to complete the task and asks that the leader trust that the task be completed in a timely manner (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). An effective leader will know and understand the needs of his or her followers and employ one of the four styles of situational leadership based on the followers and the situations (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Northouse, 2013).

Situated leadership asks that leaders determine the needs of their followers or subordinates and act accordingly for the accomplishment of specific tasks. Teachers can play either the role of legitimate peripheral participant or a leader (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Often the role leaders assume by providing direction or support is based on the particular social construct and situation. Not all teachers are leaders or desire to share in leadership roles but would rather assume a peripheral role in participating in professional learning

communities (PLC), communities of practice, or general problem solving and planning sessions; however, due to the idea of peripheral participation from Lave and Wenger (1991), most find themselves participating before they realize it. Lave and Wenger (1991) further explain this process by focusing on the point that “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of the community” (p. 29). They refer to the learners as being peripheral participants and believe that “A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes . . . the learning of knowledgeable skills” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). This idea of communities of practice and peripheral participation by teachers can move the teachers forward to become active leaders in their schools and community.

Whether an administrator uses distributed leadership, transformational leadership, or situational leadership to encourage leadership roles in teachers does not change the general formal and informal leadership roles assumed by teacher leaders. Teacher leader roles can include master teacher, curriculum specialist, mentor, professional development educator, student advocate, or researcher (Henerson & Barron, 1995). Some teacher leaders are often tasked with taking on more than one leadership role while still maintaining high levels of instructional practice. Because of the many roles that teacher leaders assume, they have the ability to influence instructional practice beyond their own classroom instruction to include connections with students, families, and communities. The connection teachers possess with students, families, and communities is developed over time, however, in rural school communities this connection is heightened. While rural

school teacher leaders often assume similar roles and possess similar leadership qualities as urban teacher leaders there is one caveat: Rural teacher leaders have a personal identity connected to the rural community that allows them to “build individual characteristics consistent with the mentality of a small rural community” (Harmon & Schafft, 2009, pp. 4-5) and by fostering social capital by building relationships with the school and community. The building of social capital is maintained and strengthened by “cultivating a strong sense of place, providing opportunities for parent involvement, strengthening church ties, building strong school-business-agency relationships, and using the community as a curricular resource” (Bauch P. A., 2001, pp. 7-8). Overall, the senses of place the school administrators, teachers, and other leaders possess can be the key to rural school success. It is the virtue of the sense of place that encourages greater parent involvement, supportive and interested businesses and media connections, a true sense of school spirit among the whole community and student body, lower dropout rates because of the involvement of the community and parents, smaller class sizes and personalized instruction, and a safe and orderly school and community environment (Smith & Lotven, 1993).

Hilty (2002) suggested teacher leaders who emerge in rural settings are the keys to good schools, it is also thought that they need to be in an environment conducive to fostering the growth of the teacher as a leader where he or she is presented with opportunities to lead (Hilty, 2002). For rural schools to successfully foster the growth and development of teacher leaders, principals need to move away from managerial roles and instead embrace the idea of teachers as leaders within the school (Anderson, 2008). Furthermore, Hilty (2002) suggested utilizing teachers as leaders in rural schools is especially important to combat the issues of funding and resource attainment because

teachers possess that ability to provide a link between the community's values, beliefs, and attitudes and the needs of the school, which will enable open communication with those who will provide funding and other areas of support needed for the success of the school. There is a vast amount of literature and research on teacher leadership in urban schools, however, the research on teacher leadership in rural schools is sparse. This study aims to help fill the gap in the research by examining the roles, motivations, and perceptions of teacher leaders in rural schools.

Research Problem

Rural schools face many challenges including lack of resource funding and isolation from large urban areas; however, research has shown there can be benefits including a strong connection to the community and a sense of place, both of which provide perspective on the needs of the school and families. Specific challenges facing rural school districts include: Financial challenges associated with a large geographic size, national mandates and their impact on the school climate, local community special interest groups, and effective navigation through the community politics of allocating of funds and exercise of power (Farmer, 2009). It is because of these challenges that Hickey and Harris say that "Rural schools require more efficient and effective use of limited human and financial resources" (p.12). As encouraged by Hickey and Harris, schools that utilize teachers in leadership roles beyond the classroom can overcome the challenges. Teacher leader roles can range from curriculum specialist, mentor, master teacher, researcher, team leader, and many others, as the school may need (Hickey & Harris, 2005). However the lack of research in this area for rural schools suggests a need for further examination of the roles and experiences of teacher leaders in rural schools. Given this situation, my research problem is

to illuminate the perceptions of roles, characteristics, and skills teacher leaders in rural schools undertake as well as identifying the various motivations teachers have for assuming leadership roles in rural schools.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine rural high school teacher leader perceptions of roles, characteristics, and skills as well as identifying the various motivations these teacher leaders have for assuming teaching and leadership roles in rural schools. Currently, there is a lack of research in the area of rural schoolteacher leadership; therefore, it is my intention for this study to help to fill some of the gaps in the current rural school research. Specifically, the study explores the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward various roles of teacher leaders in rural high schools, including the experiences and motivation for teaching and leading in rural high schools in Washington State. The following research questions guided this inquiry:

- How did teacher leaders and administrators perceive the characteristics and roles of teacher leadership in schools?
- What motivated teacher leaders to teach in rural schools?
- What motivated teacher leaders to assume leadership roles in rural schools?
- What perceptions of support or hindrances from administrators, community members, and colleagues did the teacher leaders faced when assuming leadership roles?

The aim of the first question is to illuminate the perceptions of the characteristics and roles as seen through the eyes of the participants and their experience. The second research question will provide insight into the reasons why these teachers have chosen to

teach small, rural communities. The third research question will delve deeper into the motivations of why these teacher leaders have not only chosen teach in rural schools but also assume leadership roles. Finally, the last research question will provide insight into the perceptions that teacher leaders have experienced support for their leadership roles and balancing those with their teaching roles or examples of ways they have faced hindrances in assuming and performing their leadership roles. Together, the interview questions go deeper into the research questions and experiences of the teachers.

Method

In this qualitative case study I utilized phenomenological-oriented interview questions (Cresswell, 2013; deMarrais, 2004) to gain insight into administrators' and teacher leaders' perceptions of teacher leaders' motivations and experiences in rural schools. I chose schools based on their status as rural and low-income in Washington State, commonality in school and community demographics, student graduation rates, and school and district enrollment numbers. The schools I chose are located throughout the state in northeastern Washington, central Washington, and north central Washington. I made contact with administrators to gain permission to use the school in the study and asked them to identify teacher leaders within the school with the purpose of employing phenomenological-oriented interviews. I asked administrators to use snowball sampling (Merriam, 1998) to identify teacher leaders in their school that I could interview. Interviews were conducted with teacher leaders from the list of administrator teacher leaders. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for a triangulation of data analysis.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review provides a basis for research into teacher leadership in rural schools and is divided into five main sections as they relate to the research questions. The sections are the following: Teacher Leadership in General, Supports and Challenges Faced by Teacher Leaders, An In-depth Review of Rural Schools and Communities, Teacher Leadership in Rural Schools, and Summary of Literature.

The first section, Teacher Leadership in general, explains the qualities of teacher leadership and types of leadership, including a brief history of teacher leadership roles and characteristics of leadership and a review of teacher leadership from an international standpoint. In the second section Teacher Leader Challenges, Hindrances, and Supports I delve into the myriad of challenges, hindrances and supports facing teachers in leadership roles. The third section, An In-depth Review of Rural Schools and Communities contains the two subsections of Rural School and Community Connections and Rural School Challenges and Hindrances. In these sections I provide a general overview of the uniqueness of rural communities, rural schools, and their challenges. In the fourth section, Teacher Leadership in Rural Schools, I provide a deeper look at rural school teacher leadership roles. Finally, the Summary of Literature provides an overview of the literature and reiterates the claims for further research in teacher leadership.

Teacher Leadership in General

This section provides four subsections that examine different aspects of teacher leadership in general. The first subsection describes the evolution of teacher leadership, which includes subsections examining the foundations of teacher leadership and how it has

evolved through the decades and United State studies and perspectives on teacher leadership. Finally, the last subsection international perspectives on teacher leadership provide examples of studies seen around the world.

Evolution of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership has developed from the 1600's to what we see today. Teachers have faced many challenges throughout the history of education in the United States and through valiant efforts, dedication, and continued improvements to curriculum development and teacher involvement teachers have been able to thrive in their profession. Researchers have continued to examine teacher development into leadership roles and leadership qualities that help contribute to the success of students and school communities. This section will further examine the foundations, roles, and qualities of teacher leadership in general.

Foundations of teacher leadership. The history of education in the United States shows the evolution of teacher leadership as essential to the growth and success of schools. During the 1600's education was the primary avenue for both political and moral development of children (Spring, 2008). The creation of schools by the Dutch West Indies Company resulted in a new educational structure where the schoolmaster (administrator) was paid by the Dutch West Indies Company, the teacher and her home was paid by township or cities, and the government possessed overriding control and determined policy for education (Spring, 2008). As time went on, the structure outlined by the Dutch West Indies Company took hold in other areas of the United States and for the next few hundred years an educational system for all children governed by interest groups and monitored by the government sustained the growing need for education in societies

(Spring, 2008). This dichotomy between the self interest groups, the government, and the roles that educators play in the educational environment continues today. As the struggle for balance continues, roles emerge for educators that aim to alleviate the pitfalls associated with those struggles. As education continues to evolve so does the balance between leadership and teachers, and between self interest groups and government reforms. Part of this evolution is the role of teachers stepping beyond the classroom and taking on roles as teacher leaders within their school, community, unions and government.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century two progressive teachers emerged as teacher leaders within the educational community. Margaret Haley and Catherine Goggin were instrumental in the fight for teachers' rights, and illustrated the "differing economic interests of those who supported and those who rejected the reforms of administrative progressives" (Spring, 2008, p. 275) while trying to restore balance to the educational system. Haley began teaching in a small Illinois country school at age 16 before moving to Chicago where she continued to teach 6th grade. During her time in Chicago she began to see firsthand the poor working conditions and low wages teachers faced (especially females) and advocated for "equal pay for equal work" (Munro, 1995). During her time in Chicago Haley began teaching with Catherine Goggin who was also concerned about the economic rights of teachers, particularly female teachers (Munro, 1995, p. 2). Because they had a mutual desire to "to address economic inequities as well as resist incursions into the classrooms and promote teachers' autonomy as curriculum decision makers" (Munro, 1995, p. 3), Haley and Goggins created the Chicago Federation of Teachers (CFT) in 1887. Furthering their efforts for equality in education and economic standards, Munro (1995) described Haley and Goggin's work with the CFT central to raising issues in

the “the lives of women teachers: Economic exploitation, the imposition of standardization of methods and curriculum, and the involvement of business in education” (p. 3).” The creation of the CFT became the foundation for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) created in 1916 (Spring, 2008). Spring (2008) cited Wrigley’s explanation of the struggle of the CFT and the role Haley and Goggin play in creating “a sweeping battle in which organized labor and teachers were on one side and conservative business interests and school administrators were on the other” (p. 333). These two women did not give up their battle and in 1904 they successfully achieved a degree of success: The Board of Education agreed to a salary increase (Munro, 1995).

Throughout the next seventy years the CFT and AFT grew, upholding the goal to bring “light and hope in the lives of American educators, and give and receive mutual sympathy and support . . .” (Spring, 2008, p. 335). These special interest groups gave rise to others, like the National Education Association (NEA). All of these groups had the common goal of creating a teaching profession that would be at the forefront of development of educational policy. For example, in the early 1900’s teachers leaders in the NEA formed a commission to study the problem of teacher shortages and together pushed the government to create a Department of Education that would help maintain teachers and to “reduce literacy, train teachers, and equalize education opportunities for all children” (National Education Association, 2006). These organizations gave teachers a voice in the profession and the opportunity to engage in both district and school level policy-making (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002).

This brief history of the rise of education in the United States illustrates how teachers and administrators were once on opposite sides of the educational leadership

spectrum and the evolution of teachers as leaders to help bring to light the needs of teachers. Teachers like Haley and Goggin saw a need to unite, provide support for one another, and create an open dialogue about instructional practice, thus becoming some of the first teacher leaders in the country. Through their leadership and drive for success in their chosen vocation these two teachers created a foundation for a broader spectrum of leadership within education that brought teacher leaders to the forefront and forced administrators to see teachers as more than just instructors following a prescribed curriculum.

The reform movements by progressive educators such as Haley and Goggin and the recognition of teachers as leaders evolved throughout the 1900's, as seen with the involvement of teacher leaders in the CFT and later the AFT and NEA; however there is a gap in the identification of teacher leadership roles from the 1950's through the 1970's (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). This gap is due to the emphasis to move away from teacher involvement in leadership and school improvement to focus primarily on the principal and superintendant as leaders for school improvement. In the mid 1980's, the term teacher leadership began to appear in literature, reform movements, and policies (Smylie M. A., 1997). As these reforms and policies shifted to include teacher leadership, roles emerged through "career ladder and mentor teacher programs, the appointment of master and lead teachers, and policies to decentralize and involve teachers in school and district decision making" (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002, p. 164). The literature suggests that teacher leadership is essential for the development of teachers and to foster school improvement. For example, Danielson (2006) explained, "Throughout the 20th century, enlightened school boards and administrators recognized that if teachers were to embrace

the school's policies and organizational structures, they had to be a part of the processes that created them. Hence, many schools created site councils to make decisions affecting the school" (p. 16). In other words, because teachers are on the ground level their expertise was needed to help solve school improvement issues and enforce the new initiatives, thus increasing the human resources available for school improvement. These leadership roles provided opportunities for teacher recruitment and retention by offering incentives for assuming the leadership roles, which took the teacher beyond the classroom, hence giving the teachers a sense of empowerment that embodies "a 'heroic' model of individual leadership" (p. 16). This idea of teacher empowerment and roles based initiatives contributed to increased performance and a new direction for professionalizing the workforce.

The 1990's brought the shift away from "individual empowerment and role-based initiatives toward more collective, task oriented, and organizational approaches to teacher leadership" (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002, p. 165). Teachers were taking on more informal roles including but not limited to, leading professional learning communities, acting as researchers, and participating on leadership teams. More detail into the roles of teacher leaders will be addressed in further sections.

Utilizing teachers in more informal ways as suggested by early initiatives may create a climate where teachers are overloaded with work, stress, and an unclear description of their new roles and how those were to be balanced with their classroom responsibilities. Though studies are emerging about the various roles of teacher leadership, including distributive or transformative leadership, teachers as researchers, and leadership teams, including professional learning communities and communities of

practice, rather than administrative leadership roles training in those roles is lacking. Teacher leadership is becoming a more common term throughout educational literature, and as the research continues more models may emerge that provide evidence for school improvement and student success.

National perspectives on teacher leaders. Teacher leadership in the United States is not a new concept, however, the research on teacher leadership is lacking nationwide. Research has shown that teachers assume many roles beyond their classroom instructional assignments, but according to one survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools (2015) out of 86% of urban school districts who cited having teacher leadership roles only 32% offered specialized training for teachers who take on leadership roles in their schools. Data such as this prompted Marianna Valdez and Gina Ikemoto to write *The Research Behind UNTAPPED An Evaluation of New Leaders' Emerging Leaders Program* (2015). The program was developed by the New Leaders organization in 2011 with the goal of providing "job-embedded training and coaching to teacher leaders, assistant principals, and coaches" (Valdez & Ikemoto, 2015, p. 4) in order to combat the lacking programs for teacher leaders. 572 participants applied to become a part of Cohort II and of those 360 were offered acceptance into the cohort. In 2012 315 of those 360 began the program as members of Cohort II. Of the 315 who began the program only 231 completed the program in its entirety. During this early period, research showed that the participants who did not complete the program did so by choice because they did not see their career path heading toward being a principal or assistant principal. The report shares the research that guided the development of the program as well as data from the second cohort of program participants.

The Emerging Leader Program (ELP) was designed to provide a site-based, school relevant teacher leadership development program. Overall, the program goal was to “cultivate skills teacher leaders need to be successful in empowering colleagues’ instructional performance through real world practice leading teams of teacher in their schools” (Valdez & Ikemoto, 2015, p. 8). A unique factor about this program is the that they promoted the use of “authentic assignments aligned with the needs of the school” which in turn allowed participants to “bolster their teacher team’s instructional practice and advance student achievement...In this way ELP transforms great teachers into high-impact instructional leaders who can move colleagues toward excellence in their own classrooms for many years to come” (Valdez & Ikemoto, 2015, p. 8). Most importantly, this program was designed with the objective of improving the leadership skills of the participants so they are able to “immediately contribute to their school while remaining in their current role and practicing the skills necessary to enter more intensive principal preparation programs later in their careers, if they wish” (Valdez & Ikemoto, 2015, p. 10).

Understanding that not all teachers want to move toward being a principal or assistant principal, the program offers two pathways for participants to choose: Classroom-Centered Leadership and Leadership through the Principalship and Assistant Principalship. The Classroom-Centered Leadership pathway “prepares participants to succeed in a variety of leadership roles within their school, district, or charter management organization” (Valdez & Ikemoto, 2015, p. 19). These roles include both formal and informal roles such as department chair, instructional or data coach, grade-level leader, mentor teacher, or curriculum specialist. The second option, Leadership through the Principalship and Assistant Principalship program offers leaders the opportunity to move into formal

principal programs. The program was research based and included using the framework and standards for leadership development, skills, and competencies outlined by the Transformational Leadership Framework (TLF) and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.

Overall the response by participants of this program were favorable. Based on the data from this cohort changes were made to the program to reflect the challenges and opportunities presented by the development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The researches attribute much of the success of the ELP to the high standards, the development of a program that is focused on developing existing leadership skills as they relate to site specific needs, and the continuous feedback provided by program leaders.

A second study that emerged in 2010 is the Teachers Network survey of 1,200 teacher leaders. The goal of this study was to “better understand the role that participation in teacher leadership networks plays in supporting and retaining effective teachers in high-needs urban schools” (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010, p. 1). Results from this study are incorporated into further research by the Center for Teaching Quality and the Teachers Network. Overall the survey shows

- 1.) Teachers’ leadership and collective expertise are tightly linked to student achievement.
- 2.) Teachers search for innovative strategies as instructional and school leaders but are often stifled by prescriptive policies that drive them from the profession.

- 3.) Teachers identify missing supports for leadership in their schools as barriers to their empowerment and effectiveness.
- 4.) Teacher leadership beyond the classroom walls facilitates the spread of effective teaching practices and breaks down barriers to effective teaching policies.

Some limiting pieces for this study and the cases studies mentioned in the discussion provide insight into the many problems associated with teacher leadership including, time, relationships with peers and impementation of new policies and programs, support from adminstrators including micromanaged and often scripted instruction, pressures with high stakes testing, and lack of material for teacher leadership development. The implications for this study recognize that t

- Teacher leadership is a critical component of effective teaching and school success
- Accomplished teachers tend to seek out leadership opportunities but require supports to fulfill their promise as leaders
- Expanding leadership roles and advancement opportunities for teachers may be an excellent and cost-effective strategy for retaining the most effective teachers
- Professional networks for teachers offer a means by which teacher leadership can be nurtured and expertise can be spread.

Overall, the study claims that more research is necessary in the area of teacher leadership under different contexts and demands, specifically examining the roles and supports needed.

International perspective on teacher leadership. Teacher leadership programs in the United States are developing, but these programs are not new on the international

level. This subsection describes two studies performed by the United Kingdom and Singapore that not only provide insight into the skills needed to be a successful leader but also outline training pathways for teacher leaders based on their career goals.

The National College for School Leadership (2006) in the United Kingdom produced a summary of empirical research in the area of educational leadership, which provides insight into the skills needed to be a successful leader. According to the research, the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g. in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), resilient and optimistic. (p. 14) These findings show that in the United Kingdom schools need to employ leadership that is effective and transformational rather than transactional, and leaders need to take in all sides of an issue before setting policy or making final judgments to promote school improvement (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2010).

Over and above the skills needed to lead, school leaders need to possess the desire and the opportunity to lead, while also realizing that being a leader is not just “about one person, it’s about building a shared commitment and building a leadership team” (Migang & Maeroff, 2008). A study of the Singapore educational system exemplifies the shared commitment needed to impact student learning, influence change, and elicit school improvement. Unlike the United Kingdom study, Singapore used a distributed leadership model to develop pathways to leadership. In 2012 the Ministry of Education in Singapore announced that in response to the collaborative efforts needed to ensure a nurturing environment for engaged learning and because “Schools are being asked to do more . . . the

scope and complexity of school-building leadership has expanded such that ‘the demands of the modern principalship are practically impossible to meet’ (Danielson, 2007, p.15). A “re-thinking” of the roles of teachers was needed that resulted in “multiple pathways to leadership that focus on what is termed as “school middle leaders” (Ng, 2011), “who help the school principals manage the work of colleagues or teams of colleagues . . . serve as co-leaders in their schools and are agents of change” (p. 255). According to the study, leadership became more distributed in order to “ensure good teachers remain connected to teaching, students, peer teachers, and curriculum” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 6). The three pathways to leadership include the University-based pathway, the School-Based Pathway, and the Ministry-Based Pathway. The University-based pathway served “middle level leaders, mainly those with the potential to be or who are already Heads of Departments . . .” and “who are already engaged in leadership work and school based reform at their schools” (Goodwin, 2013, pp. 7-8). The School-based pathway encompasses two distinct tracks to leadership: the teaching track which focuses on “exemplary teachers,” and the leadership track which focuses on school administration and is a pathway that could take them beyond leadership in schools to leadership at the Ministry level” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 10). Finally, the Ministry-Based Pathway serves as a “continuum of leadership routes available to teachers” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 10) where it is not only encouraged but also assumed that these teacher leaders have followed the previous two tracks of leadership to reach the Ministry level. The results of this study show that leadership is a community effort where it is not only the leadership skills that make a leader but also the desire to lead coupled with the opportunity to lead. Following any one of these tracks to leadership does not imply that a teacher will move directly into an administrative role, but instead provides the

opportunity for teachers to choose the path that best suits their career goals and will meet the needs of the school community.

Teacher leadership qualities and skills. The United Kingdom study and the Singapore study emphasize leadership skills, desire to lead, and opportunities to lead, but leaders also need to possess certain qualities, as seen in studies done in the United States. According research done by the Institute for Educational Leadership, these qualities include not only knowledge of child development but also pedagogical knowledge. Additionally, leaders possess empathy and a dedication to their students and to education, they have a readiness to step in and help for the betterment of the community, they have a team spirit and commitment, and a respect for and sensitivity to their community, families, and students (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2010). Teachers make unique leaders because they have diverse talents and abilities. Since teachers work directly with the students and parents in both positive experiences, and when necessary disciplinary matters, they have a deeper insight into the needs of the school. By allowing teachers the opportunity to grow through leadership opportunities outside of the classroom, their “spectrum of influence” is increased (Hickey & Harris, 2005). This spectrum of influence supports the view of Geijsel and colleagues (2007) that leadership is relational and therefore use of influence that a teacher has within the community will prove to be the transitional movement into leadership positions that will benefit the school community.

There are many varied definitions of teacher leadership and what composes a leader (Goodwin, 2013). According to Angelle (2010) “leaders must possess three attributes for success: the desire to lead others, the skills necessary to lead others, and the opportunities to be in a position to lead” (p. 14). The school in which leaders reside must

provide opportunities to develop the skills and enhance the desire to lead in order for their leaders to become truly successful (Angelle, 2010). Geijssel and colleagues (2007) believe that “Leadership is relational: it is defined by its influences and is thus shown by its impact . . . the role of a leader is to exercise influence” (p. 138). Influence includes promoting activities that will provide teachers and colleagues with strategies to illicit change within the classroom and school. Utilizing both a transformational model as described by the Institute for Educational Leadership as well as relational approach from Geijssel, teacher leaders might be able to influence colleagues, whether indirectly or directly. Danielson (2006) added to this belief by explaining that,

The term teacher leadership refers to that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere. It entails mobilizing and energizing others with the goal of improving the school’s performance of its critical responsibilities related to teaching and learning. (p. 12)

Danielson (2006) explained that the ability of the teacher leader to mobilize and energize others is due to the fact that they are not the boss (principal), but rather because they have a connection with the school and because they are “informed and persuasive” (p. 12) and they possess an “unwavering passion for the core mission of the school and the courage to confront obstacles to achieving that mission” (p. 12).

The beliefs and values teachers hold in their hearts influence their ability to move from the classroom to more public, formal leadership roles (Collay, 2006). Teacher leaders emerge as those who undergo the “process of influencing and direction setting of one teacher toward another” (Anderson, 2008). Murphy (2005) opined that “the impetus for

school reform is not portrayed as the teacher's own and teachers influence rather than direct others" (p.16). The influence teachers possess and demonstrate leads to the belief that as the "field of teacher leadership matures, teachers may define leadership for themselves" (p. 16). Furthermore, as teachers move from standing in front of their classroom to leading, whether formally or informally, they continue to shape their leadership identities. According to the research study conducted by Anderson (2008),

A distinction for teacher leadership in the absence of formal roles is that fellow teachers attribute leadership to them as *teacher leaders* [original emphasis]. In this sense the teacher leader is more readily recognized in the context of the school as they exhibit leadership characteristics more consistently and more often than their respective counterparts. (p. 9)

In his study, Anderson (2008) explained how teachers assumed leadership roles in three different ways. Teachers would take on roles by assuming the role as it stands, they would make the role their own by extending the existing parameters to meet the needs of the school and/or their leadership style, and lastly, they would create leadership roles as needed for the school community. In each case the teachers did not take on formal leadership roles, as would have been the case in an urban school. The findings in this study support the idea that school success is dependent upon its leadership, in this case both distributed leadership as well as leadership reciprocity with the principal and teachers sharing mutual influences (Anderson, 2008).

According to Hilty (2002), because teachers see the process of teaching as encompassing a balance between "both art and skill" it is possible that they understand "leadership is also a creative endeavor" (p. 166). It is this creative endeavor that Hilty

(2002) posited, “Good leaders facilitate the establishment of learning communities that produce teachers, students, and parents who are independent, self-motivated thinkers and actors” (p. 166). Successful teacher leaders know that education is collaborative in nature; therefore, teacher leaders do not possess power over their peers rather they work *with* their peers (Pillars, 2013; Danielson, 2007). Furthermore, teacher leaders invite others to join in the collaboration journey through accomplishments in the classroom and school community (Pillars, 2013; Danielson, 2007). Inviting peers to join the journey highlights the expertise other educators have by recognizing and celebrating their specific knowledge and areas of interest. In order for teacher leaders to be successful in their leadership pursuits they need to be able to take risks, accept and encourage criticism for growth, and then reflect on the experiences all the while problem solving for improvement and growth (Pillars, 2013; Sledge & Morehead, 2006).

The roles teacher leaders can assume are as varied as the teachers themselves (Harrison & Killion, 2007; Burgess & Bates, 2009). Because teacher leaders are in a position to “take the long view and carry out long-range projects” (Danielson, 2007, p. 14) leaders can be seen within the school “monitoring improvement efforts, selecting curriculum, and participating in administrative meetings . . .” (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). They also “participate in peer coaching, engage in parent and community participation, and review research . . .” (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005), or on a district level on committees or as union representatives (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). According to Harrison & Killion (2007) and Henderson & Barron (1995) teacher leaders are resources providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom

supporters, learning facilitators, school leaders, data coaches, mentors, student advocates, and generally catalysts for change. All of these roles can be summed up into four categories and duties outlined by Burgess and Bates (2009):

- 1.) Interpersonal coach: Communicating, building trust, listening, encouraging, organizing, cheerleading, and providing resources.
- 2.) Academic facilitator: Working side by side with colleagues to focus on teaching and learning through such activities as analyzing data, reading about best practices, aligning curriculum, investigating and implementing new teaching strategies, creating learning opportunities, mentoring, and modeling and observing new practices.
- 3.) Team manager: Organizing what's done, when, and by whom; developing systems and structures; and performing other administrative tasks, such as selecting and ordering materials and texts.
- 4.) Administration liaison: Advocating, representing, and advising.

No matter the role teacher leaders assume, teachers “receive a great deal of satisfaction and professional motivation from working as leaders and innovators in their schools—contributing to both their effectiveness and retention” (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, *Teacher leadership: Leading the way to effective teaching and learning*, 2010, p. 4). Overall, for teacher leaders to be successful they need to be in an environment conducive to fostering the growth of the teacher as a leader where they are presented with opportunities to lead (Hilty, 2002).

Teacher Leader Challenges, Hindrances, and Support

The first subsection provided brief examination of the challenges and hindrances faced by teacher leaders. The second subsection will provide an examination of the supports that teacher leaders provide to novice teachers and how that support not only aids in the professional development of novice teachers but also for veteran teachers.

Teacher leader challenges and hindrances. Teachers often face many challenges whether it is in the classroom or finding the time to balance instructional planning with leadership aspirations. Teacher leaders often contend with challenges because their leadership roles may be inherently connected to historical notions of a hierarchical belief of specific role definitions (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). This belief could come from peers regarding one another or from administrators thinking they may be losing control if they step back and let teachers assume roles such as team leaders, administrative liaisons, researchers, coaches, or another type of academic facilitator (Burgess & Bates, 2009).

Teacher leaders as support for teacher development. As novice teachers develop their skills they must develop and draw upon “their understanding of subject matter, learning, development, culture, language, pedagogy, and assessment in addressing concrete problems of practice” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 358) all the while understanding that the “profession of teaching is never fully mastered” (Danielson, 2006, p. 15). As new teachers continue to develop as educators they need to “come to think about (and understand) teaching in ways quite different from what they have learned from their own experience as students” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 358). New teachers often teach the way they were taught, which in turn has an effect on the preconceptions new teachers bring into the classroom. To combat the teaching as one was taught—or as

Lortie (1975) entitled the apprenticeship of observation—idea of instructional strategies new teachers need to “develop the ability to think like a teacher . . .” and to “put what they know into action” by trusting that they not only need to “understand but also to do a wide variety of things, many of them simultaneously” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 358). New teachers need to demonstrate that they not only possess the content knowledge and skills to teach, but that they know the why and how of what they are teaching and its impact on student learning, one way to illustrate this knowledge is through reflection. Reflection is key for any educator, especially for new teachers who “need to develop metacognitive habits of mind that can guide decisions and reflection on practice in support of continual improvement” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 358). New teachers develop and grow in their craft by working together collaboratively in teams or with mentors reflecting and discussing instructional practice, curriculum, or procedure, all of which fosters growth not only as teachers, but as leaders within the community (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Sledge & Morehead, 2006; Harrison & Killion, 2007).

When new teachers are exposed to teachers who are leaders within their community the new teachers are encouraged to expand their knowledge base and move beyond the classroom to assume leadership roles based on their knowledge and expertise (Hilty, 2002). Teacher development into leadership roles is not something that happens overnight, but with the guidance, support, and encouragement of administrators and other teacher leaders these roles emerge and construct the school’s capability to progress (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Teacher leaders are developed through the creation of an “environment of mutual respect, collaboration, and connection . . . they create an atmosphere for dialogue, reflection, and debate, while simultaneously encouraging the

development of intellectual skills that lead to critical, reflective thinking” (Hilty, 2002). The natural progression of a teacher’s skills and ability to command the classroom, understand the why and how of curriculum and pedagogy, and continue to learn and reflect is what elevates a new teacher into a leader in the community.

Teacher leaders are change agents within their community and it is because of this that programs must focus on helping pre-service, new, and veteran teachers develop the skills to successfully address school problems and promote a common vision for success (Henerson & Barron, 1995). As the art and craft of teachers grow so will the hope that teachers will continue to share their knowledge with peers to improve the teaching and learning in schools thus developing increased achievement for all students (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Reeves (2008) another way to recognize new teachers as those with leadership potential is to “cast a wide net for the next generation of leaders, not only discovering those who call attention to themselves but also finding those many quiet teacher leaders who can serve our students and society very well” (p. 21). New teachers are often eager to learn, grow, and evolve in their practice. Encouraging them through the use of mentor teachers will not only make available the expertise of a veteran teacher, but will also show them the various leadership opportunities available should they wish to pursue that avenue.

Understanding Rural Communities and Schools

In order to fully understand the needs of teacher leaders in rural communities it is first necessary to understand the makeup of rural communities and the challenges they can face. Rural communities are defined as those areas that have a population of less than 2,500 people and are not within an urbanized cluster or urbanized area (Office of

Management and Budget, 2000). Rural schools, teachers, and communities face challenges due to geographic location, cultural isolation, financial stringency, leadership, and community members who wear multiple hats rather than concentrate on their specialization. Other challenges include personal loneliness associated with leadership positions, community relations, location, and lastly a stability associated with the school as historical representation of the community (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Farmer, 2009). To further examine these challenges as well as the rural school and community connections, this section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection examines the connections that the school and community have as well as understanding that those connections are built around the construct of sense of place. The second section examines the unique challenges and hindrances faced by rural schools and rural communities.

Rural schools, community, and a sense of place. People inherently have a connection to a place in which they live and work and it is this connection that develops into a sense of identity and culture, an interdependence with the land in which they live on and work, and a greater involvement in politics, civic engagement, spiritual development and church life (Budge, 2006). Overall, a unique ideology is gleaned from the sense of connection a person has with the place in which they reside and work and Gruenwald (2006) described this connection as a sense of place in which the “human experience of geographical contexts” and a “marriage between the geography of mind and geographical places” (Gruenwald, 2001, p. 626) exists. In essence, the theory of the sense of place is the connection points one has with an environment and involvement in the community and with its citizens.

Rural community members have a connection with their community that, in many

cases, goes back generations. The theoretical construct of sense of place helps to explain the connection rural community members have with schools and according to Gruenwald (2003) “this means developing the connections with places that allow us to invest them with particular kinds of meaning.” (p. 627) Bauch’s (2001) ideas added to Gruenwald’s concept of connections with places and investing meaning: “In rural communities, important community meanings are embedded in the school and its traditions” (p. 213). Morris and Potter (1999) suggested that in rural communities, the “*school is the community* [original emphasis]” (p. 97) while also being the “entertainment center” (p. 97) and these communities support their schools because “sports play a major role” (p. 97). Additionally, if music and drama programs are offered they are considered a “valued activity” where students often participate in community activities such as “marching in the 4th of July parade to enhancing community productions” (p. 97). Communities use connections and personal history to invest in the schools because not only do schools provide an avenue for educating the youth of the community, but they also provide for communities an avenue for social networking, involvement in politics, and civil engagement (Budge, 2006) and often the school buildings themselves are the only spaces large enough to hold town meetings (Morris & Potter, 1999). Because of the importance of the sense of place of community members and the connections between the community and the school, it is necessary for school leaders to recognize that the school is an extension of the community, but the community can also serve as an extension of the school and it is this connection that can have “a tremendous impact on rural education” (Morris & Potter, 1999, p. 97).

The sense of place a person has for their community confirms “there is something very powerful about sense of place in rural communities that helps them transcend the

challenges of poor infrastructure and few resources” (Tierney, as cited in Budge, 2006, p. 2). According to Harmon and Schafft (2009) “Educational leaders may develop personal identities connected to a rural place, come to personally value the quality of life-ways, and build individual leadership characteristics with the mentality of a small rural community” (p. 5). Moreover, a sense of place promotes integration and an interactive environment that encompasses the school-community relationship and its identity and attachment to one another (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). The roles administrators, teachers, and other community leaders play are encouraged in rural communities because of the connection to the school and its community.

Rural school challenges and hindrances. Rural schools face a number of challenges, which have complex relationships to teachers’ roles and work characteristics. One of the greatest challenges facing rural schools is the limited financial resources for school improvement, technology and building improvements, small class sizes, and teachers who are teaching in their specialty and not being spread too thin. There seemed to be hope in bridging these financial pitfalls through the 2012 *McCleary v. State* decision, whereby the Washington State Supreme Court “mandated significant boost in K-12 school funding” (Justice, Mitchell, Nicholas, & Pfingst, 2013), and the Legislature is to “make steady, real and measurable progress each year to fully fund K-12 education by 2018” (Network for Excellence in Washington Schools, 2013). According to court documents, fully funding includes providing for materials, operating costs, and supplies (Mathew and Stephanie McCleary et. al vs. State of Washington, 2015). Sadly, in 2015 the State Supreme Court has found the State of Washington legislature in contempt of this order because they have failed to show measurable and steady progress, and have not provided an adequate

timeline for implementation of the McCleary decision for fully funding K-12 education, and are therefore being fined each day they cannot make movement forward for implementation (Mathew and Stephanie McCleary et. al vs. State of Washington, 2015). This lack of funding and movement toward significant fully funded K-12 education is felt by urban and rural schools alike, however, rural schools due to their already existing financial pitfalls may feel this lack of funding greater than urban schools.

Because of the many challenges facing rural communities it is thought, according to Hickey and Harris (2005), that “Rural schools require more efficient and effective use of limited human and financial resources” (p. 12). As a result, many rural schools may make use of their limited resources by having teachers teach at least one class or grade level they are not specialized in or in which they do not possess adequate knowledge or training (Smith & Lotven, 1993; Arnold et. al., 2005; Thomas, 2005). This method of consolidation can pose the greatest challenge for rural schools and students. Often teachers who teach a class or grade level that they are not specialized in or of which they have no knowledge are spread too thin, and because of their location and funding issues they have lower budgets for supplies and less opportunities to receive the professional development and workshop trainings they need to successfully manage the varied teaching load (Smith & Lotven, 1993). Another issue rural schools face with this challenge is the lack of instruction in each class by highly qualified teachers as outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Barley, 2008).

While consolidation of teachers and resources is a hindrance to teachers it may be a benefit to the students and community because many students and their siblings can have the same teacher for multiple years, thus offering students and teachers the possible

opportunity to create meaningful relationships (Thomas, 2005). In addition, it is because of the isolation and small school size that the school climate may be more personal and supportive than what is sometimes seen in larger urban schools (Thomas, 2005). It is this positive climate and the relationships that foster a high level of success for students and these positive attributes may be celebrated by the school community and its leaders (Thomas, 2005).

Teacher Leadership in Rural Schools

According to research by Hilty (2002), teacher leaders in rural schools “provide important links between the community’s values, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 163). Teachers are often the first responders to community and parent inquiry (Hilty, 2002) where they “articulate and work to achieve aims and purposes that are connected to and serving real communities” (Hilty, 2002, p. 163). In addition, “teachers need to provide leadership by respecting the consciousness and culture of their students and creating communities where students and parents can express the relationship of educational institutions to their needs and aspirations” (Hilty, 2002, p. 168). These ideas presented by Hilty (2002) provide examples of teacher leadership based on the culture of the students and creating communities of mutual respect for both the educational institutions and the needs and aspirations of the community, furthermore, Hilty (2002) believes “Good schools are characterized by an environment of mutual respect, collaboration, and connections. These schools recognize cultural diversity that exists even in relatively homogenous rural population” (p. 166). Leaders in rural schools then, will “take the time to recognize and affirm these differences” (p. 166) while also sharing the “responsibility for learning with all members of that community” (p. 167). Teachers often view teaching as “both an art and

skill” (Hilty, 2002, p. 166), and it is in the same way that leadership should be considered an innovative endeavor in which teacher leaders draw upon their knowledge, experience, and beliefs to improve the schools in which they work (Hilty, 2002). These last few statements are true not only of the rural schools that Hilty described, but may also be true of teachers in urban schools as well. To assume that teacher leadership is an innovative endeavor only by rural schools and that only rural schoolteachers and leaders believe that teaching is an art and skill is to diminish the views and work of teachers from other types of communities.

For rural schools to access the knowledge, experiences, and beliefs of teacher leaders and to encourage leadership, the roles teachers play often extend beyond relationships with students and families and will include community members and community leadership roles. They may assume leadership roles due in large part to their leadership qualities, which are developed not only within the school but also due to connections in the community in which they live. It is thought that an aspect of rural teacher leadership is that rural school teacher leaders have the wherewithal to see the vision of the school and community which “honors the importance of schools and communities working together and setting an agenda that reflects the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the people within that community” (Hilty, 2002, p. 165). Furthermore, teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators in rural schools may have a personal identity connected to the rural community where they “build individual characteristics consistent with the mentality of a small rural community” (Harmon & Schafft, 2009, pp. 4-5), which helps in further developing their leadership skills and fully understanding the needs of the

school and community. Hilty (2002) explained these needs while recognizing the ways to empower teachers to be leaders, stating,

Rural communities and their schools have unique needs—it is important for rural teachers to begin to articulate those social and cultural phenomena that impact their schools and classrooms and for us as educators to begin to train teachers to be leaders in rural schools—to empower teachers, students and parents to articulate a vision of culturally relevant pedagogy that recognizes the unique social and cultural identities . . . of the schools and communities. (p. 166)

Hickey and Harris (2005) presented six recommendations for administrators to identify and encourage teachers to take on leadership roles within the school:

1. Identify teacher strengths.
2. Match teacher strengths to professional development needs.
3. Develop professional development programs with these strengths and needs in mind.
4. Provide teachers with the time needed to prepare for presentations.
5. Provide opportunities for informal presentations to reduce anxiety.
6. Provide time throughout the year for collaborative opportunities.

Using these six recommendations as guides, teachers may be empowered to lead their peers in a manner that provides meaningful professional development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of the school and its students. Using the ideas of Freire from his 1974 book *Education for Critical Consciousness*, “Knowledge is not extended from those who consider that they know to those who consider that they do not know; knowledge is built up in the relations between human beings” (p. 109). Using teacher leaders to help

build relationships among colleagues and community members will provide opportunities for collaboration and problem solving.

The connection teachers, and administrators have with their schools is just one piece of the unique position of rural schools. Another unique piece is that rural schools are distinctive in setting and context. This distinction forces leaders to adjust their styles to reflect the needs of their schools while motivating teachers to take on leadership roles based on the needs of the school and community. Developing teacher leaders through distributed leadership, transformational leadership, or situational leadership practices must reflect the needs of the school and its community. Unlike distributed leadership or transformational leadership, situational leadership provides a close tie with the rural culture because its basis is the idea that “learning and knowledge are situated in physical and social contexts and that the transfer and use of knowledge is affected by the context in which the learning took place” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, as cited in Williams & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012, p. 9). Teachers and administrators can have differing views on needs of the school because each has a unique perspective on the sense of place, therefore it is important for leaders to adjust their leadership styles based on the situation and provide support and direction as needed. In addition, because not all teachers are the same, it is important for rural school leaders to recognize and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher leaders and adjust leadership styles to meet those needs so the school can be successful (Northouse, 2013). Furthermore, for rural school leaders to further develop their situational leadership skills they must become full participants in the in their communities of practice. According to Lave and Wenger (1991) “Full participation is intended to do justice to the diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community

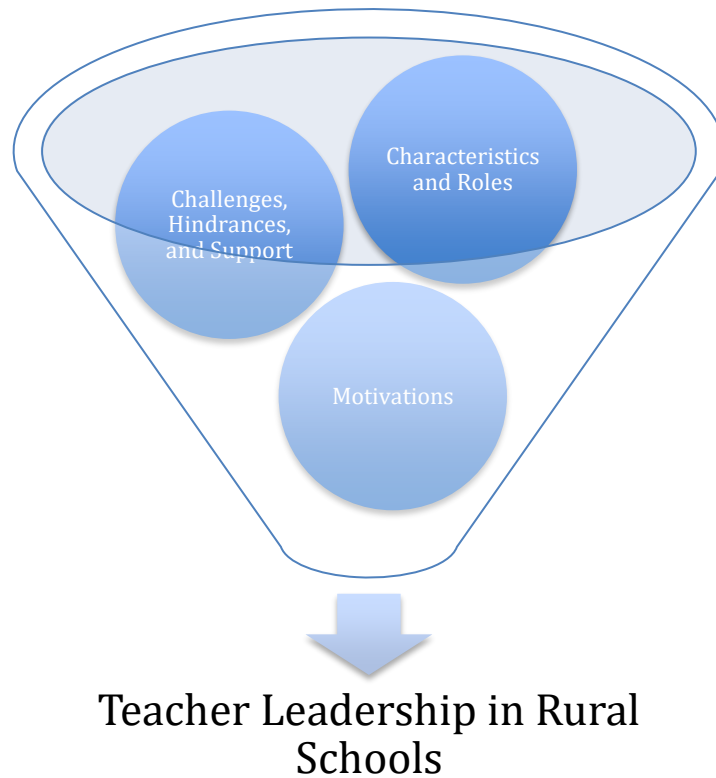
membership” (p. 36). One way to obtain full participation is to utilize the connection of place in a peripheral way thus suggesting, “an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). Using full participation and a peripheral view (Lave & Wenger, 1991) coupled with the knowledge and understandings of place, leaders are able build upon the existing social relationships within their community and school all the while “absorbing and being absorbed in the ‘culture of practice’” where “an extended period of legitimate peripherally provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 94). This culture of practice highlights the idea that through understanding of a sense of place and leadership rural school leaders will recognize the needs of their community and provide a more efficient and effective context for problem solving.

Summary of Literature

The literature on teacher leadership in general is vast. However, it is the specific area of teacher leadership in rural settings that is lacking. Teacher leaders provide schools with an opportunity to utilize the specific skills and talents that each teacher possesses for the betterment of the school community. The skills and criteria for teacher leader positions are as varied as the opportunities themselves; nevertheless, formal and informal leadership roles play an important role in the success of the school community (Burgess & Bates, 2009). Teachers impart their knowledge upon others creating a network of community building opportunities and a culture for collaboration. The use of a shared decision making structure, in both urban and rural school settings, provides schools with a myriad of opportunities for student, teacher, and school success (Smith & Lotven, 1993).

Rural schools are located in areas that do not have the same advantages as urban schools. They have funding issues, community involvement issues, and struggles with meeting the federal mandates. Imbedded in the many problems rural schools face they have one key idea that permeates all they do, and that is a sense of place. With this sense of place, they have a “shared responsibility among parents, staff and teachers . . . and when it is achieved, schools become healthy environments for our children” (Hurley, 1999, p. 147). The sense of place envelops the rural schools in a blanket of security, support, and school spirit. Even with the unique challenges rural schools face, and there are many, it is the positive aspects, like the low dropout rates, the community involvement, the concerned and involved citizens and media, and the general desire the school and outside community have for the success of the school and its students that continue to propel these schools and its leaders to find new and inventive ways to combat the challenges. Teacher leadership is a broad term that encompasses how a teacher evolves into someone who goes beyond the curriculum and their classroom to impact the school and community through leadership roles. The following figure provides an explanation of how the literature review fits into the phenomenological framework for providing a definition of what teacher leadership in rural school means based on perceptions of participants’ lived experiences teaching and living in a rural community.

Figure 1: Framework



The above figure is used to frame the study by showing how the three areas studied challenges, hindrances, and support; motivations; and characteristics and roles all combine to produce a teacher leader in rural schools. Each piece is an important aspect to understanding why teachers are motivated to build on the skills and overcome challenges to assume leadership roles within rural schools.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the perceptions of roles and experiences of teacher leaders in rural high schools. This study explores the various roles of teacher leaders in rural high schools, including the experiences and motivation for teaching and leading within rural high schools in Washington State. The following questions guided this inquiry: How do teacher leaders and administrators perceive the characteristics and roles of teacher leadership in school communities? What motivates teachers to teach in rural schools and assume leadership roles? What perceptions of support or hindrances from administrators, community members, and colleagues have teacher leaders faced when assuming leadership roles? To obtain a detailed, rich interpretive view of rural high school teacher leadership in Washington State, I employ phenomenological-oriented interviews questions as the primary data collection method.

Participants for this study included teachers and administrators from three different rural schools in Washington State. Washington State has 295 school districts and of those 57% is rural. Furthermore, according to the 2008-2009 school year Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), rural schools achieved the highest on time graduation rate with 70.3%. I chose each school based on their status as a rural and low-income school in Washington State, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, and demographics.

Once each school was identified administrators were contacted via mail and follow-up emails for an initial meeting to discuss the study and their participation. During the meeting I discussed teacher leadership with the administrator and provided a list of

characteristics to help identify teacher leaders within their school community [Appendix A]. As Patton (cited in Merriam, 1998) explained, this provided “cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (p. 63). Once teacher leaders were identified I briefly discussed with the administrators the characteristics again to double check that the participants met the majority of the criteria. I contacted teacher leaders via phone or email to ascertain permission to participate in a “scheduled . . . extended conversation” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31) designed as a “semi structured interview” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31). Interviews with the teacher leaders and administrators were conducted so participants could have the opportunity to fully describe their experiences (Cresswell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). Throughout the interview process I reviewed the characteristics that were used to identify teacher leaders to confirm that the participants met the criteria and were leaders within their school. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis by an outside company specializing in educational transcription. After the interviews were transcribed a copy was sent to the participants for review.

Qualitative research provides insight into the meanings of actions by persons in social situations (Green, 2001) and aids in the understanding of particular phenomena without disrupting the setting (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research aims to illuminate how pieces of a puzzle work together to shape a picture. In this study of rural high school teacher leadership, I examined the experiences of teacher leaders and gleaned meaning from those experiences through my own perspective. According to Patton (1985):

This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting—an analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting . . . The analysis strives for depth and understanding. (As cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 6)

In addition to examining the phenomenon from an insider’s perspective, Merriam (1998) recalled characteristics distinguishable to qualitative research. The first is the role of the researcher as the “instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 7). As an instrument for the data collection and analysis I prepared interview questions that served as the basis for data collection and analysis. The second is that qualitative research involves the researcher going into the field to gather data in the subject’s natural setting. In order to interview the administrators and teachers I visited the schools twice. During the first visit I met with the administrator to discuss the study and its goals and tour the schools in order to get a feel for the climate of the school and its location. The second visit focused on meeting with the administrator identified teacher leaders and conducting the interviews. Lastly, “the product of qualitative research is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned from the phenomenon” (p. 8). After in-depth analysis, writing the final data reports consisted of using the interviews to guide the narrative and provide evidence for the final written report.

Each school used in the study served as a separate case, which allowed for the opportunity to examine people, programs, topics, or issues as they related to the

research questions and interviews (Hayes, 2004). Case studies are items or units that are encompassed by boundaries or fences around which the phenomenon falls into (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). According to Merriam (1998) "If the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case" (p. 27). Merriam (1998) explained that one way to determine the boundaries of the case is to ensure there is a limit to the number of participants, interviews, and observations. If no such finite boundary exists, then the phenomenon cannot qualify as a case. The number of participating schools as cases binds this study. The cases are limited to three rural schools and each case will have up to four teacher participants and one administrative participant. One concern with this format is using purposeful snowball sampling as the method for participant selection and participation because there is the opportunity to go beyond the boundary set with the number of participants. Teacher leaders were asked if they could give me names of other teacher leaders in the school, and in each case the teachers leader participants identified teachers I was already interviewing, therefore the boundary of number of participants was not violated. Within the boundary of each case are the connection teacher leaders and administrators may have with the outside community. As previous research has indicated, rural community members possess a strong sense of place and rural teachers are part of that sense of place, therefore to eliminate the greater rural community from the binding would be eliminating a large piece of connection teachers may have with the community. The last piece is the boundary is the timeframe. This study was conducted during a six-month period with visiting each school only twice.

The phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study because the primary goal is to provide a description of an occurrence or experience, which includes information

on the thoughts, perspectives, and emotions of the participants (Cresswell, 2013; O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). When examining the phenomenon and participant responses, the goal of the researcher is to determine based on the participants' perceptions, "What did they experience and how did they experience it?" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 76). Creswell (2013) developed seven defining features to aid the researcher in conducting his or her phenomenological study. These features are borrowed from the psychological perspective of Moustaka (1994) and the human science orientation of van Manen (1990). The features are:

- That there is an emphasis on the phenomenon to be explored and presented in terms of a single concept or idea;
- That the phenomenon is explored with a group of individuals who experience the concept or idea;
- That there is a philosophical dialogue about the concepts or ideas involved in the study and a mutual acknowledgement that participants share objective experiences with others as well as possess a subjective view of the experience;
- That depending on the goal and purpose of the phenomenological study the researcher will be bracketed out of the study;
- That in order to provide in-depth examinations of the phenomenon the researcher will conduct interviews or observations or gather written work such as poems, stories, and documents pertaining to the progression of the experience examined;

- That data analysis progresses from narrow data that is detailed and specific to broad themes that include answers to the previous questions of the “what” and “how” of the experience; and
- That each phenomenological study includes narrative passages which clearly describe the phenomenon and the “what” and “how” of the participants’ experience. (Cresswell, 2013, pp. 78-79)

Using these seven features as guides for a phenomenological study provides a path for walking through the concepts associated with teacher leadership and examination of the experiences of participants. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between each of the above features and that of this study.

Figure 2: Features of Phenomenological Study and Researcher Activity

Researcher Activity/Role	Activity/Role Feature Explanation
Researcher will examine the perceptions of teacher leadership in rural schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This is the phenomenon to be explored and presented in terms of a single concept or idea
Researcher will examine teacher leaders and administrator participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •These are the groups of individuals who experience the concept or idea of the phenomenon being explored
Initial discussion with administrators in identifying teacher leaders in their school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This is a dialogue about the concepts or ideas involved in the study and a mutual acknowledgement that participants share objective experiences as well as possess a subjective view of the experience
Researcher experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The researcher has acknowledged her own personal experience with the phenomenon
Interviews conducted with teacher leader participants and administrator participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews with participants that provide in-depth examinations of the phenomenon
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The researcher performs data analysis which progresses from narrow data that is detailed and specific to broad themes that include answers to the research questions
Written Narrative/Report of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The finding phenomenological study includes narrative passages which clearly describe the phenomenon and the “what” and “how” of the participants experience.

Figure 1 shows the researcher's purpose and activities as it relates to this study. The blue boxes show the left provide the researchers purpose and activity as I moved forward through the research, data collection, data analysis and written narrative. The column on the right shows the relationship between the researcher's purpose and activities with that of the features outlined by Moustaka (1994), van Manen (1990), and Cresswell (2013). Using Figure 1 a walkway is created for following through with the steps in the research process as well as understanding the purpose of each step.

Moustakas' idea of transcendental phenomenology allowed for me to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 80) and provide a depiction of the essence of the experience without my beliefs about the phenomenon in order for a clear picture to be revealed through the data (Merriam, 1998; Cresswell, 2013). Examination of the experiences of teacher leadership roles in rural high schools using this approach coupled with a case study framework for reporting these experiences provide a picture of the experiences, perspectives, and emotions of the participants.

Using the phenomenological approach with semi-structured open-ended interviews, I was able to "gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences" (deMarrais, 2004, p. 52). Marshall and Rossman (2006) explain, "The purpose of phenomenological interview is to describe the meaning of a phenomenon that several individuals share" (qtd. in Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). In this study, participants all share the commonality of being teacher leaders in rural low-income high schools in Washington State. Interview questions and the interviews were created in order to create a dialogue and rapport with the participants (deMarrais, 2004) and beginning

interviews with a general conversation allowed for myself and the participants to become relaxed and a trusting atmosphere was created (Moustakas, 1994).

Interviewing coupled with follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) provided an opportunity for the participants to “reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study” (Seidman, 2013, p. 14). The follow-up questions help acknowledge the need for the participant to provide “as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 52). For example, when meeting with participants in Miller I was introduced to the term Expeditionary Learning. Because I had not heard this term before I asked the participant to further explain what it is and how it is used in their school. The interviews with teacher leaders from each of my case schools provided a comprehensive examination into participants’ perceptions and experiences in rural school education. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Study Design and Sampling

Participants

Participants for this study included teachers and administrators from three different rural schools from Washington State. Schools were chosen using data from the 2014-2015 OSPI Rural Education Achievement Program-Rural and Low Income Schools Program schools report. Each school was chosen based on their status as a rural and low-income school in Washington State, graduation rates, school and district enrollment numbers, and demographics. Once each school was identified administrators were contacted via mail and follow-up emails for an initial meeting to discuss the study and participation. During the meeting I discussed teacher leadership with the administrator and provided a list of characteristics to help identify teacher leaders within their school community [Appendix

A]. Using these characteristics as a guide after the interviews I determined whether the participants met the criteria for a teacher leader.

At this time, administrators were provided with the informed consent form that outlined the study, its purpose, and privacy and confidentiality of data collection. During this time, they also provided permission to use their school names in the study.

Administrators then offered names of teacher leaders and I contacted them via email to set up a time to meet. I met with participants during their preparation period to make it easier on them during their busy schedules. All participants signed the informed consent form outlining the study the purpose of the study, privacy and confidentiality of data collection (Appendix C). Based on the following definition of snowball sampling, teachers were asked to identify other teachers I may want to speak with about their leadership experiences within the school. Each participant replied with names that were already on my list from the administrator. No additional interviewees were added to my list for teacher leader participants. Because I was granted permission to use school names, the schools were not coded, however participants from each school were coded using numerical coding such as KF 1, B 2, O 3. The participants were coded randomly and specific names were removed from transcripts to provide additional confidentiality.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews served as the data gathering method for this study. In a phenomenological study it is assumed that there is a distinction between perceptions and experiences, therefore, the purpose of using interviews is to gain knowledge and explore the perceptions of the participants experiences so the information may be shared with others in the educational community. Throughout the data collection I “consider[ed]

foreshadowed problems, concentrate on issue-related observations, interpret patterns of data, and reformulate the issues as findings or assertions” (Stake, 2006). Semi-structured open-ended interview questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013) were developed for this study. These questions were presented to each of the teacher leader participants and a separate set of interview questions was created for administrators. deMarrais (2004) stated “Because each participant is unique, each interview experience will also be unique” (p. 53), therefore while I created an interview guide for each of the participant groups (teachers and administrators), I tailored the manner in which I asked the questions to “fit comfortably into the experience of each interview” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 53). This method helped to identify any foreshadowed problems during the interview as well as refocus the interview based on answers provided by the participants.

Interview Design

In creating the interview guides I aimed to encompass the four purposes provided by Yin (2014), which are to (a) Explain presumed causal links or relationships from real world experiences; (b) describe an experience and its real world context; (c) illustrate and describe topics within the scope of the experience or its evaluation; and (d) enlighten the audience on those experiences where there are not clear outcomes (p. 17). According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012), when creating interview questions it is important to refrain from asking loaded questions that will skew the results or asking a question that may elicit more than one response. In other words, interview questions need to be general enough to cover a breadth of topics but narrow enough to explore specific experiences. Table 1 illustrates how the interview questions relate to Yin’s (2014) four purposes as well as to the research questions.

Table 1: Relationship Between Interview Questions and Research Questions

The following table shows the relationship between the interview questions and the Four Purposes (P), and Research Questions (RQ).

Interview Question	Purpose (P) and Research Question (RQ) Association
1.) What is your role at your school (teacher, administrator, etc.) and what subject's do/did you teach?	RQ1
2.) How long have you been in your role?	RQ1
3.) Describe other teaching experiences you have had that are in schools that are not considered rural? What do you see as the major differences/similarities?	P1A, P2B
4.) What motivated you to teach in a rural school setting?	RQ2, P2B, P3C
5.) What does being a leader mean to you?	RQ1, P1A
6.) How do you define teacher leadership?	RQ1, P1A
7.) Do you think teacher leadership is different in rural schools vs. urban schools? Can you give specific examples?	RQ1, RQ3, P3C, P4D
8.) What inspired and/or encouraged you to assume leadership roles within the school?	RQ2, P2B, P3C, P4D
9.) Explain your roles and the contributions you have made as a teacher leader.	RQ1, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D
10.) What sources of challenges have you observed or experienced in these leadership roles? What hindrances have you experienced as a leader? Can you give me some examples of each?	RQ3, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D
11.) How has your role as a teacher leader affected your relationship with your peers and your instructional time in the classroom? Can you give me some examples?	RQ3, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D
12.) Describe a typical day for you as both a classroom teacher and a leader. How do you manage both roles throughout the day? Can you give me examples?	RQ3, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D
13.) Can you give me examples of how the might administration offers support to teachers and leaders within the school?	RQ3, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D
14.) What other roles do teachers assume with in the school or community that you would consider leadership?	RQ1, RQ3, P1A, P2B, P3C, P4D

Four Purposes (Yin, 2014)

P 1A.) Explain presumed causal links or relationships from real world experiences

P 2B.) Describe an experience and its real world context

P 3C.) Illustrate and describe topics within the scope of the experience or its evaluation

P 4D.) Enlighten the audience on those experiences where there are not clear outcomes

Research Questions

RQ1) How did teacher leaders and administrators perceive the characteristics and roles of teacher leadership in schools?

RQ2) What motivated teacher leaders to teach in rural schools?

RQ3) What motivated teacher leaders to assume leadership roles in rural schools?

RQ4) What perceptions of support or hindrances from administrators, community members, and colleagues did the teacher leaders faced when assuming leadership roles?

Throughout the interview process, the use of probes was used to allow the participants to relate their lived experiences in a more complete context (deMarrais, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013) and to keep the interview focused and account for the uniqueness of the participant and continue the rapport with the participants (deMarrais, 2004). Examples of probes employed during the interview included attention probes, conversational management probes, and lastly credibility probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Attention probes are used to encourage the participant to continue to go in depth with the answer given and can be verbal or nonverbal. Verbal probes examples include phrases such as “Uh-huh,” “Wow,” “That’s interesting” or “Oh, that’s what happened” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 140). Nonverbal probes would include leaning closer, looking up from writing, or writing furiously (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Conversational probes consist of six different types: Steering probes, confirmation probes, clarification probes, sequence probes, continuation probes, and elaboration probes. Steering probes are used to bring the conversation back on track. An example of a steering probe is “I’m sorry we became distracted with that last answer, you were talking about . . .” or “Could you go back to . . .” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 140). Confirmation probes are used to repeat or summarize the answer given to ensure understanding and they give the participant the opportunity to clarify if needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). An example of using confirmation probes is “So if I understand you correctly...” or “So what you are saying is...” Clarification probes are used when you want the participant to clarify their answer because it was difficult to follow. An example of a clarification probe is “Could you run that by me again? I’m afraid I didn’t quite follow it” or (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 141). Sequence probes are used to “clarify the timing

and order of events” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 143). Continuation probes are used to help guide the narration of story when it seems as though it has stalled. Examples of continuation probes are “So . . .?”, “Then what?”, “And?” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 143). Elaboration probes are used to glean “more detail or explanation of a particular concept or theme that you have selected from what the interviewee has said” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 144). An example of an elaboration probe is “Could you explain what you mean by that?” or “Can you tell me more about...” The final category of probes is the credibility probes. These aid in deciding “how heavily to rely on what a particular interviewee has said” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 146). Two types of credibility probes are evidence probes and slant probes. Evidence probes are used to determine how much the participant has learned from the event he or she is describing by asking for them to relate the event to another event they have personally experienced or if they can provide another example (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Slant probes help “determine the lenses through which people see and interpret their worlds” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 146). Using questions that ask for opinions will help to gain understanding of the perspectives the participant has on a specific theme. Probes will allow for “collecting a substantial amount and depth of data” which in turn “offsets the negative effects of several misleading claims or writing a superficial analysis” (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012, p. 351). In essence, the more information I can glean from the participants the more detailed and in-depth my analysis will be.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were tape recorded and sent to a professional transcription company to produce the transcription I used for analysis. Interviewees were asked to review the transcribed interviews and make comments as needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman,

2013). Follow up interviews were not necessary during the interview or after (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), however during the interview follow up questions were used to delve deeper into relevant issues raised and to provide additional examples and explanations of programs and school structure (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) data analysis and data collection are simultaneous acts because the researcher must attend to the questions they ask and the answers they receive to determine relevance and provide enough specific details. Once interviews were complete and each participant approved the transcriptions, analysis of data began. Using an analysis process by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) I began working with one case at a time. The first step in the process outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) is to “immerse oneself in some of the data” (p. 82) by first listening to the interview and then reading and re-reading the transcript. Throughout the immersion process the following adapted worksheet (Worksheet 1) from Stake (2006) was used to help organize and guide data analysis.

Worksheet 1. Notes on Transcribed Interview

Case ID _____

<p>Synopsis of case:</p>	<p>Case Findings:</p> <p>I.</p> <p>II.</p> <p>III.</p>
<p>Uniqueness of case situation</p>	<p>Possible excerpts for cross-case report:</p> <p>Page/Line</p> <p>Page/Line</p> <p>Page/Line</p>
<p>Relevance of case for cross-case Themes:</p> <p>RQ/Theme 1_____</p> <p>RQ/Theme 2_____</p> <p>RQ/Theme 3_____</p>	
<p>Commentary:</p>	

Transcriptions were coded with school codes and participant code for analysis using a two-step process outlined by Charmaz and Belgrave (2012). For example, for Miller High School, the school code is KF and a participant code would be KF1, the same format followed for all three case schools and participants. The first step in Charmaz and Belgrave’s process is to employ open coding which will allow for making analytic decisions

about the transcripts not shaped in an a priori way from the conceptual framework. This will also determine if follow-up interviews are necessary. The second step is more selective and focused coding that uses the most frequent or significant words and phrases to sort, synthesize, and then conceptualize data. Using worksheet 1 I was able to see common phrases and words across each case. I used note cards with headings for each of the three categories from the conceptual framework to categories the words and chart how often they were used by each participant. Appendix D provides examples of the words and phrases and how often they occur in each transcript.

After coding the interviews, I employed a triangulation of data analysis. In order to accomplish the task of triangulation I studied the differences and similarities among each case using a multiple case study analysis approach that employs triangulation of data as it relates to my research questions (Stake, 2006). The notecards used for initial coding provided the basis for determining similarities and differences. The purpose of triangulation in a case study is “to assure that we have the picture as clear and suitably meaningful as we can get it, relatively free of our own biases, and not likely to mislead the reader greatly” (Stake, 2006). The triangulation occurred using a series of findings and factors related to each of the research questions, or themes, as related to the data and each case (Stake, 2006). Using Worksheet 2(below) allowed for a more descriptive and specific triangulation of factors and themes as related to the research questions.

Adapting from Stake’s (2006) multiple case study analysis method provided for the analysis protocol for this study. Each worksheet Stake (2006) designed helped to analyze the participant as an individual then further analysis and merging of factors allowed for a picture of each case as a whole, which provided for a cross-analysis of all three cases. Each

step in this process builds upon itself in order to create a complete picture of the perceptions of teacher leadership in rural schools. The following paragraphs and worksheets will further explain how this process works and why it is important to the study. The Appendix provides specific examples of how each worksheet was completed to show the triangulation process and how each builds upon the other to create a full picture of the case as it relates to the phenomenon of teacher leadership in rural schools.

Each research question provided the details used for the overall themes in the worksheets adapted from Stake (2006). Using Worksheet 2 (Appendix E) as a guide, I identified the factors for each theme from each individual participant. While the research questions serve as the themes for each case, the factors are key terms and phrases that occur in the transcripts associated with each theme.

Worksheet 2. Themes and Factors in Each Case and Supporting Evidence

School Code:

Participant Code:

Themes	Evidence from Transcription
Theme 1: Factors	
Theme 2: Factors:	
Theme 3: Factors:	
Theme 4: Factors:	
Theme 5: Factors:	
Theme 6: Factors:	

Once these factors were identified the following adapted Worksheet 3 (Appendix F) was used in conjunction with 3x5 index cards. This worksheet looks at the overall themes and factors from each case (school) as a whole and compares those factors for commonality, or the term Stake (2006) uses “ordinariness.” The index cards were used to identify each factor as it relates to the theme identified in Worksheet 2. Each card related to the theme and was identified by the school code. The factor note cards were first separated

by each case then clustered according to similar factors and outliers are placed on the side. The examination of the similar factors helped to determine the ordinariness of the factors and themes and was identified on Worksheet 3. Because some cards were not clustered together, these were judged as to whether to include them in the final report. This process aids in strengthening the trustworthiness of the analysis and findings by showing generalizations for perceptions of teacher leadership roles and motivations in rural schools.

Worksheet 3. Estimates of Ordinariness of the Situation of Each Case

W = highly unusual situation, **u** = somewhat unusual situation, blank = ordinary situation

M = high manifestation, **m** = some manifestation, blank = almost no manifestation

	High School #1	High School #2	High School #3
Ordinariness of this Case's situation:			
Original Multi-case Themes			
Perceptions of characteristics			
Perceptions of roles			
Motivations			
Perceptions of support			
Perceptions of hindrances			

High manifestation means that the Theme is prominent in this particular case study.

A highly unusual situation (far from ordinary) is one that is expected to challenge the generality of themes.

Using a format similar to that above, the individual case note cards were merged together to create clusters of common factors. These clusters were analyzed for ordinariness and outliers were placed on the side to be further examined for the final report. Worksheet 4 (Appendix F) adapted from Stake (2006) provided the avenue for recording the merged factors from each case and recording supporting evidence used for the final analysis.

Worksheet 4. Multi-case Common Factors for the Final Report

	Merged Factor Clusters	Evidence in Which Cases	Related Theme

Seeing the factors in a general format while providing evidence from the transcribed interviews created a clear picture for the final report of data analysis. Each phase of the

analysis process built upon itself allowing for a detailed analysis of each case and synthesis of data.

The final step in data analysis was to triangulate the data based on the themes and factors identified from each of the previous three worksheets. In order to organize this data for writing the results and concluding the analysis Worksheet 5 (Appendix H) adapted from Stake (2006) was used. Again, this worksheet organizes each of the cases, the factors as they relate to each theme, and context for each piece of evidence. This worksheet acted as an outline for the final written analysis for each individual case.

Worksheet 5. Planning the Final Report

School Code	Pages	Participant Code	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3										Single Mention Topics	Quotes, Impressions

- RQ 1.) How do teacher leaders and administrators perceive the characteristics and roles of teacher leadership in school communities?
- RQ 2.) What motivates teachers to teach in rural schools and assume leadership roles?
- RQ 3.) What perceptions of support or hindrances from administrators, community members, and colleagues have teacher leaders faced when assuming leadership roles

The goal of this phenomenological case study is to “describe the ‘essence’ of the experience” as well as “develop a detailed analysis of the case” (Cresswell, 2013, p. 105). Therefore, the breadth of the description depended on the details of the interview analysis and identified factors from each theme. Identifying the individual factors as they relate to each theme for each case provides the essence of the experience for the individual cases.

Using the themes and merging the individual case factors as areas of ordinariness for each case allows for a well-developed analysis of the cases.

Ethics

All participants signed a consent to participate in this study form, which outlined the study protocol and confidentiality agreements, as per IRB protocol. Furthermore, to protect the participants and his or her school each will be coded using aliases that are held confidential (Cresswell, 2013). Throughout the interview process I utilized Rubin and Rubin's (2012) detailed examples of how to provide an ethically responsible interview and this information will act as an ethical guide for data gathering. They stated that to be ethically responsible you must:

- Not lie to gain confidence or access to the interviewee;
- Allow interviewees to assume there will be some benefit from the interview/study (monetary compensation, promotion, funding, etc.);
- Not forget to remind the participants they are being recorded/observed for the study but must abide by their wishes if they ask to be "off the record";
- Honor promises, for example if you tell the interviewee they will be able to read and correct their interviews you must allow them to do so as quickly after the interview as possible; and
- Allow for participants to back out or not participate, do not pressure them into providing information they are not comfortable discussing.

All interview tapes and transcriptions are considered confidential and placed in a locked cabinet in a locked office.

Personal and Professional Standpoint

I taught for ten years in a small private school where we faced many of the same challenges that rural schools face. Because of our lack of funding and the demands our school community put on us to ensure high levels of success of their children, the administrator utilized the strengths of the teachers to complete various leadership tasks. Based on the situation and the needs of the school, I was one of the teachers utilized to lead our staff in various areas. I served as an assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, in-service facilitator, and model/mentor teacher. During this time, I taught a full load of seven classes in grades 5-8. My desire to help my fellow colleagues strive to be improved teachers motivated me to take on these roles all the while knowing that I would not be provided with a stipend or given extra time for my additional roles. I was purely motivated by the desire to better my colleagues, my school, and myself.

It is because of my roles in a small school and district that I am interested in how rural schools, many of which possess the same hindrances and challenges I faced, are so successful. With an on time graduation rate of over 70% these schools are overcoming obstacles and embracing their community and proving successful. I want to examine how these teachers and leaders are overcoming obstacles of location, funding, and federal initiatives to be successful. Through interviewing teachers and administrators I hope to gain an insight into the lives and motivations of teacher leaders in rural schools.

Chapter IV

Results

This section provides findings from the data analysis for each individual case as well as an analysis of the combined data. First I provide a synopsis of each case and how the data relates to the research questions. I then provide details on how each case triangulated to create a generality of information as it relates to the research questions.

Case #1: Miller High School

The community of Miller is located in Eastern Washington State about 80 miles North of Spokane, WA and 40 miles South of the Canadian boarder. Farms and logging help to support this small rural community. Miller School District has approximately 898 students with Miller High School serving 253 of those students. The graduation rate of Miller High School is 87% with 51.4% of the students receiving a free and reduced lunch. There are 15 teachers at Miller High School and 78.9% have a master's degree. Miller High School was named to the US News and World Review list of Best High Schools in America for the 2011-12, and 2012-13 school years and they were listed as one of the top performing high schools serving a high poverty community by Newsweek in the 2013-14 school year, and Newsweek has contacted the administrator and indicated be listed again for the 2014-15 school year. Lastly, they received state academic achievement awards in 2009 and 2012. Miller High School is a unique case because they participated in Expeditionary Learning as well as utilized a Leadership Team made up of four teachers to help develop the SIP plan and lead professional development each week.

Before the creation of the leadership team, teachers at Miller High School participated in peer coaching where they would video each other and then discuss the progress teachers were making toward professional development goals. While teachers still participate in peer coaching, the school now uses a leadership team comprised of four teachers who either volunteered or were asked to participate because of their involvement in the school. The principal asked teachers who he thought would be valuable and could influence other teachers. Each teacher has been teaching for at least five years and not only teach his or her core subjects but also take on additional leadership roles within the school or community. The leadership team is responsible for planning and conducting weekly professional development workshops for colleagues as well as reviewing and creating the SIP plan for the year. The team meets before the school year begins to create the SIP plan and discuss possible areas of focus for professional development.

Participants in the Miller High School case study included the administrator and each member of the three members of the leadership team. Participants were coded for anonymity and are referred to by a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Participants include Mike, John, Sam, and Christina. Mike has been a principal for 22 years and has been a teacher or administrator in rural schools his entire career. During his time as a teacher he also took on leadership roles as the technology director and athletic director. John has been a teacher for nearly 13 years and is on the leadership team. He also performs informal leadership roles as a teacher leader through peer coaching, collaboration with new and veteran teachers on new ideas with incorporation of standards, readings, and sharing with others. Sam, another member of the leadership team, has been a teacher for nearly 14 years and has always taught in rural schools. He also serves on the district high school leadership

team. Christina is the last member of the leadership team and has been a teacher for over ten years. In addition to her role on the leadership team Christina is also the FCCLA advisor.

Teacher and administrator perceptions of teacher leadership characteristics and roles. This section is divided into administrator perceptions and teacher leaders perceptions to delineate between the two groups of participants.

Administrator perceptions. In response to the question about what Mike believes the skills teacher leaders need to have, Mike explained that teacher leaders need to have “An open mindset, a growth mindset.” Furthermore, recognizing that “everybody has strengths,” they also “need to be confident.” Lastly, Mike believes that a teacher leader needs to be someone who can be “really open minded and forward thinking to the possibilities and not try to refine, you know, what we’ve already done, but as much as to look for where we still get to go.” The result of this thinking is the creation of the leadership team. The leadership team is made up of four teachers who were “cherry picked.” However, just because they were chosen by Mike does not mean he chose a group of people to push his agenda, as can be seen with the following quote:

I wasn’t looking for disciples. It’s not me who makes a decision and you go out and sell it to everybody. That’s really not what I’m interested in. What I’m interested in is you guys being teachers in the trenches doing the work on kind of a tip of the spear stuff. What do you and your peers, your colleagues, need? If we know we need to move forward, where do you think we need to move forward? Not where does the principal think you need to move forward and so I want to put the ownership of developing our program, our professional development program especially, back into the laps of the people that are the ones doing it. So, it feels less done to them.

This description of the leadership team outlines responsibilities and the purpose for implementation and shows that the team has an understanding of the needs of their colleagues by creating professional development and providing mentor support. As Mike stated, he wants the leadership team to work with the staff so they do not feel like it is his vision that is being forced upon them.

As a follow-up question I asked Mike if there were teachers he saw as leaders but who were not part of the leadership team. He provided me with the example of one teacher at Miller High School who decided that because she teaches math and a LEGO Robotics course, a big screen TV would be beneficial to her students and provides for her an opportunity to incorporate more technology into her lessons. While the school did not have a budget for this, she went out and bought one for herself and her classroom. Other teachers saw what she was able to do with that piece of technology and how it impacted her students and soon wanted one. Based on Mike's description of the skills teacher leaders need possess it could be said that she, too, is a teacher leader even though she is not on the leadership team. She is a teacher leader because she is impacting other teachers with her technological knowledge and guiding them in best practices through technology integration.

Teacher perceptions. The teachers at Miller High School have varying perceptions of how they describe teacher leadership and the characteristics and roles of teacher leaders. Christina described the characteristics, stating that a teacher leader needs to be someone who has the ability to “walk the walk” and who not only helps to lead but is also “stepping up” when needed. Sam said that a leader is someone who, “realizes that you’re also participating in and helping to guide and being a facilitator to people.” Finally, according to

John, teacher leaders should be “setting an example and helping others see where we’re going and helping them find the ways to get there” while also being able to “model best practices.” These descriptions of the roles and characteristics of teacher leaders are examples of the perceptions of how these participants feel about teacher leadership as well as what their role is as a leader.

Prior to the formal leadership team, the teachers participated in peer coaching where they videoed each other practicing a particular concept discussed in professional development, peer coaching as an informal leadership model. Because of this Mike believed that the “staff has been pretty comfortable with the teachers leading teachers model.” Christina explained the role of the leadership team as being “responsible for, I guess, coming up with and leading professional development on Wednesday’s.” The school improvement plan drives the professional development experiences the leadership team provides. Sam further described the roles of the leadership team by stating that they:

Meet every Wednesday morning for approximately 90 minutes and leading up to our professional development kickoff this year, myself and the other members of the leadership team helped to create the school improvement plan and so our school improvement plan is really like the foundation of all of our work. Along with the school improvement plans, we have the new teacher evaluation that we spent a lot of time this summer working to try and make the two mesh together so we have the school improvement plan and the evaluation piece working together so that the time we spend in professional development is time that we are helping our teachers to learn and practice the skills that they are going to need to be successful on their evaluation.

Not only do many of the teachers in Miller perform formal and informal leadership roles within the school, but teachers, like Sam, serve on district committees. Sam is a member of the district leadership team where he described this role as a group who “Met together with the elementary school members, the middle school members, and the high school members and we would share what was happening in our buildings with our leadership groups.” Sam believes that it is because of his membership on the district leadership team that “now our leadership team is more focused around professional development of the staff and that’s what we’ve really focused on with the leadership team the last two years, is getting more staff involved in the process of developing our professional development and training.” While the leadership team leads the professional development activities each week, many teachers still take the initiative to coach one another through videos to help meet the goals of professional development. While the leadership team is the backbone of teacher leadership for Miller High School, they have encouraged others to step out and help one another through their own leadership.

Motivations of teacher leaders to work in rural schools. Motivations for participants in Miller High School to work in rural schools, and Miller in particular were varied. Overall the participants both grew up in Miller or in other rural communities and wanted to provide the same type of environment and experiences for their children that they had growing up.

One reason Sam came to Miller was because he grew up in Miller and his family still lives in the area, so it was a natural choice to move closer to family. He added that because he was from Miller he feels like he “understood the kids that grow up here and the opportunities they have and the opportunities they don’t have based on where they live.”

John stated that being part of Miller was not a choice because of the environment and that being part of Northeast Washington is “just home.” Christina was drawn to Miller because she grew up in a small community and knew that she wanted to be in a small school. For Christina it went beyond the small community outlook and a sense of place to the experience of her children. She was frank, stating, “I don’t want my kids in the big school.”

Another aspect all these participants have in common is that they completed their student teaching in small, rural schools, so moving or returning to Miller was just a natural progression. For example, Sam stated, “I spent my first five years teaching in a rural school district in Central Oregon, North Central Oregon, and when the opportunity came to be able to move back to my hometown that was pretty important to my wife, and I wanted to be closer to my family.” John accomplished his student teaching in another small rural community in the area and when he finished,

I was asked to apply to Miller. I subbed for a year after student teaching in [School A], so I subbed for a year and actually the day I was hired at [School A], I was a full time teacher. Miller asked me to put in materials, and this is home. So I actually got hired in two schools on the same day.

Finally, Christina grew up in a small rural community in southern Washington and when it came time to choose her student teaching location she knew she wanted a small community like the one in which she grew up. When considering her family, she stated, “I was able to never ask a question, if we could make it work it was going to be small from just what I experienced growing in there, you know. Its just a great way to raise a family.” Christina also did her student teaching in Miller and when her master teacher retired she took her position.

Motivations of teacher leaders to assume leadership roles. The participants all expressed varying reasons and motivations for assuming leadership roles. John was, Inspired to take, to volunteer, through I guess a desire to tackle some frustrations that were shared frustrations and nobody really wanted to do anything about or could do anything about. And then I was also asked to take on a leadership role. I got it from both directions, so I thought I would like to try it and then somebody suggested, well, may be you should. So I did.

John was motivated to join the leadership team by a desire to try to bring to light his frustrations and those expressed by his colleagues. But he was motivated to assume informal roles as well by providing guidance and “just collaborating with new ideas. You know, trying to incorporate life standards, basic reading and stuff like that. So, we—if we figured out what we were doing we tried to share it with others.” While John was motivated by change and understanding, Christina was motivated by the encouragement of her principal at the completion of her master’s degree. She admitted that “I think, Mike saying ‘I think you are ready for this’ and then because I did my Master’s through Gonzaga so I just finished that a few years ago . . . and so I don’t know that I felt like I have more skill set, but it was just kind of a natural progression.” Like Christina, Sam was motivated by his pursuits of a higher degree, and membership on the leadership team was a natural progression. He believes that because “I’ve been working towards an administrative certification, and earned it two years ago and so this was kind of a natural progression in my career.” Because of his administrative certification, Sam believes his teacher leader roles have evolved over the course of time. He explained,

Well, it's changed over time with different administration at the higher levels. We've had a new superintendent and so things have changed a little bit as far as my role. But I've been a part of, we had a group called the District Leadership Team, and we met together with the elementary school members, the middle school members, and the high school members and we would share what was happening in our buildings with our leadership groups and now our leadership team is more focused around professional development of the staff.

Motivations for participants to accept leadership roles varied from being asked by the principal to receiving higher education degrees and certifications. These leaders have followed Mike's description of leadership: having a growth mindset, the confidence to step up and take on roles, and to set an example for others formally on various leadership teams and informally by sharing with others.

Teacher leader perspectives on the supports and hindrances of the roles of teacher leaders. According to the participants, the greatest challenge and hindrance they experience is the lack of funding and time. While the participants did say that the administration and the district works diligently to find money through grants to help provide what teachers need, they also said it was difficult sometimes.

Finding the time to perform their leadership tasks while teaching a full schedule can also be a problem for these participants. For example, when talking about time and responsibilities of rural educators versus larger district educators, Sam explained:

I think it might be a little more unique that in a larger school and that all of our members of our leadership team are teachers that are teaching a full load and so we

don't maybe have as much time together to meet; unlike maybe in a larger district where it might be a prep period for those members.

Another example of time constraints Sam provided further explained this notion as it relates to leadership roles:

The toughest thing for us, because we're a small school, is once we've laid the plans, like at the beginning of the year and the beginning of new semester, is being able to find the time to follow up leading to each weekly professional development time and so even though we have kind of the map laid out, we're all really busy with coaching and extra-curricular activities that we are involved in that to find the time for us all to get together.

Finding time to accomplish tasks is often difficult for teachers, but it seems especially challenging for these rural schoolteacher leaders because of the heavy press of duties. For Sam and his colleagues it is not only that they teach a full class load; they also serve on district committees, they are instructional coaches and mentors, and they serve as advisors for extra-curricular activities. As teacher leaders these participants have found support with the use of technology to help them communicate to accomplish their leadership tasks. Use of technology has been a great time saver for the leadership team, especially Office 365 and One Note. Sam explained:

You know the one thing that has probably helped us [leadership team] the most is technology. We use Microsoft One Note to communicate as a group and so we organize our agenda on our One Note Tab and the four of us are all connected together and we can add things and make comments and if we have questions they are answered there. So , that's been really huge so we don't always have to come

together into one room and meet because our prep periods are all different periods, first, second, and third and so on. And also our principal is really good that we can come down during our prep period and have a conversation with him about planning and then that gets put into One Note or it gets brought to the other two members during their prep periods.

Using technology as a means of communication has provided Miller participants a way to balance their leadership roles with their classroom teaching responsibilities.

Time, however, is not the only factor that hinders these rural school teacher leaders. Other factors that hinder these participants in their roles are skepticism and cynicism by colleagues as well as being part of a small community in general. John explained:

Skepticism comes from a lack of trust in the direction we have gone in the past and to be taken in a certain direction and not actually being able to meet the goals we wanted to meet, then changed totally to something different, it's like we're stopping, going, never getting anywhere. That kind of skepticism has been a hindrance because a lot of teachers are like "here we go again. What are we going to do? So, how is this going to be any different than the last seven things we have tried?" So, trying to re-direct the attention away from the past to where we're at now, where we're hoping to go and trying to give the assurances that you know, if we keep putting our, you know, digging our heels in, we're going to get nowhere. So we have to try to get past the skepticism and cynicism, and you know, look, what is it? The glass half full as opposed to half empty . . . to communicate that this actually has substance. Whatever we are doing now has substance. We got to work with that and not worry about the past. That becomes the hindrances, worrying about what failed.

Where John feels the skepticism and cynicism associated with mandated change, Sam addressed the issue by stating that they are trying to combat these issues through “changing our culture” by learning to,

Change the staff perspective to a positive one by changing the experiences to positive experiences, changing the type of dialogue we have with each other or about each other, so that we can move forward instead of staying, you know, spinning our wheels in the mud.

Teacher leaders are the key to ensuring that this change in perspective happens because as stated in the participants’ description of the characteristics, they lead by example. In this way it seems as though these teacher leaders are essential to changing the mindset of their staff and promoting a positive environment for growth.

While all these participants desired the small rural community way of life they experienced growing up, for some it can also be seen as a challenge. John described life as a rural teacher leader as someone who is seen with two sides,

I think a teacher automatically has that second role in public that they just can’t, they can’t drop their teacher face, you know, when they walk out the door because especially in a community like this, you’re constantly looked at as a teacher, so whatever you do out there reflects on you as a person that’s in a classroom with kids. So, having the extra visibility out in the public is a good thing or it can be a bad thing.

These participants desired that sense of small community living for their children and for their career, but as John has explained, it is also a double-edged sword because they are always in the public eye whether shopping at the grocery store or attending a sporting

event. According to John's perception, another hindrance of living and leading in a small community is:

Because we're a small community, whatever decisions we make in here [school] that don't work out, they sure hear about it. So, that becomes another obstacle to progress, I guess, is when parents distrust the system to a point, now the kids distrust the system to where, okay, well, why should we put forth that much effort because the parents are going to be against it anyway.

John and other participants are trying to change the mindset and culture of not only the staff but also the community to gain the trust of the school and administration and ultimately progress toward stated goals. John stated that a big part of changing the mindset is not only to change the staff perspective and the dialogue they have, but also to "hopefully have the students change the dialogue they have about us to their parents. So, it's an overall district culture change and one of the main obstacles of that is actually having buy in from the parents."

While Miller is a small community and sometimes it may seem like a hindrance to the participants, there are benefits to being part of the small community. One of the benefits the community of Miller provides for its school is the connection with the Expeditionary Learning projects. Sam explained,

Expeditionary Learning really asks you to have in place with your expeditions is experts that are in the field or maybe were in the field at one time that can lend support; whereas the teacher doesn't have to try to be the expert on everything.

Furthermore, as Christina explained, the community members work in conjunction with the school and are "mentors on the robotics program and then we have community leaders

that coach.” Having that direct connection with the community where the community members support the school and its leaders and having the community be a part of the educational process where they are involved in the learning of the students by providing their expertise seems to be benefit.

Another way that the participants felt supported was through the administration and its willingness to help find funds to allow them to travel for professional development opportunities. Mike said that teachers are encouraged to travel for professional development opportunities because when teachers are presented with an option they will choose to travel over a stipend for the same work. He said it ties into how you motivate people:

What I’ve learned is if I went to a teacher and I said for \$800, \$1000, I’ll give you a stipend to do all this work. You’re going to tell me no, its not worth it. But if I can set up a professional experience for you, where you get to travel with your friends and your colleagues for a week, four or five days, to go to some city, all expenses paid, and you get to present some of the work you’ve done, they jump on it in a heartbeat. Teachers are willing to go out and travel and go and see, for less money that you would’ve paid them in a stipend to just do the work at home.

Finding the funds for these teachers to travel has been the key to help them develop as teacher leaders. When talking about the travel opportunities provided Christina explained that the administration, both school and district, has been “super supportive” and that because of these experiences “I’ve got to travel for training to some just absolutely amazing places.” But for Christina, it is not just the travel for trainings and professional development that helps her feel supported; it is also the weekly professional development

opportunities that allow, “time for training and helping us develop as professionals.” The administration has encouraged this type of professional development opportunities through individual goal setting and asking, “So, what kind of trainings do you need?” and then providing it for those teachers if possible through the use of the leadership team. Because the team spends time with the SIP plan and the creation of the professional development opportunities they can help to meet the needs and goals of the staff. Furthermore, Miller has created a leadership structure that has encouraged an open line of communication where staff members feel comfortable going to a leadership team member for clarification or advice. When discussing his relationship with his peers now that he is on the leadership team, Sam reflected:

I think it’s probably strengthened my relationship with my peers because if there are concerns our staff will come and speak to myself or one of the other members where maybe it’s not in a staff meeting where there’s a spotlight on it. But then things can be handled and discussed in a less public way and then we can move forward and take those thoughts and ideas and mesh them into our plans for moving forward.

John has a similar statement regarding his relationship with his peers. He believes his relationship has been more productive because,

I think now that I can help clarify things that are happening, you know, from a planning table to our professional development into our classrooms, being able to communicate what is being decided and how it’s being decided, and the purpose for being decided, I think it just helped make the dialogue more productive.

Finally, Christina described the relationship with peers as strengthened because “it’s not always the principal that’s saying this is what you shall do, it’s coming from a team of three people that are doing it in their own class.” In this way, the ownership is now on the teacher leaders to develop programs and provide professional development necessary to and desired by the staff. This form of teacher leadership encourages the staff to feel ownership for what is happening in the school and they don’t feel that it’s something being done to them. As stated in the examples, the perceptions of the other teachers is that they know that decisions regarding professional development are not just a top-down decision and that these leaders are also going to be making the changes in their own classrooms. These teacher leaders are there for support and to help others achieve their goals and the goals of the school and not to roadblock or dictate the changes the administration wants to see.

Miller High School has a carefully structured teacher leadership team that provides support for the school and staff while being an opportunity for changing the culture of the school to a positive climate that values open communication. Examples of teacher leadership characteristics and roles support the definition of teacher leadership by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009). Teacher leaders lead beyond the classroom and contribute to a community of teacher learners by assuming roles on the leadership team that would help to alleviate frustrations where they could inform or explain issues or changes to the staff and by creating professional development opportunities for the staff that are meaningful.

While there are challenges facing the leadership team, it is the support of the administration, the district and the open communication with their peers that makes this

leadership team and each member's relationship with his or her peers successful for this small rural school district. By embracing the strengths of the teacher leaders on the leadership team and in the rest of the building, the administration has provided a cadre of support for the school where the professional development opportunities are what the staff needs and desires, not what the administration thinks they want. Finally, through connections with the community and the Expeditionary Learning model, Miller embraces the small community idea of sense of place and builds upon it by providing for its students an experience that is unique to their environment and encourages their connection with the space in which they live.

Case #2: Strongleather Flats High School

The small community of Strongleather Flats is located in central Washington State, approximately 123 miles west of Spokane, Washington, and about 83 miles south of the Canadian border. This incredibly small community's economy is reliant upon agriculture, the CJ Dam, and seasonal tourism along the river. It is because of the large agricultural demands that 95% of the 833 students in the school district are English Language Learning students and 99% of students receiving free and reduced lunches. Strongleather Flats High School serves approximately 222 students and boasts an 87% graduation rate with 50% receiving enough credits by the end of their senior year to be one quarter shy of achieving an Associates Degree through the local Wenatchee Valley College extension program. There are thirteen teachers in Strongleather Flats High School and one counselor and of those 43% hold a master's degree. Strongleather Flats High School participates in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which works to close the achievement gap for students through college preparation and other opportunities beyond

high school. For the 2014 school year Strongleather Flats had Advanced Placement Test participation with 30% of AP students scoring 3, 4, or 5's. Furthermore, Strongleather Flats High School earned the Washington Achievement Award for the past six years with the most recent 2014 award for Overall Excellence, Reading Growth, and Extended Graduation Rate. Several high-tiered public officials have spoken at commencement. Most notably in 2011, President Obama was in the running for the Commencement Challenge, while they didn't acquire President Obama they did have Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis speak as well as Governor Gregoir. Strongleather Flats High School is nationally known; its principal is asked to speak all over the nation at conferences and she takes many of her teachers with her to share what they do and why they are so successful.

Participants in Strongleather Flats High School included the administrator, two teachers, and one counselor/teacher. The administrator selected three teachers based on the previously provided guidelines and our initial discussion. Participants were coded for anonymity and are referred to by a pseudonym. One interview was completed with two participants at once (Mary and Jim); however, they are coded individually on the transcript. During the dual interview, Mary and Jim would often build upon each other's comments to further explain a statement.

The first participant is Janet, who has been an administrator for seven years and has been a teacher for 29 years. Janet still teaches one class a day for the local community college. Janet was chosen by the Department of Education to be a classroom teacher fellow from 2009-2010. During that time Janet worked for the US Department of Education with the Secretary of State and would fly back and forth across the nation for meetings and conferences. Janet was also part of the America Achieves Fellow program as one of five

principals in the nation selected. The America Achieves program is a philanthropic non-profit program sponsored by the Gates Foundation and Bloomberg Foundation. They bring teacher leaders and principal leaders from across the nation to discuss issues facing education today. During her two year term she will spend time flying back and forth to Washington, D.C. working with government officials such as Patty Murray. Before working with the Department of Education Janet worked for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) as a member of the Writing Assessment Leadership Team. Janet is also a trustee for Wenatchee Valley Community College, which is a ten-year appointment that is appointed by the Governor. The first teacher leader participant is Mary, the school counselor, advanced placement psychology teacher, and director of a migrant program in the high school. The second teacher leader participant is Bob who has been teaching for six years. He is the FFA Advisor, agricultural education teacher, advanced placement microeconomics teacher, and has volunteered to pilot a program to link an advanced placement program with current technical education programs. Finally, the last participant is Jim, who has been teaching for 26 years; 21 of them at Strongleather Flats. He teaches freshman English, advanced placement U.S. History, college U.S. History, and the College in the High School program with Wenatchee Valley Community College. He also teaches advanced placement government and college government classes in the high school as well as 10th-12th grade American Studies. He recently gave up his prep period to teach 8th grade civics. In addition to teaching a full load of classes, Jim serves on the district Leadership Literacy Team, he is an advisor, a coach, and he spends time afterschool providing HSPE preparation classes and COMPASS test preparation classes.

Teacher and administrator perceptions of teacher leadership characteristics, and roles. This section is divided into administrator perceptions and teacher leaders perceptions to delineate between the two groups of participants.

Administrator perceptions. Janet described teacher leadership as “Someone who is able to be a part of the group as a teacher, an equal, a peer, but yet can influence and be a model for others.” She also said that a teacher leaders needs to be “somebody who is willing to be down in the trenches and getting dirty with everybody else and show who is really willing to say I make mistakes. I’m not perfect. I have not arrived as a teacher.” Janet believes that teachers who embody those characteristics are “the most powerful ones and influencing their peers and the teacher leader is going to think of kids first and expect the stars.” She also said that teacher leaders “need to have integrity” and “They have to walk the walk because they can say whatever, but their peers need to see that ‘Wow!’ they’re doing it.”

Teacher perceptions. Jim described a teacher leader as “Someone who exemplifies and models the behavior that you would expect of followers or students . . . someone who models and exemplifies what they want done.” Not only is it important for a teacher leader to be a model for their peers, but according to Mary a teacher leader also needs to be someone who “steps up, maybe out of their comfort zone, to make changes that need to happen.” Jim provided an example of a teacher stepping up and making changes that need to happen, having given up his prep period to teach 8th grade civics. Mary used this example to help provide an example of teacher leadership in action:

I’ve never seen somebody excited to give up his or her prep. That is stepping out of your comfort zone. You probably didn’t know what you were stepping into. You

always hear horror stories about oh, this class is so difficult. And he was looking forward to it. So that right there I think is teacher leadership.

Jim built on this example given by Mary, stating:

Teacher leadership is being a team player, someone who's not Rambo, someone who's not going on it alone. A leader is also part of the team. You look at sports teams that are quite successful. For example, the Seahawks, you look at Russell Wilson. He's part of the team. But at the same time he's a leader. You can look at the San Antonio Spurs: Tim Duncan, Ginobili, Parker, they are leaders. But at the same time they are part of the team. And they make sacrifices. They have to make sacrifices for the benefit and the general welfare of the team. I think that's what team leaders are. Team leaders also have to get involved at the local level—be a part of, let's say, a literary cadre at our local ESD. Or in the past I served on the state writing team where 40 teachers across the state served on the state writing team. Sometimes you have to step out of your comfort zone and do some things that you don't maybe necessarily want to do, but it's what's ultimately best for the team, it's what's ultimately best for Strongleather Flats High School and then ultimately what's best for our students.

Overall, Jim identified several necessary characteristics of leadership for a teacher leader: Being part of a team, someone willing to make sacrifices, and someone willing to get involved at the local or state level. Mary believed that another characteristic of a good teacher leader is someone who “doesn't always have to have the answers, but they have to be willing to seek it out and seek out the resources.” Mary continues by saying that “And in this school district, a leader is somebody who doesn't—like you say, just doesn't go with

the status quo—really tries to make a difference by taking that extra step.” Jim continued this definition, stating, “a leader also has to have a vision of what should be done, whether it’s in a classroom working with peers, colleagues or students...So leaders have a vision. And leaders have a mission to accomplish.” The teacher participants were selected by their principal because she feels they embody the characteristics described and because they go beyond their classroom to make a difference and promote change.

Jim felt that his biggest leadership role is being a motivator and cheerleader for his students. He explained this, stating,

It’s when they come into my room their freshman year, it’s my job to motivate those students to take AP classes, College in the High School classes their junior and senior year so that we can create that legacy of lifelong learning for first-generation students. So being a leader is literally being a motivator and cheerleader as well—being positive with the kids—that these kids can do it.

Bob provides leadership by serving on the FFA and the Ag Teachers Association as District President as well as serving as the FFA advisor for the school. According to the participants, they feel that teachers in general also serve as counselors to the students, whether they have them in class or not. Mary provides help and guidance to the migrant groups and migrant recordkeeping so no child goes unnoticed or is left behind. She provides trainings for the district and surrounding areas through counseling workshops and creating a team with the elementary and middle schools counselors. Teacher leaders in rural schools assume many varied responsibilities, but the teacher leaders in Strongleather Flats High School have a list of responsibilities they take on for the sole reason that it is “what is best for the kids.” Each additional role beyond their classroom assignments is what is best for

their school and the students they serve and they step out and challenge themselves just as they challenge their students so the students and their colleagues can see that they “walk the walk” and don’t just “talk the talk.”

Motivations of teacher leaders and administrators to work in rural schools.

Teacher leaders have many reasons for desiring teaching positions in rural schools and to live in rural schools. The reasons for the participants at Strongleather Flats are just as varied. One teacher grew up in a small rural community near Strongleather Flats and two were raised in large cities in western and eastern Washington. Despite such varied experiences, these participants came to the small rural school because they wanted to have more personal relationships with their students and to know the students and their families better. This section is divided into two sections to further delineate the motivations between the administrator and the teacher leaders.

Teacher leader motivation. The motivation to live and work in a small rural community for t teachers at Strongweather Flats was varied. Only Bob was originally from a small rural community, and the others grew up in larger cities but had experiences working and living in small rural communities, so Strongleather Flats was a natural progression for them. Bob grew up in a small rural community and because of his experiences growing up in a similar geographic area he seems to understand that in:

A school like this, you know their brothers, their sisters, their parents, their uncles, and their cousins. So if Johnny doesn’t do his homework or is smarting off in class or something you can get a hold of someone and they straighten him out for you.

It is his understanding and personal experience with a small rural community that has motivated him to want to move to Strongleather Flats and teach in a rural high school.

Mary “wanted to raise my family in a small community” rather than a large urban city like where she grew up. Because of this desire, Mary completed her student teaching in a nearby a small rural community. She described the community as “smaller than it is here.” However, because of that experience she stated,

It was just natural that I would stay in the area. . . [Because, I] really wanted to be in a profession where I was helping kids and I was working with children. I wanted to be around my children’s peers because I have three children. When I go the job here seven years ago, I ended up transferring my two youngest kids to go to school with me. I feel like this was a great environment for them to be in.

Jim’s first experience with small rural living was when he went to college in eastern Washington, where he “really liked the small town setting.” But experiences living, working and going to school in small rural communities aren’t the only reasons these teacher leaders chose Strongleather Flats. Jim’s motivation to teach in a small rural community is the opportunity to:

Have a greater impact on these students. These are first-generation students literally going to college. And if we can impress upon them that this is important not only for you but your kids, your grandkids, and your great-grandkids, where you are going to build that legacy. I really enjoy Strongleather Flats. I think as an educator I can have a greater impact here.

Jim has spent some time teaching in an affluent urban school district, so his perception of the relationships between himself and his students is based on his experience with both affluent urban students and students at Strongleather Flats, who he described to be “over 90% Hispanic.” This desire to have an impact is not a single notion from just one

participant. Based on Mary's experience attending a large, affluent school in a large city, she expressed that,

We have kids that I probably would never had the exposure to had I stayed in [School A]. And I say that because our kids are not entitled. They work hard for what they have and their families are excited to have us a part of their lives. Jim has taught these kids—their parents. So that's kind of exciting. I think it's kind of exciting. He has a little bit of leverage . . . And we can push the kids to really challenge themselves, I think, by applying for maybe scholarships and colleges and maybe putting themselves out there and taking AP classes and college classes where maybe they wouldn't have a tendencies to do that. Maybe they would hang back. I feel like in a smaller school and especially in this school district, there's such a college-going culture that we can really push.

These participants believe that it is the small, rural environment that has allowed them to develop relationships and the opportunities to get to know students beyond the classroom. Jim's experience in a large school has informed his perception that "at a larger school you don't get to develop the personal relationships with the students as you do at a small, rural school" and it is those relationships that motivated him to move to Strongleather Flats over 20 years ago and teach in the high school. Furthermore, Jim feels that,

A key to success for students in a small, rural school is I'm almost like a parent, a surrogate parent. I have freshman English and I also have senior AP government and College in the High School political science. So I literally get to see them grow from their freshman year to their senior year. Not only do I get to see them grow,

but also I'm in a sense a surrogate parent for all four years. As a teacher, I can push them because I know their abilities and skills. At a large school district—I'm just saying my personal experience is I didn't have that same opportunity that I have here at Strongleather Flats.

Motivations for these teacher leaders to live and work in the small rural community of Strongleather Flats are varied, but at the forefront is their desire to have relationships with students beyond the classroom.

Motivations for teacher leaders to assume leadership roles. The teachers in Strongleather Flats have various reasons for assuming leadership roles. For Jim “it ultimately goes to what’s best for kids.” Using this as motivation, Jim is “also on the Leadership Literacy Team down at the local ESD. So you have to do several roles, bring back the information and distribute the information to our colleagues and to the students. You’re not only a coach.” This example shows how even while Jim assumes a teacher leader role, he views it not just as a coaching role for his colleagues but also a connection with what is best for the students in the school. Listening to Jim’s story, Mary added:

Sometimes you’re a counselor too. . . I say that because my daughter was in his advisory. And then my son took several of his classes. And he was probably a better counselor to my son than I was . . . [I] think we all have multiple roles.

Bob’s leadership is currently focused around his development of the FFA program and service on the state FFA board. However, he stated that “when it comes to the FFA and Ag teacher side of things, I was involved with FFA since my freshman year of high school. So I know those circles really well.”

Teacher leader perspectives on the supports and hindrances on their roles as teacher leaders in rural schools. Each rural community is unique and Strongleather Flats is no exception due to its location on the banks of the Columbia River and its overwhelming migrant population. While the context of Strongleather Flats High School is unique, it shares hindrances and challenges common to other low-income rural schools, such as lack of money and funding. Janet explained that it is often difficult to pass bonds and levies because “We are high poverty . . . most every one of our kids is a first generation kid, not just to go to college, but to even complete high school.” She continued by explaining that “The people who vote and who would be paying for the levies and the bonds are saying no” and “the people we serve can’t vote . . . And until this population here takes over the voting population, their numbers rise, we’re going to face that difficulty of raising money to support the schools.” As Jim described his perception of this challenge with the community and monetary issues he explained, “We are growing as a district, and the community’s just not passing the bonds for new buildings.” Despite the lack of funding for bonds and levies, Strongleather Flats High School has continued to grow and thrive. The teachers know that it is a great challenge and they still stay because it is for the kids that they do their job.

Like other rural schools, finding the funding for professional development and travel expenses is often difficult for Strongleather Flats High School. To combat this challenge they have to be “a little more creative” in finding money and as Janet recognized, many of the teachers “spend more of their personal money than they should.” Another way that Strongleather Flats combats the funding issue to provide opportunities for teachers is through grant writing. A district administrator position exists, whose sole purpose is to write grants. Strongleather Flats High School has also partnered with Wenatchee Valley

Community College to help with programs and providing opportunities for students that would otherwise be financially out of reach for both the school and its student body.

One challenge more specific to Strongleather Flats High School is the issue of race. Because the student body is 90% Hispanic (and growing), language barriers and a perception of racism exists among community members and some families. For example, according to Janet's perception the community of Strongleather Flats has "A population that is not Hispanic and who do not have kids in our school and who have issue with other races . . . We've had people actually take their kids out of here as our school, our population, the Hispanic population grew." Janet reasoned this was due to a "lack of cultural understanding on both sides" and this is yet another reason why many of the bonds and levies do not pass. According to Jim's perception and experiences many of the Hispanic community members have a difficult time because "it's hard to get used to new language and the structure." Mary perceives the relationship with the Hispanic community as families who, "just don't understand our culture, meaning our system of education." Although Jim and Mary perceive the relationship with the community as difficult sometimes, Strongleather Flats High School is moving forward and has created the position of Director of Migrant Programs. While the educational relationship with many of the families is perceived as a "cultural misunderstanding" it may also be that these families are unaware "of how our educational system works," And so to alleviate the cultural understanding about education with the families Mary runs a migrant program at the school that includes record keeping and communicating with families. "While they may not understand or be aware of our educational system," Jim said, "they do place their utmost trust and confidence in us as professionals to do what is best for their kids." The overall

belief about the relationship with the Hispanic students and families is based on the desire for these kids to have a choice. As Janet explains,

I can have an impact on where they're going and these kids in this community particularly they don't have any role models that go into higher education or who have any jobs beyond agriculture. We need agriculture workers and I am impressed by them. There is no way. I would be hungry and starve. I couldn't pay rent, or feed myself if you sent me out to pick cherries or apples because I couldn't pick them. I couldn't pick fast enough, and I'm like wow, how do you do that? I mean, they're good at what they do...But I want these kids to have the choice to work out in the fields or to work in an office or be a doctor or be a teacher. I want them to have that choice. I don't want them to leave here saying they had no choices when they left.

In order for these kids to relate to their teachers and take advantage of the choices given to them they must have trust and the trust the kids have for the teachers can be another challenge; however, Bob found a way to help connect with his students by:

Telling them I used to work in the orchard. My family worked in the orchard, both grandparents owned orchards. That's how I made it through college was working in the orchards, you know, 22-hour days, I've been there. Once that kind of got related that I came from the same roots . . . really cemented relationships with the kids.

Bob believes it was this story and others of working in the orchards that also encouraged students to participate in FFA. According to Bob, the program grew from six members the first year to 34 at the time of the interview. Bob realized that the key to building relationships with his students was to find a connection point, and he believes that for most

of the students at Strongleather Flats High School all they know is working the fields, so this connection is a big step to build the trust for the students and their parents.

While funding seems to be a large hindrance and challenge recognized by all the participants, they did say that it was because of the support of the district and the administration that they were able to develop their educational pedagogy and leadership skills through workshops and travel to conferences. Some even presented about the programs at Strongleather Flats High School. When discussing the ways administration supports teacher attendance at trainings, Janet stated that the school and district “send them to trainings, whatever they need, with you know, within reason. But yeah, we and try to send them out of state, out, to see what else is out there.” Because Strongleather Flats High School is an AP and AVID school, it is important for teachers to be able to travel to trainings and seminars so the teacher leaders can bring back the knowledge gained to their colleagues. No matter where these trainings and seminars may be because of the location of Strongleather Flats participants have to travel. But for these teachers, providing travel to Virginia, Hawaii, or other places is similar in cost and time to traveling within the state. However, being able to not only experience trainings from experts but also experiencing a different culture or learn new historical information is a way to make the most of the limited grant money allotted for travel. Not only do AVID teachers or AP teachers take advantage of these trainings, but according to Jim there is encouragement for “people to go and take the AP institutes and get the training even if they’re not going to teach an AP class because you can still use those same skills, methods, in a ‘standard’ class . . .” and then share that knowledge with colleagues further developing teacher leaders. The administration does not just try to find money for these trainings; they also go out of their way to provide

money for student programs, like FFA. For example, the FFA conference was during AP testing, and students could not participate in both simultaneously. However, with the help of the administration and grants money was given for these students to go to the conference and then take the AP exams when they returned. These are examples of how just because Strongleather Flats is small and underfunded they have support of district administrators and local administrators to attend conferences, trainings, and seminars because in the end it is the students who will benefit and become successful.

In many ways the school serves as the community center for the town because they do not have one and it provides a place for families and community members to gather and interact. Mary explained, "We don't have a community center. This town doesn't have one. So the school is the community center." For these participants teaching at Strongleather Flats High School is not just a job, they have a connection to the community, a strong sense of place.

Strongleather Flats High School is unique in its location, its isolation from larger communities, and its lack of funding support from community members. Despite all these challenges, however, Strongleather Flats provides its students with an education that is rooted in the belief of doing what is best for the kids. Administrators have provided a climate of support for teachers to step up and assume leadership roles within the school. These leaders do not see their role as singular and isolated only to their classroom, but instead are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone to take on additional roles as needed for the success of the students. They are enthusiastic about their school, their students, and their roles within the community.

Case #3: Richardson High School

Richardson High School is located in north central Washington State about one hundred miles north west of Spokane and fifty miles south of the Canadian boarder. Richardson School District has roughly 1114 students. Richardson High school boasts a 95% graduation rate with 70% of students receive free and reduced lunch, 20% of students are Native American, 60% are white/Caucasian, and 20% are Hispanic. Richardson High School has 274 students in a building that houses grades 6-12. Many of the teachers, such as the art and music teacher, share teaching positions in grades 6-12. There are seventeen teachers and four support staff, which serve the special education programs. Richardson High School has received the Washington State Achievement award, is a 2013 School of Distinction, and their art students and program continuously receive the Golden Apple Award, and their football and basketball teams have upheld their athletic success by earning State Championship honors and 75% of Richardson students participate in a club or a sport. Furthermore, the science program has developed two studies, which have won four national awards including two from the EPA in the 2014-2015 school year, one from a private source and one from the state. The school prides itself in its academic success and this is evident with the student support team that meets every week to discuss students. Because the school is small the teachers have the unique advantage of having students in their classes for many years, which allows for the creation of relationships and staying on top of student growth and behavior is paramount in the success of the students and of the school.

Participants included four teachers and one administrator. The administrator selected four teachers based on the previously provided guidelines and our initial

discussion. Participants were coded for anonymity and are referred to by using pseudonyms.

Bruce is the principal of Richardson High School. In addition to his administrative roles, Bruce is a member of the State Principal Association where he serves as a board member and has served on the state board for student leadership for twelve years. The first teacher leader participant is Jeff and he teaches business education, is the FBLA advisor, the volleyball coach, the head track coach, the senior class advisor, serves on the technology committee and is on the attendance committee. When he isn't advising, coaching, and teaching he serves on the advisory committee for Wenatchee Valley Community College. Jeff has been at Richardson for ten years and before that taught in a large school district on the west side of the state. Tim is the second teacher leader participant and is the social studies teacher, assistant basketball coach, serves as a football official and radio broadcaster for the high school football and basketball games. Tim has been at Richardson for 22 years and before that he taught in another small rural school. The third participant is Sally. She teaches English and is the junior class advisor, year book club advisor, junior high head volleyball coach, junior high head track coach, and the assistant track coach at the high school. Sally has been teaching for eight years in Richardson and before that taught in a small school in Oregon. The final participant is Sarah, who has been teaching for 32 years. She is the life science teacher, the ASB advisor, science department chair, and is a National Board Certification Mentor.

Teacher and administrator perceptions of teacher leadership characteristics, and roles. The participants at Richardson High School have varied opinions of what teacher leadership means to them. This section is divided into administrator perceptions and teacher perceptions so as to delineate between the participant roles and answers.

Administrator perceptions. According to Bruce, teacher leadership is:

where the other teachers look up to that teacher for advice and the teacher who is a teacher leader gives good advice plus they model it in their classrooms and with their students before and after school and in the community.

According to Bruce, teacher leaders need to:

Be compassionate, they have to be knowledgeable and they have to not be self-centered. It's not about them, it's about the students, about their school. They're always looking to see what's best for everyone as opposed to maybe their history department or themselves or something they've looked at...with a group broad picture all the time instead of a little cubby hole at their end. They care.

If Bruce sees a teacher that exhibits these characteristics he encourages them to take on leadership roles. To this end: "We put teachers on committees. We don't have that many committees I mean, some schools, I know they have so many committees all over the place and so we have a few committees and teachers in leadership role." Bruce shared that when the teachers are on the committees he "can look to see the ones that the other teachers are listening to when they talk, when the students listen to them when they talk." Furthermore, these are the teachers that "people go to for advice" and he will "talk to these teachers and see what they say and use them to help me out too as advice and the ways to learn different methods of teaching and what's going on in their classrooms."

Bruce views teacher leaders as those who exhibit characteristics like caring, those willing to see the big picture and what's best for the school and students instead of what is best for the individual, and he encourages leadership by observing the interactions of the teachers.

Teacher perceptions. While the leadership roles of these teachers go beyond their teaching assignments, the definitions of leadership are fairly consistent. Jeff explained that being a leader “is giving people that I supervise the guidance to enable them to be leaders, be independent thinkers.” Sarah explained that being a leader is doing what needs to be done regardless of being paid or not. She has taken on leadership roles because it is what needed to be done for the school and the students. Along these lines is the idea that,

Being a leader involves being able to sit back and analyze your situation or analyze the situation of the school . . . it also means listening to other people and trying to get a group consensus when you're trying to solve problems in a place like a school that involves a lot of different people . . . you have to be able look back and see where your problem is and then involve the people who are involved in the problem and the solution. It needs to be kind of ground up solution system, not top down.

But it's more than problem solving and being able to recognize the problem and solution; Sarah stated that teacher leadership is “being a role model.” Sarah said it is also “setting a high standard . . . and just being there to mentor young teachers or if teachers are having a problem, being able to join in the conversations and problem/solutions discussions during lunch.” Jeff offered a particularly insightful explanation:

If you are a person who wants to teach in a rural school district, you need to know you have to coach. You have to advise. You have to wear more hats than you do if you're teaching in an urban school or in a large number school.

Motivations of teacher leaders to work in rural schools. As stated in the definitions of leadership, these teacher leaders understand their roles as something that needs to be done for the students, so they step up and act as role models by assuming roles beyond their teaching assignments. For each of these participants the reasons for assuming teaching and leadership roles in the rural community of Richardson is as varied as the roles themselves. However, there is one common trend: they each emphasized the importance of establishing close ties with the community and relationships with students and family. Sarah explained that the "intimacy that you have getting to have students multiple years and really getting to know your students" was what inspired her to teach in rural schools. Sarah has taught in other several other rural schools in eastern Washington State. Not only does she believe the students are "a little more down to earth, have better manners" but the geographic region of the rural school was an important factor because her family enjoys skiing, snowshoeing, and riding horses. All of these reasons are why she desired to teach in rural schools and Richardson in particular. Like other participants in other schools, Jeff reflected that one of the reasons for moving to Richardson was because it is where he grew up. While he was teaching in Tacoma he came to the realization that "it was just a matter of we could not enjoy the lifestyle that we wanted to have" because they wanted to have horses and other animals and he loved growing up in Richardson and wanted the same small rural upbringing he had for his family.

Sally is also from a small town and she admits that she began her teaching career in a rural school because it was the first job offer she received. However, the reason she has stayed in the rural system is because “there’s a bigger tie with your community. Like it’s part of your identity of who you are when you are in a small town.” Teaching in rural schools,

Pays dividends because I know every kid in the building pretty much. It’s very rare that I don’t know who’s who in the hallway. It’s almost a safety net because they know you and you know them, when something is off you know and you like you can actually identify.

This intimacy is what she likes best about being in rural communities. Tim also grew up in a small rural community and expressed similar sentiments as Sally with the notion of the relationships with students is a motivation to moving to Richardson. He likes the “connection that you get with people . . . in a rural school you get to know everybody really well. You can build some good friendships with people.” This common thread of desiring relationships with students, families, and the close-knit ties that each has with the small community atmosphere is what drew these teachers to Richardson and the rural way of life.

Motivations of teacher leaders to assume leadership roles. Just as the motivations for the teacher leaders to live and work in Richardson are varied, so are their motivations for assuming leadership roles. Sally admitted that she doesn’t feel that anyone encouraged her to assume leadership roles:

Honestly, I don’t think—I mean encouragement? I don’t really know if anyone did. I just kind of do it. I guess I’m a lead by example. I feel like, okay, so if this is going to

be it then I need to do this to the best. If I'm doing my job and following my role and that kind of stuff then other people should follow my example. Like this is how it's going to be. I mean I'm not afraid to say, hey is this the best idea guys? I'm not afraid to—I mean I am afraid sometimes to speak up because in your mind you're like, oh gosh. Does this really—and just jamming it all around and trying to logically plan it out. Am I really thinking right? I mean and I know—like Bruce has been great for support. I've never had support like this, of somebody going "Oh, yeah. That's a good idea." "Oh, yeah, you should do this." Or, "no you're on the right track."

Sally believes that because she leads by example she has created this atmosphere where students and teachers "can come anytime and I'll listen to whatever they have to say . . . and try to help them." An example Sally provided about leading by example is with respect to coaching, and that she has tried to "breathe some life into it and get them excited about it." Based on these descriptions, Sally is focused on leading by example but is motivated by trying to "do the best I can and leave something better than I found it." One way that she feels this is being accomplished is through collaboration. For example she says:

I'm that random question person . . . It's probably more informal conversations . . . There's just a comfort level and friendliness about it that's, I kind of feel like a lot gets done when you're not under the gun, but we can talk and be like, "Oh, hey I'm doing that. Okay, cool. Let's do that. Let's do that together."

Sally shared that she has not only been motivated by the need to the best she can and collaborate to lead by example, but often she sees leadership roles being assigned with

the caveat of “you’re going to do this and figure it out. Do the best you can, here’s what’s expected of you.” This happened to her in respect to assuming the role of yearbook advisor.

On the other, Jeff believes his leadership roles have been inspired by the fact that “I care about people, and I want to see people maximize their potential.” An example of this is seen through his collaboration with teachers in other subject areas. As the technology teacher he says that,

The new English teacher and I work a lot together with developing . . . using Word to do all your APA and MLA formatting. I try to get that done early with my students before she starts writing big papers . . . And then the Spanish teacher likes to make videos of different things, and so we try to get that in, too. With the biology program, they have a lot of field studies. We do a lot with Excel to get them ready to plot data with Excel.

Beyond his curriculum work, Jeff stated that he likes to also work with teachers on school wide issues “like attendance and portfolio, five-year plan type of things.” The fact that Jeff is seen as a leader has surprised him because he doesn’t see what he does as leadership. He stated:

I’m not certain that they view me as a leader. That was what was kind of interesting when I saw that Bruce had chosen me. I don’t know. I am very me with the people I work with. I don’t boss them around. In a staff meeting, I’ll rarely stand up and say something because I’m generally happy. I’m very content with where I’m at. I was kind of interested in why Bruce picked me because I’m not . . . I think I’m more of I just do my thing. I don’t know.

However, when I followed up with a question regarding his roles he replied, “when people come to me it’s for help.” While Jeff doesn’t see himself as a leader his examples show that others do, including the administrator.

Tim provided a similar response when asked what inspired or encouraged him to be a teacher leader. He said that “I didn’t really go out and say I want to be a teacher leader.” However, he does believe that he has earned that title because,

I think it was wanting to be good at my job. It’s really important to me to be good at my job. So I’m constantly thinking about what can I do to do this job to the best of my ability? And there are different—as you go through your career sometimes you get to a point where you’re saying I want more. So you seek. Sometimes you to a point where you say I’ve had enough. So you take some time and say, I’m just going to focus on my classroom right now. So it kind of goes in waves like that but mostly it’s just, I think it’s just a desire to do the best I can at the job.

One way that Tim has shown leadership and been motivated is through attendance at professional training. He expressed that,

I went to a lot of professional training and one professional trainer that I went to on reading in the content area asks us when we got back to present information to the rest of the staff and that’s very challenging sometimes, a scary thing to do to present to your colleagues. But it was rewarding too and we went through some things on what was called performance-based education. Being a teacher this long we’re constantly getting these new things that we’re supposed to try and all the acronyms and stuff . . . I felt like I was able to share some ideas with other teachers to maybe

help them better. Maybe I did, maybe I didn't. But I think that's a leadership thing that I've taken on.

The examples Tim offered demonstrate his leadership motivations go beyond wanting to be good at his job. He also wants to share the knowledge he is gaining from professional development opportunities. While not formal leadership roles, these are roles that could be making a difference in the teaching practices of his colleagues.

Teacher leader perspectives on the supports and hindrances on their roles as teacher leaders in rural schools. For teacher leaders in Richardson the challenges and hindrances faced include time, money, and distance from professional development experiences. According to Jeff, his instructional time and planning time "suffers" due to all of the different leadership roles he has as a coach and an advisor, which is "A huge challenge of the teacher in a rural school district." Sally echoed this sentiment as well:

There's never enough time. I guess that's just the one thing I notice is that it feels like I work all year. There's never quite enough time to plan things. Plans are never concrete because oh, I've got to go to this workshop, or I have to leave at 2:00. So that means I haven't seen my seventh period in three weeks...I mean it does affect it and sometimes makes things overwhelming and you get behind and I've been playing catch up all day.

Sarah felt that the lack of time she has due to her leadership roles as department chair, ASB advisor, and a National Board Mentor "... affects my family. And it affects my private time because my classroom is my top priority." Because she often has meetings afterschool or outside of school she often finds herself "grading papers at home at night or I'm coming in on the weekends and working." She attributed her success as a teacher

leader and the ability to balance her classroom and leadership responsibilities with her “very understanding husband who pulls a lot of weight at home . . . he understands that this isn’t a 40-hour a week job, its more of a 50 to 60 hour a week job.” Along with the shortness of time associated with being a leader in Richardson is the struggle for funding.

While there it is felt that there is a lot of support by the administration to attend workshops or encouragement, Sally expressed,

I wish I could say that there was awesome financial support where it’s like, hey, we should do this and they give you money. I mean you get all the support and encouragement you could ever want as a human being. It makes you feel really good about yourself . . . but financially, I mean there’s not really a lot there and that could just be our district.

In a similar manner, Sarah shared,

Money is always a challenge because a lot of times solutions cost money . . . This school district is pretty poor tax based. This is the lowest socioeconomic district I’ve worked it. And a lot of times, we can’t get the solutions we need because there isn’t funding for it. Part of the financial piece is the isolation from large cities to attend professional development.

Because of the isolation, Tim said that “You have to either go to [Location A] or [Location B] and it’s a three or four hour drive to wherever you want to go.” As Bruce further stated,

Going to a workshop, a one-day workshop is almost a two-day thing . . . Especially if it’s off in [Location C] or something like that, it takes two or three days to get to all those kinds of things so we don’t get to as much as we want. I wish we could have more. I think teachers sometimes feel like they’re isolated here and stuff like that.

To help the issue of travelling to workshops, Bruce stated “There are webinars and we’d send some teachers, too.” But admitted “It’s just not the same thing. Because when you go to a conference, I think I get more out of standing in the hallways, talking to other principals.” The lack of funding and money also has a great impact on programs. For example, due to testing constraints there are not enough computers for Sarah’s science classes to finish their fire and ecology studies to the Chamber of Commerce. She states that “In order for the presentations to be ready, they need access to computers, to publish or create a PowerPoint. For the next month you can’t get near a computer because of testing in grades 6-11.” One way they helped to combat this issue of lack of technology is by calling out to community members to “scrounge together some of the laptops” so they can “try to get our project done using those.” This is an example of how funding is preventing students from creating projects essential to their learning and ability to utilize technology to connect with the community.

While all participants expressed money as a hindrance, Jeff also added that there has been a societal change happening in the community. Jeff states that

There has been a societal change, in my opinion, in the last five to ten years. There’s a lot of to me, a lot of—I don’t know—entitled behavior. We’re always fighting back, whether it is in the classroom or out in the athletic field—getting students to think about others. That’s been a challenge. That would be the largest challenge.

Combating this hindrance is a challenge for teachers like Jeff, but the other challenge that parallels this one is the relationship with the community.

While there is a strong connection with the school, Jeff feels that relationship is “misguided” because “It’s very connected in the form of athletics because—you’ve driven

through here—not a lot going on. The sports teams are the community’s source of entertainment.” Trying to change this mindset that sports is the center of entertainment for the community is also seen as a challenge for Sally. She share that she “sees it a lot with the community but its kind of interesting because they’re in this mindset where they’re kind of open to stuff” but at the same time “you get resistance because, well, it’s always been done that way . . . but maybe the way it’s been done isn’t the most effective or the best . . . just because it’s like, well, that’s been done since 1950.” As Bruce stated, “The relationship with the town is pretty good. I mean some people always think they know what you should be doing, you know? Because I went to school once so I know how to do it better than you. And I see that a lot.” Sarah described a similar experience with the community and the parents by saying,

I also think that most people don’t like change, particularly parents don’t like change. They kind of have this dream of their students having the same experience in high school that they had. So whenever you try to change something, there’s going to be a little resistance to it. You have to give people time to process and give ‘em a lot of reason why you the change.

According to Sally, another challenge exists for teachers in a small community. While teachers “have a bigger tie with the community” the role is also “part of your identity of who you are when you’re in a small town. You are the teacher . . . You can’t go and do anything because you’re always on, like 100% of the time.” Tim agreed with Sally’s perspective, however, he felt this to be a positive aspect and an accountability piece. He added,

When you become a teacher its really a life choice. You can't go become a teacher and then go out at the bar at night and you know, do those things. You're being watched all the time and to be honest with you, I like that. I like that I'm held accountable for what I do in this community and if I want to do my job right then I need to be setting and example to the kids.

Because Jeff grew up in Richardson he believes he has a greater connection with the community and that "A lot of the kids I'm seeing now, I either went to school with their parents or knew a cousin or something like that." He expressed that his connection with the community and many of the parents makes a big difference:

What's great about it is you can be like 'teacher Jeff' or you can talk to them as Person I Grew Up With Jeff, which kind of phase in and out of and that maybe you can communicate things that you really couldn't communicate as a teacher but will enable their kid to do better.

Sarah shared similar positive feelings about the strong connection with the school and the community:

I think it's a function of being a rural school. The school is kind of the center of the town. I don't know if you noticed when you drove through Richardson, but it's kind of a ghost town. There's not much left here. If we didn't have the county courthouse and all the county seat here and the fairgrounds, I don't know if there would really be anything left. The county seat and the school is really what's holding the town together.

Jeff and Tim provided examples of how while the community relationship and mindset can be a hindrance, they expressed advantages like being held accountable for

your actions and being able to relate to the students because of past history. Sarah, on the other hand explained that there is such a connection with the school and the community because “its what’s holding the town together.” Sarah also believes that when one is an active part of the community “it enriches your life” and that “it gives parents and students a chance to see you as a person outside the classroom. And it develops relationships that create trust. I think that then encourages communication.”

Another area perceived to be an advantage for the participants is the support provided by the administration. Jeff expressed that “At this school, my principal anyway—he and the superintendent are basically like ‘what do you need? We’ll do it for you.’” Tim continued this notion of support, stating,

One of the things I really like is they let you do your job but they, you know, if you need help, they’ll help you. So they encourage you to do things. Very rarely, if you go in and say ‘Hey, I’m interested in this. Can I do it?’ I don’t think I’ve ever had them say no to me. They want their employees to expand themselves and to go to trainings and to get interested in different things.

Sarah shared that the admiration has offered support by “Giving us the freedom to get together and problem solve” and explained that “sometimes they’re able to give us some time to problem solve. Sometimes they’re able to let us go to some kind of training that we can use to problem solve.” The perception of the participants is that the administration provides ample support for them in various ways, whether it’s allowing the time to go to trainings or webinars, or time to problem solve.

The teacher leader participants in Richardson do not see themselves as teacher leaders, rather they are encouraged to assume leadership roles through their own self

desire to improve the school, provide an open door where students and staff feel comfortable coming and asking for help, and to do their job to the best of their ability. Their leadership roles are non-formal and are focused more on the school and community than on leading from the district or national level. Furthermore, their principal will encourage them to take on leadership roles, such as participating on a committee, by watching how others react to them and the level in which colleagues are influenced by their actions through collaboration and other non-formal roles. Like other rural schools Richardson faces the hindrances and challenges of time, location, and money. But they have taken all of this in stride to continue to provide an atmosphere that supports collaboration and being part of a team.

Summary of Data

Each school studied is similar in demographics and status as a rural-low income school in Washington State, but that is where many of the similarities end. While there are some similar understandings and beliefs about teacher leadership, there are also many differences. Miller High School and Strongweather Flats High School have teacher leaders who not only lead from within by being on committees, but they go beyond by serving as leaders within the school district and leading professional development through their own participation at workshops or based on the needs of the schools. Richardson High School, on the other hand, is much different in the way teacher leadership is viewed and in the examples for roles of teacher leadership. All schools have administrator-sanctioned leadership roles and this leads to a school that is focused on what is best for the students,

the community, and colleagues. But the question remains, are these teachers leaders?

Based on the data and using Katzenmyer and Moller's (2009) definition of teacher leadership I have summarized the data above to show how these teachers were leaders within their school and community.

Miller High School participants showed leadership by:

- Leading within and beyond the classroom: teacher leaders serve as mentors, SIP creators, serve on committees, collaborate and serve and on district committees
- Identifying with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders: the creation of the SIP plan, creating and leading weekly professional development for colleagues, mentoring, collaborating, and modeling
- Influencing others toward improved educational practice: leading weekly professional development that is meaningful and being available to discuss new policies, practice, and other areas of concern with colleagues, through collaboration and modeling of lessons
- Accepting responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership: school awards (US News and World Review list of Best High Schools in America for the 2011-12 and 2012-13, Newsweek top performing high schools serving a high poverty community in the 2013-14 and 2014-2015 school years); aiming to combat the cynicism and distrust of community and colleagues through open communication and collaboration

Richardson High School showed leadership by:

- Leading within and beyond the classroom: serving on committees, mentoring teachers, and collaborating and modeling lessons

- Influencing others toward improved educational practice through collaboration and modeling lessons.
- Identifying with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders: One teacher serves as a National Board mentor, which adds to her contributions to current and future teachers and leaders and others are leaders of committees and on district committees.

Strongleather Flats High School shows leadership by:

- Leading within and beyond the classroom: Seen through modeling, collaborating, speaking at conferences
- Identifying with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders: teachers attending conferences and sharing their experiences in rural schools through conference participation
- Influencing others toward improved educational practice: sharing knowledge from conferences with colleagues
- Accepting responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership: successes with AVID and AP exams, as well as political speakers

Many of the roles and ways the participants show leadership are similar, however, how they approach leading within their school and beyond is different due in large part to the specific needs of their school and community. Chapter V will further discuss these similarities and differences beginning with the cross case analysis followed by specific comparisons with the research and data.

Chapter V

Discussion

The three schools provided a brief insight into teacher leadership looks like in three rural high schools in Washington State. Furthermore, Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) definition of teacher leaders as those who "lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership" (p. 6) is used as the basis for this discussion on teacher leadership. First the discussion will present Table 2, Cross Case Analysis depicting the similarities and differences in factors illuminated through the evidence presented in Chapter IV. Second, the discussion will compare the teacher perceptions and the administrator perceptions on teacher leader characteristics and roles of teacher leaders, motivations, and finally supports and hindrances for each case.

Cross Case Analysis Summary

The following table outlines initial cross case analysis of the three schools. The similarities show the shared themes between two or more schools. The differences are outliers mentioned by only one school.

Table 2 Cross Case Analysis

Differences in Characteristics	School Code	Similarities in Characteristics	School Code
Open mindset/Open minded	M	Forward thinking/visionary/can show where going	M, SF, R
Involvement on local and state level	SF	Walk the walk	M, SF
Willing to make sacrifices	SF	Stepping up when needed	M, SF
Caring	R	Modeling/mentor	M, SF, R
Listening	R	Influence others	SF, R
Individual thinkers	R	Giving good advice	SF, R
Working until the job is completed	R	Being part of a team/group	M, SF
Uses strengths	M		
Secure in practice/confident	M		
Differences in motivations of teacher leaders to work in rural schools	School Code	Similarities in motivations of teacher leaders to live in rural community	School Code
get to know students beyond the classroom	SF	From community	M, R
Area is "home"	M	Understands the kids because from a rural community	M, R, SF
from a large city and wanted to have a greater impact	SF	Grew up in small town and wanted same for family	M, SF, R
		Completed student teaching in rural school	M, SF
		Have greater relationship with students and families	SF, R
Differences in motivations of teacher leaders to assume leadership roles	School Code	Similarities in motivations of teacher leaders to assume leadership roles	School Code
What's best for kids	SF	Collaboration	M, R, SF

Doing what's best for the job/school	R	Involved in leadership since a kid	SF, R
Helping others	R	Stepping up because it was needed	R, SF
Inspired because of frustrations	M		
Was asked to be on the team	M		
Administrative degree or advance degree	M		
Differences in perceptions of support and hindrances	School Code	Similarities in perceptions of support and hindrances	School Code
Grants for professional development/programs	M	Financial support for professional development, substitutes	M, R, SF
Technology	M	Administrator advocates for teacher	M, R
Distance for PD	R	Connections with community	R, SF
Community not passing bonds/levies	SF	Small community means everyone knows everything	M, R
Apathy and accountability	M	Planning time	M, R
		Money	M, SF, R

M= Miller High School

SF=Strongleather Flats High School

R=Richardson High School

Characteristics of teacher leadership. According to the literature, teacher leadership has a deep-rooted history in the development of education and educational policy on the school, district, and national level. According to Miller high school, perceptions of the characteristics needed for teacher leadership should include a teacher that has an open mindset or is open minded, someone who uses their strengths and is secure in practice and confident. For the participants in Miller this is the norm for many of the teacher leaders as well as the administrators. Because of the teacher leadership team, Miller has a small cadre of teachers who are making a difference in their school because they have the unique advantage to be able to be forward thinking and have the opportunity to influence others through weekly professional development and the creation of the School Improvement Plan, which supports collaboration and professional development. Sam is making difference in the district level through his five-year service on the District Leadership Team. His membership on the team allows him to continue to be forward thinking, to be able to influence the greater district by sharing the unique needs of the schools and because he is from there knows where the school has been and where it can go in the future. Overall, the team has a growth mindset to improve instruction through professional development and mentoring other teachers.

Strongleather Flats High School participants believe a leader should be someone who is involved on the local and state level and someone who is willing to make sacrifices. Strongleather Flats has an administrator that is making a difference not only on the district level as an administrator but also on the state and national level through her fellowship experiences and involvement with Wenatchee Valley Community College. She has

motivated other teachers to extend their leadership beyond mentoring fellow teachers to the national level by having them speak at conferences and sharing their rural school experiences. While these teachers all exemplified various leadership roles by serving on college boards, demonstrating a vision and accomplishing that mission, and serving on local district or school committees or national and state boards, they did lack concrete examples that showed how these leadership roles impacted their colleagues' learning as defined by Katzenmeyer and Moller's teacher leadership definition. However, their roles on local district and school committees as well as national and state organization boards does show that they lead within and beyond the classroom and are willing to "accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 6) as seen with their school achievements and awards.

This contrasts with Richardson High School participants who stated that characteristics of a good leader include someone who is caring, a good listener, who will work until the job is done, and who are individual thinkers. These teacher leaders did provide examples of how they lead through collaboration and service on school committees, which show they possess the skills mentioned above. However, using Katzenmyer and Moller's definition as a guide, the only teacher that truly goes beyond the school leadership roles to influence others is Sarah who serves not only on school committees but who also serves on district committees and as a National Board Mentor. It is not to say the other teachers were not good teachers or teacher leaders, but more interviews would need to be conducted to fully understand the impact these teachers have on their colleagues, the school, the community as teacher leaders.

According to Danielson (2006) a teacher leader is someone who possesses a set of skills whereby they continue to teach in the classroom but also have an influence over others that includes mobilizing and energizing them with the goal to improve the school. Each case studied was unique, however, the teachers chosen to participate seemed to be those who have the skills of influence over others and have managed to motivate and energize staff. An example of this characteristic is a teacher leader in Miller who as the math teacher who saw the need for a flat screen television in her classroom for her robotics students to use and for greater instructional opportunities. She purchased the television and has demonstrated the various instructional strategies she can use it for, and because of this has mobilized the staff to use similar strategies in their classrooms. In this way she is a leader because she took the initiative to do what was best for her students and shared with the staff the benefits and uses for technology in the classroom. In Richardson, the principal explained that he looks to teachers who are exhibiting leadership skills during collaboration meetings and committee meetings. He notices which teachers seem to be stepping up and who are also the ones who seem to have their peers listening and which teachers they are seeking advice from, these are the teachers he sees as leaders. These are teachers Danielson is referring to in his definitions of a teacher leader.

Other skills mentioned in research include Angelle's (2010) three attributes that leaders must possess, including the desire to lead others and the skills necessary to lead others. An example of this influence includes the leadership team in Miller. Even though these teachers were selected by the principal to participate on this team, they all have the desire to lead others and this is seen through their influence of the staff through their creation of relevant professional development opportunities for the staff each week. Hilty

(2002) considers collaborative time, such as these professional development opportunities to be necessary because it allows for teacher leaders to create an atmosphere where colleagues can meet, share, and connect with common goals. During this sharing time Hilty (2002) believes that collaborative meetings such as these will encourage reflective thinking and encourage dialogue and problem solving. Strongleather Flats teacher leaders also expressed the importance of collaborating and helping one another through observation and reflective thinking. Similarities in leadership characteristics that each case mentioned include a leader who is forward thinking, a visionary and can show where they or the school or programs are going (SF, R, M); teacher leaders who are able to walk the walk (M, SF); they step up when needed (M, SF); they possess a desire to model or mentor other teachers (SF, R, M); influence others and are able to give good advice (R, SF), and are part of a team (SF, R, M). Characteristics such as these are evolutionary and through informal encouragement coupled with guidance and support of the administrator these leadership team members can develop their skills and become leaders not just within the school but within the district as well.

Roles of teacher leadership. According to research by Anderson (2008) teacher leaders assumed three different types of leadership roles: they took on the role as it stands, they would make the role their own, or they would create leadership roles as needed for the school community. For Miller, the leadership team exhibits the first type; they took the role as it stood—as a formal leadership role within the school community. They have regular meetings online or in person, they seek to follow the school improvement plan by creating professional development, and they serve as points of contact for the staff. This is the only example of a formal teacher leadership role that has parameters centered around

the goals of the administration and the school improvement plan. It is these parameters that could also hinder the movement of the leadership team to examine other areas the school may need to grow and change. The leadership team was hand selected by the administration, which could also be seen as a limitation because it could be said that the leadership team is a tool being used to implement the agenda of the administration. Further research and interviews with Miller teachers would be a way to determine the true limitations of placing a leadership team as a formal position within the school community and to determine to what extent, if any the leadership team is making a difference.

Strongleather Flats and Richardson High Schools seem to have teacher leaders who exhibit the third role Anderson describes. They have teachers who have created leadership roles themselves as needed for the school community. In general discussion some teachers expressed how they didn't see themselves as leaders, they just do what they see is necessary for moving the school forward and what is best for the school community. For example, Jim a teacher from Strongleather Flats has given up his prep period to add another class to his schedule because he saw the need and knew it would be better for the school. This is an example of seeing the bigger picture and doing what is best for the school. It also reflects what the literature says about teachers assuming more than one teaching role that is not Janet, from Strongleather Flats, also has stepped out into leadership roles that help to promote what is happening in Strongleather Flats and Washington State rural schools. She has spoken at conferences on rural education and has sent Jim and Mary to speak at conferences about leadership and rural education in their area. In attending these conferences and speaking at them these teachers have created leadership roles and served as mentors and models for other rural educators in the state and across the nation. Bob

serves on state and national FFA and Agricultural Teachers Association committees and because of this he is able to provide leadership to Strongleather Flats High School in these areas. Overall, however, the leadership roles expressed by Strongleather Flats participants are vague and general. They are cheerleaders for their students and provide motivation to attend college by modeling continuing education practices, they speak at conferences and mentor other teachers, but so do teacher leaders in urban areas. Further research with observations would provide a more concrete and in-depth view into teacher leadership in Richardson. I think because these teachers see what they do as part of their responsibility as a rural educator they could not provide specific examples of the leadership they provide beyond their roles in the classroom. I have found that in talking to teachers sometimes it is difficult to see what we do is actually leadership and not just part of our role as an educator.

Like Strongleather Flats, Richardson has teacher leaders who serve in roles that they have created or developed based on the needs of the school community. With the exception of Sarah who also served in more formal leadership roles as the Science Department Chair and on various committees throughout the school and district, the others have stepped up and taken on roles and responsibilities as needed. As the principal, Bruce helps to encourage teachers to take on leadership roles based on how other teachers respond to each other, how they listen to each other, and whom they go to for advice. Teacher leaders like Tim, Jeff, Sally, and Sarah are leaders who meet these criteria. When I asked these teachers to identify other teacher leaders they all mentioned each other. These relationships that the teacher leaders have with one another is supported by the research of Geijssel and colleagues who believe that leadership is relational. While none of the

participants in any of the schools identified relationships as being a key role or characteristic of teacher leadership, they did mention collaboration, mentoring, peer coaching, and being a team player. All of these things build upon Geijsel's idea that leadership is relational. The administrators at each case school echoed Danielson's (2006) sentiment that teacher leaders have the ability to mobilize and energize others because they are not the principals and because they have a connection and a relationship with the school and a passion for the mission.

These teacher leaders all stepped into roles that were encouraged and sanctioned by their administrator, but the fact remains that rural schools are small, they have financial difficulty associated with isolation and community relations, and because of these challenges the teachers are forced to wear many hats. When talking with teachers about teacher leadership and their roles not one participant served in only one teaching position or leadership position within their school. They try to manage and make use of the financial hindrances facing rural schools by stepping up and taking on more than one role.

Motivations for Teaching in Rural Schools and Assume Leadership Roles

Motivations for teaching in rural schools. Rural schools are unique in setting, size, cultural isolation, and sense of place. As research has shown, there is a connection and a sense of place that members of small rural communities feel for their community.

Based on this information on the motivations of working in rural schools, it can be seen that it is the prior experiences that these teachers and administrator had in either their current rural community or another small rural school that has provided a deep-rooted sense of place and connection with the community. For these participants raising their family in an environment where their children can be exposed to similar

opportunities and experiences they themselves had is an important factor for moving to Miller, Strongleather Flats, and Richardson to live and teach. For these participants there are many benefits and motivations to living and working in a small, rural community, such as being from the or a similar rural community and wanting the same small school and rural living for their children and knowing the limitations the students have because of the rurality of the school and community but also know how they can overcome those limitations of a small community to reach their full potential. For the participants from Richardson and Miller who grew up in those communities they have tie with the community that goes beyond their desire to work in a rural school and it is this sense of place and familial relationship with the community that is supported by Gruenwald's (2001) notion that there is an unique ideology that is developed because of the sense of place and connection one has with their community and where they work. This is not to say that the participants who did not originally come from the community in which they work cannot have this connection as well. It is the fact these participants from Richardson and Miller have a greater sense of place and connection to the students and the community because they are part of a generational tie with the geographic region. For participants who desired the rural community living for their families and the relationships with their students that they perceived was not possible in a large school, they have developed a connection with the rural community and school that as Gruenwald (2003) explained, allows them to mindfully invest those connections with specific meaning. For each participant in each case they have been motivated teach and lead in rural schools because they understand that the community is embedded into the school, is part of their traditions, and they are part of a school climate where the community uses their connections and

personal interest to invest in the schools with sports, music and drama, and providing an entertainment center for the community (Bauch, 2001; Morris & Potter, 1999; Budge, 2006).

Teaching is demanding, but for rural schools in these cases their demands go beyond classroom and school responsibilities. They are “on” all the time and as active participants in the community have a greater accountability for their actions. As research has shown, rural communities have a vested interest in the schools as entertainment centers and as avenues for social networking, involvement in politics, and civil engagement (Budge, 2006). As some participants from each school explained, they have a life where no matter where they are they are being watched, critiqued, and celebrated for their roles as leaders and educators in the community. This dual role is like a double edged sword where you have the struggle of being out in public when you go to the store or out to dinner and are examined for your behavior or you are scrutinized for teaching practices or implementations the parents might not agree with. On the other hand, however, the support that the community provides schools is also a benefit to being part of a small rural community. Teachers in several of the cases serve as community leaders through hosting radio shows for the sporting events, serving on church boards or city councils, being an EMT, or even owning small businesses. Research has shown that it is these connections and the sense of place one has for their community that the participants are able to transcend the challenges of the poor infrastructure and few resources associated with living in a geographically isolated area. One case, however, is the exception to this support shown by research and by the other case schools, and that is Strongleather Flats. Participants expressed frustration at the perception that the reason why they were unable to have

improvements in the school buildings and technology was due to the community not passing bonds and levies. They perceived reasons for this being the older generations of landowners in the area who no longer have students in the schools and also the large number of migrant farmers. Further research into the support of the rural community and the relationship with the school system would need to be conducted to determine if these perceptions are accurate.

Perceptions of Support or Hindrances from Administrators, Community Members, and Colleagues Toward Teacher Leaders

This section will be divided into two sections, supports and then hindrances and challenges. The purpose of dividing the section is to be able to describe the differences the supports teacher leaders receive versus the challenges and hindrances they perceive.

Support teacher leaders receive from administrators, community members, and colleagues. Literature on the supports that teacher leaders receive from administrator, community members, and colleagues was lacking. However, the participants were clear in their perception that their administration and district were very supportive of their leadership roles and providing funds to pursue further education through conferences, workshops, and trainings. As seen with the research on the sense of place, it can be said that the community supports the school and its teachers in their roles as educators, coaches, and community leaders. Overall, the participants in this study did feel some level of support from the community; however, where there is support for being part of a rural community there are also hindrances. These hindrances will be addressed in greater detail below.

The perception of the participants is that there is a positive relationship with their community and that has a positive impact on the school and students. For example, in Strongleather Flats, the high school serves as the community center by providing a place for students and families to gather. In Richardson there is a strong connection with the community in relation to athletic and academic arenas, such as the student's research on the fires and ecological ramifications that are presented to the EPA and Chamber of Commerce. Lastly, in Miller because of their Expeditionary Program the students work closely with community members who serve as mentors and on projects.

The perception by participants is that they are supported by their colleagues and that their relationships with them has not changed regardless of their role as leaders. For example, the leadership team in Miller feels that the structure of the team has helped their relationships with their colleagues because they feel that their peers see them as leaders but also as equals. The leadership team is still responsible for teaching a full schedule, advising, and coaching, based on the perceptions of some of the participants it could be perceived by their colleagues that they are still part of the staff that they are more receptive to the modeling and instruction they provide.

Hindrances and Challenges. As the literature has shown, rural schools face a myriad of challenges including the complex relationships between the community members and the teachers, the geographic isolation, the issue of funding projects and school improvements, and having to be creative to meet the needs of limited human resources. As mentioned above, the personal challenge of the duality of being an educator and in the spotlight is contrasted with the desire to have some level of anonymity within the community outside of school events. The challenge of funding projects, providing

technology, and funding school improvements has been mentioned by the participants and in the literature. All participants mentioned the success that they have had with funding through the use of grants, but also said that they have to struggle to make things happen. Strongleather Flats sees the financial struggle first hand with the inability for the community to pass bonds and levies. The struggles seen by the McCleary decision and its lack of forward movement for implementation directly affect these rural schools and their ability to provide for materials, supplies, and operations. Strongleather Flats is an example of a rural school that is in desperate need of these funds. Another example is in Richardson where, because of testing, they had to put a notice out to the community members asking to borrow computers so their science students could complete their final presentations and analysis. If the McCleary decision were moving forward and finding ways to fully fund schools, as delegated by the Supreme Court of Washington State, these issues would be fewer and far between. Funding for schools may always be an issue, however, the financial struggles faced by rural schools may be greatly decreased.

Within that funding issue is geographic isolation, which affects the ability for the teachers to attend conferences outside of their region. Because most of the conferences and workshops are in large cities within Washington State they have to travel two to five hours just to attend a one day workshop, and for some it means staying the night, which is another hardship both financially and geographically. Another problem seen with the participants and the geographic location and financial challenges is the ability to obtain substitute teachers when needed. Finally, because of the limited resources teachers often teach subjects or grades they may not have experience or training to do. For example, in Strongleather Flats Bob teaches a class he had not had experience teaching nor was he

certified to teach, but he had taken several classes in the area in college so he was able to teach himself and create a curriculum for his students based on research from other schools and districts. Like Bob, Jim is teaching a class he has not taught in many, many years. The need was there for both of these men to step up and take on teaching rolls that would benefit the school and its overall curriculum, so they did the necessary research to make sure their students are meeting standards and passing exams.

Limitations and Implications for Further Study and Research

The goal of this study was to provide a description of the perceptions of teacher leaders and administrators in rural schools in Washington State. Overall, this study illuminated the problems facing rural schools in general, such as financial problems and the affects of the McCleary decision, the isolation from larger cities which prevents attendance to needed professional development, community involvement and lack of funding, and finally limited planning time associated with the plurality of roles including a full teaching course load and leadership responsibilities. While these rural schools faced many challenges they celebrate their accomplishments including teachers and administrators serving on district, state, and national committees. Their students earn academic excellence evidenced by state and national recognition and awards and they have a strong connection with their community, which provides extended support. They are collaborating, mentoring, and modeling best practices for their colleagues so even though they cannot always attend the professional development opportunities they would like to they are able to provide examples of best practices.

This section will further discuss the limitations and implications for further study based on the general insights discovered throughout this study.

Limitations. One limitation that arose during the study and analysis is the fact that only three schools were interviewed and participants were only interviewed one time during the data gathering process. This provided a brief and albeit sometimes superficial view of the school and the role that teacher leaders play in the daily interactions of the participants with their colleagues and community. For example, revisiting Richardson to further discuss the specific roles and examples of leadership would provide a deeper picture into their relationship with their colleagues. Revisiting Strongleather Flats and focusing on their migrant population and what specifically they do to help bridge the gap in culture and language would provide a deeper picture into the community and school relationships.

Moreover, in order to paint a more detailed picture of these schools deeper research may include observations and interviews with colleagues on the perceptions of teacher leaders within the school and the roles, characteristics, and motivations of those leaders. Questions to examine may include: What makes a good teacher great? What makes a good teacher a great teacher leader? What does the impact of teacher leadership have on colleagues and school climate?

Further study would also be beneficial in examining more schools with intention to create a more generalized view of rural school teacher leadership. In researching more schools and creating a general view of teacher leadership in rural schools, it could be a benefit to teacher preparation programs and teachers in rural schools looking to assume more leadership roles within their school community. The research could provide for specific program adoptions that address the needs of rural school educators and teacher leaders.

Another limitation to the study was the perceptions of the teacher leaders on the support of the community members. Because this is a perception study, participants did address their perceptions of community support and hindrances, however, being able to look at the study from a community standpoint would give another insight into the roles of schools in rural communities and the needs of the schools. For example, in Strongleather Flats the participant views of the families and community are pretty narrow minded as to the reasons why there is a lack of participation and passing of bonds and levies. Interviewing the community would provide greater insight and might also provide a basis for creating a bridge of understanding and communication between the school and community. Interviewing community members about their perceptions of the roles of schools, the needs of the school, its teachers and leaders would provide more insight into the school-community relationships and how those relationships influence the school climate.

Implications for further research. Because research in the area of rural school teacher leadership is sparse, more research in the area of rural schools is important to aid in the continued success of these schools and the teachers who teach in them.

Additional research into the area of rural schools could go into many directions. Focusing on specific areas would help teachers and administrators currently in rural schools to gain further insight into the programs and strategies used by successful schools so they may adapt the research reflect to their own needs. For teachers wanting to move from behind the desk to assuming leadership roles more specific and in-depth research on teacher leadership would help them understand the characteristics, the roles, and the implications of assuming these roles. Further research in the supports and hindrances of

rural school and community relationships would help administrators and teachers further understand the needs of rural schools and how they can adapt the research to meet the needs of their own school and community relationships.

Another area that has implications for further research is the impact the McCleary case has on rural schools in Washington State. In researching the impact this decision has on the financial stability of the rural school it will illuminate to state officials just how damaging their lack of decision-making has on communities that need the funding the most. Furthermore, examining the support and hindrances associated with the financial responsibilities of rural schools and the impact those responsibilities have school programs, curriculum, and professional development will provide a greater understanding for administrators, district leaders, and state officials.

Any one of these topics would provide institutions of higher education the opportunity to deliver specific courses and programs for students who are interested in working in rural schools to learn about the unique situations and factors that are part of the rural school climate and community. Providing specific courses in the area of school community relationships, rural school finance, and implications for leadership and policy would also benefit current rural teachers, administrators, and leaders. Recognizing that rural community members have a sense of place that connects them directly to the community and schools and preparing future rural school teachers for this sense of place and connection would benefit both the school in which they teach and their own connection and understanding of rural schools and living in rural communities.

Rural communities are unique and making the choice to move to a school and community that is geographically isolated, struggles with funding, and has a close

relationship with the community requires understanding of the specific needs of the school and its students. Throughout this study I learned more about rural school teacher leadership, what it means to be a leader in a rural school, the connection that these participants have with their community and the various supports and hindrances associated with this type of community. The goal of this study was to add to the literature and to propose further areas of research that will fill the large gaps currently existing in the literature.

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Appendix A

Characteristics for Teacher Leaders

The following is a short list of characteristics of teacher leaders as identified through research. Please select at least three teachers who you feel embody the majority of these characteristics.

Teacher leaders are individuals who...

- 1.) Possess qualities that motivate them to lead and teach such as enthusiasm, life-long learning, interest in school improvement, etc.
- 2.) Desire to lead and influence others through collaboration for improvement
- 3.) Are open-minded to change and a willingness to learn from others
- 4.) Engage in formal and/or informal leadership roles
- 5.) Possess a knowledge of child development, curriculum, and pedagogy
- 6.) Possess a team spirit and commitment to the school, its community, families and students,
- 7.) Possess empathy, respect, and dedication to students, community, and education
- 8.) Possess a desire to grow through leadership experiences both inside and outside of the classroom

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Teacher Leaders and Administrators

- 1.) What is your role at your school (teacher, administrator, etc.) and what subject's do/did you teach?
- 2.) How long have you been in your role?
- 3.) Have you ever taught or worked in schools that are not considered rural? If so, what do you see as the major differences/similarities?
- 4.) What motivated you to teach in a rural school setting?
- 5.) What does being a leader mean to you?
- 6.) How do you define teacher leadership?
- 7.) Do you think teacher leadership is different in rural schools vs. urban schools? Can you give specific examples?
- 8.) What inspired and/or encouraged you to assume leadership roles within the school?
- 9.) Explain your roles and the contributions you have made as a teacher leader.
- 10.) What challenges have you observed or experienced in these leadership roles?
- 11.) How has your role as a teacher leader affected your relationship with your peers and your instructional time in the classroom?
- 12.) Describe a typical day for you as both a classroom teacher and a leader. How do you manage both roles?
- 13.) How does the administration support teachers and leaders within the school?
- 14.) What other roles do teachers assume with in the school or community that you would consider leadership?

Appendix C

**WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education
Department of Teaching and Learning**

Research Study Consent Form

Study Title: Rural High School Teacher Leadership: A Qualitative Case Study

Researchers:

Primary Investigator

Richard Sawyer, PhD

Professor

Department of Teaching and Learning

(360) 546-9658

Co-Primary Investigator

Jayna Ashlock-Huston, MAE

Graduate Student

Department of Teaching and Learning

(509) 435-7483

You are being asked to take part in a research study carried out by Richard Sawyer and Jayna Ashlock-Huston. This form explains the research study and your part in it if you decide to join the study. Please read the form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Ask the researcher to explain anything you don't understand. You can decide not to join the study. If you join the study, you can change your mind later or quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of services or benefits if you decide to not take part in the study or quit later. The Washington State University Institutional Review Board has approved this study for human subject participation.

What is this study about?

This research study is being done to understand the motivations of rural schoolteacher leaders.

You are being asked to take part because you have been identified as a teacher leader in your school. Taking part in the study will take an initial interview time of no more than 60 minutes, with an option for further interviews as needed.

You cannot take part in this study if you are not a teacher leader within your school, you have fewer than five years of teaching experience, and you do not teach in a rural school.

What will I be asked to do if I am in this study?

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to provide information relating to the topic of teacher leadership based on your personal experiences as a rural schoolteacher leader. An initial interview of no more than one hour will take place first and will be recorded. After the interview is transcribed you may be asked to clarify the transcription or participate in another interview to clarify or further examine information given. You may be asked to identify teachers within your district who you feel are leaders and would be good candidates for this study.

Interview questions will relate specifically to your position in your school and your experiences. All information will be kept confidential and you will not be specifically named but instead you will be given a pseudonym to protect the information you provide. You may opt out of the study or any interview question you do not feel comfortable answering.

Are there any benefits to me if I am in this study?

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study. Information provided in this study is intended to gain a greater understanding of teacher leaders in rural school districts so that others in similar situations can learn from your experience.

Will my information be kept private?

The data for this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by federal and state law. No published results will identify you, and your name will not be associated with the findings. Under certain circumstances, information that identifies you may be released for internal and external reviews of this project. Data will be coded and a key maintained separately. Information provided will be kept in a private locked office and only the primary investigator and co-primary investigator will have access. Interviews will be conducted in private offices or via telephone interview. All interviews will be tape recorded for accuracy and transcribed for analysis.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous

The data for this study will be kept for at least three (3) years.

Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?

There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study.
You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for taking part in this study.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact the researcher:
Jayna Ashlock-Huston
2718 N Atlantic
Spokane, WA 99205
jmashlock@comcast.net
(509) 435-7483

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to report a concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Washington State University Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-3668, or e-mail irb@wsu.edu, or regular mail at: Albrook 205, PO Box 643005, Pullman, WA 99164-3005.

What are my rights as a research study volunteer?

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to be a part of this study. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

What does my signature on this consent form mean?

Your signature on this form means that:
You understand the information given to you in this form
You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns

You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

Statement of Consent

I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and potential risks of participation.

I also certify that he or she:

Speaks the language used to explain this research

Reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her

Does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Role in the Research Study

Note: For lower risk studies or studies with a large number of participants (mass administered questionnaires, etc.) it may be permissible for the PI to sign and date one copy and make copies of the informed consent document for participants.

Appendix D

Worksheet 1: Notes on Transcribed Interview

Notes on Transcribed Interview	
Case ID <u>B24B4</u>	
<p>Synopsis of Case: This was a dual interview with the HS counselor/AP Psych teacher and the 9th English/AP Hist./College Govt + American Studies teachers. Teacher B has taught in larger districts, A has not. Both chose this school + community b/c it offers a chance to build personal relationships w/ kids + families.</p>	<p>Case Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These teachers use their influence in the classroom to motivate students to think beyond migrant work - Leadership + stepping out of the comfort zone is something they do - It's best for the kids, this pro for an experience that is student centered. They recognize the hardship of language barrier + 1st gen. and go a way to provide support needed for student success.
<p>Uniqueness of case situation for program/phenomenon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These 2 teachers wear multiple hats and do not have prep periods. They do not teach just one subject or grade but all of them in one way. - Both teach courses that are college courses in the HS - School is 90% Hispanic + 100% FRL - Only school using AVID 	
<p>Relevance of case for cross-case themes:</p> <p>RQ1/Theme 1: Roles + characteristics T.L.</p> <p>RQ2/Theme 2: Motivations for teaching +/or leading in a rural school</p> <p>RQ3/Theme 3: Perceptions of support + hindrances by admin + comm.</p>	<p>Possible excerpts for cross-case report:</p> <p>Page/line #</p> <p>RQ1: pg 3 ¶ 6; pg. 4 ¶ 2-3 pg. 4 ¶ 4-6; pg. 5 ¶ 3+4; pg. 6 ¶ 1 pg. 7 ¶ 1</p> <p>RQ2: pg. 6 ¶ 2+4</p> <p>RQ3: pg 3 ¶ 4 H. Pg. 7 ¶ 5+6</p>
<p>Commentary:</p>	

Appendix E

Worksheet 2: Themes and Factors in Each Case and Supporting Evidence

School - 0 Part code 01		Evidence
Themes + Factors		
	① Perceptions of T.L.	
Factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guidance to be leaders + ind. thinkers - stepping up - working until the job is done 	Pg 24145
	② Perceptions of Roles	
Factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lifestyle - grows up in okanogan - want to see rural max pot. - outside school in comm. + 	P3#2
	③ Motivations	
Factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - care about people + want them to max. potential 	P3#7
	④ Perceptions of Chall + kind + supp.	
Factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - societal change → entitled behav. of kids - misguided rel. w/ community due to focus on athletics - time → must + planning 	p. 4#3 p. 4 p. 7
supp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$ for conf. 	p5
?	* connections w/ comm. b/c grows up	p. 6 p. 7

Appendix F

Worksheet 3: Estimates of Ordinarity of the Situation of Each Case

Original theme: Characteristics	Miller HS	Strongleather Falls HS	Richardson HS
Ordinariness of this case themes			
Factors			
Forward thinking/visionary/can show where going	2	2	2
Walk the walk	2	2	
Stepping up when needed		2	
Modeling/mentor	3	3	3
Influence others		2	2
Giving good advice		2	2
Being part of a team/group		1	2
Open mindset/Open minded	1		
Involvement on local and state level		1	
Willing to make sacrifices		2	
Caring			1
Listening			1

Appendix G

Worksheet 4: Multi-Case Factors for the Final Report

Merged Factor Clusters	Evidence in which case	Related Theme
Forward thinking/visionary/can show where going	M, SF, R	Characteristics
Walk the walk	M, SF	Characteristics
Stepping up when needed	M, SF	Characteristics
Modeling/mentor	M, SF, R	Characteristics
Influence others	SF, R	Characteristics
Giving good advice	OK, B	Characteristics
Being part of a team/group	B, KF	Characteristics
From community	KF, OK	Motivations for teaching/moving
Understands the kids because from a rural community	M, SF	Motivations for teaching/moving
Grew up in small town and wanted same for family	M, SF, R	Motivations for teaching/moving
Completed student teaching in rural school	M, SF	Motivations for teaching/moving
Have greater relationship with students and families	SF, R	Motivations for teaching/moving

Appendix H

Worksheet 5: Planning the Final Report

Worksheet 5. Planning the Final Report

109 Stake

School Code	Pages	Participant Code	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	Single mention Topics	Quotes, Impressions
OK	Charact P&P		✓			working until jobs done	driven for best for stud.
KF		Pg3	KF2	✓		uses strengths	
KF		Pg3	KF2	✓		Secure in pract	
				✓		guide to be leaders	
KF	Motivation		KF2	✓		Saw need for team	Wanted what best for school
KF	"	Pg.2	KF2	✓		Wanted to be on team	improvement
KF	"	P2	KF3	✓		working on admin cert=LT progression	