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Supporting and Sustaining Specialized Literacy Professionals in Teacher Leadership Positions

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Introduction

School district administrators continue to invite teachers to step into leadership roles and provide learning opportunities within their area of expertise. Many specialized literacy professionals are enacting these roles, some informal, and others in formalized leadership positions. To better understand the contextual and descriptive nature of their roles and responsibilities, we need to narrow our lens and investigate these individual cases of literacy professionals in these leadership positions. There is also a need to learn about the shifts and evolution of these specialized literacy professionals' overtime.

In this manuscript, the experiences of three specialized literacy professionals in the same district are examined three years after accepting formalized teacher leadership positions. The initial case study investigation provided the opportunity to follow-up and examine the participants' current role(s) and responsibilities. Follow-up interviews for these three participants uncover what they have learned over time and how they changed as specialized literacy professionals. The following research question guided this updated study: *What structures and resources influence the support and sustainment of specialized literacy professionals in formalized teacher leadership positions?*

This paper intends to share the resources and support that current specialized literacy professionals have utilized to sustain their positions as teacher leaders. This study's results have the potential to inform the educational and literacy community with new approaches to support current and future teacher leaders, suggest implications for professional development focused on teacher leadership, and offer information on formalizing and defining the current practice of teacher leaders.

Teacher and Literacy Leadership

The definition of a teacher leader continues to evolve in the education and literacy communities (Bean & Ippolito, 2016; International Literacy Association, 2018b; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leaders are individuals recognized with extensive knowledge in specific disciplinary areas and seek to share their knowledge with the broader school community (Gibson, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2013). These individuals actively support both colleagues and students to model lifelong learning practices (Danielson, 2006). The term “teacher leader” can often be associated with various positions of specialized literacy professionals (specialists/coaches/coordinators) due to the impact of their roles with both teachers and students (Bean, 2015; Bean, Kern, et al., 2015). However, many specialized literacy professionals are continuously negotiating their various roles and responsibilities to understand the complexities of their positions better.

The literature on literacy professionals identifies a need to unpack the complexities associated with these specialized positions. Galloway & Lesaux (2014) reviewed over fourteen years of publications to identify that reading specialists have multiple roles influenced by the context and view of stakeholders. For example, a literacy coach takes on the role of working with a teacher and facilitating efforts to improve school literacy programs (ILA, 2018a; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). The International Literacy Association (ILA, 2018a) defines a literacy/reading coach under the umbrella term for specialized literacy professionals. Rainville & Jones (2008) examined the multiple case studies to uncover the various identities that a literacy coach must enact throughout the day. The theory of “situated identities” (Gee, 2000) was applied to reveal shifts in both roles and social positions. These coaches negotiated between different identities and recognized the inequity of power. These findings reflect the new *Standards for the*

Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017 (ILA, 2018a), which recognize multiple roles of specialized literacy professional and differentiated standards for each (Kern et al., 2018).

A national survey of over 2,500 specialized literacy professionals indicated multiple roles associated with these positions (Bean et al., 2015). These same respondents expressed a need for further preparation and leadership experience to succeed in their roles. The literature refers to these as hybrid-positions that include the roles of working with both students and supporting classroom teachers with literacy instruction (Bean et al., 2015; Pletcher, 2016; Pletcher, Hudson, John, & Scott, 2019). Research identifies the roles and responsibilities of leadership activities as both informal or formal (Walpole & McKenna, 2013). For example, informal leadership could include coaching teachers' instructional practices as co-learners rather than experts (Cambourne, 1995; Dozier, 2006). In contrast, formalized leadership may include explicit directives to enact the role of an expert and influence instructional practices (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). The *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (ILA, 2018a) differentiate these leadership activities for specialists, coaches, and coordinators.

The ILA standards (2018a) provide a framework to understand the complexities of specialized literacy professionals better. At the same time, there are emerging case studies still revealing how these specialized literacy professionals are navigating hybrid positions such as literacy coach, literacy specialist, and teacher leader (Parsons, 2018; Pletcher, Hudson, John, & Scott, 2019). It is essential to identify the unique experiences of specialized literacy professionals in one school community to uncover underlying challenges (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Bean, Kern, Goatley, et al., 2015). This paper extends the conversation by examining the transformation of three specialized literacy professionals three years after accepting formalized teacher leadership

positions. The participants' perspectives in one school community may offer insight to inform the structure and implementation of formalized leadership positions.

Methods

This study extends from a more extensive investigation of one school community engaged in a state initiative focused on strengthening teachers' professional growth through formalized teacher leadership positions. The participants in this study teach in a suburban school district, serving approximately 3,000 students in grades K-12, with approximately 31% of the student population received free/reduced-price lunch. This study focused on the primary (K-2) building serving over 600 students with nine sections at each grade level.

Case study methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Stake, 2006) allowed for an in-depth exploration of the three specialized literacy professionals recently identified as teacher leaders in formalized positions. Initial data collection from the first qualitative research study took place over one academic year (2015-16). The follow-up data collection took place three years later to provide time for these specialized literacy professionals to reflect on the influence of their formalized teacher leadership positions.

Teacher leadership initiative. The participating district initially was selected because of their newly awarded teacher leadership initiative. Administrators in the participating district collaboratively designed a plan to expand and improve the professional growth of teachers. This initiative led to their application for a state-funded grant. This grant provided funding for the formalization of new teacher leadership positions and innovative professional development opportunities. Administrators invited selected individuals throughout the district to apply for a one-year teacher leadership position. The initial data collection educators' diverse experiences, expertise in specific academic areas, and their active engagement with professional learning in

the school community influenced the administrators' selection process. These formalized leadership positions required new responsibilities but did not replace their current roles and responsibilities.

The responsibilities for some of the teacher leaders under this district initiative included: (a) co-teaching and modeling lessons for colleagues using research-based teaching practices, (b) working on curriculum development and implementation of state standards, (c) serving as mentors to new teachers or other school members who need support, and (d) attending and/or providing specialized professional development to increase their skills. The funding from this initiative also provided educators with a \$1,000 stipend for accepting these teacher leadership positions during the school year. The three specialized literacy professionals in this study were among the educators who accepted these leadership positions for the year.

Specialized literacy professionals. The key participants in the initial and follow-up research include three specialized literacy professionals identified in this study as Sara, Grace, and Lisa. Figure 1 provides an overview of each participant's positions, as indicated from their initial and follow-up interviews.

Sara. After nine years as a classroom teacher, Sara became a reading teacher for nine additional years in the same primary school. As a result of the teacher leadership initiative, Sara was invited by her district administrators to accept a formal teacher leadership position. The administrators also offered Sara the position as a primary literacy coach and her teacher leadership position. Initially, administrators appointed Sara as a (.5) reading teacher for kindergarten students and (.5) literacy coach. Her position aligns with the research that identifies many specialized literacy professionals as enacting hybrid positions (Bean et al., 2015; Pletcher, Hudson, John, & Scott, 2019). Sara's literacy coaching responsibilities include co-teaching,

planning/modeling lessons, providing feedback, and reflecting on lessons, and sharing resources for teachers. In addition to the two half-time positions, her responsibilities also included facilitating an early literacy book study in her building, creating flipped classroom videos on literacy instruction, and attending the district-wide professional development for new teacher leaders. Follow-up interviews revealed her position remained the same three years later after the initial study.

Grace. Grace was a teacher for sixteen years, with fourteen years at the intermediate school in the district. Grace taught fifth grade for five years and then spent nine years as an intermediate reading teacher. Similar to Sara, Grace initially accepted the title as a teacher leader with the additional position as the (.5) third and fourth-grade reading teacher and (.5) literacy coach for grades 3-5. Grace's literacy coaching responsibilities also consisted of co-teaching, planning/modeling lessons, providing feedback, reflecting on lessons, and sharing resources for teachers. As part of her teacher leadership position, Grace also supported and facilitated an early literacy book study, led additional professional development sessions in the intermediate building, created flipped classroom videos on literacy instruction, and also attended the district-wide professional development for new teacher leaders. Similar to Sara, follow-up interviews identified her positions remained the same three years later after the initial study.

Lisa. Lisa taught first-grade for fifteen years at the same primary school as Sara. Initially, the district appointed Lisa as a full-time teacher leader and also a teacher on special assignment. This assignment involved becoming a full-time first-grade reading teacher. Lisa also had an influential role in supporting the facilitation of an early literacy book study at the primary building. Lisa's leadership responsibilities included supporting the literacy coaches with the facilitation of this book study, creating flipped classroom videos on literacy instruction, and also

attending the district-wide professional development for new teacher leaders. Follow-up interviews revealed her position shifted three years later as the primary buildings English Language Learner (ELL) teacher.

	Sara	Grace	Lisa
Position: Before Teacher Leadership Grant	Reading Teacher Kindergarten	Reading Teacher Grades 3-4	1 st grade classroom teacher
Position: Implementation year of teacher leadership grant and initial research study	Split Position: (.5) Literacy Coach Grades K-2 & (.5) Reading Teacher Kindergarten	Split Position: (.5) Literacy Coach Grades 3-5 & (.5) Reading Teacher Grades 3-4	Full-time (1.0) Reading Teacher 1 st grade
Position: Follow-up to initial research Three years later	Split Position: (.5) Literacy Coach Grades K-2 & (.5) Reading Teacher Kindergarten	Split Position: (.5) Literacy Coach Grades 3-5 & (.5) Reading Teacher Grades 3-4	Full-time (1.0) English Language Learner Teacher (K-2)
School Building	Primary (K-2)	Intermediate (3-5)	Primary (K-2)
Experience before grant: Classroom teacher	Kindergarten (8 years) 1 st grade (1 year)	5 th grade Another district (2 years) 5 th grade: Participating District (5 years)	1 st grade (15 years)
Experience before grant: Reading Teacher	9 years	9 years	No previous experience

Figure 1. Overview of participating specialized literacy professionals

Data Sources

Case study methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Stake, 2006) allowed for an in-depth exploration of the three specialized literacy professionals identified as formalized teacher leaders. Initial data collection from the first qualitative research study took place over one

academic year. The follow-up data collection took place three years later to provide time for these specialized literacy professionals to reflect on the influence of their formalized teacher leadership positions. This data included individual audio-recorded interviews and public documents to understand their participants' experiences.

Interviews. Individual interviews provide a lens to understand the context and meaning behind each participant's history of behavior (Seidman, 2006). Sara, Grace, and Lisa were interviewed separately in their primary school building. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed following the interview protocol (Appendix A). The interview structure consisted of (1) learning about their current position, (2) details on their current experience with support systems, and (3) reflection on the meaning of their experience. This structure allowed the participants to highlight the context and history of their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

Documents. Prior to the interviews, participants collected public documents to share at their interviews linking specific events and information (Patton, 2015). These documents included their updated daily schedules, access to Google Drive to view current professional development planning pages, and the school newsletter that featured information from each participant. These documents provided additional information to produce a more in-depth understanding of the shifts in their experiences since the previous study. These documents also informed the reliability of participants' roles and responsibilities and illustrated what they reported during interviews.

Data analysis

This follow-up study investigated three specialized literacy professionals' individual experiences three years after accepting formalized teacher leadership positions in their district. The intent was to explore data from each participant and subsequently propose hypotheses about

the sustainment of teacher leadership grounded within the data to inform the initial research. Data analysis followed a grounded theory design (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to identify themes as emerging from collected data. An open-coding method identified these common patterns, categorizes, and generalizations within the sources of data (Patton, 2015).

I analyzed the interviews by transcribing, highlighting key portions of data, and making comments in the margins on how this information connects to the research question. I then searched for any connecting threads and patterns within these excerpts (Seidman, 2006). Finally, I then compared their interview responses with the associated documents each participant provided. The documents collected served as a historical timeline of the participants' role(s). For example, after transcribing each interview, I looked for across the three experiences of each participant to identify any related themes. Some themes consisted of (a) defining their role, (b) new learning, and (c) support systems. After re-reading these interviews, I coded and highlighted the data based on the participants' responses to interview questions (Appendix A). I explored the documents associated with these themes and subsequently proposed a hypothesis about the influence of formalized teacher leadership positions grounded within the data to inform my research question.

To analyze the range of qualitative data sources, I used triangulation to cross-check for any inconsistencies (Patton, 2015). This process contributed to the verification and validation of what individuals can say over time, individually, and the differences in perspectives and perceptions of a shared experience (Patton, 2015). I triangulated all data sources to achieve reliability from collecting multiple sources to check for consistency and capture an accurate representation of the participants' experiences. The examination of this data provided opportunities to study and understand when and why differences in the data occurred in order to

inform my research questions. The analysis of all three cases offered a range of definitions, support systems, and resources for specialized literacy professionals in teacher leadership positions.

Findings

Three years after the initial study, a cross-case analysis of follow-up interviews indicated three themes to inform the research question: *What structures and resources influence the support and sustainment of specialized literacy professionals in formalized teacher leadership positions?* The results indicate: (1) district administrators' continuous communication of teacher leaders roles and responsibilities were critical to the sustainment of these positions within the school community; (2) the formalization of teacher leadership positions influenced the service of specialized literacy professionals within and beyond their school community; and (3) initial professional development on formalized teacher leaders' positions influenced the sustainment of collaborative learning communities among teacher leaders throughout the district.

Communication with District Administrators

The initial research study indicates that administrators played an active role in the success of teacher leadership positions in the participants' districts. The teacher leadership grant only provided one year of funding to these selected educators (during the initial research study). Three years after the grant ended, this district still recognized all three participants as formal teacher leaders. For example, the district administrators still used the term "teacher leader" to describe the role of each participant. In a follow-up interview with Sara, she stated:

"The administrators keep asking us every year if we still want to be teacher leaders. And it's funny because we aren't really sure every year if they will still ask us. Even if they didn't ask us, I think I would still take on these extra responsibilities, because it's who I am now. It's almost affirming to me though because when they ask it's like I'm being recognized for the work I'm doing to help other teachers"

This reflection from Sara identifies the importance and recognition of formalized leadership. The district grant on teacher leadership provided a term to describe some of the roles and responsibilities all three teacher leaders were already enacting informally.

Additional data collected from public documents indicated how administrators recognized these participants for their work with both teachers and students. For example, Sara and Lisa wrote excerpts in a monthly school newsletter to provide tips on different literacy strategies. The teachers within the school building and students' families all receive these newsletters. Sara and Grace also shared a presentation they developed for their district school board meeting to highlight the professional development activities offered to teachers. Interview data affirmed that the district administrators invited each participant to share their work with the wider school community. This data provides evidence to indicate how administrators continued to provide opportunities that communicated some of the roles and responsibilities of these teacher leaders.

Three years later, the role of district administrators remains critical. For example, the most common theme found within their interviews involves their relationship with district administrators. In all three individual interviews, participants chose to discuss the role of their administrators when asked to share some of the resource and support provided in their school community to support learning (Appendix A): In a follow-up interview with Lisa, she stated:

“I think it’s important for teacher leaders and principals to communicate. And not just through email, but also face-to-face meetings to get that feedback and support. It was helpful to already have that relationship with the principal (at the primary school) before this teacher leadership position existed. I felt more comfortable asking questions and helping in the school because I already knew I was supported. The title gave me the confidence I needed to just follow through with my ideas and my principal gave me that support.”

Lisa identified the importance of communication between specialized literacy professionals in leadership positions. In addition, her interview shared the importance of acknowledging the administrators' formalization of her leadership role as a level of support.

The themes found in the interview data identified that participants felt supported through different types of communication. These communication efforts included: on-going meetings to revisiting the intention of this position, setting goals for working with teachers in the school building and reflecting on professional development opportunities. The documents collected from these participants verified this communication through shared planning pages with administrators to prepare for professional development and scheduled time in their weekly planning to de-brief or plan with administrators.

In this school community, the participants’ identified how the collaboration between administrators and the specialized literacy professionals supported the sustainment of their identifies as teacher leaders. These characteristics and structured support align with Bean et al.’s (2015) call for districts to communicate more explicit definitions and descriptions of specialized literacy professionals’ in leadership roles. The level of continuous collaboration communication these teacher leaders experienced with their administrators affirm the need for leadership activities in programs that prepare specialized literacy professionals.

Supporting Service Within and Beyond the School Community

After three years in continuous appointments as formalized teacher leaders, each literacy professional increased their commitment to service opportunities. This service included such activities as planning committees, volunteering to lead professional development, and teaching graduate literacy courses at a local university. Galloway and Lesaux (2014) note that reading specialists can assume many different roles, including student-oriented, data-oriented, teacher-oriented, and managerial. The findings in this follow-up study indicate that formalized leadership can create a shift in these roles' multiple roles over time within and beyond the school community.

The interviews with each teacher leader provided further information regarding each shift to their involvement with the school community. The interviews were categorized and then coded to highlight these shifts, as illustrated in Figure 2. This figure provides a timeline to capture the increase of service involvement based on data collected at the initial and follow-up interviews. Each participant continued to be involved in the same activities before and during the implementation of the district grant. Cross-checking participant's schedule and their planning tools confirmed these additional activities within and beyond the school community.

Teacher Leaders	Service involvement one year before teacher leadership grant	Service involvement during initial teacher leadership grant implementation year	Service involvement three years after implementation of teacher leadership grant
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Committee • Reading Department Committee • Primary Building Planning Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Planning Committee • SPED Review Committee • Response to Intervention Committee • Organize Parent Nights • Mentor Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistant at local university • Creating personalized professional development videos • Informing school board members of literacy curriculum • Attending and presenting at state reading conferences
Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Committee • Reading Department Committee • Curriculum Planning • Student Success Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED Review Committee • Site-Based Planning • Intermediate Building Planning Team • Organize Parent Nights • Mentor Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and lead professional book clubs • Teaching Assistant at local university • Creating personalized professional development videos • Informing school board members of literacy curriculum • Attending and presenting at state reading conferences
Lisa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Committee • Response to Intervention Committee • 1st grade team leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED Review Committee • Response to Intervention Committee • Primary Building Planning Team • Organize Parent Nights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended and received certification as ELL teacher • Teaching Assistant at local university • Creating personalized professional development videos • Attending and presenting at state reading conferences

Figure 2. Specialized literacy professionals service overtime in teacher leadership positions

The follow-up interview data provides a closer examination of the additional roles and responsibilities that specialized literacy professionals engage in from one school community. Before the teacher leadership grant, these participants identified approximately three service activities of working with teachers' in their school community. During the grant implementation, they increased to about four more activities that now involved in family outreach and mentoring. Three years later, each of these participants is taking on an additional involvement in four different service activities that now extend beyond the school community. This finding suggests that the levels of involvement were more localized when specialized literacy professionals did not have formalized leadership titles. Grace reflected on these opportunities since taking on the formalized position:

“If you were to tell me three years ago that I would be a teaching assistant for graduate students I would not believe you. It’s like I had it in me all along and yet this position just made me feel valued in my district and that gave me courage to take on this opportunity. I mean I was always a teacher leader now looking back, but something about being recognized as one just opened new doors that helped me on this new career path.”

This participant’s reflection provides an example of how the formalization of teacher leadership positions can contribute to the identity of specialized literacy professionals. Grace shared that although she recognized leadership as a quality in her previous position, she changed once the district formally credited her as a teacher leader. This change is evident in the ways that Grace and the other participants increased their service involvement.

The implementation of the teacher leadership grant influenced the participants’ involvement with additional associated with their position. Follow-up data reveals how each participant became more involved outside of the school community. For example, attending and presenting at their local state reading conference. These findings also align with the International Literacy Association (ILA, 2015) research brief, that specialized literacy professionals are

playing a more significant role of engagement and leadership when roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

Professional Development for Literacy Leaders

A common finding from the initial and follow-up data revealed that all three participants recognized the importance of professional development for specialized literacy professionals in teacher leadership positions. The characteristics of teacher leaders, as described by the participants, identify the need for engagement in continuous learning opportunities. Sara, Grace, and Lisa all independently became involved in professional development through their increase in service involvement over time (Figure 2). Final interviews identified a need for further professional development support from district administrators. For example, when asked how the participants stay current with literacy research, each expressed the need for more professional development for all formalized teacher leaders.

Initially, district administrators required all selected teacher leaders to attend professional development throughout the grant implementation year. This professional development included specific activities and reflection tools to understand their roles and responsibilities. The professional development did not continue after the first year, even though the participants remained in formalized teacher leadership positions. Sara reflected on this learning experience during her follow-up interview:

“I think that is why it’s so important for teacher leaders to communicate with administrators. Because I get it, like the grant funded our PD the first year, which was so great for all of us. And then after the grant was done, we didn’t really do any follow-ups. Like the resources we used that first year I still refer to today. I wish we could just all meet again to see where we’re at. I don’t even know if everyone in that group is still a teacher leader.”

The interview data identifies that each participant has attended professional development outside of the school community that was often funded by their district. The planning documents collected from Sara, Grace, and Lisa reveal that these opportunities were not explicitly related to teacher leadership, but focused more on literacy practices.

The triangulation of the data from each interview indicated teacher leadership as the focus of professional development due to participants' level of work with other teachers. The most common professional learning tool that emerged from their interviews included their reliance on professional literature related to literacy leadership. While each of these participants is from the same school community, the professional sources, they located for support all differed. For example, Grace referred to books on literacy coaches, Sara identified articles from practitioner literacy journals, and Lisa relied on websites and online from literacy researchers.

While the grant provided the funding and resources to design professional development and leadership positions, it did not create professional development for teacher leaders beyond that initial year. The *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (ILA, 2018a) indicate a need for on-going professional learning. The finding from this study highlight the importance of professional learning and suggest the need to follow-up professional learning initiatives to sustain leadership positions.

Sustaining Future Literacy and Teacher Leaders

These follow-up case studies identify multiple ways formalized leadership can change specialized literacy professionals. The results are limited to one school community, and their initial participation in this study may have influenced their reflections and actions. Given these limitations, it is critical to add to the literature by sharing current experiences from specialized literacy professionals.

In this study, district administrators' continuous communication of the roles and responsibilities of these teacher leaders were critical to the sustainment of teacher leadership positions. There is a need for district administrators and specialized literacy professionals to create opportunities for on-going communication. Specifically, designate times and spaces for specialized literacy professionals to meet with district administrators and create a shared vision of their roles and responsibilities. Administrators must have access to the revised *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (ILA, 2018a). It may help to use this document when creating descriptions for formalized leadership positions and sharing the roles/responsibilities of these formalized positions with the school community. Sustainment of formalized leadership positions can also be supported by revisiting the standards together to re-assess the roles and responsibilities associated with these positions.

As we prepare specialized literacy professionals for the complexities associated with positions (specialists, coaches, coordinators), we need to value the informal leadership responsibilities associated with these roles. The formalization of teacher leadership positions in this study influenced the service of these literacy professionals within and beyond their school community. The title/label of a "teacher leader" increased the amount of service and involvement outside the school community for all three participants. There is a lot of value and history associated with the term 'teacher leader.' While creating formalized positions may support school communities, it should not restrict growing specialized literacy professionals from taking on service opportunities. The findings from this study show that there is a need to recognize the informal leadership qualities of specialized literacy professionals to foster sustainment. This recognition may include school newsletters, professional development sessions, or through the encouragement of outside service opportunities such as presenting at conferences.

Educational policymakers have designed many state initiatives that focus on teachers' quality and effectiveness (Kern, Bean, Dagen, DeVries, et al., 2018). Many of these grant initiatives impact the positions and responsibilities of specialized literacy professionals and have the potential to individually, collectively, and formally impact the school community to improve teaching and learning practices (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Desimone & Pak, 2017). In many ways, the grant provided these specialized literacy professionals with recognition for extra service outside of their current positions. This service included designing/facilitating professional development and co-teaching or modeling lessons. This finding offers an example to support Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman's (2015) call for school districts to recognize and build awareness of the various roles and responsibilities associated with specialized literacy professionals' leadership roles.

Finally, there is a need to build more opportunities for professional development focused on supporting informal and formal leadership roles and responsibilities. This study highlighted how formalized teacher leaders' professional development could influence the sustainment of collaborative learning communities among teacher leaders throughout the district. Dagen & Bean (2014) recognize a need for high-quality professional development that supports growing teacher leaders. The findings from this study provide an example of this need for high-quality professional development. The participants' reflections suggest a need for initiatives focused on teacher leadership to include a plan for a continuation communicated to teachers. For example, workshops that are on-going with planned checkpoints beyond the school year. Professional development for specialized literacy professionals that focus directly on teacher leadership may create opportunities for fostering future literacy leaders.

The conclusions from this follow-up study inform the education and literacy community on new approaches to support current and future teacher leaders, suggest professional development focused on teacher leadership, and offer information on formalizing and defining the current practice of teacher leaders. Implications of this research can influence how school communities sustain current and future teacher leaders in both informal and formal leadership positions. There remains a need to investigate further the implementation of teacher leadership positions in school communities, professional development approaches that support teacher leaders as facilitators of their colleagues' professional learning, and follow-up research on school communities engaged in teacher leadership grant initiatives.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I am going to audio-record the discussion today and record notes so that I do not miss any of your comments. There are no right or wrong answers. Please do not feel required to respond to a particular question if you don't want to answer.

You are free to skip any questions they would rather not answer and can quit at any time. I will not include your real names or any other information that could identify you in any written documents. The recordings and notes will be on a password-protected file in a password-protected computer.

Interview

The intent of each question is to follow-up with the experiences from the original study. The questions are designed for the individual participants to reflect on the past two years of their teaching. The setting of the interviews will be located at the teachers' school building. The time of the interviews will either be held before or after school depending on their schedules.

Tell me about your current position.

How has your position changed since the grant ended three years ago?

What were you hoping would happen with the grant?

When your district uses the term "teacher leader", what does this mean to you now?

Do you think that is the same or different than what it means to the district?

How does your district now determine the roles and responsibilities of?

- Literacy specialist/reading teacher
- Literacy coach
- Literacy leader

Talk about how your current position was impacted this year by the grant.

Current Professional Development

Talk about a professional development experience that was most beneficial to you.

Briefly describe how the grant and professional development initiatives in your school building have shifted in relation to literacy practice.

Tell me about your role in this shift.

What are your thoughts on professional development for teacher leaders?

From your perspective, how has professional development helped to support formalized teacher leaders?

Please describe the nature of your role in this professional development (may already be answered)

Support Systems

Share some of the resources and support provided to you in your school community to support your learning.

How are you deciding what support and resources to use and what not to use in your school community? What guides your decision making?

Share some of the resources and support provided to you through your school community in your role as a facilitator

How are you deciding what support and resources to use and what not to use in professional development?

Talk about your experience with technology and videos to facilitate professional learning.

Service and experience

Briefly your current service experience in your district

Briefly your current service experience in your school

Why are you now involved in these professional service activities?

How do you stay current with literacy instruction and research?