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The Role of Superintendents in Supporting Teacher Leadership: A Study of Principals' Perceptions

ABSTRACT: This article documents a study in which principals were asked to examine the concepts related to the development of teacher leadership in their districts by responding to an original survey sent electronically via SurveyMonkey. Half the respondents were chosen from districts that were involved with a program identified as preparing teacher leaders; the other half had no program affiliation. This descriptive study used quantitative measures that revealed some differences between perceptions of principals in school districts based on involvement in teacher leadership programs. Principals from all schools reported that the role of the superintendent was important in developing teacher leaders, although they seldom experienced the support. The article concludes with suggestions for superintendents to consider as they use a research-based approach to changing the culture of their schools to include teacher leadership.

Superintendents and other staff in a school district can legitimize the efforts of developing teacher leadership by establishing appropriate policy and district culture and by being advocates for leadership.

—Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p. 15)

The issue of teacher leadership is not a new concept. The roots for utilizing teachers in leadership roles in schools were articulated in the reform movement of the 1980s (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers have long been involved as department chairs, grade-level leaders, union representatives,

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literacy coaches, and various other appointed roles. Smylie and Denny (1990) reported, "What is new are increased recognition of teacher leadership, visions of expanded teacher leadership roles, and new hope for the contributions these expanded roles might make in improving schools" (p. 237). As teachers' roles continue to expand, a spotlight is cast on the roles of principals, who are in close proximity to the new sharing of leadership at the building level. The attention in the literature has been on the relationships of principals and teachers as partnerships in distributed leadership are forged (Birky, Shelton & Headley, 2006; Gajda & Koliba, 2008).

This article shifts that level of interest from principal to superintendent as the one who is in a unique position to support the roles of teacher leaders. Few studies have reflected how teachers engage with various leaders and how this affects the culture of the organization (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Currently, there are no studies that reviewed the roles that superintendents play in advancing teacher leadership in their districts. Hence, the researchers in this study extrapolated from the literature about superintendents and leadership, administrators and teacher leadership, and superintendent communication with staff, reviewing that information as it related to creating educational change. The hope is that the application and synthesis of this literature can guide a deeper inquiry into the field of teacher leadership and the concept of superintendent involvement.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

An underlying assumption for teacher leadership is that teachers can lead the way for a continuous improvement of teaching and learning, with increased student achievement (Bowman, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; DiRanna & Loucks-Horsley, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Wynne, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There is a recognition that teachers who are central to the growth of learning in a school are well situated to share in leading the efforts to transform teaching and learning (Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996). The school improvement literature calls for the active involvement of teachers, yet the research in the area of teacher leadership has only begun to emerge (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000). In this emerging field, there are numerous questions regarding how teachers function, if the roles are informal or formal, how they are supported, and what these teachers do within their classrooms. As teachers consider new opportunities to lead and serve, the cultural conditions of the school matter a great deal (Fullan, 1993; Phelps, 2008; Reeves, 2008; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). Teacher leaders break

from the isolation and privacy that characterize schools (Lortie, 1975; Smylie & Denny, 1990) to interact with other professionals.

The concept of teacher leadership continues to evolve as external pressures grow for schools to perform with greater success and accountability. Schools and school districts are likely to use teachers in a variety of leadership roles, with some being formal and others informal. Quinn, Haggard, and Ford (2006) reported four phases of teacher growth into leadership roles. They reported Phase 1 as those skills that are important for effective classroom leadership, Phase 2 as the skills of leading with peers and within professional organizations, Phase 3 as the preparation of the next generation of teachers, and Phase 4 as the leadership to effect change within the profession. As teachers gain confidence, they gain credibility and voice to share their perspectives and contribute to the professional growth of colleagues. For the purposes of this study, the theoretical constructs of teacher leadership were taken primarily from roles classified as Phase 1 or Phase 2, in an attempt to ascertain which leadership roles for teachers are superintendents expected to support and which are actually being implemented and supported.

DEFINITIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Interestingly, while the field continues to grow, the definition of what constitutes teacher leadership remains elusive, with a variety of meanings. York-Barr and Duke (2004) reported their findings from two decades of research about teacher leadership and concluded that there are different conceptions of what teacher leadership includes. These conceptions are basically grouped according to what teacher leaders do in their schools, with the authors acknowledging that roles have changed as school needs have changed:

After reflecting on the literature as a whole, we suggest that teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. (pp. 287–288)

The development and influence that York-Barr and Duke described result in personal and organizational change. For purposes of this article, we use this definition for teacher leadership, emphasizing the power of influence to create the capacities that result in schools being adaptive to the changes that result in improved student achievement. Influence has several connotations; as such, it refers to the power that exists within

the system to provide for interrelatedness of structures and people. Ultimately, influence is a systems approach to change that allows for us to review how people within districts function together to share leadership, develop voice, and increase their capacity to lead. This article focuses on the influence that superintendents have with school district structures and employees to include teacher leadership, with the perceptions of principals being central to our understanding of how that influenced is received, understood, and requested.

A common denominator of virtually every definition of teacher leadership is a foundation of collaboration (Fullan, 1993; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Collaboration among teachers influences conditions that shape teacher leadership; school culture, roles and relationships, and structures are three categories of conditions that affect teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 268). Unfortunately, teachers have not been trained in the skills and knowledge that are the cornerstones for collaboration (Moller, Childs-Bowen, & Scribner, 2001; Snell & Swanson, 2000). The processes of establishing effective utilization of teacher leaders take deliberate work—work supported throughout the school district.

SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

The literature about teacher leadership has affirmed the importance of teacher preparation, professional development, coaching by administrators, learning communities, and the need for administrative support while indicating that principals may lack the skills and knowledge to support teacher leadership. York-Barr and Duke (2004) further reported, “There is evidence to suggest that principal support of teacher leadership is more readily espoused than enacted” (p. 274). What can be said of superintendents who are responsible for articulating the goals and vision of a district? Although the importance of administrative support is indicated in the literature, the role of the superintendent with regard to teacher leadership lacks definition. Superintendents are in unique positions to be able to create and communicate a vision for their districts. Superintendents communicate these values in their interactions with principals and teachers in their districts.

This article examines the issue of superintendent communication as a means for understanding the beliefs and values they hold relative to teacher leadership. Spanneut and Ford (2008) reported, “Whether by design or by chance, superintendents communicate their beliefs about what is important educationally and the roles they expect their principals to fulfill” (p. 28). As such, superintendents articulate their views to princi-

pals, who carry the goals to their respective buildings. They set priorities for instructional leadership; for distributed leadership, including interest in and expectations for teacher leadership; for improved student achievement; and for other goals as determined by themselves, state or national directives, and district policy.

If superintendents are attempting to make deeper, cultural changes in the school district, then they are involved with breaking traditions that have been deeply held and practiced. Teacher leadership positions can be examples of first-order change when teachers assume roles that do not disrupt the culture of the school. In these examples, teachers are department- or grade-level chairpersons or other similarly assigned roles.

With second-order change, the teacher leaders are involved in work that is outside their classroom to affect the larger culture of the school. Superintendents who pave the way for these activities allow for democracy and shared leadership. Silva and colleagues (2000) reported, "Democratic schools emphasize shared power where teachers participate in developing schedules, deal with problem students, attend board meetings, evaluate teachers, allocate resources, and select conferences and staff development activities" (p. 801).

As teachers complete these important roles in schools, superintendents play essential roles of encouraging, allowing, and defining distributed leadership. Scribner and colleagues (2007) reported that the "structures and social dynamics of distributed leadership must be attended to and not taken for granted" (p. 67).

Superintendents who champion the efforts of distributed leadership are leading change efforts for which they have not been specifically trained. Sarason (1996) reported the lack of understanding that superintendents have relative to educational change and organizational culture. Superintendents are not experienced as change agents; thus, they often feel overwhelmed by the deep levels of change that involve risk (Murphy, 1994). The change efforts of teacher leadership involve second-order change, which implies that unique behaviors and skills are necessary for effective leadership.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) indicated that administrators should engage in seven responsibilities while leading second-order change. These requisite tasks necessitate that a superintendent possess, in rank order of effectiveness, (1) knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (2) the capacity to be an optimizer; (3) the intelligence to stimulate meaningful discourse; (4) the vision to act as a change agent; (5) the capability to effectively monitor and evaluate; (6) flexibility; and (7) a strong commitment to ideals and beliefs.

Second-order changes require leadership skills that are dramatic and sensitive to the environment. Marzano and colleagues (2005) summarized,

To successfully implement a second-order change, a school leader must ratchet up his idealism, energy, and enthusiasm. Additionally the school leader must be willing to live through a period of frustration and even anger from some staff members. No doubt this takes a great personal toll on a school leader and might explain why many promising practices in education have not led to improved student achievement and ultimately have been abandoned. (p. 75)

As superintendents orchestrate the dramatic change efforts to reculture schools, it is important to understand the dynamics of educational change and the resulting challenges that the change efforts produce (Fullan, 1993, 2001).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) related the three conditions that influence teacher leadership: school culture, roles and relationships, and structure. These three areas can be understood from a systems analysis because they are interconnected and they relate to the whole of the school or the school system. As teachers lessen their isolation and begin to work collaboratively, they change the culture of the school. Superintendents play an important part in creating the vision that sets the expectations for growth and in supporting teachers working as leaders in the school. Superintendents are in unique positions to be able to promote the vision that enhances the role of teachers as leaders in the district. As chief educational officers, the superintendents are the ones who optimize the conditions within the school district that can manifest conditions that support teacher leadership. Relational trust and effective communication skills are foundational to the establishment of teachers as leaders.

Kowalski (2005) reported, "Both professionally and politically, relationship enhancing communication is a more effective alternative for administrators who must initiate and sustain change" (p. 108). Communication skills are part of the important characteristics that define effective superintendents, with relational trust being an essential element embedded in those skills. As superintendents communicate their vision for teacher leadership and model those values by effectively utilizing the human capital of those teachers, they develop political currency for their advocacy.

DEFINITIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF GALILEO ASSOCIATION

An understanding of the ongoing and parallel work of the Galileo Consortium, the Galileo Academy, and the Galileo Institute for Teacher Leadership is essential in analyzing and summarizing the results of this study.

The Galileo Consortium was formed in 1997 and dedicated itself to its mission to advance the development of teacher leadership to ensure high levels of learning for all. The organizational leaders reflected on their common demographics, needs, and innovations and pondered the potential strategies that would better support their efforts to effect school improvement. The consortium's work includes the teacher leadership development academy, conferences and workshops for member districts, and ongoing fund-raising to support its activities. Partnerships with businesses and industries have helped to fund the Galileo Consortium.

The Galileo Academy has provided an intense 2-year leadership development opportunity for approximately 400 teachers representing 25 local school districts and 2 community colleges from the southeastern region of a Midwestern state since 1997. Not only did the academy receive start-up funding, but school districts and community colleges continue to support Galileo leaders professionally and financially.

The Galileo Institute for Teacher Leadership extends the reach of the Galileo Academy's experience by focusing on the development of teacher leaders through graduate programs, conferences, and the development of a stakeholder network under the aegis of a highly regarded state university. In addition, the Galileo Institute provides services to districts and scholarly research linking teacher leadership with systemic change models of school transformation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine principals' perceptions of the role of superintendents in promoting and supporting teacher leadership efforts in their districts and to assess what differences, if any, emerged between what principals wanted and received from their superintendents. We were additionally interested in learning if there were differences in perceptions between principals who were from districts that had participated in the Galileo Academy and those who were not.

For purposes of this study, we reviewed the perceptions of principals with regard to expectations from their superintendents as well as to observations of what principals had actually witnessed their superintendents do with regard to teacher leadership roles. It was our hope to learn what these principals wanted and to review those expectations next to what they perceived to receive.

The unique positioning of the principal in this model, as a catalyst and mentor in developing teacher leaders, is directly influenced by the

attitudes, behaviors, and support generated by the superintendent. The extent that superintendents develop systems to support and encourage teacher leadership poses significant implications for the training of school superintendents as well as the development of successful collaborative leadership models within school districts. With a greater understanding of the principals' perceptions of the role of the superintendent and their subsequent expectations, superintendents can address complex systemic change issues that they confront in committing to full partnership with teacher leaders as well as with the principals who promote collaborative leadership practices. Teachers become encouraged to lead; they develop voice and empowerment; and the cycle of teacher leadership grows.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study that appears quasi-experimental in design. Because the study reflects what happened in the past without manipulation of variables, the researchers consider it descriptive rather than quasi-experimental.

Quantitative methods were used to document the principals' perceptions of the role of superintendents in supporting teacher leadership in 34 school districts in a Midwestern state in late 2008. A survey was electronically distributed to 394 principals in K–12 school districts in this purposeful sampling (see appendix). Accounting for 50% of the respondents invited to participate were principals representing school districts that had been affiliated with the Galileo Academy and had trained teacher leaders for the preceding 10 years. Most, but not all, of the principals in these districts worked with teachers who had been or were currently involved in the Galileo Academy. Note that the number of Galileo teacher leaders in the school districts ranged from 4 (in the most recent member districts) to approximately 40 (districts that have been part of the consortium since its inception in 1997). Despite the fact that superintendents in these districts have made a solid commitment to the professional growth of their Galileo leaders, it is possible that a principal in a Galileo district might work with few, if any, Galileo leaders in a building. The remaining principals represented districts in the same geographic location who were matched with principals in participating districts (in terms of district size and socioeconomic characteristics of the student population) that were not involved in the Galileo teacher leadership initiative. Most districts were moderately linked by size and our understanding of each district's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, in addition to published test score data. Stu-

dent enrollment ranged from 1,500 to 20,000 students, and income levels varied from lower to upper-middle class.

The participating schools were involved with the Galileo Academy over a 2-year period in which teams of teacher leaders engaged in a number of weekend and school-released professional development days, hosted by trainers who had considerable expertise in teacher leadership, school improvement, and program facilitation. We deliberately chose these two distinct school district groups to consider whether principals' perceptions of superintendents' commitment to teacher leadership could be a function of membership in the established Galileo Academy teacher leadership initiative or whether superintendents' support of teacher leadership emerged from different contexts.

PARTICIPANTS

From this purposeful sample of 17 districts participating in the Galileo Academy and 17 nonparticipating districts, we were able to collect responses from 176 principals. At least 1 principal responded to the survey in 33 of the 34 districts in this study. Principals from districts that had engaged in the Galileo Academy accounted for 60% of the survey respondents.

As indicated in Table 1, a majority of the principals responding to the survey were elementary principals: Overall, 59% of the respondents were elementary principals, and 65% of the principals from Galileo districts represented elementary schools. One respondent to the survey was principal in a K–8 building and was thus considered an elementary principal. In sum, the districts in this study were representative of a larger population of districts.

In this study, we intentionally focused on the principals' perceptions—regardless of whether the principals were part of the Galileo Academy—to see what differences, if any, resulted between districts that had participated in targeted teacher leadership training and those that had not. We were interested in learning if there were differences between what principals deemed significant for their superintendents to emphasize relative to teacher leadership and what the superintendents actually achieved. Principals assigned to preschools, charter schools, and alternative education programs were excluded from the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection in late 2008 involved a survey (see appendix) distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey. The survey was original, developed

Table 1. Demographics of Survey Respondents: *n* (%)

	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Galileo Academy</i>	<i>Non-Galileo Academy</i>
Principals	176 (100.0)	106 (60.2) ^a	70 (39.8) ^a
Men	80 (45.5)	49 (46.2)	31 (44.3)
Women	96 (54.5)	57 (53.8)	39 (55.7)
Experience, years			
> 20	16 (9.1)	7 (6.6)	9 (12.8)
15–19	13 (7.4)	7 (6.6)	6 (8.6)
10–14	35 (19.9)	18 (17.0)	17 (24.3)
5–9	61 (34.7)	38 (35.8)	23 (32.9)
< 5	51 (29.0)	36 (34.0)	15 (21.4)
School			
Elementary	104 (59.1)	69 (65.1)	35 (50.0)
Middle	45 (25.6)	23 (21.7)	22 (31.4)
High	27 (15.3)	14 (13.2)	13 (18.6)

Note. Not all percentages add to 100 because of rounding.
^aPercentages based on total sample.

by the researchers, with concepts generated from the literature base of teacher leadership, as well as with concepts used in surveys that were field tested in previous studies (Maxfield, Wells, Keane, & Klocko, 2008). The questionnaire was designed to measure principals’ perceptions of the significance of identified superintendent behaviors associated with teacher leadership and to identify the perceived extent to which these behaviors were demonstrated by their superintendent in their school district.

The face validity of this instrument was assessed by the five members of the research team, whose background as former principals and superintendents provided considerable knowledge and expertise with the theoretical and practical experience associated with teacher leadership. These individuals made their judgments about the relevance of the items and the clarity of their formulation and determined that the survey addressed the issue of face validity. In the judgment of the five reviewers, the instrument appeared to measure the theoretical constructs for which it was designed—namely, principals’ perceptions of the importance of the 13 behaviors identified as constructs and the extent that superintendents accomplished them.

Content validity requires more rigorous statistical tests than that of face validity, which requires only an intuitive judgment (Lawshe, 1975). The consensus of the researchers provided some degree of numerical support to determine that face validity was established. Furthermore, to determine the reliability or the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach’s

alpha of .89 was obtained—indicating that the fundamental requirements of construct validity were met. Thus, the instrument had a high degree of reliability.

Data were collected over a 4-week period, and 2 reminder letters were sent to those who had not yet responded. Principals were asked about their backgrounds in education and their perceptions regarding the inherent barriers in developing teacher leadership programs. Principals also responded to 13 statements about teacher leadership, rating the importance of the superintendent in developing teacher leadership with response choices of *highly significant*, *significant*, *moderately significant*, or *not significant at all*. Moreover, respondents had the option of indicating *I don't know* to all questions in this survey. Last, principals rated the extent that their superintendents achieved these same 13 elements of teacher leadership, with response choices of *almost always*, *often*, *sometimes*, or *almost never*.

DATA ANALYSIS

In the first stage of the analysis, the research team analyzed the findings provided by SurveyMonkey to look for systematic patterns regarding principals' perceptions of the role of superintendents in supporting teacher leadership. Frequencies and means were explored to identify relationships between the levels of superintendent support for teacher leadership in school districts that had participated in the Galileo Academy and those that had not.

For the second stage of the analysis, the data were transferred to SPSS (Version 16.0) to conduct formal analyses to test for significance. An analysis of variance was performed on each item comparing the Galileo and non-Galileo principals' perceptions to determine if there were significant differences in districts that were involved in the teacher leadership initiative and those that were not. Differences were considered significant at the standard alpha level of .05.

The first stage of the analysis concentrated on identifying possible similarities among the perceptions of principals regarding the role of superintendents in districts that did and did not participate in the Galileo Academy. The second stage examined the association between (1) principals' perceptions of the preferred role of superintendents in supporting teacher leadership and (2) principals' perceptions of the extent that the superintendent engaged in behaviors that supported teacher leadership in their districts. These analyses were compared between Galileo and non-Galileo districts as well as in aggregate.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate three major findings. Principals clearly expressed that they desire their superintendents to engage in activities and behaviors to support teacher leadership programs. The survey results also revealed differences in the responses from principals in school districts that had been part of the Galileo leadership training and those that had not. Finally, principals clearly identified active rather than passive roles that superintendents should play to create systems that support teacher leadership.

When principals were asked how significant it was for their superintendents to engage in the behaviors that supported teacher leadership, they identified trust as the most important factor. The highest mean score for both groups was associated with how significant it is for the superintendent to build relational trust within the district for teacher leaders. We posit that this does not represent a significant difference because trust represents an overarching theme and is a desirable behavior regardless of leadership training.

As shown in Table 2, some behaviors revealed statistically significant differences; that is, principals reported their perceptions of how significant it was for their superintendent to engage in the following behaviors:

- working with teacher unions for teacher leadership opportunities,
- problem solving with principals experiencing challenges,
- supporting principals if they are publicly or otherwise challenged, and
- providing recognition for teacher leadership achievement.

These behaviors represent areas specifically addressed in the Galileo leadership experience. Although these data indicate a relationship between the behaviors that principals identify as being essential, the Galileo leadership experience is further validated by the principals' perceptions of the extent that superintendents engage in these behaviors.

Principals were asked to rate the extent to which their superintendents achieved the level of support for teacher leadership principles, and the results were clear that superintendents' actions did not match their principals' expectations for support of teacher leadership, as shown in Table 3. The range in responses from the principals from districts involved with the Galileo Academy ranged from *often* (2.95), for providing the autonomy that principals need to nurture teacher leaders, to *sometimes* (1.81), for evaluating principals on growth in developing teacher leadership programs. It is interesting to note that even in the districts that were engaged in teacher leadership training, the principals perceived that their superintendents

Table 2. Analysis of Variance: Principals' Perceptions of the Importance of Superintendents in Supporting Teacher Leadership

How Significant Is This? ^a	Galileo Academy (n = 106)		Non-Galileo Academy (n = 70)	
	M	SD	M	SD
a. Engage administrators in discussion about teacher leaders	3.16	0.85	3.13	0.96
b. Provide financial support for development of teacher leaders	3.33	0.80	3.27	0.97
c. Works with teacher unions for teacher leadership opportunities	3.34	0.79	3.04*	0.93
d. Speaks about importance of teacher leaders at board of education meetings	3.28	0.72	3.09	0.93
e. Arranges for teacher leaders to have prominence in decisions	3.29	0.77	3.05	0.95
f. Assists principals experiencing challenges moving culture	3.14	0.86	2.98	0.97
g. Problem solves with principals experiencing challenges	3.25	0.79	2.95*	0.92
h. Encourages principals in developing teacher leaders programs	3.27	0.71	3.10	0.95
i. Evaluates principals on growth in developing teacher leaders	2.89	0.93	2.63	0.96
j. Supports principals if they are publicly or otherwise challenged	3.17	0.83	2.83*	1.04
k. Provides autonomy principals need to nurture teacher leaders	3.35	0.71	3.30	0.83
l. Provides recognition for teacher leadership achievement	3.27	0.78	2.95*	0.98
m. Builds relational trust within district for teacher leaders	3.45	0.72	3.40	0.85

^aScale: 4 = *highly significant*, 1 = *not significant at all*.

**p* < .05.

were somewhat supportive but only at a level between *sometimes* to *often* and clearly not indicating a regular observed behavior.

When the mean scores from principals whose districts had been associated with the Galileo leadership training were compared with principals whose districts had not, eight responses were expressed as being statistically significant:

- engaging administrators in discussion about teacher leaders,
- providing financial support for development of teacher leaders,
- working with teacher unions for teacher leadership opportunities,

Table 3. Analysis of Variance: Principals’ Perceptions of the Extent That Superintendents Support Teacher Leadership

<i>To What Extent Does Your Superintendent Achieve This?^a</i>	<i>Galileo Academy (n = 106)</i>		<i>Non-Galileo Academy (n = 70)</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
a. Engage administrators in discussion about teacher leaders	2.26	0.96	1.95*	0.95
b. Provide financial support for development of teacher leaders	2.71	0.98	1.92*	0.97
c. Works with teacher unions for teacher leadership opportunities	2.79	0.94	2.05*	0.95
d. Speaks about importance of teacher leaders at board of education meetings	2.72	0.96	2.15*	0.99
e. Arranges for teacher leaders to have prominence in decisions	2.55	0.97	2.11*	0.96
f. Assists principals experiencing challenges moving culture	2.10	0.98	1.89	0.85
g. Problem solves with principals experiencing challenges	2.18	1.00	1.94	0.96
h. Encourages principals in developing teacher leaders programs	2.44	1.05	1.81*	1.03
i. Evaluates principals on growth in developing teacher leaders	1.81	1.07	1.71	0.93
j. Supports principals if they are publicly or otherwise challenged	2.43	1.20	2.15	1.20
k. Provides autonomy principals need to nurture teacher leaders	2.95	1.03	2.56*	1.13
l. Provides recognition for teacher leadership achievement	2.88	1.00	2.13*	0.85
m. Builds relational trust within district for teacher leaders	2.59	0.98	2.27	1.10

^aScale: 4 = *almost always*, 1 = *almost never*.
**p* < .05.

- speaking about importance of teacher leaders at board of education meetings,
- arranging for teacher leaders to have prominence in decisions,
- encouraging principals in developing teacher leader programs,
- providing autonomy principals need to nurture teacher leaders, and
- providing recognition for teacher leadership achievement.

Although these data suggest a higher standard of performance for superintendents in districts that had engaged in Galileo leadership training, they clearly indicate that there is still much work to be done. At best the means were close to the category signifying *often* or *sometimes*, indicating that

even in those districts with training for teacher leadership, the transformation involving superintendents had not occurred at a high level, as reported by the principals.

When the constructs that were deemed statistically significant were further analyzed, it was clear that the superintendents from the districts that had participated in the Galileo teacher leadership programs had means for areas described as supportive elements. The principals rated their superintendents for being supportive by discussing and working with teacher unions, providing financial support for programs, speaking about the importance of teacher leaders in public, encouraging principals to develop teacher leaders while allowing them autonomy, and providing teacher recognition.

Additionally, the principals from the districts that had participated in the Galileo teacher leadership programs had one statistically higher mean for an area classified as shared leadership, with the category of allowing teachers to have prominence in decision making.

The results of this study indicate that the principals in districts that had been involved with the Galileo Academy teacher leadership programs rated a higher level of expectation and support of superintendents in promoting teacher leadership. They also indicate that principals want more support and involvement for teacher leadership than what they currently experience from their superintendents. Additionally, the results of this study raise the issue of teacher leadership training as a mechanism for promoting the behaviors of superintendents to promote teacher leadership, understanding that the culture of a school district is difficult to change (Fullan, 2001).

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to the generalizability of this study. This was not a random study; it was a purposeful sample in which principals that were from districts that had been through leadership training through the Galileo Academy were identified and matched with principals that were from schools and districts of similar characteristics but that had not participated in the teacher leadership training. Because some principals were involved with the training of the teacher leadership principals as part of the Galileo experience, there could have been bias in their responding to the survey; however, with principals being involved with the project of teacher leadership, they had sufficient knowledge to discriminate among the variables and concepts being measured and

thus carefully evaluate the superintendents on these concepts regarding whether they were truly living up to the ideals of each construct. The survey captured the perceptions of principals regarding the behaviors of the superintendents; superintendents were not queried regarding their involvement or self-assessment.

The principals were not asked to explain or verify their answers, to ascertain if their level of response aligned with the behavior of the superintendent. This survey did not generate qualitative information that might have given additional insights regarding what was happening in the districts. Instead, it was a one-time assessment of what was happening, without regard to the length of time that a district had been involved with Galileo Academy programs and training. It could be argued that the superintendents from districts that participated in the teacher leadership training already had a propensity to support the teacher leadership concepts; hence, the means reported from principals indicate a correlation—that is, no causal interpretations can be made from these data. Finally, this survey was not intended to assess the effectiveness of the Galileo teacher leadership experience.

IMPLICATIONS

As roles for teacher leaders continue to evolve, so do the roles of superintendents. Orr (2006) reported the findings from focus groups with superintendents who revealed that the increased democratization of schools and the increased pressure for student achievement resulted in increased pressure and stress. She further reported, “The problems facing new superintendents today may be similar in kind to those that they had faced initially but were now greater in scale, intensity, and stress” (p. 1384). The implications of this study suggest that superintendents are confronted with numerous challenges as they promote change within the district. A superintendent’s first-level response to stress includes effective communication with staff (Kowalski, 2005). Smylie and Denny (1990) reported the conclusions of their research on teacher leadership with regard to policy and program development:

Because of the potentially conflicting and compromising organizational factors, they suggest that teacher leadership development should be approached as an issue of organizational change and not merely as a task of enhancing individual opportunity and capacity. They suggest that attention to the structure of roles and organizational contexts is necessary but insufficient to promote teacher leadership performance. (p. 257)

Superintendents are the ones who will be orchestrating the organizational change of the district. To do so means a thorough knowledge of teacher leadership, the history and cultural traditions of the district, and effective means to manage the stress, mediate polarities, and build relationships that build capacity for shared leadership.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study suggest the important role that superintendents can play in the development of teacher leadership programs. There is great potential for the hope that teacher leaders will improve schools (Smylie & Denny, 1990), and the belief that superintendents can facilitate the growth in the teacher leadership programs that exist in the schools. The role of superintendents with regard to teacher leadership, although not clearly defined, may create structural components that have strong implications for how principals influence, develop, and nurture the growth of teachers as leaders.

Although the results of this study show promise for the partnership associated with a formal leadership program such as Galileo, the actions of superintendents that were evident to building principals in support of teacher leadership were less than compelling. In short, teacher leadership programs require persistent action, systemic alignment, and commitment. The results further suggest the need for purposeful, systemwide alignment to support teacher leadership. Although principals in Galileo districts tended to perceive a higher level of support for teacher leadership from their superintendents, their responses were hardly overwhelming. In fact, the data further suggest that Galileo districts have given minimal attention to realigning systems and resources to support teacher leadership.

The results also propose that there are numerous challenges inherent in creating school districts that effectively use teachers as leaders, whether the superintendents are part of a formal partnership with the Galileo Academy or with any other organization that purports the same. Although this study reported on superintendent behaviors, it was the perceptions of the principals regarding those behaviors that were reviewed. Building principals wanted financial support from their superintendents for teacher leadership programs and assistance with the development and problem solving associated with the roles that they would play as they lead the teacher leadership efforts in their schools. The principals wanted relational trust with their superintendents within the district, which would serve as a foundation for teacher leadership growth. It is clear that the principals in

this survey, both those affiliated with a program for developing teacher leaders and those not affiliated, were in favor of shared leadership within their buildings.

The principals in this study provided insights and feedback about the state of teacher leadership programs in their districts, with perceptions that can inform the literature base regarding what they want and need from their superintendents. What do principals need to build teacher leadership programs, and what role might superintendents play in supporting them to complete this growth? Superintendents are in unique positions to mitigate the barriers and pay attention to the patterns of practice and power within their districts. This study suggests that principals are hoping that those changes will emerge. Superintendents can create numerous opportunities for advancing teacher leadership. They can foster expectation and reward for effective teacher growth and leadership. They are uniquely able to encourage principals to develop teacher growth in their schools while providing incentives for the same.

The role of the superintendent, though not thoroughly studied with regard to teacher leadership, is one that can provide fruitful yield as superintendents, building leaders, and teacher leaders learn new ways in which to serve in capacities that engage their schools, districts, and the larger educational community with shared leadership. Although it is certainly not unique that principals would ask for and expect support from their superintendents, the results from this study suggest that principals perceived that it was important for them to be supported along areas of relational trust, a foundational piece for building capacity and inspiration within a district. These findings are consistent with the research on teacher leadership conducted by Smylie and Denny (1990), who reported,

The literature on leadership suggests that leadership development is an organizational phenomenon. It is influenced not only by organizational structure but also by the interactions and negotiations among leaders and other organizational participants that take place in a political and normative framework. (p. 256)

The principals in this study asked for targeted support from their superintendents. These superintendents possess the influence and opportunity to transform schools with a spirit that encourages, uplifts, supports, and expects that the human capital of teachers is effectively utilized in the schools and school district.

As superintendents navigate a changing landscape of increased pressures for student achievement while experiencing diminished resources and increasingly complex political terrain, they encounter new stresses and new opportunities for transformation. Instead of struggling with a loss

of authority from the external and internal pressures, superintendents can seek partnerships with teacher leaders who are invested in advancing the achievement of their students and assisting their colleagues. As superintendents collaborate in setting nonnegotiable goals, they can include all relevant stakeholders. In their review of their meta-analysis, Waters and Marzano (2006) reported, "Superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement" (p. 4). The stakes are high for involving teachers as leaders, and the path, though not risk-free for superintendents, allows for a deeper analysis of the variety of skills that superintendents use to build capacity for shared leadership. An insight that we infer as a result of this and other studies that we have conducted (Maxfield et al., 2008) affirms that superintendents matter a great deal in the equation of teacher leadership, which thus propels us into additional study of the role of superintendents.

Simply put, superintendents matter in the development of teacher leadership programs. Their influence creates a path for teachers to influence the school in ways that strengthen the profession and improve learning for students.

APPENDIX: SURVEY

1. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

This is a study of the perceptions of principals regarding the role of superintendents in supporting teacher leadership. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The benefit of this research is to examine the perceptions of principals and offer feedback regarding the role of superintendents in developing teacher leadership. There is no possible harm foreseen in participating in this research. We will not name individuals or schools participating. This survey is voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to, and you can stop taking part at any time. Choosing not to participate will not affect your relationship with your school district, Oakland University, or The Galileo Institute for Teacher Leadership. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. Your privacy will be protected and your name will not be used in any sort of report that is published. Your survey information will be kept strictly confidential.

Participants will be assigned a number, and all information will be identified with that number rather than the participant's name. After completion of the study, all information will be destroyed.

For questions regarding the rights of human subjects in research, you may contact Dr. Christine Hansen, Chair, Oakland University Institutional Review Board, (248) 693-2762. For questions regarding this particular study, you may contact Dr. C. Robert Maxfield at (248) 370-3087 or maxfiel2@oakland.edu.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please indicate below.

- YES. I agree to participate.
- NO. I do not wish to participate.

2. LEADERSHIP

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
2. How many years have you served as principal in your current district?
 - More than 20 years
 - 15–19 years
 - 10–14 years
 - 5–9 years
 - Fewer than 5 years
3. Describe the students in your building:
 - Early Elementary (K–2 or K–3)
 - Intermediate (3–5)
 - Middle School (6–8)
 - Secondary (9–12)
 - Other
4. Is your district a member of the Galileo Consortium?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I Don't Know

5. Do you have any Galileo Leaders (past or present) teaching in your school?
- Yes

◦ No

◦ I Don't Know

3. BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

1. How significant are these barriers to developing teacher leadership in your district?

	<i>Highly Significant</i>	<i>Very Significant</i>	<i>Somewhat Significant</i>	<i>Not Significant at all</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Lack of district administrative support	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of time	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Negative peer pressure	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of training	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of understanding	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of union support	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of teacher interest	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Lack of need	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

4. SUPERINTENDENT SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS

1. In order to better understand the role of superintendents in supporting principals who are committed to developing teacher leadership in schools, please indicate the significance and the observed frequency of these behaviors by your superintendent.

	<p>How significant is this?</p> <p>Please indicate <i>highly significant, significant, moderately significant, or not significant at all.</i></p>	<p>To what extent does your superintendent achieve this?</p> <p>Please indicate <i>almost always, often, sometimes, or never.</i></p>
<p>a. Engages administrators in discussion about teacher leadership in district meetings.</p> <p>b. Provides financial support for the development of teacher leadership.</p> <p>c. Works with teacher unions to prepare the way for teacher leadership opportunities.</p> <p>d. Speaks about the importance of teacher leadership at board of education and other community meetings.</p> <p>e. Arranges for teacher leaders to have prominence in important decisions such as budget formation, curriculum, and strategic planning at the district and building level.</p> <p>f. Assists principals who are experiencing challenges with moving the culture of the school to accept teacher leaders.</p> <p>g. Problem solves with principals who are experiencing challenges with moving the culture of the school to accept teacher leaders.</p> <p>h. Encourages principals in developing teacher leadership programs.</p> <p>i. Evaluates principals on their growth in developing and nurturing teacher leaders.</p> <p>j. Supports principals if they are publicly or otherwise challenged for developing teacher leadership.</p> <p>k. Provides for the autonomy that principals need as they develop and nurture teacher leadership programs in their schools.</p> <p>l. Provides recognition for teacher leadership achievement.</p> <p>m. Builds relational trust within the district as a foundation for teacher leadership.</p>		

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