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Teacher Perceptions of their Responsibilities as Site based Leaders in Mentoring Colleagues

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Teacher Leader / Teacher Mentor 1

Teacher Perceptions of their Responsibilities as Site based Leaders in
Mentoring Colleagues

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling Psychology
Dominican University of California

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Signature Sheet

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the Chair of the Master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Abstract

In a school setting, teachers may serve as leaders as well as classroom teachers. In any school, principals are unable to run a school without the help of others. This help often comes from classroom teachers who are supporting student and school needs by taking on leadership roles. The focus of this study is to examine teacher perspectives on their leadership role in mentoring other teachers.

The research literature indicates that teacher leaders play an important role in any school setting. Teacher leaders must build their confidence in stepping into this role, supporting the principals in school operations, mentoring, and collaborating with others (Heleterbran, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher perceptions of their role as mentors for others in their school setting. The participants in this study include teachers at a private elementary school. They were informed of the nature of the study and asked to volunteer and meet in a focus group, in which they are asked to respond to questions on their leadership role in mentoring other teachers.

Results indicate that teachers in this setting who participated in the focus group consider themselves teacher leaders who mentor their colleagues. Teachers need to be open to change, be able to listen and take advice from their colleagues. Implications of the research include encouraging principals to foster teacher leadership, specifically mentoring other teachers at the school environment.

Key Words: Teacher leaders, Mentor, Distributed Leadership

Chapter 1 Introduction

Stepping into a private school in San Francisco as a brand new teacher was a exciting experience. Being new to the profession and landing my first teaching job, I was eager to change and help the lives of my students. It was not until about three months into my first teacher job that I noticed that this private school did not operate only by the principal but also the classroom teachers. The principal of this school offers the opportunity for all the classroom teachers to help shape and run it. This school would not be running smoothly if it was not for the principal being open to encourage teacher leaders. Principals are often asking teachers to stand up and take a leadership role.

Distributed leadership in a school gives the opportunity for teachers to step up and become mentors to colleagues. Teachers serving as mentors to other teachers allow the students to have a better opportunity to learn in a new way and also to have the students become successful in the classroom. Teachers can be great mentors and give great advice when it comes to curriculum, mapping, planning, and also lesson ideas. Having teachers work together can make a school successful as well as create student success in the school. (Spillane, 2005)

Statement of Problem

Principals are not experts on every aspect of their job requirements due to all the many different responsibilities. The principal has to be an instructional leader, a creative thinker, and keep track of the budget. They are unable to do all of the work that is required to run a school by themselves. Principals have to receive support one way or another so they call on different teachers at the

school. Teachers step up as leaders to help run a school and provide the best education for the students. Without teacher leaders in a school setting, the school would not operate efficiently.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of their roles as mentors to their colleagues.

Research Question

What are the characteristics of teacher leaders as mentors to their colleagues?

Teacher leaders are classroom teachers that act as leaders in a school setting. Teacher leaders have many different roles in a school but one particular role they play is a mentor to their colleagues.

Definition of Terms

Teacher leaders are classroom teachers who take on different roles and responsibilities besides their own classroom duties. A teacher can formally be asked by principals to take on a leadership role or informally take on the role themselves help the schools' and students' needs.

Mentor is someone who helps guide and gives advice to their own colleagues.

Theoretical Rationale

Distributed Leadership

The key theory behind the characteristics of teacher leaders as mentors to their colleagues is Distributed Leadership. Distributed Leadership involves teachers and principals working

together towards the same goal serving the student's needs and guiding to the student's learning (Spillane, 2005).

“Distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structure” (Spillane, 2005, p. 146). Principals need to be able to interact and collaborate with the teacher leaders and create a relationship of trust. A principal cannot fulfill all of their responsibilities as a principal alone, so but being able to guide teachers into leadership roles can help distribute the responsibilities.

Kathzenmeyer and Moller as cited in Merideth (2007) “define teacher leaders as those teachers who lead within and beyond the classroom...identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders..and influence others towards improved educational practices” (p. 2). Teacher leaders are crucial in a school setting according to Kathzenmeyer and Moller as cited in Merideth, (2007) looked into the practices of what a teacher leader does. These teachers identified as leaders have a lot of different characteristics. The teacher leaders job is mentoring and guiding their colleagues into the best teaching practices for their students.

Assumptions

My assumptions are that teacher leaders are an important part of any school. Principals cannot run the school all by themselves so they need to distribute the leadership among teachers to provide the students with the best learning environment. Principals have to guide or appoint the teachers to become teacher leaders in their own schools. Teachers mentoring their colleagues can be a positive influence in a school for professional development as well as professional growth for each teacher.

Background and Need

“ Principals today are expected to be visionaries and competent managers, as well as instructional leaders” (Danielson, 2007, p. 14). Teacher leaders serve a greater purpose in the school other than just teaching in their own classroom. They serve as mentors, encourage their colleagues, follow the policies of the school, assist in improving the instruction, and work closely with their colleagues to ensure that every student in the school is learning to the fullest. Teacher leading has a positive impact on the school and allows excellent teachers to professional grow into becoming even better teachers in the classroom (Thornton, 2010).

Distributed leadership in schools can be a positive aspect of a school setting. Having teacher leaders in a school is not easy if the principals and superintendent are not in favor of teacher leaders but with teacher leaders support, benefit everyone creating mentoring a positive learning environment for all the students.

Summary

Principals have complex responsibilities in managing a school. Therefore, teachers have an opportunity to step in a leadership positions by assisting a principals, particularly in the area of mentoring other teachers. The research question of this paper is what are the characteristics of a teacher leader in mentoring their colleagues? The purpose of this study is to identify the roles of teacher leader in a school and their role in mentoring their colleagues. The theory is Distributed Leadership, which is a shared leadership among others in a school setting. There are many studies and articles about the characteristics of a teacher leader and their roles in the school.

The research indicates that the role of teacher leadership is emerging in practice. The following Chapter is reviewing literature of teacher leaders in a school setting.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

This section is an examination of the research literature on teacher leaders. Information was gathered from academic library searches using online resources. Research information is organized in the following categories: Leadership Roles, Navigating the Teacher and Principal Roles in Distributed Leadership, and Transition from a Classroom Teacher to a Teacher Leader.

Leadership Roles

The benefits of teachers as leaders include: preparing to teach others, learning by experience, identifying goals and strategies, learning from one another, and collaborating with others. Leaders teach and are taught by co-teaching, speaking about experience, lunch gathering, meetings with parent groups, and coaching each other (Betof as cited in Goodman, 2014).

McKenzie and Locke (2014) conducted a qualitative study of the challenges that teacher leaders face while working with colleagues to change instructional strategies and help students be successful. Six experienced teacher leaders were studied for one year through observations and interviews. The findings of this study were that the challenges that the teacher leaders faced when dealing with conflict with colleagues, negotiating responsibilities, balancing time to meet with colleagues and doing observations while having their own class, and frustration with their colleagues not being prepared for professional development (McKenzie & Locke, 2014).

The Kanas Educational Leadership Institute's (Augustine-Shaw & Funk, 2013) mission is to have support and professional growth for educational leaders. Mentoring happened between leaders and experienced leaders by face-to-face interactions. Building relationships between

leaders and new leaders while collaborating for the student's learning is important. Mentors in the KELI program were given an opportunity to reflect on their own professional practices and encouraged collaboration. This KELI program has gave teachers an opportunity to work and collaborate and give them the tools they need to be successful.

According to Kent, Green and Feldman (2012) new teachers are expected to know and have the same job responsibilities as a skilled teacher. Some challenges that new teachers face are being in a new school culture, emotional ups and downs of a new job, high expectations of the school and parents, and mastering the knowledge and curriculum of the grade level. New teachers need mentors to guide them through their first couple of years. This study indicates that teacher-mentoring programs help new teachers to be successful in their new job. They provide new teachers with the support and advice they need.

Teacher leaders have to build a positive relationship with their colleagues to become a mentor and friend. A mentor for their colleagues is not a spy to the principal, it is an opportunity to learn from one another. Teachers are there for the common goal that is to find out what is best for the student's learning. On-on-one model mentoring helped teachers work together and be able to build a relationship rather than being told what to do in a group setting (Mangin, 2010).

Leadership is divided between faculty and principal in the school. Teacher leadership arises within the teaching ranks and if for the better of the student's learning. The principal is fully affected by teacher leaderships and can also benefit from shared leadership. Examples of formal leadership roles such as mentoring, coaching roles, and grade level supervisors. An informal leadership role is where a teacher can see a problem and works to come up with a solution without being appointed that role. Collaboration between teachers is very important.

Teacher leadership is capable in any school as long as the principal is willing to support and encourage these teachers to move forward and take that leadership role. Four Dimensions of Teacher Leadership (Day & Harris as cited in Helterbran, 2010)

- “1. Strengthening classroom practice
2. Encouraging teacher ownership in the change process
3. Assuming the mantel of teacher expert
4. Engaging in collegiality for mutual learning.” (Helterbran, 2010, p. 367)

Navigating the Teacher and Principal Roles in Distributed Leadership

Principals cannot do all the work for the school. They have to focus on school goals, guide instruction, develop budget, and lead for student success. Student success is more likely to happen if there is shared leadership in the school. Teachers who assume leadership roles have an impact on the school and also carry their experience into their own classroom. The benefit of having teacher leaders in school is so they can help the principals run the school. Teacher leaders can take responsibility for making decisions and help the principal focus on more important tasks. Shared Leadership is a positive thing (Nappi, 2014).

The participants of this study were two principals and fourteen teachers. The researchers had the participants complete a self-assessment and consent to monthly observations and peer coaching. The findings indicated that when sheltered instruction was implemented the teacher’s perception of the principals changed from manager to instruction leaders; Content teachers became teacher leaders, instruction focused on academic language proficiency and there was

evidence of academic growth for low achieving students. Teachers with continuous feedback can help with professional development. It can help the teachers grow in their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Finding the time to collaborate with colleagues was hard but the principals found time for teachers to be able to work together and talk. Principals were present in all professional developments and learned with the teachers as well. Having the principals involved helped motivate the teachers and they were all able to work as a team. As the teachers started to collaborate and find time to work together it became a great working environment, which made it a successful school (Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls & Cumiskey, 2013).

In a study conducted by Roby (2011), 195 pre-K to 12 grade teachers in rural, suburban, and urban schools in Ohio completed a survey on school culture. "Key elements identified from this culture survey focused on trust and respect, relationships, workplace contribution, motivation, leadership, sense of purpose, accountability, workplace goals, meaningful work, cooperation, student achievement and support" (Roby, 2011, p.784). Trust between teachers and principals are a big concern. The findings indicated that the trust factor between teacher and principals is important. Another factor identified issues associated with teacher isolation in the classroom. Teacher leaders can take the lead to building communication between teachers and principals have a positive affect on the school culture (Roby, 2011).

Taliaferro (2011) explains that the most successful school leaders are those that work to do what is best for the students, faculty, and community. They contribute to the greater community. To have effective teaching, teachers need to utilize within the culturally responsive teaching such as support all achievements of all the students. Teachers need to be able to create a learning environment where all students can feel safe and supported. Cultural leadership requires

principals to understand the physical, intellectual, social and emotional components that shape the views and experiences of the staff and the school community (Taliaferro, 2011).

A descriptive study conducted by Wells, Maxfield, Knocko, and Feun (2010) used quantitative measures to understand the perspective of the principals and the role of the superintendent based on the involvement and support of teacher leadership in schools. 176 principals in K-12 schools were given a survey to completed. The findings of this study show that principals expressed that they wanted the superintendents to be more involved in supporting teacher leadership programs. When superintendents are in favor of teacher leadership, principals are able to change the culture of the school by having teacher leaders (Wells, Maxfield, Klocko, & Feun, 2010).

School principals should be instructional leaders. Leadership development should be job-embedding learning that consists of supporting individual leaders in real on the job settings. Organizational embedded leadership focuses directly on improving the school culture and structure. System embedded learning is beyond the school and consists of the state, federal, and also the school district support. Leadership development is part of the school improvement as well as whole system reform (Fullan, 2009.)

Principals and school principals need to be flexible and accommodating to help teacher leaders, especially when it comes to providing collaboration time between teachers. This is a qualitative study that looks into eight teachers concerning how leadership, collaboration, and team learning affects the school environment. The results show that teachers and staff that affect a common language began to trust each other and work together. Principals are co-learners that let the teachers make decisions and be part of the decision making process. This is a way for

teacher leaders to feel that they were accepted in the school. Successful teaching depends on the feedback and support they received from their fellow colleagues and principal. Distributed Leadership has a significant impact on the student's learning especially when fellow colleagues collaborate, communicate, and motivate each other (Pedersen, Yager & Yager, 2010).

Transition from a Classroom Teacher to a Teacher Leader

Training experienced teachers who can become peer coaches will help prepare themselves to become teacher leaders. Teachers can have the opportunity to observe other teachers, assisting them as they narrow their focus and providing teacher time to collaborate. This can help teachers work together. School ask teachers to do a lot beyond their classroom duties but the most powerful ability that teacher leaders have is to help other teachers grow and becoming a mentor. Teachers working together and collaborating with other teachers/colleagues can help school culture become the best it can be for the student's learning (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

A teacher's focus is to help the students learn. Leaders of the school such as principals and superintendents begin their careers as classroom teachers. They have to make a transition from classroom room teacher to a leader. " Many educational leaders, despite understanding the importance of school leadership for student learning and achievement, have been apprehensive when it comes to allocating resources toward their own development as leaders" (Dyer & Renn, 2010, p. 5).

An important part of developing leaders in school is to have essential preparation practice, principal knowledge of curriculum and assessments, and school's instructional strategies. A relationship between leadership preparation practices and leadership behavior is the schools

learning environment. A questionnaire was sent to school principals along with student achievement data and school practices. This study was conducted in Rhode Island and had 140 K-8 principals. Out of 140 principals only 88 of them completed the questionnaires. The questionnaires asked about leadership practices and preparation, self-rated behaviors about their own leadership, professional development, and the number of years as a leader and a school leader. The researchers concluded that to develop teacher leaders in a school setting, principals and the schools environment have to be open to having classroom teachers as leaders. Professional development and leadership preparation practices have to be an essential part of developing a teacher leader in a school setting (Braun, Gable, & Kite, 2011).

“Teaching is a flat profession” (Danielson, 2007, p. 14). A veteran teacher has the same rights and responsibilities as a new teacher. Principals are expected to be visionaries for the school’s success but one person cannot do everything to run a successful school. Formal teacher Leaders are teachers that are assigned a job such as department chair, master teacher, or grade level leader. Informal teacher leader are teachers that have or find a problem about the school setting and come up with a solution and try to make change without having the authority or given job by the principal. These Informal Teacher Leader are usually teachers that want to push for change (Danielson, 2007).

Harrison & Killion (2007) identify ten roles for teacher leaders: resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, catalyst for change, and learner. Teachers share instructional strategies with their colleagues. Teacher leaders guide teachers to agree on standards, adopt curriculum, and develop assessments. Teacher leaders often work together and observe other teachers. A

teacher leader is a mentor that serves as a role model that guides new teachers and advises them about instruction, curriculum, procedures, and policies. School leader serves on a committee and helps with the shared vision of the school (Harrison & Killion, 2007).

Excellent teaching practices impact high students achievement in the classroom. To raise teacher talent it is important to collect data of their student's achievements as well as observe and evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers are expected to be life long learners and sometimes they are never evaluated on their student's progress but principals need to be aware in order to improve their teacher's skills and teaching. The principals have to provide teachers with professional development opportunities to learn and grow as a classroom teacher. (Jacob, 2012).

Teacher leaders serve as mentors and encourage their peers. They are an influence on school policies, instructional practices, and help develop teachers as leaders. Some barriers of a teacher leader are the lack of time, formal leadership structures, communication of faculty principal leadership style, and support to change. Some solutions to helping teacher leaders be successful in a school setting is making time such as staff meetings, communication a new approach to staff meetings, professional learning community leadership (Thornton, 2010).

“ Being an excellent teacher does not mean that one is able to communicate with others about how to be a good teacher” (Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 23). Teacher leaders develop a positive school environment. It is important to provide teachers and teacher leaders with the right professional development and support that they need to succeed. It is important that the teachers many goals are for their student to learn and be successful in the classroom.

Developing an instructional leadership program can help the role of teacher leaders in a school environment (Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009).

Summary

Looking over many different studies about teacher leadership roles, navigating the teacher principal roles in Distributed Leadership and transition from a classroom teacher to a teacher leader all have similar findings that teacher leaders are important in a school setting. Teacher leaders have many different roles in a school and with the support of the principals they can help make the school setting the best learning environment for all students.

Chapter 3 Method

Research Approach

This is a qualitative study, a teacher action research project, including gathered teacher responses from a focus group discussion. Data was collected from teachers at a private elementary school in the San Francisco Bay Area. The questions were open-ended in nature and included discussion points on characteristics of teacher roles mentoring their colleagues.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to the ethical standards for protection of human subjects of the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally a research proposal was submitted and reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved and assigned number 10344.

Sample and Site

The study took place at a private school in San Francisco, California. The classroom teachers that teach at this private school are all teacher leaders. These elementary classroom teachers participated in a focus group discussion about their perceptions of their role as a teacher leader and mentor to their colleagues.

Access and Permissions

The researcher is a teacher at a private school in San Francisco, California. The researcher received permission from the principal to facilitate a one-hour focus group with elementary classroom teachers at this school. The researcher announced the purpose of the study at a staff meeting, and requested volunteers to participate in a focus group discussion. Nine elementary school teachers agreed to participate in the one-hour focus group.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher conducted a focus group. The focus group identified volunteers to respond to questions pertaining to teacher leadership roles in mentoring their colleagues. Also discussed were their best strategies when it comes to working as a mentor for their colleagues such as being open, listening and building a trusted relationship with one another. The focus group included teachers from kindergarten through eighth grade. They responded to questions about their perceptions of teacher characteristics that are important in mentoring colleagues.

Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe a teacher leader? Do you see yourself as a teacher leader who mentors colleagues?
2. What qualities and characteristics do you think teacher leaders need in mentoring colleagues?
3. What are some ways in which teacher leaders can mentor colleagues?

4. Now from this discussion, what do you think are the key characteristics that people discussed? What did you learn about teacher leaders in mentoring colleagues here at this private elementary school?

Data Analysis Approach

The researcher conducted an hour-long focus group with elementary school teachers during a faculty meeting. The researcher took notes during the focus group, making sure to record actual responses to the questions. All data was secured in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop. The responses from the discussion were categorized in tables to capture teacher perceptions in aggregate form. Similarities and differences in teacher responses were identified.

Chapter 4 Findings

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

Enrollment at the school site includes 250 students. This school is diverse including people who self-identify as African American, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Native American, White, and/or Hispanic.

Nine teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. Out of the nine teachers that participated eight of them were female and one male.

Data: narrative responses to focus group questions.

Narrative Responses: Demographic Information

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Degree Completed
DF	Female	Hispanic	28	B.A.
BD	Female	White	28	B.A.
JY	Female	Chinese	2	B.A.
SH	Female	White	32	B.A.
CL	Female	White	33	M.A.
MP	Female	White	22	B.A.
LA	Female	Hispanic	4	B.A.
MG	Male	White	4	B.S.
KR	Female	White	1	B.A.

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Degree Completed
N=8	Female N=8	Hispanic N=2	1-5 years n=4	B.A. N=7
	Male N=1	White N=6	20-29 years n=3	B.S. N=1
		Chinese N=1	30+ n=2	M.A. N=1

Focus Group Responses

DF	I am a mentor to all my colleagues. Support and be open to mentoring To help you need to ask help... Teaching is a hard job~ In solution sharing what we know~ Time!! Lesson plan sharing is important~ Borrowing curriculum and students idea! At this school all the students are well loved and all the teachers are caring all through the grades~ Share ideas and insight about the student's learning needs and also curriculum and what works and what doesn't work throughout the years gives the teachers a sense of student's learning and personalities.
BD	Go to each other for support is important
JY	opening up at weekly meetings~ talk~ Share ideas~ Back you up! Sharing from other programs and outside information such as BTSA and other professional development opportunities Checking in with other teachers Concern and passion with each others Common goal~ working with child and student's learning
SH	know what is going on each other classroom... not ignore what is happening in each grade. Prepare with each class and talk to previous teachers about the students and their learning needs.
CL	build one another~ become to break ground~ grade level meetings! (need time) Faculty meeting~ an hour extra~ professional development is required TIME
MP	Professional Development is key when it comes to being a teacher and teacher leader
MG	Open mind Patient and Understanding Funny
LA	Growth mind set and willing to learn
MP	Peers~ working together~
DF	old teacher- younger teacher~ ok to not know Learning happens~ Experience and non-experience everyone can learn from each other
JY	Humanity~ veteran teacher~ learn from each other... Process~ knowing we are going to learn Eagerness~ different way to do things then we have~ Try something new
DF	There are many job responsibilities WASC
LA	Math
JY	Art
CL	Preschool
MP	Administrator/ PTG
SH	Religion Coordinator
BD	Student Council/ Laminate Queen/ Closet Queen
ALL	COLLABORATE~ Voice, hear, changes, working together
LA	RTI, Math coaching, Faculty Meeting~ APPS on the I Pad Classroom~ visited about Common Core~ Teach her faculty Nuns~ in depth ~ Principals!

	Principal Her she was going to do!
DF	Teacher~ Servant and you are serving the children. Professional and personal Address the needs of the person Teacher ~ no money.. Servant!
SH	“servant to each other” ~ All Jobs!
MP	All different jobs~
DF	Principal~ micro managed Sr. Angeles~ Foster more activity... Distributed Leadership
ALL	Shared Leadership~ Gifts and Talents ~
DF	“Leadership is the health of the body”

All the teachers in the focus group see themselves as teacher leader that mentor their colleagues. During the focus group discussion, the teachers were very open and honest with their answers to the questions. As the discussion got deeper, the teachers tended to focus on a key factor: the need to be open to advice from their colleagues. In the discussion the teachers talked about borrowing curriculum and working together to help the students learn. The teachers discuss that they wish there was more time to do grade level meetings and collaborate. The faculty discussed that there are young and old teachers and experience does not matter. It was understood that we could all learn from one another. Teachers talked about the need to back each other up and support each other by expressing patience and understanding. The common goal is to serve the children.

Teachers need to grow in their development and share those ideas with their colleagues. Many of the teachers are in other master programs, Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs. They participate in many different professional development opportunities offered in the community and return to school to share the information that they learned. The teachers were in agreement that they really like how the principal provides them with the right tools and opportunities to be able to go to any professional development opportunities offered to them. This gives the teachers a chance to be a teacher leader and mentor their colleagues with the knowledge they gain from the workshops.

In the focus group discussion, the teachers talked about their different roles in the school community and how everyone has a job that was given by the principal. Teachers were happy about having these leadership jobs and were accepting to completing their job throughout the school year. The principal at this school gives the teachers encouragement to work together, collaborate, and mentor their colleagues.

Themes

Some of the main themes that came from this focus group discussion were working together, sharing ideas, and openness. Working together is an important part of the teaching profession. Teachers need to work together and collaborate with one another to have a successful classroom learning environment.

Sharing ideas is also very important. As teachers, we can learn from one another and share ideas and lessons to teach the students. Openness came up in the discussion because teachers need to be open to change and new ideas. The teachers in the focus group talk about how this faculty has many different new teachers and veteran teachers. The mix of teacher experience provides the faculty the opportunity to work together and be open to learn and listen from one another. In the focus group discussion the teachers talked about how at this particular school setting, there are veteran teachers and newer teacher but this faculty has sense of openness and eagerness to learn from one another.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

The major finding of this study was that any teacher can be a teacher leader who mentors colleagues. As a teacher, one has to be open to hearing advice from their colleagues. As a teacher, being open and listening to their colleagues helps makes them a more well rounded teacher. In a school setting, principals need to be open and encourage the teachers to step into their role as a leader in the school community.

Comparison of Findings to the Literature

After reviewing the literature about teacher leaders along side my findings from the focus group I found there are many similarities. Looking over the literature, it talks about how hard it is to be a teacher leader. McKenzie and Locke (2014) describe that being a teacher leader you can face many different challenges, such as dealing with conflict with colleagues, negotiating responsibilities, balancing time, and observing of colleagues. During the focus of the discussion, the teachers talked about the timing of collaborating with their colleagues. They expressed that there is not enough time to observe, collaborate, and meet on a weekly basis. As a teacher leader who mentors their colleagues, they have to be open to listen and take advice from each other but time is needed to provide these opportunities.

In the focus group discussion, the teachers talk about how the principal in their school setting was very encouraging and gave them an opportunity to step up and become a teacher leader who

mentors their colleagues. In a study done by Pedersen, Yager & Yager (2010), it discussed that successful teaching depends on the feedback and support the teacher receives from their fellow colleagues and principal. At this particular school setting, the teachers talked about how the principal encourages them to work together and collaborate.

Harrison and Killion (2007) discuss the ten roles of a teacher leaders: resource provider, instructional specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, catalyst for change, and learner. During the focus group, the teachers discussed the different roles that they have in their school to help their principal run the school. Every teacher in the faculty talked about their role such as mentor, curriculum, yearbook, parent group, art projects, technology, student council and many more. The teachers discussed mentoring was a priority job for them at this school. The principal usually asks teachers to mentor a new teacher to the school but the teachers feel it also comes naturally to these teachers as they constantly collaborate and work together.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

A limitation to this study was that the research only looked at only one school site and a very small sample of elementary school teachers. Also this study only looked at teachers that teach in an urban private school.

Implications for Future Research

One implication for future research would be that principals need to encourage teacher leaders and be open to that idea of having teacher leaders in the school. Another implication is that teachers need encouragement from their principals to step into leadership roles.

Overall Significance of the Study

The overall significance of the study showed that a balanced school community teacher needs a mentoring role to encourage their colleagues. When teachers are mentored and encouraged by their colleagues it helps them become a well-rounded teacher benefits their student's learning.

About the Author

Danielle Boland became interested in the topic of Teacher Leaders in mentoring their colleagues because she was given an opportunity to become a teacher leader in her own school. Danielle's principal asked her to become a mentor to her colleague that taught the second grade. During her mentorship with her colleagues, she became aware that she was also learning in the process of collaborating with others. Teachers are always learning and teaching is a team effort, it is important that we work together and collaborate with each other.

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