Teacher Leadership: A District's Human Capital Investment Approach For Elevating Professional Learning

Alexandra Martillo Goldfarb

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TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A DISTRICT’S HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT APPROACH FOR ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A Dissertation

Presented to the

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Alexandra Goldfarb

March 18, 2020
TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A DISTRICT’S HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT APPROACH FOR ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Carmen S. Concepción

Tricia Fernandez

Milagros Gonzalez
DEDICATION

Carmen S. Concepción

I am filled with gratitude to Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary for the opportunity to grow as an educational leader. My gratitude extends to Mr. Rouben Yaghdjian, Dr. Margaret Constantino and Dr. James Stronge who supported this project from the onset. To my friends and dissertation partners, Tricia, Milly, and Alexa, this journey would not have been possible without each of you.

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and many friends, my most valuable treasure. Isela, your guidance has been invaluable. A special feeling of gratitude to my family, your faith in me has pushed me to always persevere. I could never let you down!

Para ti mami, por siempre creer y confiar en mi. Para ti papi, tu ejemplo y tenacidad han sido un gran ejemplo a seguir. A mis suegros, Cary y El Galle, por su apoyo incondicional, muchos de mis logros se los debo a ustedes.

To my sister Patricia, and my brothers Ariel and Alejandro, the greatest gift our parents ever gave me. You are a pillar of strength in my life.

I also dedicate this work to my husband, Roberto, who one day promised he would always support me through my studies. I am sure you never realized I would not stop until I reached this summit. You have always been a constant source of love and encouragement.

To my sons, Robert, Carlos and Tommy, you are my world. You have taught me of my capacity to love, to experience life in its most meaningful way, and to open my heart wide enough to let all those joyful feelings inside. I am a better educator, mother, and human being because of you.
Tricia M. Fernandez

After I finished my Masters’ degree, I knew I wanted to pursue a doctoral degree but in true form, life gets in the way and it got pushed to the back burner. As I got older, I regretted not pursuing this lifelong goal. When the opportunity presented itself to participate in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary doctoral program, I knew I wanted to be part of this amazing project. I am grateful to Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary for this experience.

Through this work I have developed relationships and friendships with my cohort colleagues. I am thankful to my dissertation colleagues, Alexa, Carmen and Milly. Working with each of you on this project allowed me to grow personally and professionally, you often challenged my thinking and beliefs. I am grateful to each of you.

I dedicate my dissertation work to my loving family and friends. On more than one occasion you’ve heard me say, “I can’t,” “not now,” “I have research to do,” and the litany of phrases goes on and on. To my husband Ivan, you are my best friend and my soulmate, words cannot express my gratitude and love for you as you stood by my side during this journey.

To our children and their spouses, Michael, Lauren, Meredith and Bruno, Joseph and Janet, thank you for always encouraging me and being my greatest cheerleader.
Alexandra Goldfarb

My wholehearted gratitude goes to Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary for the opportunity to embark on this journey. It is my privilege to thank my colleagues and friends, Carmen, Tricia, and Milly, for sharing their knowledge, time, and dedication, for only together, this undertaking was possible.

With boundless love and appreciation, I dedicate this dissertation to the strong women in my life. To my mother, Rosy, whose unconditional love, support, and wisdom I could always count on. To my sister, Ani, who instilled a sense of belief in my ability to balance the many demands I encountered and had faith in me, even when I doubted myself. To Margie, my mother-in-law, who encouraged me to pursue this doctorate degree despite the naysayers. To Tessie, whose spirit and energy cheered me on. Most of all to my daughter, Giuliana, at your young age, you’re already a pillar of strength and my inspiration to see this journey to the finish line. I strive to be an example for you and make you proud. You can accomplish anything you set your mind to. Always chase your dreams!

It must be acknowledged that my humble efforts are also a result of the influential men in my life. My father, Wilson, who provided the foundation of my determination and perseverance. To Alan, my father-in-law, whose positive influence and affection are immeasurable. My deep appreciation and indebtedness go to my husband, Michael, you are my rock. Thank you for being a constant source of support and encouragement throughout the challenges of this journey and life. Love you to heaven and back!
Milagros Gonzalez

I am grateful to Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary for the opportunity to fulfill a life-long dream I did not think was attainable. My heart is filled with gratitude for my friends and colleagues, Alexa, Carmen, and Tricia without whose unwavering support over the past year, I could not have persevered.

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive family and friends who shower me with unconditional love every day. A special heartfelt thank you to my sister, Pily, brother-in-law, Manolo, nieces, Pilar Maria, Elizabeth, and Christy, and nephews, Manny and Ben who have always supported and believed in me. Your belief in me has given me the strength to continue to grow as a mother, daughter, sister, friend, colleague, leader, and educator.

I dedicate this journey to my hero, my father, who once asked me to promise him I would pursue a doctoral degree. Pipo, te doy las gracias por todos tus sacrificios, por nunca fallarme y siempre creer en mi. Aquí te cumple la promesa de ver a tu hija graduada de doctora. Gracias a ti y a mima yo soy la mujer que soy hoy día. Sin el amor y apoyo de ustedes yo nunca hubiera podido lograr todo lo que he logrado. Mima, tu eres mi fuerza y mi corazón.

To my daughters, Andrea and Gabriela, you are my world. Words cannot express my love for you, and I thank God every day for the gift of being your mother. I hope this dissertation serves to prove to you that you can do anything you set your heart and mind to do no matter the obstacles that may stand in your way. Thank you for encouraging me every time I doubted myself by saying, “Mama, you got this!”.
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Acknowledgments

We wish to thank Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the College of William and Mary for this opportunity to explore a problem a practice that studies Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ Teacher LEADership Academy.

Our colleagues at Miami-Dade County Public Schools have been supportive and instrumental in the research and findings of this dissertation. In addition, our Dissertation Committee, Christopher R. Gareis, Ed.D., Chairperson, Steven M. Constantino, Ed.D., and Margaret E. Constantino, Ph.D., Committee Members have mentored and guided us through this process and for that, we are eternally grateful.

A special thank you to Mr. Rouben Yaghdjian, for your continued support and friendship. Your constant encouragement and words of wisdom throughout this endeavor guided us through this journey. We share this honor with you, our dear colleague and friend.
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Abstract

Research shows that providing teacher leadership opportunities has a positive influence on the capacity building of teachers and is an effective strategy to retain effective teacher leaders. Current reform efforts include creating sustainable career pathways that provide teachers the opportunity to grow professionally while leading from the classroom. However, present trends depict low returns on investment from professional learning programs resulting in reduced funding. The purpose of this study was to determine if Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ (M-DCPS) human capital investment approach in the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) strengthens the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning while retaining them in the classroom. An Innovation Configuration Map was used to determine fidelity of implementation to purposively select the study sample. Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the selected schools completed a nine question Likert scale survey to determine their perceptions regarding the value of the academy. Using semi-structured focus groups, data were also gathered regarding the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning and the impact of the M-DCPS TLA on their decision to lead from the classroom. The findings from the study support and extend the literature on best practices in human capital development regarding teacher leaders who can support and influence teaching and learning for their colleagues through greater involvement in school leadership. We recommend that school districts make an investment in formalizing teacher leader roles that foster collaborative, job-embedded professional learning that is sustained over time to impact teaching and learning.
TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A DISTRICT’S HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT

APPROACH FOR ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

For decades, the educational landscape has been one of high-stakes testing, performance management, and accountability. Teacher quality has been at the forefront of educational policy, funding, and national, state, and local decision-making. In order to do so, teachers must increase their knowledge and skills to successfully implement these practices in their classrooms. To ensure teacher quality, it is increasingly important for school districts to redefine teacher roles through participation in targeted, job-embedded, and sustained professional development (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

To increase teacher quality and improve schools, districts across the nation have been asked to transform their professional development systems and shift professional development functions from central office to school-based, site-specific professional development activities that meet the needs of teachers and their students (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Teacher participation in formal and/or informal professional development activities helps improve their practice (Mizel, 2010). Ensuring that the knowledge and skills acquired through formal professional development are transferred to the classroom, requires professional development structures that support continuous learning through colleague-to-colleague interactions. Parsons (2011) states that “the best professional learning occurs when teachers coach teachers” (p. 11). This occurs when teachers lead colleagues in planning
curriculum, analyzing student work, observing instructional practice, and providing meaningful, relevant feedback. Parsons (2011) states that “the best professional learning occurs when teachers coach teachers” (p. 11).

Teachers who lead colleagues in professional growth are by nature teacher leaders. Whether through formal or informal teacher leader roles, teacher leaders are making a difference in schools by building trust, establishing credibility, and sustaining meaningful change. Teacher leaders who recognize, develop, and deliver quality professional development activities use their influence to impact teaching and learning in their schools. School districts that value teacher quality, professional growth, and teacher leaders make an investment in creating structures that promote teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

**Background**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015), “an education system is only as good as its teachers” (p. 1). As demands for an increased number of teachers becomes more complex, opportunities are needed for teachers to learn and refine their practice (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). To achieve equity and excellence in teaching and learning, a knowledgeable and skillful educator workforce is essential. Investing in teacher leaders who promote professional learning for continuous improvement by recognizing the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community can be seen as a viable human capital investment approach for developing and retaining quality teacher leaders (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). These teacher leaders have the potential to sustain and support long-
term deep transformation at their schools through modeling, coaching, advocating, and supporting their colleagues Killion et al. (2016). Given the right tools and resources, they can reach far beyond the walls of their classroom. For the purpose of this study, the term human capital investment is indicative of a human capital development approach to professional learning. The term as it relates to this study is further defined in the Definition of Terms section.

Manuti, Impedovo, and De Palma (2016) reported that organizational success and competitive advantage derive from organizations learning how to support workers in the accomplishments of their tasks and in the actualization of their identity through job-embedded professional learning that provides employees the opportunity to grow and develop their knowledge and skills. Building from a classic reference, these knowledge and skills are considered “human capital” because they cannot be removed from the individuals (Becker, 1962). It is important to recognize that these characteristics produce capable and efficient educators.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes provisions that impact how educators experience professional learning. ESSA (2015) defines professional learning as a learning journey and affirms that it should be collaborative, job-embedded, sustained, classroom-focused, and data-driven. This definition focuses on school and classroom-based professional learning opportunities. For this study, the terms professional development and professional learning are used interchangeably. This study focused on teacher leaders who receive sustained, intensive support to then be able to facilitate the professional learning of their colleagues (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016).
Context for the Study

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), comprised of 392 schools, is the fourth largest district in the nation. The school district spans over 2,000 square miles, in a large urban community in which 69% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch, and 93.2% is designated as non-White (M-DCPS, Department of Research Services, 2019). These factors coupled with a teaching workforce of over 17,700 teachers pose unique challenges in the alignment and provision of equitable services and resources to both teachers and students. Thus, the need for school-based, job-embedded professional learning opportunities anchored on the district’s Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI). The M-DCPS FEI is located in Appendix A.

Description of the program. To address this need, M-DCPS created a Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) that extends and supports existing components within the district through the incorporation of differentiated professional learning and career lattice pathways aimed to improve teacher leaders’ ability to lead high-quality professional learning (Nappi, 2014). M-DCPS seeks to advance programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting the district’s goals as outlined within its strategic plan, titled Vision 20/20. A key element within Vision 20/20 is Pillar 3: “Highly Effective Teachers, Leaders, and Staff” with a specific objective to “recruit and hire the most qualified people, develop them deliberately, and retain them strategically” (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2017). The M-DCPS TLA is one of the Superintendent’s Millennial Access Platforms. The Superintendent’s Millennial Access Platforms are the launching pads for innovation and improvement in M-DCPS. Appendix B reflects the Millennial Access Platforms for the M-DCPS TLA.
The M-DCPS TLA is designed to recruit, retain, recognize, and reward a highly effective teaching force while also: (a) leveraging teacher expertise through implementation of new teacher leadership roles to engage schools in building a community of practice, (b) institutionalizing the expertise of high-performing mid- and late-career teachers, and (c) acknowledging the critical value of teacher leadership in diverse roles. It is a key aspect of the district’s human capital investment approach for elevating professional learning through sustained, systemic professional learning opportunities, to facilitate teacher collaboration and collegiality as workplace conditions, and to include teachers in decision-making.

The M-DCPS TLA challenges and supports teacher leaders across the district in developing the andragogical knowledge, content expertise, and facilitative leadership skills needed to guide instructional improvements in schools. The major focus of the program is to provide guided opportunities for teacher leaders to engage in and document experiences within the observable domains of the M-DCPS FEI. The development of teacher leaders who lead from the classroom provides a platform for career lattice opportunities that encourage effective educators to remain in the classroom.

The M-DCPS TLA develops teacher leaders' skills, knowledge, and abilities over the course of one academic year. During the year, participants engage in 12 days of face-to-face development sessions, 10 of which are a 2-week long summer academy, one professional learning session in the fall and one in the spring, nine virtual sessions that are 1-hour in length and conclude with an annual learning showcase. Appendix C provides a sample agenda for the Foundational Course which takes place during week one of the two-week long summer academy. Teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA are
expected to document the implementation and impact of their efforts in an electronic portfolio. Artifacts resulting from these implementation actions are aligned to the six domains of the FEI: (a) Knowledge of Learners, (b) Learning Environment, (c) Instructional Planning, (d) Engagement, (e) Instructional Delivery, and (f) Assessment. The precise experiences that teachers choose to document, and share depend on their school contexts and the specific professional learning needs of the teachers they support as identified by the district-wide professional learning needs assessment.

The M-DCPS TLA aims to be a catalyst to the professional growth that transforms teachers into leaders in the areas of new teacher support, professional learning and growth, digital convergence, and instructional coaching by facilitating intentional and systematic experiences within their classrooms and when supporting and developing their colleagues. The M-DCPS TLA (Appendix D) is comprised of individual teachers in four specific roles: (a) New and Early Career Teacher Leader, (b) Professional Learning and Growth Leader, (c) Digital Innovation Leader, and (d) Instructional Coach/Content Expert. The New and Early Career Support Leader coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of the mentoring and induction program provided to new and early career teachers. The Professional Learning and Growth Leader coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation in the professional learning opportunities offered to all teachers at the school site. The Digital Innovation Leader coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of digital innovation tools used in the district. The Instructional Coach/Content Expert coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of instructional coaching practices to impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement positively and
effectively. By becoming a participant in the M-DCPS TLA, teacher leaders become active members of their school’s Professional Learning Support Team (PLST), commit to an active role as learners throughout the period of the academy, and agree to conduct action research and present the results at an annual learning showcase. The components of the M-DCPS TLA are included in Appendix E.

**Logic Model for the Study**

This study focused on determining whether the M-DCPS TLA positively and/or negatively impacts the development of effective teacher leaders. Effective teacher leaders promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The logic model depicted in Figure 1 is included to represent the activities and intended outcomes of the initiative (Spence, Buddenbaum, Bice, Welch, & Carroll, 2018). All of these strategies are intended to work cohesively to achieve the overall objective of developing a cadre of teacher leaders who lead professional learning within and across schools.
Figure 1. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) logic model.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on knowledge and perceived best practices in human capital development and an established common language within M-DCPS regarding teacher leaders who have the opportunity to influence teaching and learning for their colleagues through greater involvement in school leadership (Myung, Martinez, & Nordstrum, 2013). Figure 2 depicts the alignment of professional learning among teacher leaders, building administrators and district personnel. The M-DCPS TLA starts with the selection of high-quality teacher leaders, the development of comprehensive and personalized professional learning experiences, responsive administrative support, and targeted district support. Building administrators and district personnel participate in ongoing differentiated professional learning opportunities aligned to their job responsibilities outside of the M-DCPS TLA.
Figure 2. Aligned human capital development approach.

To provide a context for the importance and connectivity among the variables featured in Figure 2, each variable will be addressed briefly. To begin, teacher leaders are selected by their building administrators based on specific eligibility criteria inclusive of their experience in fostering a collaborative atmosphere and promoting professional learning for continuous improvement (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). In order for teachers to be selected by their administrators to participate in the M-DCPS TLA, they should have 5-12 years of teaching experience. According to Garcia and Weiss (2019), 79.7% of experienced teachers—those with over five years of experience—leave the profession, compared to 20.3% of inexperienced teachers—those with five years of experience or less. Providing opportunities for teachers in years 5-12 provides these teachers with career lattice opportunities. Appendix E includes the M-DCPS TLA selection criteria.

Building administrators’ support is a pivotal component of an effective teacher leadership program. A key responsibility of school administrators is to provide
individual support and to challenge teacher leaders to examine their own practices (Meyers et al., 2017). District personnel also play a critical role in establishing, sustaining and leveraging teacher leadership to achieve the greatest impact (Rausch, 2018).

The notion of investing in human capital has been at the forefront of the discussion in the educational arena for attracting, developing, and retaining a high-quality workforce. Districts that develop teacher leaders by investing in professional learning opportunities tend to have greater efficiency (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016). Investments in human capital also have the potential to improve organizational outcomes. A relationship exists between investing in human capital development and enhancing teachers’ skills, knowledge, abilities, and experiences (Myung et al., 2013). Myung et al. (2013) state that a critical element of a human capital approach to education is the development of a stronger teacher workforce, responsible for collectively producing educational outcomes. This study examined the relationship between investing in human capital development and improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning (Figure 3).
The concept of human capital was developed in the 1960s by Gary Becker to explain both the amount of schooling an individual receives as well as the abilities, knowledge, and skills an individual obtains while performing the job (Becker, 1962; McCall, 2014). His research has been instrumental in building an understanding of the economics behind education. According to human capital theory, individuals possess great potential which can only be developed by making investments in human capital (Becker, 1962). When individuals increase their professional knowledge and growth, their earnings typically increase as well. In other words, continuous education improves worker effectiveness (Kern, 2009).

Human capital is one of the largest financial investments of the nation’s total education spending, with the largest portion of those expenditures being allocated to classroom teachers (Myung et al., 2013). In a report on public school expenditures, the National Center for Education Statistics estimated that 80% of school district budgets are dedicated to salaries and benefits (McFarland et al., 2018). Personnel costs are what drives the budgets of districts (Odden, 2011). This investment in personnel means that
school districts must make a financial commitment to recruit, develop, and retain teachers through career lattice and ladder programs that boost their effectiveness and develop instructional leaders who lead from the classroom (Odden, 2011).

Odden (2011) identifies two key components that school systems need: talented people and strategic management of said talent. In addition to these key components, school systems must systemically manage personnel talent through well-designed and thoughtful professional learning. Based on the research of Wurtzel and Curtis (2008), a systemic approach to developing human capital in K-12 education requires school systems to identify and prioritize its strategies, align the central office and school support structures, as well as engage in partnerships with outside organizations and higher education entities. Great teachers are crucial to building a successful educational system (Kanoske-Graf et al., 2016). Effective teacher leadership programs aid school districts in attracting and retaining effective teachers by providing them with opportunities to learn, grow, and implement professional learning that supports teachers’ continuous improvement.

Problem Statement

To develop top-performing systems, leaders receive sustained, intensive support to then be able to facilitate the learning of their colleagues (Jensen et al., 2016). Sales, Moliner, and Amat (2016) conducted a study which focused on the analysis of a collaborative space for professional learning and its implications on how it can develop competencies for distributed teacher leadership. The researchers found that professional learning offerings should provide the tools to empower teachers as agents of change. Additionally, the researchers suggested that empowering teacher leaders as a strategy for
instructional improvement may also help streamline overall professional learning spending and support teacher leadership activities. Teacher leaders can impact educational practices and change without leaving the classroom (Citkowicz, Brown-Sims, Williams, & Gerdeman, 2017).

According to research, the inability to retain effective teachers is the most important factor contributing to the teacher shortage (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Ingersoll (Ingersoll, Sirinides, & Dougherty, 2017) an educational policy researcher, who has tracked the issues plaguing the teacher workforce for over two decades coined the term leaky bucket to describe the high levels of teacher attrition affecting districts. Sutcher et al. (2016) stated that nearly 8% of teachers leave the profession each year. Data indicate that not being able to staff schools appropriately with qualified teachers is predominantly due to additional demands resulting from large numbers of teachers leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The shortage of teachers in the United States is a very complex issue, stemming from several factors such as: (a) inadequate preparation, (b) lack of support, (c) challenging work conditions, (d) dissatisfaction with compensation, (e) better career opportunities, and (f) personal reasons (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). High performing school districts address teacher shortage with targeted, local solutions and build teacher capacity by developing systems and structures that support all teachers, from preservice to teacher leadership. The M-DCPS TLA is designed to address the factors of lack of support and better career opportunities as cited by the preceding research. Expanding teacher leadership roles can be a powerful strategy for
retaining effective teachers. Not only would it provide teachers with opportunities to step into leadership roles that focus on improving instruction, it will also contribute to a professional learning environment in which all teachers are able to succeed (National Institute for Teaching Excellence, 2018).

Solving the issue of teacher development and support requires rethinking traditional approaches to professional learning. Models of teacher-to-teacher support provide a foundation for teacher leadership roles to accelerate attainment of accomplished levels of practice and reduce the drain on talented teachers in the classroom (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). As indicated by a 2017 study series that includes teacher voice in conversations and research about educator effectiveness, the most important supports and experiences that help teachers improve their practice depends on effective cooperating teachers, assigned and informal mentors, collaboration with peers, supportive school leaders, instructional leadership, and coaching (Jacques et al., 2017). Investing in human capital includes identifying and nurturing talent and providing resources and support structures for success (Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008). These are matters most prevalent to the district when it comes to teacher development and retention.

**Evaluation Questions**

This study was designed to determine if M-DCPS’ human capital investment approach in the M-DCPS TLA promotes the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning while retaining teacher leaders who lead from the classroom. The following evaluation questions guided this study:

1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of the M-DCPS TLA implemented across participating schools?
1a. Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.

1b. Serving as a leader of professional learning.

1c. Fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.

1d. Creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

2. What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning?

3. To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the TLA?

4. To what degree does participation in the TLA impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?

Significance of the Study

M-DCPS recognizes the urgent need to develop and support new and mid-career teachers. The district’s singular goal is grounded in ensuring student achievement. M-DCPS is committed to providing a world-class education to over 354,000 students. It is M-DCPS’ moral imperative to ensure that every student in every school has access to rigorous, relevant, and effective instruction in every classroom, every day (Fullan & Quinn, 2015). Teacher attrition poses a challenge in staffing our schools with effective teachers, especially in low performing schools. The M-DCPS TLA is designed to be implemented in yearly cohorts with the long-term goal to have a cadre of credentialed teacher leaders at each of the schools in the district who effectively lead professional learning of their colleagues. A 5-year detailed description of teacher retention in M-
DCPS by school tier—a classification system used to identify a school’s performance—reveals a drain of talent leaving the district (Table 1).

Table 1

*Retention/Separation Data of Newly Hired Teachers by Tier, 2014-2015 Cohort*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Separation Period</th>
<th>No. Hired</th>
<th>No. Separated</th>
<th>% Reduction</th>
<th>% Remaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
<td>90.54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.88%</td>
<td>74.66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td>69.26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.77%</td>
<td>61.49%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.42%</td>
<td>55.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>296</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.93%</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.07%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Watch</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>81.82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>57.86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.55%</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.45%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.97%</td>
<td>81.03%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.17%</td>
<td>75.86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.52%</td>
<td>60.34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.24%</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.90%</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.10%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>89.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.37%</td>
<td>80.93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.14%</td>
<td>62.79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22.33%</td>
<td>40.47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
<td>33.02%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
<td><strong>66.98%</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.02%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>40.53%</td>
<td>59.47%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher retention in M-DCPS is captured at the district level and is calculated as the percentage of teachers who separate from the district for reasons other than retirement. The percentile is higher for low performing and hard to staff schools. The
data indicated in Table 1 reflects that M-DCPS currently retains 59.47% of its new hires over five years with repeatedly lower retention rates in Tier 3 schools.

Tier 1 (T1) schools are the highest performing and receive the least amount of support from the district. These schools have very little teacher mobility, typically perform well academically and are usually located in the suburbs. Tier 2 (T2) schools are average performing schools that receive moderate support from academic coaches. Lastly, Tier 3 (T3) schools are the lowest performing schools equipped with a variety of district resources for school improvement and specialized transformational coaches in the areas of reading, math, and science. T3 schools are characteristically hard-to-staff, have a high percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and tend to be inner city schools. Table 2 includes a breakdown of schools by tier and the school-based and district support provided to each.
### Table 2

**M-DCPS Tier System of Support 2018-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>School-Based Support</th>
<th>District Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Released Schools</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Transformation coaches can be hired based on available funds</td>
<td>Instructional Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools released from Tier 2/Tier 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Coaches’ Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-weekly Updates Via Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1 Watch</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Coaches can be hired based on school-site available funds</td>
<td>Instructional Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools released from Tier 2/Tier 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Adm. Dir. Site Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement/Action Plan Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Planning Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DATACOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Coaches’ Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Principal iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-weekly Updates Via Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Transformation Coaches</td>
<td>Monthly Content IS visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between 15th and 20th percentile as determined by the district support formula</td>
<td></td>
<td>ES – 1 Reading/1 Math</td>
<td>Monthly Content CSS Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-8 – 2</td>
<td>Instructional Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS – 0</td>
<td>Support for Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HS - 4</td>
<td>Improvement/Action Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Planning Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DATACOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Coaches’ Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Principal iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-weekly Updates Via Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Transformation Coaches</td>
<td>Biweekly IS Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 15th percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td>ES – 24</td>
<td>Weekly Content CSS Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest 300</td>
<td></td>
<td>K-8 – 7</td>
<td>ETO Instructional Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Support and Improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS – 11</td>
<td>Support Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Support and Improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>HS - 9</td>
<td>Improvement/Action Plan Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as determined by the district support formula</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Planning Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DATACOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Coaches’ Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Principal iCADs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-weekly Updates Via Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention Funds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. ES = Elementary School; K-8 = Kindergarten to 8th grade; MS = Middle School; HS = High School; DATACOM = Data-based management process used by Superintendent of Schools; iCADs = Instructional Coaching Academies; IS = Instructional Supervisor; CSS = Curriculum Support Specialist; ETO = Education Transformation Office*
Although many of these teachers may not separate from the district, they leave the classroom to pursue instructional support positions and/or administrative roles. Given this data, it is important for M-DCPS to invest in its human capital and make programmatic changes geared towards developing and supporting its teaching workforce in order to keep high-performing teachers in the classroom. Teachers who are afforded opportunities to lead from the classroom experience the greatest professional growth while also impacting the growth of their colleagues (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This study aimed to broaden the scope of research on teacher leaders by focusing on a human capital development approach as a strategy for improving professional learning and increasing the retention of effective teacher leaders. It expands upon the current teacher leadership research and seeks to provide support for the continued development of formalized teacher leadership roles. We hope that the results of this study will strengthen existing research and literature in the area of human capital development approach to professional learning, teacher leadership and retention of effective teachers.

According to a research study published by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2014 entitled, *Teachers Know Best: Teacher’s Views on Professional Development*, teachers favor professional learning that is teacher driven, helps them improve instruction, includes relevant strategies, is sustained over time, and values them as professionals (Gates & Gates, 2014). Teacher leadership encompasses promoting a collaborative culture that supports educator development. The expected outcomes of this study may create new opportunities for teacher leaders to embrace a new and challenging vision of teaching and learning.
Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study and the accompanying definitions were used to enhance shared meaning when implementing the study:

- **Collaborative professional learning**: Involves teams of educators working together to achieve a common goal and who are committed to learning, working, and problem solving together (Olson, 2018).

- **Data-driven professional learning**: Involves collecting, analyzing, and using data to identify learning needs, set goals, plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning (Learning Forward, n.d.).

- **Digital Innovation Leader**: A school-site teacher who coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of digital innovation tools used in the district.

- **Early Career Teachers**: This group can be defined as having 4 to 7 years of teaching experience.

- **Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI)**: M-DCPS' instructional framework which establishes a common language of effective instruction and aligns teacher practices with outcomes.

- **Human Capital Development**: Developed by Gary Becker (1962) to explain the amount of schooling, abilities, knowledge, and skills individuals obtain on-the-job.

- **Human Capital Investment**: An investment in the collective skills, knowledge, or other intangible assets of individuals that can be used to create economic value for
the individuals, their employees, or their community and that pays off in terms of higher productivity.

- **Instructional Coach/Content Expert**: A school-site teacher leader who coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of instructional coaching practices to impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement positively and effectively.

- **Job-embedded professional learning**: Refers to professional learning within schools focused on improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement (Learning Forward, n.d.).

- **Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)**: The fourth largest urban school district in the country.

- **Mid to Late Career Teachers**: This group can be defined as having more than 7 years of teaching experience.

- **M-DCPS Teacher Leader**: A teacher leader who promotes professional learning for continuous improvement by promoting, designing, and facilitating job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

- **M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA)**: The M-DCPS' Teacher LEADership Academy (Leading Education and Development) is designed to challenge and support teacher leaders across the district in developing the andragogical knowledge, content expertise and facilitative leadership skills needed to guide instructional improvements in school-sites.
• **Millennial Access Platforms**: M-DCPS’ strategic and systematic approach to implementing new programs.

• **New and Early Career Teacher Leader**: A school-site teacher leader who coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation in the mentoring and induction program provided to new and early career teachers.

• **Novice Teachers**: This group can be defined as having 0 to 3 years of teaching experience.

• **Professional Learning**: Sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom focused activities that are an integral part of school and district strategies for providing educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet challenging academic standards (ESSA, 2015).

• **Professional Learning and Growth Leader**: A school-site teacher leader who coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation in the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers at the school site.

• **Sustained professional learning**: Involves continued support over a period of time to ensure substantial implementation (Learning Forward, n.d.).

• **Teacher Leader**: An individual who is able to communicate effectively, work independently and collaboratively to support the goals of the school and the mission and vision of school districts; effectively fosters the professional growth of peers in order to improve student outcomes; engages in continuous reflective practice and professional learning; exercises sound judgment and organizational and time management skills in coordinating multiple priorities and
responsibilities; and engages in a community of practice as a resource for peers on best professional practices (Killion et al., 2016).

- **Teacher Leader Model Standards**: National standards which define what constitutes the knowledge, skills, and competencies that teachers need to assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and the profession (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

- **Title II, Part A**: Federal entitlement funds allocated to prepare, train, and recruit high quality teachers and principals (ESSA, 2015).

- **Traditional Approach to Professional Development**: Sessions are not tailored to individual problems of practice and are led by an expert in the field. Educators are then expected to incorporate strategies learned in their classrooms with little to no support or feedback from an instructional expert, time to collaborate with colleagues or time to reflect on their practice.

- **Value**: Determined as building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers strongly agreeing or agreeing that there is evidence of teacher leaders fulfilling their role as defined within the M-DCPS TLA and evidence of the teacher leader functions within Domain III, Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

- **Vision 20/20**: Strategic plan that guides M-DCPS from 2015 through 2020. The plan was developed through a process that included Board workshops, focus groups, community meetings and stakeholder working groups. The plan is also
used at school site level during the development of school site School Improvement Action Plans (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2017).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The role of the teacher has evolved throughout history offering teachers opportunities to lead from the classroom through a variety of teacher leadership models. A widely used definition of teacher leadership is by York-Barr and Duke (2004) “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). Uribe-Flórez, Al-Rawashdeh, and Morales (2014) describe teacher leadership as the practice by which teachers share leadership with their administrators while also supporting their colleagues in order to improve teaching and learning. In recent years, policies and guidelines in support of teacher leadership have elevated this role providing teacher leaders conditions conducive to that of a leader of professional learning thus supporting teachers’ professional growth and teacher retention.

The following review of the literature explores empirical studies and conceptual or pedagogical articles related to the functions of teacher leaders, the evolution of teachers as teacher leaders, the role of teacher leaders in professional learning, current policies and guidelines in support of teacher leadership, barriers and conditions that support teacher leadership, retention of teacher leaders and also discusses the importance of evaluating fidelity of implementation. A review of the various functions of teacher
leaders presented by researchers highlights the commonalities and differences among researchers’ current conceptions of teacher leadership. The literature surrounding the evolution of teachers as teacher leaders highlights the importance of identity transformation as a critical step in the preparation of teacher leaders. A review of the role of teacher leaders in professional learning provides a description of teacher leaders as change agents who build capacity in self and others with the goal of improving educator practices. The literature on the policies and guidelines in support of teacher leadership focuses on local, state, and federal policies that support teacher leadership development. A description of barriers that hinder and conditions that support teacher leadership is included for the purpose of stressing their impact on the design and implementation of effective teacher leadership programs. A discussion about ways in which opportunities for collaboration and leadership within and beyond the classroom contribute to the retention of teacher leaders provides a better understanding of the role teacher leadership plays in developing and retaining teacher leaders. This section is followed by a section on the definition of fidelity of implementation as used within this study.

**Defining Teacher Leadership**

York-Barr and Duke (2004) state that “Teacher leadership reflects teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshalling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students’ educational experiences and outcomes” (p. 263). Throughout the latter part of the 20th century and into the present, a succession of widely divergent approaches has been clustered under the label of teacher leadership (Carver, 2016). For the purpose of this study, a quality teacher leader can be defined as an individual who is able to communicate effectively, to work independently
and collaboratively to support the goals of the school and the mission and vision of school districts, to effectively foster the professional growth of peers in order to improve student outcomes, to engage in continuous reflective practice and professional learning, to exercise sound judgment and organizational and time management skills in coordinating multiple priorities and responsibilities and to engage in a community of practice as a resource for peers on best professional practices (Killion et al., 2016).

Definitions of teacher leadership can vary contingent on the setting and structures in place. Consider the definitions of various teacher leader roles from the review of the literature presented in Table 3 and their alignment to the M-DCPS TLA.

Table 3

*Teacher Leader Roles Defined*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change agents</td>
<td>Teacher leadership is the ability to influence teachers to change (Wasley, 1991).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors of others’ learning</td>
<td>Teachers who lead beyond their classrooms and contribute to the improvement of others’ teaching practice (Katzenmeyer &amp; Moller, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborators</td>
<td>Teachers cultivate expertise by collaborating with colleagues (Boles &amp; Troen, 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity builders</td>
<td>Purposeful involvement in leadership work as a means of building capacity (Lambert, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator of optimal learning environments</td>
<td>Teacher leadership fosters effective teaching and learning environments (Harris &amp; Muijs, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter of school improvement and student learning</td>
<td>Teachers’ knowledge, ability, and expertise is used to increase student achievement and student improvement (York-Barr &amp; Duke, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource for student success</td>
<td>Schools that support teacher leadership view teacher leaders as key resources to student achievement (Childs-Bowen, Moller, &amp; Scrivner, 2000).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the roles encompassed by a single teacher leader can span from formal, compensated administrative functions, to providing services such as formal mentoring, leader of professional development, or informal and spontaneous peer collaboration. School districts may have structures that utilize a shared or distributive leadership model where teacher leaders are responsible for key components such as leading professional learning, supporting teacher effectiveness and leveraging resources in support of teaching and learning (Helterbran, 2010; Nappi, 2014). Historically, teaching has been seen as an isolated profession, however, based on a study on shared leadership by Harris (2003), “investing in the school as a learning community offers the greatest opportunity to unlock leadership capabilities and capacities among teachers” (p. 321). Providing a trajectory of the role of the teacher is crucial to defining how teachers have evolved as teacher leaders.

**Teachers Evolving as Teacher Leaders**

Fullan (2007) attributes teachers’ commitment and participation in change as a factor in the success of school reform. In recent years, the teacher leadership roles that expand the role of a teacher as a leader effecting change has been linked to educational improvement (Danielson, 2007). Lieberman and Miller (2004) attribute this to the ability teacher leaders have on participating in and implementing change considering their direct connection to the school and classroom. Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004) support the notion that teacher leaders can be successful change agents since they possess the unique advantage of being rooted in the classroom. While teacher leaders are beginning to make a mark as change agents, understanding how teachers evolve as teacher leaders is essential to understanding the development of teacher leaders.
The role of teacher leaders in M-DCPS has evolved over the last decade in response to high-stakes testing, accountability, and the need for job-embedded, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration. M-DCPS has experienced a drain of effective teachers from the classrooms due to them transitioning into administrative and support roles within the organization. The M-DCPS TLA was designed to empower teacher leaders as change agents, develop their skillset and that of their colleagues while retaining effective teacher leaders who lead from the classroom.

In a review of the findings on teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) noted that teacher leadership is an outgrowth of success in the classroom, resulting in successful teachers, who are model candidates for teacher leadership roles. These teacher leaders are more readily able to gain the respect and trust of peers as they assume formal and informal leadership positions. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identified several factors that influence a teacher’s readiness to take on teacher leadership roles and responsibilities. These include: (a) excellent professional teaching skills, (b) a clear and well-developed philosophy of education, (c) being in a career stage that enables one to contribute to others, (d) interest in adult development, (e) and being in a personal life stage that allows the time and energy required to assume a position in leadership.

In addition to the factors that influence teachers’ readiness to evolve as teacher leaders, Gordon, Jacobs, and Solis (2014) identified the top 10 training needs for teacher leaders. They include: (a) the development of interpersonal skills; (b) coordination skills to facilitate the organizing of people, resources, programs, and activities; (c) knowledge of curriculum and instructional innovations; (d) mentoring; (e) group processes; (f) use of technology; (g) facilitating change; (h) training and coaching; (i) leading reflective
inquiry; and (j) addressing diversity. Shillingstad, McGlamery, Davis, and Gilles (2015) conducted a case study on the leadership development of mentor teachers and pointed to the need for developing skills in the areas of relationship-building, knowledge of adult learning, in addition to the need for ongoing, sustained support models. Additionally, the researchers concluded that well-developed communication and organizational skills, as well as knowledge of adult learning are essential to the success of a teacher leader. The skillsets and level of development of teacher leaders is linked to teacher leadership phases that vary from hierarchical to transformative roles.

The M-DCPS TLA curriculum was designed to address the research-based practices mentioned above. Teacher leaders participating in the M-DCPS TLA experience nine out of the 10 training needs identified by Gordon et al. (2014) during the Foundational Course facilitated by staff in the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation and the role specific courses facilitated by the New Teacher Center, the National School Reform Faculty, and M-DCPS Office of Academics and Transformation. Addressing diversity is currently not an explicit component of the M-DCPS TLA curriculum. The M-DPCS TLA curriculum also includes the development of mentor teachers, relationship building, knowledge of adult learning, and effective communication and organizational skills during the one-year sustained TLA model.

Review of the literature about teacher leadership has identified four phases of teacher leadership roles varying from hierarchical roles to transformative leadership roles (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Although these phases materialize in chronological order there is not a linear progression. Teacher leaders can alternate from one phase to another with the common thread of having the qualities of effective teaching mastered.
The first formalized teacher leadership roles focused on the educational system itself and provided hierarchical roles for teachers to fulfill (Silva et al., 2000). The first phase mirrors a managerial role focused on developing others and encompasses traditional forms of leadership that are hierarchical in nature for teachers as grade-level chairperson, department head or union steward (Silva et al., 2000). The review of the literature indicated this first phase of teacher leadership as missing a formalized role which results in redundancy and superimposing of existing authority taking on an inferior role to that of a leader (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

The second phase of teacher leadership focuses on the role of teacher leaders as instructional leaders, specifically in the areas of team leader, curriculum developer, or staff developer (Silva et al., 2000). In this second phase, although teacher leaders assume roles such as team leaders, an instructional leader role emerged as they coached their peers to build their capacity (Silva et al., 2000). As instructional leaders, their expertise and knowledge are critical to their teacher leader role; however, their colleagues do not see them as change agents (Frost & Harris, 2003).

The third phase of teacher leadership introduces the idea that teachers could help each other improve their practice by mentoring and engaging with colleagues in professional learning activities (Pounder, 2006). Silva et al. (2000) describes teacher leaders in the third phase as change agents within the transformational realm of leadership. Northhouse (2016) defined transformational leadership as “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (p. 162). In this third phase teacher leaders collaborate with their colleagues to build their capacity.
According to Pounder (2006), a fourth phase of teacher leadership is implemented by focusing on a collective alignment of accountability for teaching, learning and leadership within and outside the classroom. This fourth phase identifies teacher leaders as “teacherpreneurs” who act as change agents in their schools, districts and beyond (Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013). This is the kind of teacher leadership, Fullan and Quinn (2015) explain is the kind of transformative leadership needed for systemic change in schools. Research suggests that the principal as the exclusive voice in a school is no longer an effective model adding value to the third and fourth phases of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Actually, the findings argue that principal-centered leadership negatively affects teaching and learning (Gronn, 2009). Lieberman (1995) built on the need for shared leadership by considering leadership, a collaboration and partnership between principals and teachers. Although Webb et al. (2004) expressed similar findings of the benefits of shared leadership, “the push to improve student learning is too large a problem for any single leader to handle alone” (p. 254).

Independent of which phase teacher leaders may act upon, is their need to develop their identity as a teacher leader.

Research indicates that becoming a teacher leader requires acquiring a new professional identity (Malm, 2009). Developing and constructing a teacher leadership identity is a critical step which requires time and support. Identity is based on social roles and the context in which these roles exist (Sinha & Hanuscín, 2017). According to Krause (2004), the social roles individuals play indicate his or her position in a group. Identity refers to a person’s self-image and the way it is presented to others (Krause, 2004). Identity also includes how individuals are perceived by others and the way they
are recognized in a given setting (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). Teachers leaders develop their identity by exercising leadership within and outside their classroom and school (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017; Snow, Anderson, Cort, Dismuke, & Zenkert, 2018). Using a multiple case study approach, Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) demonstrated that teacher leadership development pathways are unique for teacher leaders based upon their personal experiences, new roles, social interactions, and feedback from others.

Carver (2016) studied a 2-year teacher leadership development program at the Great Lakes Academy found that developing a teacher leadership identity is critical in the preparation of teacher leaders. Additionally, providing teacher leaders with information or to have a common vision is not enough, teachers must also see themselves as leaders. Developing a clear identity empowers teacher leaders to initiate processes of organizational and curricular transformation. As teachers develop as teacher leaders, they broaden their leadership views and increase their scope of leadership practices and begin to lead school improvement efforts by building relationships among colleagues and facilitating professional learning not only for themselves but for others as well.

**Teacher Leaders’ Role in Professional Learning**

To support school-based professional development, leadership teams comprised of principals and teacher leaders must expect all students to succeed, must foster collaborative problem-solving structures around student learning, and must nurture strong instructional skillsets. As mentioned earlier, ESSA (2015) defines professional development as a learning journey and affirms that it should be job-embedded, collaborative, sustained over time, classroom-focused, and data driven. Teacher leaders’
role in professional learning is about increasing professional learning opportunities for colleagues and expanding systemic improvements to benefit student learning.

Professional learning must be personally meaningful and relevant to teachers for the greatest impact to school improvement and teachers’ professional growth (Blau, Whitney & Cabe, 2011). Teacher leaders who design data-driven professional learning opportunities and help colleagues take ownership of their professional growth can become a valuable resource. Furthermore, having teacher leaders provide professional development that is visible and quantifiable can help schools and districts streamline spending on professional development and build internal capacity over time.

Professional learning communities are “groups of teachers who meet regularly for the purpose of increasing their own learning and that of their students” (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2). A review of the literature highlights transforming schools into professional learning communities as a main objective of teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Sergiovanni (2001) supports this claim and further identifies an alignment to teacher leadership and the development of social, intellectual, and other forms of human capital. Ultimately, teacher leaders’ role in professional learning is to create an environment of teacher growth and learning and elevating professional learning for themselves and their colleagues.

Technology offers teacher leaders the opportunity to become more collaborative and to create professional learning communities within their school and across the district. Enhancing professional learning communities with technology encourages teachers to share ideas and helps them infuse technology in their classrooms. Technology enables teacher leaders to share instructional materials and professional development
resources with their colleagues. Teacher leaders whose role is to coordinate, monitor, and support the implementation of digital innovation tools build colleagues’ capacity to use technology to differentiate instruction by facilitating professional development sessions on how to use technology effectively in the classroom (Quatroche, Bauserman, & Nellis, 2014).

Teacher leaders are essential to the capacity building of their colleagues and overall school improvement. Parsons (2011) supports the idea that building capacity is most effective when teachers coach teachers. Research indicates that teacher leaders can foster positive relationships among colleagues, facilitate professional learning for others as well as for themselves, and lead change in schools (Fullan, 1994).

Frey and Fisher (2009) suggest that professional development without supportive structures does not have a positive impact in school improvement. Through their research they found, “teachers need time to be able to talk with one another about the curriculum, instruction, and assessment” (Frey & Fisher, 2009, p. 279). Teacher-driven observations (TDOs) is an approach that empowers teachers with a classroom-embedded process to refine their instruction while collaborating with their colleagues. TDOs engage colleagues in gathering and analyzing classroom data to improve instruction (Kaufman & Grimm, 2013). This type of structure is fostered through the guidance of school leadership, including teacher leaders. Generally, classrooms are only structured for student learning. Teachers need learning opportunities that are embedded within their practice to improve teacher practice and student achievement (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Eraut (2004) identified four factors needed to support adult learning: (a) working in
teams, (b) working collaboratively alongside others, (c) undertaking challenging tasks, and (d) working with stakeholders (p. 266).

Traditionally, teachers work in silos and are left to learn from working with just their students. Rarely do teachers have the opportunity to work alongside other teachers and moreover undertake challenging tasks outside of their classrooms. Although the research supports the notion that collaboration is a critical factor in adult learning, Barth (2001) argues that leadership itself promotes adult learning and enables teachers to become active learners as leaders. In addition, a factor that is unassailable when it comes to adult learning is a leadership structure that is aligned to the growth and development of teachers.

Schools often implement initiatives and expect change without making the necessary structural changes aligned to the newly implemented initiatives. Fullan and Miles (1992) note, “The failure to institutionalize an innovation and build it into the normal structures and practices of the organization underlies the disappearance of many reforms” (p. 748). To this point Elmore (2004) postulates that “The problem [is that] there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and substantial learning about their practice in the setting in which they actually work” (p. 127). Establishing and sustaining feedback practices can support and provide growth for teachers and students and provides opportunities for teachers to model, mentor, and support their colleagues in meaningful improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Giving and receiving feedback expands the opportunities for professional growth, improves instruction, and creates opportunities for collaboration.
Local, state, and federal policies and guidelines can aid school districts in the creation of structures that support teacher leaders in leading school improvement efforts through professional learning. Standards and policies governing teacher leadership are the key to organizing and promoting a coherent system that establishes a quality benchmark for performance and provides opportunities for continuous improvement. Through the coordination of local, state, and federal funds, M-DCPS designed the TLA to provide collaborative structures that facilitate access to professional learning experiences for educators that are timely, relevant, research-based, and results oriented.

**Current Policies and Guidelines in Support of Teacher Leadership**

Policy makers are paying attention to critical research in the area of effective, efficient, and equitable use of human resources that claim to improve teacher quality and effectiveness (Knapp, Honig, Plecki, Portin, & Copland, 2014). ESSA (2015) governs every school district. ESSA Title II Part A Guidance states:

Sustainable teacher career paths should give teachers the opportunity to exercise increased responsibility and to grow professionally, while keeping effective teachers in the classroom. Moreover, the availability of teacher leadership opportunities positively impacts teacher recruitment and retention, job satisfaction, and student achievement. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 13)

ESSA also includes several provisions that impact how educators experience professional learning.

Although particular policies and programs, such as teacher evaluation and staffing frequently remain the sole responsibility of the principal, the contributions of teacher
leaders are pivotal in school reform efforts and needed to be a bridge between faculty members and principals (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010; Webb et al., 2004). In this era of accountability, teacher leaders’ participation in school reform is critical to its success. Finley (2000) acknowledged that when policy changes are mandated, classroom teachers are often omitted or not considered. Fullan (2007) found most reform efforts fail without teacher participation and implementation. The need for teacher leader involvement in policy-framing and the sharing of their expertise in the decision-making process has become more evident than ever (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010). This kind of active participation in policy reform depends on teacher leaders, school districts, teacher unions, higher education, business leaders, and even mass media (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010).

Aside for the need for teacher leader involvement in school reform, teacher leadership roles, standards, and measurable goals are necessary for school improvement. Harrison and Killion (2007) defined 10 roles for teacher leaders: (a) resource provider, (b) instructional specialist, (c) curriculum specialist, (d) classroom supporter, (e) learning facilitator, (f) mentor, (g) school leader, (h) data coach, (i) catalyst for change, and (j) learner. The Teacher Leader Model Standards were developed with the intent to codify, promote, and support teacher leadership roles in order to transform schools and meet the educational demands of the 21st century (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The Consortium identified seven domains that define the role of teacher leaders:

1. Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning
2. Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Achievement
3. Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement
4. Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning
5. Using Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement
6. Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community
7. Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

This study was explicitly aligned to Domain III, Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement and Domain VII, Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession of the Teacher Leader Model standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Although Domain I, Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning was not a primary focus, it may serve as a long-term outcome as the study is one of practical application. While the Consortium identified standards, Teach Plus identified five measurable goals for teacher leadership inclusive of improving student outcomes, student access to effective teachers, career growth opportunities for teachers, peer-to-peer collaboration, and teacher leaders as advocates (Coggins & McGovern, 2014). M-DCPS adopted the Teacher Leader Model Standards to develop the curriculum for the TLA Foundational Course. Although policies that support teacher leader structures are on the rise there are barriers that limit teachers from evolving into teacher leaders.

**Barriers to Teacher Leadership and Conditions That Support Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership is the practice by which teachers influence their colleagues in order to improve teaching and learning practices (Uribe-Flórez et al., 2014). A 2010 report, “Policy to Practice Brief: Teacher Leadership as a Key to Education Innovation,”
identified attracting and retaining teachers as the primary benefit of teacher leadership initiatives (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010). However, there are several barriers that prevent teachers from taking on leadership roles.

**Barriers to teacher leadership.** Teacher leadership is not a common trend and teachers who desire to be teacher leaders can encounter a multitude of obstacles. In a 10-year study it was calculated that teacher leaders comprise 25% of the teacher population (Barth, 2001). The expertise and vast knowledge of teachers is still not being capitalized on as the leadership roles they tend to hold fall within the first and second phase of teacher leadership.

In order to enable teacher leaders to become effective, it is important to recognize barriers to teacher leadership. Not having a clear definition or clearly defined roles can create ambiguity for teacher leaders (Goodwin, 2011). Goodwin (2011) also states that not creating enough release time counteracts the benefits of having teacher leadership opportunities available. The increasing responsibilities and demands of the teaching profession coupled with personal responsibilities make balancing an overload of responsibilities challenging (Suranna & Moss, 2000).

**Conditions that support teacher leadership.** The implications of the Institute for Educational Leadership taskforce note that state-level policies together with district-level reforms could attract and retain quality teacher leaders ultimately affecting student achievement, which is the goal of the public education system (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010). As local school strategies to encourage and increase teacher leadership arise, district reforms are beginning to develop career ladders and compensation incentives, while at the state-level there is a focus on teacher leader
certification, standards, and curricula (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2010) indicated that 30% of the states who applied for the Race to the Top funds included teacher leadership as one of their focuses. Nationally, states like Arkansas, Kansas, Ohio, Delaware, Alabama, Kentucky, Illinois, and Louisiana have begun to implement initiatives with an emphasis on teacher leadership. These initiatives range from the creation of certifications to the development of teacher leader preparation curricula and standards. School districts such as St. Francis, Minnesota have developed formal teacher leadership positions with an increase in compensation as well as California’s San Juan Unified School District where the teacher contract was amended for teacher leaders to earn additional pay for serving in school leadership teams (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010). School of Education programs have also begun building a path towards teacher leadership by developing programs focused on leadership.

The literature also points to conditions that support teacher leadership. In a report summarizing 30 years of research on best practices to empower teachers to lead and improve practice, Berry (2016) identified seven qualities that must be in place to promote teacher leadership. These qualities include: (a) a vision and strategy for teacher leadership; (b) a supportive administration; (c) appropriate resources; (d) structures that enable collaboration; (e) supportive social norms and working conditions; (f) blurred lines between the role of the principal, the role of the district, and the role of teacher leaders; and (g) orientation toward inquiry and risk taking. These conditions are critical to reap the benefits of teacher leadership in M-DCPS.
Retaining Quality Teacher Leaders

Districts and schools can no longer rely on recruitment initiatives to solve teacher attrition if they do not address structures within the organization that support teacher retention. Approximately half a million teachers either move or leave the teaching profession each year. This attrition equates to roughly $2.2 billion annually spent by the U.S. (Haynes, 2014).

As stated in Chapter 1, Ingersoll and colleagues use the leaky bucket analogy when speaking of teacher attrition (Ingersoll et al., 2017). No matter the number of teachers a district hires to fill its vacancies, there is an equal or greater number of teachers exiting the system at the same time. This analogy speaks to the holes within an organization or structure and the organization’s inability to patch the holes. Districts are allocating money and resources into the bucket and instead of building capacity, the resources are leaking out.

Research indicates that high teacher attrition results in loss of continuity and commitment and lower quality instruction (Brown & Wynn, 2009). It forces school districts to spend limited resources hiring and inducting new teachers rather than supporting them (Bland, Church, & Luo, 2014). Darling-Hammond (2010) states that higher teacher attrition rates create problems with educational quality, equity, and efficiency. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), teachers are the most unevenly distributed school resource in the United States.

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2010) identified teacher retention, strengthening the teaching profession, building capacity of teachers and school leaders and improving the structure of school staffing as benefits of teacher leadership.
Jensen et al. (2016) state, “Individual teachers make behavioral shifts when they see colleagues—not just official leaders—role-modeling effective practices” (p. 5). Barth (2001) found that taking on a leadership role increases one’s learning, “Teachers become more active learners in an environment where they are leaders” (p. 445). York-Barr and Duke (2004) supported these findings of improved teacher quality when effective teachers take on teacher leadership roles. The findings of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality also highlighted the importance of providing teacher leadership opportunities to quality teachers to deviate them from taking on leadership roles outside of the classroom. York-Barr and Duke (2004) agree that recognizing teacher leaders’ expertise and contributions and facilitating opportunities for them to be change agents can support the retention of quality teacher leaders.

Providing teacher leadership opportunities to teachers can be an effective strategy to retain effective teacher leaders. A strategic approach to building capacity through collaboration and support creates new means to retain teacher leaders who want opportunities for growth and leadership (Jensen et al., 2016). Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, and Grissom (2015) examined teacher collaboration practices in M-DCPS. It was suggested that collaboration has positive effects on teacher practice. A national Teachers Network survey of 1,210 teachers conducted by the Center for Teaching Quality reported that teachers who are provided with opportunities to share their expertise and collaborate with colleagues experience greater job satisfaction and are usually more likely to stay in the profession (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010).

Fostering teacher leadership opportunities promotes teacher leaders’ retention through successful collaboration that leads to improved teaching practice (Teacher
Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Evidence from a 2016-2017 study on Iowa’s Teacher Leadership and Compensation Program concluded that the program encouraged teachers to stay in the profession, especially teacher leaders (Citkowicz et al., 2017).

When school systems develop and implement teacher leadership programs, school cultures shift from teachers working in isolation to new norms of collaboration and teamwork focused on professional learning which can impact teacher leader retention (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). These trends denote the essential elements that are inherent in the M-DCPS TLA in strengthening the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning while contributing to the retention of quality teacher leaders.

**Fidelity of Implementation**

Fidelity of implementation is often defined as the degree to which a program or strategy is used in the way it is designed or intended (Sutherland, McLeod, Conroy, & Cox, 2013). Fidelity of implementation can be used interchangeably with fidelity or implementation fidelity (Keller-Margulis, 2012). O’Donnell (2008) emphasized that, overall, fidelity of implementation is synonymous with adherence and integrity. In this study, fidelity of implementation refers to the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the level of implementation of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA at their schools.

Evaluating fidelity of implementation is essential to the understanding of whether the M-DCPS TLA works. First, which components of the academy get implemented and how they get implemented may vary from school to school. Therefore, researchers need a means of assessing whether the academy is being implemented with fidelity (Carroll et
al., 2007). It is probable that various degrees of implementation fidelity exist within the M-DCPS TLA schools.

Second, the degree to which the components of the academy are implemented with fidelity informs the conclusions we can make. Research suggests that fidelity of implementation leads to better outcomes. At the same time, outcomes are sensitive to implementation fidelity (Kutash, Cross, Madias, Duchnowski, & Green, 2012). According to Durlak and Dupre (2008), “Achieving good implementation not only increases the chances of program success in statistical terms, but also can lead to much stronger benefits for participants” (p. 334). Evaluating fidelity of implementation also prevents researchers from making incorrect conclusions about a program (Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2000).

Third, evaluating fidelity of implementation can help researchers to better understand how the M-DCPS TLA is implemented at each school and who the ‘right drivers’ are (Fullan & Quinn, 2015). Although most teacher leadership programs include thoughtful practices that focus on promoting effective collaborative teaching practices in schools, programs vary widely in the specific teacher leader roles they promote, in program duration, and the teacher leader characteristics and experiences they target (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Programs are likely to produce different levels of impact depending on the specifics of the program and the characteristics of the target group. Thus, fidelity of implementation measures are vital for understanding which teacher leadership components are most effective, for which target group, and under which circumstances.
Finally, evaluating fidelity of implementation can help facilitate improvement and enhancement of current practices. Fidelity of implementation findings can identify which components of the M-DCPS TLA are supporting its effectiveness and which ones are not, thus informing changes in academy content and implementation. For instance, if developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning is found to predict gains in the degree to which teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness, the district may want to provide more opportunities for teacher leaders to practice this skill throughout the academy. Findings related to fidelity of implementation can also inform decisions about which academy components may need to be modified to overcome challenges and implement academy components as intended. For instance, if academy leads notice that teacher leaders consistently have difficulty with a specific component, they may decide that the content needs to be modified or that more professional learning sessions are needed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine if Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ (M-DCPS) human capital investment approach in the Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) promotes the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning while retaining teacher leaders who lead from the classroom. The findings of this study will provide M-DCPS and other relevant stakeholders with information and recommendations based on the resulting evidence in support of future teacher leaders’ growth and performance. The following evaluation questions guided the purpose of this study:

1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of the M-DCPS TLA implemented across participating schools?
   1a. Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.
   1b. Serving as a leader of professional learning.
   1c. Fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.
   1d. Creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

2. What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the TLA in
terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning?

3. To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the TLA?

4. To what degree does participation in the TLA impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?

Detailed information pertaining to the research design, participants, measures, data collection, and data analysis of this study is provided in the sections that follow.

**Research Design**

This chapter addresses the research design and methodology used for this mixed methods study. Mixed methods research design has been recognized as a natural complement to traditional quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches and concepts into a single study to integrate the results in the assumption that combining these two methods provides a deeper understanding than either approach would accomplish alone (Creswell, 2014). Figure 4 illustrates the interaction between the philosophy, research design, and specific method used in this study.
Lund (2012), pointed out the utility and relevance of combining quantitative and qualitative research: (a) mixed methods research is able to answer certain complex research questions better than qualitative or quantitative research alone; (b) qualitative and quantitative results may relate to different issues, but may complement each other in mixed methods research; (c) mixed methods research may provide more valid conclusions; and (d) in mixed methods research, qualitative and quantitative results may be contradictory, which can lead to more reflection, revised hypothesis, and further research. Lund’s (2012) research serves to support why mixed methods was the optimal design we chose to maximize a systematic understanding of the role of the M-DCPS TLA in promoting professional learning that leads to improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning.
The pragmatic worldview defines the philosophy we employed. This worldview develops out of actions, circumstances, and/or consequences rather than past conditions. The pragmatic approach to mixed methods comes from the work of John Dewey, Charles Saunders Pierce, William James, and George Herbert Mead (Creswell, 2014). Datta (1997) outlined three necessary criteria for making pragmatic design decisions: practicality, contextual responsiveness to the demands, opportunities, and constraints to an evaluation situation, and making decisions based on practical consequences. Moreover, Creswell (2014) summarized eight reasons for employing a pragmatic stance in a mixed methods study such as the one we conducted on determining teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning. The eight reasons include: (a) not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality; (b) freedom to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures that best meet the purpose and needs of the research; (c) many approaches for collecting and analyzing data; (d) provides the best understanding of a research problem; (e) truth is what works at the time; (f) research occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts; (g) external world independent of the mind as well as that lodged in the mind; (h) opens the doors to multiple methods, different worldviews, different assumptions, and different forms of data collection and analysis. The pragmatic worldview supports the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry to generate evidence in support of this study.

For this study we conducted a program evaluation using a descriptive mixed methods design. According to (Creswell, 2014), in a mixed methods design, the researcher integrates quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to inform programmatic decisions. The quantitative strand of inquiry occurred in the form of an
Innovation Configuration (IC) Map and a perception survey using a Likert scale. The qualitative strand was conducted through face-to-face focus groups using a semi-structured interview protocol. We collected quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed said data, and compared and contrasted results to interpret our findings. Figure 5 describes the overall design of this program evaluation.

![Mixed methods design](image)

*Figure 5. Mixed methods design.*

The mixed methods research design provides an appropriate approach to gain understanding of the M-DCPS’ human capital investment approach to teacher leadership and their ability to lead school-based professional learning. Thus, it was followed in the study.
Participants

Participants in this study include building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 of the M-DCPS TLA. The M-DCPS TLA spans throughout the three regional centers (north, central, and south) and has the potential to impact 4,371 teachers, of whom 199 are teacher leaders. Schools are selected annually to participate in the M-DCPS TLA. Using the eligibility criteria mentioned in Chapter 1 and referenced in Appendix E, four teacher leaders per school are identified and nominated by their principal. Teacher leaders have the option not to accept the nomination or opt out of the program at any given time during the course of the 1-year program. Cohort One was launched during the 2017-2018 school year in 38 schools. The second cohort was launched in 2018-2019 in 34 schools. All 72 schools in the M-DCPS TLA, were considered for this study. The breakdown of schools was as follows: 26 elementary schools, 13 K-8 centers, 16 middle schools, and 17 high schools. Identifying cohort participation was important to compare whether programmatic decisions made by the district at the end of Cohort 1 and implemented during Cohort 2 had any impact on the answers to our evaluation questions.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Tier 1 (T1) schools are the highest performing and receive the least amount of supplemental support from the district. Tier 2 (T2) schools are average performing schools that receive moderate support from academic coaches. Lastly, Tier 3 (T3) schools are the lowest performing schools and are equipped with a variety of district resources for school improvement and specialized transformational coaches in the areas of reading, math, and science. Originally, schools asked to participate in the M-DCPS TLA were identified as Tier 2 schools. Since the original
Cohort of 2017, the tiering of schools has shifted due to school performance grades as established by the Florida Department of Education. Schools under the accountability control of the Education Transformation Office receive direct instructional, curriculum, intervention and wrap-around services. Through the Education Transformation Office’s approach, schools are guided to develop sustainable practices to ensure the implementation of high-academic standards, thus developing teacher practice and improving student outcomes. Schools not supported by the Education Transformation Office receive support from the Division of Academics. Table 4 outlines the M-DCPS TLA school participants by school level configuration and by tiers.

Table 4

<p>|M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy School Tier Levels by Grade Configuration|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Tier 1</th>
<th>Tier 1 Watch</th>
<th>Tier 2</th>
<th>Tier 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sampling.** The school district annually collects data on the fidelity of implementation of the M-DCPS TLA and its value in improving teacher leader’s capacity to lead professional learning and the retention of teacher leaders who lead from the classroom. This data collection serves to inform programmatic decisions and program implementation. The Innovation Configuration Map developed to measure fidelity of implementation to the key components of the M-DCPS TLA was shared with district
staff. The district collected data by inviting all teacher leaders, teachers, and school administrators from the 72 M-DCPS TLA schools to complete an IC Map. Results of the IC Map were used to purposively select the four schools with the highest and the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation (Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2013). This sampling method was meant to prevent potentially false conclusions or inconclusive outcomes from being drawn about the effectiveness of the academy. Schools with 33% or lower responses on the IC Map were disqualified. According to Hager, Wilson, Pollak, and Rooney (2003) the lower the response rate, the higher the likelihood of response bias. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Only the building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the four schools with the highest and the four schools with lowest fidelity of implementation were invited to complete the perception survey. We invited teacher leaders from the same eight schools to participate in focus groups using a semi-structured interview protocol.

Data Sources

IC map. There are several tools developed to assist educators in measuring program implementation. One method of implementation is the Concerns-Based Adoption Model. Researchers developed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model to guide educators to understand, evaluate, and facilitate the change process (Hord et al., 2013). The Concerns-Based Adoption Model process focuses on the use of three tools for measuring implementation: (a) Innovation Configuration Maps, (b) Stages of Concern Questionnaire, and (c) Level of Use tool. The IC Map was used to determine the level of fidelity with which the M-DCPS TLA key components were implemented. An IC Map resembles a rubric in which all levels of quality implementation are addressed. Each
level provides characteristics of what the innovation should look like if it was implemented at the highest level down to the lowest level. This tool provides the user guidelines on what the implementation should look like. Although the literature defines fidelity of implementation as one that measures the degree to which a program is implemented in the manner in which it was designed with adherence and integrity, this data collection instrument focused on collecting the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers on the degree of fidelity with which teacher leaders participating in the M-DCPS TLA implemented its key components. Frequency counts related to teacher leaders’ implementation of the components of the academy were derived from the IC Maps.

For the purpose of this study we used extant data from a modified version of the School Leadership Team IC Map developed by Learning Forward (2012) to measure the extent to which teacher leaders participating in the M-DCPS TLA implement the components of the academy with fidelity. The IC Map outlines the degree of fidelity that is ideal, acceptable, less than acceptable, and inadequate according to experts familiar with the innovation (Learning Forward, 2012). Hord et al. (2013) recommends engaging a team of experts familiar with the development and the intended use of the innovation to create and/or modify an IC Map. An expert review of the item pool was conducted to assess the content validity (Hord et al., 2013) of the IC Map by requesting detailed responses concerning clarity, relevance, and quality of items. This was completed with members from the original team that developed the M-DCPS TLA. The expert panel also included Joellen Killion, a nationally renowned subject matter expert in the field of IC Maps and senior advisor to Learning Forward.
The IC Map served as a tool for users to complete a self-assessment along a continuum ranging from a Level 1, the highest ranking, to a Level 4, the lowest ranking. The IC Map consisted of components of the innovation listed vertically and the variations of implementing the innovation listed horizontally. Specifically, the IC Map provided a roadmap for determining the extent to which teacher leaders develop the capacity to lead professional learning and serve as leaders of professional learning. It also served to determine if principals and assistant principals foster shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles and if school district leaders create multiple career pathways for teacher leaders to lead within and across schools. The intent of the IC Map was to determine the level of implementation across each dimension of the IC Map. The IC Map is included in Appendix F.

**Perception survey.** To measure differences in the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the M-DCPS TLA in improving teacher leaders’ capacity in leading professional learning, we developed and distributed the online M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Perception Survey. The 4-point Likert scale perception survey was administered to the building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the schools with the highest and the lowest fidelity of implementation as identified using the IC Map. A Likert scale is a fundamental psychometric tool often used in educational and social sciences research to quantify qualitative data such as attitudes, perceptions, and opinions (Likert, 1932). In instances where individual perceptions and viewpoints are important and necessary to inform practices, surveys have proven to be an effective and valid data collection instrument. The nine-question survey asked participants to rate aspects of their perception on the
value of the M-DCPS TLA in improving teacher leaders’ capacity as defined by their ability to effectively lead professional learning. Participants were asked to show their level of agreement with the given statements on a metric scale—levels of agreement ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Survey questions were designed from behavioral indicators included in Domain III, Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

To account for the content validity of our evaluation questions, we used Lawshe's (1975) approach to content validity. We asked seven experts in the areas of teacher leadership and professional learning to rate each of the 12 original survey questions using a 3-point scale: (a) essential; (b) useful, but not essential; and (c) not necessary. We then entered this information using Lawshe's (1975) equation, \( CVR = \frac{n_e - N/2}{N/2} \), wherein: \( n_e \) equaled the number of experts who rated an item as essential and \( N \) equaled the total number of experts providing ratings. When all experts rated the item as essential, the value computed to 1. When more than half (but less than all) of the experts rated the item as essential, Lawshe’s (1975) table of critical values helped reduce the number of survey questions from 12 to 9 by keeping only those that indicated a positive value (Figure 6). This process enhanced the construct validity of our perception survey. The expert panel included Dr. Richard Ingersoll, Board of Overseers Professor of Education and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania; Frederick Brown, Deputy Executive Director, Learning Forward; and Laura Baker, Vice-President, Program Strategy and Delivery, The New Teacher Center.
Focus groups. This mixed-method study focused on the collection of qualitative data through the use of focus groups to explore the views of teacher leaders with regard to their ability to support the effectiveness of their colleagues through professional learning as a result of participating in the TLA and the impact it had on their decisions to remain as classroom teacher leaders. A focus group is “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Kreuger, 1988, p. 18). Kreuger (1988) further explains that the purpose of a focus group is to obtain qualitative information from a predetermined and limited number of people. Mertens and Wilson (2012) state that “evaluation by its nature requires interaction with stakeholders” (p. 380). For this reason, we found focus groups to be the most effective method of qualitative data collection.

The semi-structured focus groups led by an interviewer/moderator allowed us to ask open-ended and clarifying questions (Mertler, 2017, p. 134). The role of the interviewer/moderator was to direct the interaction and keep the discussion focused and to generate involvement from all participants. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the facilitator to provide cues or redirected questions to allow the interviewee to
consider an answer more fully (Hancock, 1998). According to Hancock (1998) this allows flexibility for participants and interviewers to more fully explore any subtopics that may arise.

Seven focus groups were conducted in January at the selected schools and the Center for Professional Learning—a school district facility where teacher leaders frequent to participate in ongoing professional learning activities. The optimum size of a focus group depends on the topic being researched and the knowledge of the participants regarding the topic (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 1990). Hancock (1998) recommends group sizes between six to 10 participants and to have more than one focus group. Each focus group included members who had varied years of teaching experience as well as diverse school level configurations, subject areas, and teaching preps (Hancock, 1998). Focus group questions were anchored on Domain III, Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement and Domain VII, Advocating for Students and the Profession of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Four of the seven identified experts in the field peer-reviewed interview questions to ensure meaningful data collection.

**Data Collection**

To adequately explore the impact of M-DCPS’ human capital investment approach in promoting learning that leads to improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning, large amounts of contextually sensitive data were collected concerning individual perceptions. These data collection techniques are described in the sections that follow. Figure 7 specifically illustrates the data collection process.
IC map data collection. Data informing this study came from multiple sources including: an IC Map, a perception survey, and semi-structured focus group interviews. The IC Map was shared with the district which adopted it as part of its program evaluation protocol.

The first goal of this study was to identify the level of fidelity with which the key components of the M-DCPS TLA are being implemented. To accomplish this goal, IC Maps in the form of a survey, using descriptive measures were used to capture the ability of the M-DCPS TLA to develop teacher leaders’ capacity to: (a) lead professional learning, (b) serve as leaders of professional learning, (c) foster shared leadership through formal teacher leader roles, and (d) create multiple career pathways for teacher leaders to lead within and across schools. IC Maps were distributed by the district using Survey Question 1
Monkey, an online survey platform, to all building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at the 72 TLA schools. We refer to the IC Map survey as an IC Map. A sample of the IC Map for one of the components can be found in Figure 8.

| Desired Outcome: Teacher leaders develop capacity to lead professional learning. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** | **Level 4** |
| Ideal Application | Acceptable Application | Less than Acceptable | Inadequate Application |
| • Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy. | • Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy. | • Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy. | • No evidence that teacher leaders improve ability to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges. |
| • Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice. | • Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice. | • Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice. | |
| • Fosters trust among colleagues, develops collective wisdom, builds ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills. | • Fosters trust among colleagues, develops collective wisdom, builds ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills. | | |
| • Creates an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges. | | | |

*Figure 8.* Sample Innovation Configuration (IC) Map Component.

Data collected from the IC Map enabled us to identify the top four schools with the highest level of implementation and the bottom four schools that self-reported the lowest levels of implementation. We used this extant data to identify the eight schools that participated in the online perception survey and the semi-structured focus groups.

**Perception survey data collection.** After securing the potential respondents’ email addresses through the Human Resources Information Systems we used Survey Monkey to disseminate the link to the perception survey via district email to building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the eight targeted schools identified through the IC Map results. The M-DCPS TLA Perception Survey can be found in Appendix I. Survey recipients were asked to voluntarily complete the required demographic information and answer the nine-question survey on Survey Monkey. They
had a 2-week timeframe, in December 2019, to complete the survey. A follow-up email was sent to potential respondents 1 week prior to the deadline to solicit as many responses as possible.

**Focus group data collection.** Focus group data were collected to answer two open-ended epistemological evaluation questions using an interview protocol. We secured a list of all participants and their school district email addresses through the Human Resources Information Systems. We invited 27 teacher leaders from the eight schools to participate in focus groups at the selected schools and the Center for Professional Learning. An invitation letter to participate in the focus groups was sent via email to all teacher leaders from the four schools with the highest and the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation. A copy of the invitation letter can be found in Appendix J. Focus groups included representation from the four teacher leader roles in the M-DCPS TLA. Appendix K includes a copy of the consent form signed by all teacher leaders participating in the focus groups. Each focus group met with at least two researchers during a 45-minute focus group interview using a focus group protocol we designed (Appendix L). Each group was asked open-ended and clarifying questions. One of us asked the focus group questions and probing questions, while the others served as observers and recorded responses. We took field notes during the interviews to account for responses that needed further clarification and to probe participants to ensure equity of voice. Focus group interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participants. Audio recordings were transcribed using Descript and analyzed using Dedoose software.
Data Analysis

All data collected through the IC Map and the perception survey were downloaded into Excel. To answer the evaluation questions effectively, data collected during the quantitative and qualitative strand of inquiry were analyzed, compared, and contrasted to interpret our findings. This section provides a detailed description of the data analysis procedures.

Evaluation question 1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of the M-DCPS TLA implemented across participating schools?

1a. Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.

1b. Serving as a leader of professional learning.

1c. Fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.

1d. Creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

We defined high fidelity as a Level 1 (Ideal Application) or a Level 2 score (Acceptable Application) for each of the desired outcomes on the components of the M-DCPS TLA identified on the IC Map. To investigate the level of fidelity of academy implementation at each school, we analyzed participants’ responses to the IC Maps using frequency counts and comparisons between schools (Hord, 1997). The frequency of each variation within a component was tallied across schools. Percentages were used to profile how a component is implemented by the teacher leaders at each school. The IC Map data from each school was compared (Hord et al., 2013). The four schools with the highest fidelity of implementation and the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation were selected to participate in the perception survey.
**Evaluation question 2.** *What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning?*

Data collected from the perception survey responses on the value of the M-DCPS TLA and teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet that offers statistical tools. The data were cleaned and coded for components of the M-DCPS TLA that participants find most valuable. A frequency table was created to determine totals for each of the coded responses. After careful analysis of the data provided by the frequency charts, the data were imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to run descriptive statistical tests that calculated the mean and standard deviation for each survey question. Mertens and Wilson (2012) state that when using inferential statistics an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test is most appropriate when comparing two or more groups from the same population. To determine if there are statistical differences in survey responses among building administrators, teacher leaders, and teacher responses, we ran One-Way ANOVA tests. Differences among participant responses from the four schools with the highest level of fidelity of implementation and those with the lowest fidelity of implementation were compared using a t-test.

**Evaluation question 3.** *To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the TLA?*

**Evaluation question 4.** *To what degree does participation in the TLA impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?*
To address the qualitative focus group data in this study, we coded the responses to look for themes. Saldaña (2013) describes coding as an interpretive act between data collection and data analysis while Creswell (2014) notes that codes cannot only emerge to expected patterns in responses, but also to what may be striking, surprising, or unusual concepts. It is a process designed to reduce the information in ways that facilitate interpretations of the findings (Lauer, 2006) by “organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information” (Creswell, 2009, p. 186).

Answers to questions three and four were *a priori* coded using language from the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The *a priori* approach involves having key codes derived from theory serving as an analyzing conceptual framework (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). They are developed before examining the current data. Answers to question three were coded *a priori* to Domain III, Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement. All data collected and coded for question three were analyzed to identify components of the M-DCPS TLA participants felt had the greatest impact on supporting teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning. Answers to question four were coded *a priori* to Domain VII, Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession. Further analysis was conducted to determine whether participation in the M-DCPS TLA has any impact on teacher leaders’ decisions to remain in the classroom. *A priori* codes can be found in Appendix M.

During the first cycle of coding, we used In Vivo and process coding (Saldaña, 2013). First cycle coding refers to our initial attempts to collect ideas and themes. The portion of data to be coded during first cycle coding can range from a single word to an entire page of text or images (Saldaña, 2013). To reduce researcher bias, we selected In
Vivo coding first to extract the exact words and phrases used by the interviewees. We then categorized teacher leaders’ responses to search for themes and ideas (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Process coding can be defined as inferring the process verbs or actions that are occurring (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Process coding was appropriate and useful as it was likely that teacher leaders would share anecdotal records and short narratives that indicated actions (Saldaña, 2013).

During the second coding cycle, pattern coding was used to meaningfully categorize the codes and reduce the number of codes created during the first cycle. Using a second coding cycle further filtered and highlighted the salient features of the qualitative data. Pattern coding allowed us to examine existing codes from Cycle 1 for trends, patterns, and relationships between/among codes, then from these labels we developed possible categories or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We reviewed the first cycle codes to assess their commonality and assign them a pattern code. Pattern codes were used to develop statements that describe major themes, patterns of action, networks of interrelationships, or theoretical constructs from the data (Saldaña, 2009). Table 5 provides a detailed description of how each data source was analyzed.
Table 5

*Data Analysis by Data Source*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of Miami-Dade County</td>
<td>Innovation Configuration Map</td>
<td>• Frequency counts, and comparisons among schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade County Public Schools’ Teacher LEADership Academy implemented?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Results used to determine the four schools with the highest fidelity of implementation and the four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td>schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Serving as a leader of professional learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Principals and assistant principals fostering shared leadership through formal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher leadership roles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Creating multiple career pathways for effect effective teacher leaders to lead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within and across schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant</td>
<td>Perception survey using a Likert scale</td>
<td>• Frequency counts, and comparisons among teachers, teacher leaders building administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADership Academy in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead</td>
<td></td>
<td>• ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• t-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’</td>
<td>Semi-structured focus groups</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of focus group data using a priori coding, In Vivo, process, and pattern coding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectiveness as a result of participating in the Teacher LEADership Academy?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what degree does participation in the Teacher LEADership Academy impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Timeline

We defended the research proposal and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the College of William and Mary November 2019. After we received approval from the College of William and Mary, we received approval from M-DCPS Assessment, Research and Data Analysis department. Assessment, Research and Data Analysis’s turnaround time is approximately four weeks upon receipt of the proposal; however, we received approval within a week of submission. After receiving approval, we requested extant data from the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation on the IC Map distributed to all 72 participating schools. The perception survey was administered to the four schools with the highest degree of fidelity of implementation and the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation.

Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions

Delimitations. Delimitations are those controls and/or parameters that are within our control. This study focused on the key components of the M-DCPS TLA. A significant delimitation were the data collections tools used throughout the study. The study was delimited to the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers (Cohort 1 and Cohort 2) within M-DCPS participating in the M-DCPS TLA. From the 72 schools in Cohorts 1 and 2 who responded to the IC Map, four schools were identified as indicating the highest level and four schools were identified as having the lowest level of implementation. The granularity of the IC Map is also considered a delimitation because participants are limited in how they can respond. To identify the four schools with the highest fidelity of implementation and the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation, we only selected schools with 33% or higher
responsiveness (Brick & Jones, 2008). A delimitation of this method is the small sample size of responses. It is quite possible that this small sampling may not accurately reflect the perceptions of many participants in M-DCPS TLA.

Limitations. We acknowledge several important limitations to the present study. A significant limitation of this these limitations include a single district, and a low number of participants. Participants option not to participate in the study is also a limitation. The experiences described throughout the study reflect the ideas and perceptions of the building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers within the M-DCPS TLA. An additional limitation is the variety of administratively assigned professional demands participants experience at their school sites. Also, since the launch of the program occurs during the summer, not all teachers are able to participate in the initial sessions and are required to attend make-up sessions throughout the school year. This time difference in the acquisition of the professional development may affect the study. We are also faced with administrator and teacher mobility due to reassignment of administrators, surplus, retirement and transfers of teachers. These factors are beyond our control.

Other limitations identified to be beyond our control include response rates of program participants, the sample size, and the commitment of school leaders to providing structures of shared leadership and teacher collaboration. We recognize that principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders participating in the study may indicate a high fidelity of implementation to avoid being identified as non-compliant. These factors can influence the outcome of the research. Potential limitations in this study may also
include the lack of responses from the identified survey groups or responses from a participant group may be more abundant than the others.

The data collection tools of the study also pose a threat to the internal validity of the study. It is recognized that the granularity of the IC Map makes it more difficult for participants to make a choice. Additionally, it is also recognized that perception surveys also have an important limitation. An inherent limitation in the use of perception surveys includes the reliability of the survey participants’ views. Even where reliable data exists, it may be difficult to determine whether the perceptions of the participants are skewed by their attempts to look good.

**Assumptions.** We assumed that if all delineated program inputs regarding human capital investments, both financial and regarding personnel, were clearly aligned with the outputs of program activities and those activities reach all stakeholders, then it is likely that the M-DCPS TLA would have produced the intended outcomes. A primary assumption was that participants would truthfully respond to the IC Map, perception survey, and focus group interview questions. Regarding the IC Map, we assumed that if participants answered truthfully, they would report only on components of the program that were fully implemented. We also assumed that the M-DCPS TLA provided the necessary knowledge and skills for teacher leaders to implement components of the program effectively at their schools. An additional assumption was that participants would complete the perception survey as accurately and truthfully as possible. Finally, we assumed that the interview protocol would provide a forum and structure for participants to openly share their experiences with the M-DCPS TLA related to preparing
them to support teachers’ effectiveness and whether participation in the M-DCPS TLA had any impact on their decision to remain a classroom teacher.

**Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the effectiveness of the study, the Program Evaluation Standards were used to judge the quality of the program evaluation efforts (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Throughout the study, we referred to the Program Evaluation Standards on a continuous basis to ensure a sound study was conducted. Focusing on the utility standards ensures that the evaluation serves the needs of the school district. Regarding the feasibility standards, the emphasis is be on the efficiency of the study and on maximizing the potential results. The study adhered to the propriety standards to ensure that the evaluation was conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard to the welfare of all stakeholders involved in the study. Finally, the study complied with the accuracy standards to ensure that the study reveals appropriate information about the worth and merit of the M-DCPS TLA (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

We are aware of guidelines, protocols and procedures established by the College of William and Mary and M-DCPS’s Office of Assessment, Research, Data and Analysis. All participants’ responses were anonymous. Participants received consent forms and information outlining their role in this research. We collected, analyzed, and painted an accurate and impartial analysis of the data collected (Mertler, 2017).

Our position in relation to the study is a fundamental issue in a mixed methods study. Ethical research is dependent on our ability to self-reflect and be transparent about our positionality, and how it can potentially affect the collection and interpretation of data (Court & Abbas, 2013). We currently serve in the positions of assistant superintendent,
district director, and executive directors in the Office of Human Capital Management and led the development of the M-DCPS TLA. Due to our role in developing, executing, and monitoring the M-DCPS TLA, great care was taken to ensure fair and accurate reporting, free of bias.

Prior to distributing the IC Map to the 72 M-DCPS TLA schools, we asked experts in the field to review the content and validity of the IC Map. This practice followed Accuracy Standard A6 (Sound Design and Analyses). We used member-checking to account for implicit bias resulting from our involvement in the M-DCPS TLA. We understand that our close proximity and unique position within the District may cause concern with regard to the development and implementation of the M-DCPS TLA. It may appear to some to be an unavoidable conflict of interest; however, as professionals seeking best practices and researchers, we took great care and pride in ensuring that the outcome of this research remained true to the data (Propriety Standard 6). We also referred to Standard P4 (Clarity and Fairness) when conducting this research.

As a team of researchers, we realized that the issue of fairness may be raised due to the political systems, existing programs, and policies (Yarbrough et al., 2011). We maintained communication with each other and various stakeholders through frequent communication and recognized that the outcome of this research may have a determination over the future implementation of the M-DCPS TLA. In addition to Propriety Standard 6, we also consulted Feasibility Standard 3 (Contextual Viability). We knew that by using the IC Map, perception surveys, and focus group data we would receive different opinions about the value of the M-DCPS TLA, particularly during focus group interviews conducted with teacher leaders. We recognize that their opinions may
be skewed due to their role in the academy. Prior to focus group interviews we were careful and deliberate in our message that responses would not be used in a punitive manner. Participants wore number tag identifying them as Speaker Numbers (P5 Transparency and Disclosure). We collected and analyzed data in consultation with Accuracy Standards 1 and 7. Following Creswell's (2014) recommendations, we used self-reflection throughout the process to create an honest narrative.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to focus on Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ (M-DCPS) human capital investment approach in the Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) and its effect in improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning while remaining in the classroom. The study began mid-November 2019 with the final data collection occurring in late January 2020. Three research instruments provided the data base for this study. The Innovation Configuration (IC) Map completed by building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers was used to determine fidelity of implementation of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA across participating schools and to purposively select the study sample. Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the eight purposively selected schools completed a nine question Likert scale survey to determine their perceptions regarding the value of the academy. Using semi-structured focus groups, data were also gathered regarding teacher leaders’ ability to support teachers’ effectiveness and the impact that the M-DCPS TLA had on their decision to lead from the classroom. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data analysis findings in order to address the following evaluation questions:
1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of the M-DCPS TLA implemented across participating schools?

1a. Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.
1b. Serving as a leader of professional learning.
1c. Fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.
1d. Creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

2. What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning?

3. To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the TLA?

4. To what degree does participation in the TLA impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?

Each question was analyzed individually to determine the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers. After the data analysis was completed, differences were found related to fidelity of implementation, value of the M-DCPS TLA, and its impact on teacher leaders’ preparedness to support their colleagues and their decision to remain as teacher leaders who lead from the classroom.

**Evaluation Question #1**

**Fidelity of implementation of key components of the M-DCPS TLA.** In assessing the fidelity of implementation of the innovation within the study group, the IC
Map components’ data were used. Cohort 1 took place in 2017-2018 and Cohort 2 took place in 2018-2019. To determine if programmatic decisions made by the district at the end of Cohort 1 and implemented during Cohort 2 had any impact on our evaluation questions, it was important to compare and contrast cohort participation. The identified tier level represents the tier at the time of participation in the M-DCPS TLA. Identifying tier level was important to determine alignment of professional learning supports provided through varied district offices.

Only 10 of the 72 schools met the 33% or higher responsiveness of which the four schools with the highest fidelity were Schools 3, 5, 7, and 8 (highlighted in green in Table 6). The four schools with the lowest fidelity were Schools 2, 4, 6, and 10 (highlighted in red in Table 6). Schools 1 and 9 declined to participate in the perception survey. For our study, responsiveness and representativeness are used interchangeably. Responsiveness refers to how well the sample drawn for the questionnaire research compares with the population of interest. Schools where less than 33% of the respondents completed the IC Map do not reflect elements of school population with breadth and depth and may create nonresponse bias which will affect the reliability and validity of the IC Map findings (Brick & Jones, 2008).

Data from the IC Map indicated variation in implementation of fidelity across schools. Levels of fidelity were determined by the number of indicators evidenced for each of the desired outcomes (Appendix G). Level 1 represented ideal application of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA, Level 2 represented acceptable application, Level 3 represented less than acceptable application, and Level 4 represented inadequate application. Variations of highest fidelity, identified as a Level 1 and Level 2 on the IC
Map, represented teacher leaders with the tendency to lead professional learning and serve as leaders of professional learning, building administrators with the ability to foster shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles, and school and district structures that create multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools. In terms of innovation, a decrease in fidelity, identified as a Level 3 and Level 4 on the IC Map, represented less opportunities for teachers to lead professional learning, serve as leaders of professional development, experience shared leadership, and have access to career lattice pathways. The entire possible teacher and administrator population for the IC Map consisted of 4,578 participants. However, data were collected from 773 participants (17%). Using percentages, Table 6 profiles how the key components of the M-DCPS TLA were implemented by the teacher leaders at each school as determined by the perceptions of school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from each of the schools in the academy. Table 6 also provides demographic information for each of the 72 M-DCPS TLA schools.
Table 6

Innovation Configuration Map Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Demographics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Note. ES = Elementary School; MS = Middle School; HS = High School; color green = high fidelity; color red = low fidelity
Responses to the key components identified on the IC Map were relatively high ranging from 80% to 97%. Based on this data, we identified four schools with high fidelity ranging from 93% to 97% and four schools with low fidelity ranging from 80% to 90%. Figure 9 includes an analysis of the IC Map results for the eight schools that participated in the study. It indicates that Schools 3, 5, 7, and 8 had the highest fidelity of implementation while Schools 2, 4, 6, and 10 had the lowest fidelity of implementation.

Figure 9. Innovation configuration map data for schools with 33% or higher representativeness.

**Fidelity of implementation and cohort status.** An analysis of the eight schools in the study sample revealed a link between fidelity of implementation and M-DCPS TLA cohort participation. Only one school from Cohort 1 was identified as having high fidelity of implementation to the M-DCPS TLA. In contrast, three schools from Cohort 2 were identified as high-fidelity schools. All the schools identified as having low fidelity of implementation participated in Cohort 1. Table 7 identifies the level of
implementation of each of the schools according to their participation in either Cohort 1 or Cohort 2.

Table 7

*Fidelity of Implementation and Teacher LEADership Academy Cohort Participation for Schools with 33% or Higher Responsiveness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cohort 1 2017 – 2018</th>
<th>Cohort 2 2018 – 2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools with Highest Level of Implementation</td>
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<td>3, 5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with Lowest Level of Implementation</td>
<td>2, 4, 6, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Cohort 2 had no schools with lowest level of implementation.*

**Fidelity of implementation and school level configuration status.** When analyzing fidelity of implementation and school level configuration, one elementary school, one middle school, one K-8 center and one high school were identified as implementing the key components of the M-DCPS TLA with high fidelity. However, low fidelity of implementation is more prevalent at the elementary schools. Two of the three elementary schools participating in the study were identified as having low fidelity of implementation. Table 8 outlines the level of implementation of each of the schools according to their grade level configuration.
Table 8

Fidelity of Implementation and School Level Configuration for Schools with 33% or Higher Responsiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>K-8</th>
<th>High</th>
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<td>Schools with Highest Level of Implementation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with Lowest Level of Implementation</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

**Fidelity of implementation and school tier status.** An analysis of fidelity of implementation and school tier status revealed that three of the eight schools identified as having high fidelity of implementation were considered Tier 1 during their participation in the academy. Similarly, two of the eight schools identified as having low fidelity of implementation were considered Tier 3. Table 9 identifies the level of implementation of each of the schools according to the school tier at the time of their participation in the M-DCPS TLA.

Table 9

Fidelity of Implementation and School Tier at the Time of TLA Participation for Schools with 33% or Higher Responsiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>Tier 2</th>
<th>Tier 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools with Highest Level of Implementation</td>
<td>3, 5, 7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with Lowest Level of Implementation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. TLA = Teacher LEADership Academy*
**Additional analysis.** Due to the compression of responses, we decided to look at the entire sample of 72 M-DCPS TLA schools to determine if there was any relationship between low response rates of schools and their level of fidelity of implementation. We looked at the data from Table 6 and divided the 72 schools into quartiles in order to conduct an analysis of the response rates. The data revealed that low response rates did not indicate low fidelity implementation. Response rates among the 72 schools remained relatively high. An interesting finding related to the relationship between average staff size and average response rate indicated that as the size of staff at schools increased, the response rate decreased. However, when conducting the analysis of the response rates, we did not find the link between the levels of fidelity of implementation and lower response rates as we had anticipated.

When analyzing the 773 responses to the IC Map from the 72 schools, we found creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools to be the component with the highest fidelity of implementation (92%). The breakdown of percentages for the other components is as follows: developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning and serving as a leader of professional learning at 91% and fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles at 90%. Additional analysis of the data collected for all 72 schools showed a relationship between average staff size and lower response rates, but no relationship between response rate and level of fidelity of implementation.

As part of this research, when analyzing the summary findings for the eight schools in the study sample, question one indicated that Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools implemented the key components with varied degrees of implementation. When
analyzing only the eight schools selected to participate in the study, we found that 80% of Cohort 1 schools had low fidelity of implementation, while 100% of Cohort 2 schools had high fidelity. In analyzing the eight schools in the study sample by school configuration and school tier, we found that 67% of elementary schools and 100% of Tier 3 schools had low fidelity implementation. Overall, fidelity of implementation levels for the key components of the M-DCPS TLA assessed through the IC Map fall within Level 1 and Level 2.

Evaluation Question #2

Value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning. The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Perception Survey (Appendix M) measured the differences in the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from the eight purposively selected schools on the value of the M-DCPS TLA in improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning. The questions were designed from behavior indicators included in Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Questions 1 through 4 were aligned to the four M-DCPS TLA teacher leadership roles (Professional Learning and Growth Leader, New and Early Career Teacher Support Leader, Digital Innovation Leader, and Instructional Coach), while Questions 5-9 were aligned to the Teacher Leader Model Standards. The 4-point Likert survey was disseminated in the form of a Survey Monkey link via district email in mid-December 2019. A week after the initial email, an email was sent reminding participants to complete the perception survey. Two weeks after the initial email was sent, only one participant from School 9 had completed
the perception survey. We replaced School 9 with School 1 as one of the schools with low fidelity of implementation. After there were no responses from School 1 it was then replaced with School 10. Out of the 470 potential perception survey respondents, a total of 173 participants (eight building administrators, 22 teacher leaders, 143 teachers) completed the perception survey, representing a 37% response rate.

Frequency counts for each perception survey question were calculated to identify the percentages for each of the selected level of agreements (Strongly Agree [SA], Agree [A], Disagree [D], and Strongly Disagree [SD]). In comparing frequency counts of responses to the perception survey questions, we found that all responses were relatively high, ranging from 83% to 96%. Given this finding, we identified the two areas with the highest percentage of strongly agree/agree (95% and 96%) and the two areas with the lowest percentage of strongly agree/agree (83% and 85%) to determine the two areas respondents found most valuable and the two areas they found least valuable. Table 10 identifies the data in percentages and indicates that respondents found greatest value in the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role (95% strongly agree/agree) and in the area of teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals (96% strongly agree/agree). The respondents found the least value in the areas of teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning (83% strongly agree/agree) and teacher leaders providing constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice (85% strongly agree/agree).
Table 10

Perception Survey Levels of Agreement Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLA Component</th>
<th>Role and Area</th>
<th>SA%</th>
<th>A%</th>
<th>SA/A% Total</th>
<th>D%</th>
<th>SD%</th>
<th>D/SD% Total</th>
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<td>1. Professional Learning &amp; Growth Leader</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. New &amp; Early Career Lead Mentor</td>
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<td>89</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Digital Innovation Leader</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Instructional Coach/Content Expert</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Leader Model Standards Questions 5-9</td>
<td>5. Collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>6. Use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues</td>
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<td>7. Use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>8. Advocate for resources to support professional learning</td>
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<td>9. Provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>

*Note.* TLA = Teacher LEADership Academy; SA = strongly agree; A = agree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree
Using the frequency counts, patterns within the levels of agreement among the perceptions of respondents on the value of the M-DCPS TLA. Table 11 shows that teachers’ perceptions for all the areas addressed in the survey were within the strongly agree, agree, and disagree categories, while four of the nine areas also included strongly disagree responses. The areas where teachers’ perceptions included a strongly disagree level were in the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role (2%), the New & Early Career Lead Mentor role (3%), the Digital Innovation Leader role (1%), and teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning (1%). Teachers’ responses indicated a higher number in the agree category (51%) for each area unlike teacher leaders’ responses which indicated a higher number of responses in the strongly agree category (65%). Building administrators’ responses indicated an even selection within the strongly agree (48%) and agree categories (48%). They indicated a higher level of responses in the agree category (88%) in the Digital Innovation Leader role and the Instructional Coach/Content Expert role. Building administrators and teachers responded similarly indicating a weaker implementation in the Digital Innovation Leader role and the Instructional Coach/Content Expert role. The only two areas where building administrators indicated a selection of disagree were in, teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning (13%), and teacher leaders providing constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice (13%). An alignment in responses of building administrators and teachers was identified in the area of teacher leaders advocating for resources and providing constructive feedback, where building administrators selected disagree among other levels of agreement while teachers also included strongly disagree in their responses. Based on the frequency analysis there is a
similarity among the findings of the three groups combined and those of the teachers’ perceptions in the area of teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning.

Table 11

Perception Survey Role Specific Levels of Agreement

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<tr>
<th>Role and Area</th>
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<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leader Model Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Advocate for resources to support professional learning.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher; SA = strongly agree; A = agree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree
Descriptive statistics results. To further analyze respondents’ perception on the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning descriptive statistics and ANOVA tests were used. Perception survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tests identified the mean and standard deviation for each of the nine perception survey questions (Table 12). The mean provided the central tendency for each survey question, while the standard deviations offered an available definition to explain potential variations for each distribution. Respondents on average found the greatest value in the area of teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.58$) and the least value in, teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.75$).

Although the area of teacher leaders use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning had a higher mean than the role of the Professional Learning & Growth Leader, the frequency counts showed more responses in the disagree category in the use of data area than in the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role.
Table 12

Perception Survey Descriptive Statistics Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role and Area</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional Learning &amp; Growth Leader</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New &amp; Early Career Lead Mentor</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Digital Innovation Leader</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructional Coach/Content Expert</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues.</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Advocate for resources to support professional learning.</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice.</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA results. ANOVA tests were conducted to determine if there were statistical differences in the perceptions among the eight building administrators, 22 teacher leaders, and 143 teachers from the eight purposively selected schools on the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning. Statistically significant relationships were determined based on an alpha level of 0.05 or less. Table 13 shows the ANOVA results for the perception survey for the Teacher Leader Roles component.

There was a significant difference in the responses regarding the Teacher Leadership Roles pertaining to the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role, $F(2, 170) = 4.45, p = 0.013$; the New and Early Career Lead Mentor role, $F(2, 170) = 5.46, p = 0.005$; and the Instructional Coach/Content Expert role, $F(2, 170) = 3.42, p = 0.035$. Teacher leaders’ responses regarding the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role had a mean of 3.73 with more of their responses being in the strongly agree category. Regarding this role, building administrators’ responses were evenly distributed between
the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories with a mean of 3.50. This was unlike the teachers’ responses, which were mostly within the *agree* category with a mean of 3.31. Regarding the *New and Early Career Lead Mentor* role, teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.64 with more of their responses being in the *strongly agree* category.

Regarding this role, building administrators’ responses were evenly distributed between the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories with a mean of 3.50. This was unlike teachers’ responses, which were mostly in the *agree* category with a mean of 3.15. In the role of the *Instructional Coach/Content Expert*, teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.64 with more of their responses being in the *strongly agree* category. Regarding this role, building administrators’ responses had a mean of 3.38, with more of their responses being in the *agree* category. Teachers’ responses were mostly in the *agree* category with a mean of 3.26.

Based on the ANOVA results the only teacher leader role where the responses of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers had no significant difference was in the *Digital Innovation Leader* role, $F(2, 170) = 2.03, p = 0.134$. Teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.50 with more of their responses being in the *strongly agree* category. Regarding this role, building administrators responded mostly in the *agree* category with a mean of 3.13. This was true for the teachers as well; their responses were mostly in the *agree* category with a mean of 3.21.
Table 13

Perception Survey Teacher Leader Roles ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional Learning &amp; Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leader Roles ANOVA Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional Learning &amp; Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New &amp; Early Career Lead Mentor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Digital Innovation Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructional Coach/Content Expert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>66.83</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.32</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81.01</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72.08</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68.39</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71.14</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14 shows the ANOVA results on the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning regarding the Teacher Leader Standards component. There was a significant difference in the responses in three of the Teacher Leader Standards component. In the area of teacher leaders collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals, $F(2, 170) = 5.69, p = 0.004$; teacher leaders had a mean of 3.82 with more of their responses being in the strongly agree category. In this area, building administrators’ responses had a mean of 3.63 with more of their responses being in the strongly agree category. This was unlike teachers’ responses which were mostly within the agree category with a mean of 3.40. In the area of teacher leaders advocate for resources to support professional learning, $F(2, 170) = 4.46, p = 0.013$; teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.64 with more of their responses being in the strongly agree category. In this area building administrators’ responses had a mean of 3.38 with more of their responses being in the strongly agree category. This was unlike teachers’ responses, which were mostly in the agree category with a mean of 3.15. In the area of teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice, $F(2, 170) = 4.36, p = 0.014$; teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.59 with their responses being mostly in the strongly agree category. In this area, building administrators’ responses were mostly in the strongly agree category with a mean of 3.50. This was unlike teachers’ responses which were mostly in the agree category with a mean of 3.16.

Based on the ANOVA test results, there were two areas in the Teacher Leader Model Standards where the responses of building administrators, teacher leaders, and
teachers had no significant difference. These were in the area of *teacher leaders use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues*, $F(2, 170) = 1.67, p = 0.191$; and *teacher leaders use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning*, $F(2, 170) = 1.63, p = 0.199$. Teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.14 in the area of *teacher leaders use adult learning strategies* where their responses were mostly within the *strongly agree* category. In this area, building administrators’ responses had a mean of 3.63 with their responses mostly being in the *strongly agree* category. This was unlike teachers’ responses which had a mean of 3.25 with their responses being mostly in the *agree* category. In the area of *teacher leaders use of data*, teacher leaders’ responses had a mean of 3.59 with most of their responses being in the *strongly agree* category. In this area, building administrators’ responses were evenly distributed between the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories with a mean of 3.50. Teachers’ responses in this area were mostly in the *agree* category with a mean of 3.34.
### Table 14

**Perception Survey Teacher Leader Standards ANOVA Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based,</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>53.43</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57.01</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of colleagues.</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>72.13</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.55</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>67.53</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68.82</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Advocate for resources to support professional learning.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>90.88</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95.65</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>80.62</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.75</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. BA = building administrator; TL = teacher leader; TE = teacher, ANOVA = analysis of variance*
In summary, ANOVA results regarding the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning indicated that teacher leaders found the greatest value in all the M-DCPS TLA roles as well as the Teacher Leader Model Standards regarding collaboration, adult learning, use of data, advocating for resources and providing constructive feedback among all the three groups of respondents. Building administrators found the greatest value in the areas of teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded and teacher leaders using adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues. Teachers also found the greatest value in teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning. Although based on the ANOVA results there was a significant difference in the area referring to teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning, a closer look at the mean for each group indicated this was the area, they found most value in.

**T-test results.** To determine any differences in the perceptions of the two groups being studied, the schools with highest and lowest fidelity of implementation, t-tests were conducted to compare the means of the groups’ responses regarding the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning, (Table 15). Schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation identified a greater value in three of the four Teacher Leadership Roles in comparison to schools with highest fidelity of implementation. Schools with the highest fidelity of implementation found greater value in the role of the Professional Learning & Growth Leader by a 0.01 difference in mean. Schools with lowest fidelity of implementation found greater value
in all the Teacher Leader Model Standards in comparison to the schools with highest fidelity of implementation.

Table 15

High and Low Fidelity Perception Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leadership Roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional Learning &amp; Growth Leader</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New &amp; Early Career Lead Mentor</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Digital Innovation Leader</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructional Coach/Content Expert</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>-2.24</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leader Model Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>-3.06</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Advocate for resources to support professional learning.</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>-3.02</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. HF = high fidelity; LF = low fidelity

Based on the t-test results there were four areas where responses between schools had a significant difference. There was a significant difference in the responses when asked about the Instructional Coach/Content Expert role in schools with the highest fidelity of implementation ($M = 3.25$, $SD = .65$) and the lowest fidelity of implementation ($M = 3.49$, $SD = .59$) conditions, $t(171) = -2.24$, $p = 0.026$. Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers in schools with lowest fidelity found the greatest value in this teacher leader role. When asked about teacher leaders using adult learning
strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues, schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.53, SD = .50)\) indicated a greater value than schools with highest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.20, SD = .68)\) conditions, \(t(171) = -3.06, p = 0.003\). Regarding teacher leaders using data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning, the schools with lowest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.55, SD = .54)\) found a greater value than schools with highest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.32, SD = .65)\) conditions, \(t(171) = -2.20, p = 0.029\). When asked about teacher leaders providing constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice, again schools with lowest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.49, SD = .62)\) found a greater value than schools with highest fidelity of implementation \((M = 3.13, SD = .71)\) conditions, \(t(171) = -3.02, p = 0.003\).

Instructional coaching, considering adult learning to provide differentiated professional development, utilizing data related to the quality of professional learning, and providing feedback to colleagues are practices predominantly found in Tier 3 schools (Table 2 in Chapter 1). Two of the eight schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation were Tier 3 schools in comparison to three of the eight schools with highest fidelity of implementation which were Tier 1 schools (Table 9 in Chapter 4). Of the schools with lowest fidelity of implementation, 50% were Tier 3 schools.

Results from the t-test identified five areas in which responses from participants from the highest fidelity of implementation and lowest fidelity of implementation showed no significant difference. These areas were in the Professional Learning & Growth Leader role, \(t(171) = 0.10, p = 0.918\); the New & Early Teacher Career Lead Mentor role, \(t(171) = -1.06, p = 0.289\); the Digital Innovation Leader role, \(t(171) = -0.94, p = \)
0.350; teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning, \( t(171) = -1.57, p = 0.118 \); and teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning, \( t(171) = -1.77, p = 0.078 \). These data suggest that respondents in schools with both high and low fidelity perceive these three roles, teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning and advocating for resources to have a similar value in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.

**Summary**

The findings from the quantitative data analysis highlighted areas where respondents found the greatest and least value for the M-DCPS TLA, quantified the differences among perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers, and differences between schools with high and low fidelity implementation regarding the value of the academy in terms of improving the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning.

Analysis of the frequency data suggests that, overall, respondents found greatest value in the role of the Professional Learning & Growth Leader and teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded. This finding indicates that building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers strongly agree/agree that there is evidence that this teacher leadership role and area of the Teacher Leader Model Standards are being fulfilled. The frequency counts among respondents at 96% strongly agree/agree and descriptive statistics results with the highest mean of 3.46 substantiate the finding that respondents found the greatest value in teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning. These areas are relevant to
the goals of the M-DCPS TLA which is to improve teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.

The area where the respondents found the least value in was in teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning. This area had the highest percentage within the disagree/strongly disagree categories among all respondents. The frequency counts among respondents with 17% in the disagree/strongly disagree categories and descriptive statistics results with the lowest mean of 3.22 substantiate the finding that respondents found the least value in teacher leaders advocating for professional learning resources.

The results of the ANOVA test indicated a statistically significant difference among respondents’ perceptions regarding the roles of the Professional Learning & Growth Leader, the New & Early Career Lead Mentor, the Instructional Coach/Content Expert. Significant differences were also found in the participants’ perceptions regarding teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded, teacher leaders advocate for resources to support professional learning, and teacher leaders providing constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice.

ANOVA results indicated no significant difference for Digital Innovation Leader role. Two areas from the Teacher Leader Model Standards with no significant difference were in the areas of teacher leaders using adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues and teacher leaders using data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.
The results of the t-test indicated a statistically significant difference among schools with high and low fidelity implementation in the role of the *Instructional Coach/Content Expert*. Three areas from the Teacher Leader Model Standards with a significant difference between schools with high and low fidelity implementation were in the areas of *teacher leaders using adult learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of colleagues*, *using data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning* and *providing constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice*.

The results of the t-test conducted between schools with high and low fidelity implementation indicated no significant difference between respondents regarding the *Professional Learning & Growth Leader* and the *New & Early Career Lead Mentor* roles. No significant differences were found in *teacher leaders collaborating to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals*, and *teacher leaders advocating for resources to support professional learning*.

In summary, a comparison between the results of the ANOVA and the t-tests indicated there were no significant differences among building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers in either high or low fidelity implementation schools regarding the role of the *Digital Innovation Leader*. Furthermore, quantitative data indicated greatest value in the role of the *Professional Learning & Growth Leader* and the *collaboration among teacher leaders, colleagues, and building administrators in planning team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time professional learning aligned to content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals*. 
Evaluation Question #3

Impact of participating in the M-DCPS TLA on teacher leaders’ preparedness in supporting teachers’ effectiveness. This mixed methods study includes the results of focus group interviews conducted to determine the impact that participating in the M-DCPS TLA had on teacher leaders’ preparedness in supporting the effectiveness of their colleagues. A total of 27 teacher leaders from the eight schools that participated in the perception survey were invited to participate in the focus group interviews. Seven focus group interviews were conducted at the selected schools and at the Center for Professional Learning. Schools 4 and 6 participated in the same focus group due to a scheduling conflict. The composition of the focus group interviews included two high schools, two middle schools, one K-8 center, and three elementary schools. Of the 27 teacher leaders who were invited to participate, 24 attended a focus group interview. The breakdown of teacher leader roles represented in the semi-structured focus group interviews is depicted in Table 16.
Table 16

*Focus Group Interview Teacher Leader Role Representation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Fidelity</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>TLA Roles Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>PLGL NECTSL DIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>PLGL NECTSL DIL ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>PLGL NECTSL DIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>PLGL NECTSL ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NECTSL DIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PLGL NECTSL DIL ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>PLGL DIL ICL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TLA = Teacher LEADership Academy; PLGL = Professional Learning & Growth Leader; NECTSL = New and Early Career Teacher Support Leader; DIL = Digital Innovation Leader; ICL = Instructional Coach Leader

To ensure consistency, six of the seven focus groups were facilitated by the same researcher with two of the other researchers serving as recorders and observers. At least one of the researchers was present at all seven focus groups. Participants were asked a series of questions about whether they felt better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the M-DCPS TLA. To ensure anonymity, schools were assigned a number and speakers wore a nametag with an assigned speaker.
Results of the qualitative data collected from the focus groups were coded in teams of three to ensure inter-rater reliability using \textit{a priori} codes aligned to teacher leader functions of Domain III, Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement, of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). During the first round of coding, we used In-Vivo coding to extract exact words and phrases derived from the focus groups and placed them into categories. We then used process coding to make inferences regarding which actions and ideas aligned best to the structured \textit{a priori} codes (Saldaña, 2013). The second round of coding consisted of pattern coding to look for commonalities, differences, and frequencies among the process codes to identify categories, determine salient themes, patterns of actions, and interrelationships resulting from the data.

\textbf{Focus group results.} Findings from the focus group interviews indicated that teacher leaders felt that the professional development they received through the M-DCPS TLA on the teacher leader functions aligned to Domain III, Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement, improved their capacity to lead professional learning and better prepared them to support the effectiveness of their colleagues by developing and delivering professional learning opportunities for all teachers at their schools. Table 17 represents the \textit{a priori} codes we used during in vivo and process coding.
### Sample *a priori* codes, *In-Vivo*, and Process Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A Priori Code</strong></th>
<th><strong>In-Vivo Excerpt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Process Code</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Learning</td>
<td>“One-size fits all doesn’t work; it’s not what everyone needs; sometimes what we need is what we need.”</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementing inquiry processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>“When they trust you, you don’t want to let them down.”</td>
<td>Supporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Team-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring/Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>“Teachers are wanting to talk to you after the PD and again, coming back to you and telling you how it worked or how they implemented it in their classroom.”</td>
<td>Improving teaching practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Impacting student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using a framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting walkthroughs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-embedded</td>
<td>“If we're going to be doing walkthroughs, the veteran teacher would come with the new teacher and they would sit and learn some of the best practices in what might work in their classrooms.”</td>
<td>Implementing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implement PLSTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walkthroughs/TDOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring/Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>“Where do we have the time to say, okay, let's look at these three new history teachers, or let's look at the ELL learners and let's devise a plan. It's like we get a lot of information and not enough time to walk out with a concrete product.”</td>
<td>Lack of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compensating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/District Improvement Goals</td>
<td>“PD has to be relevant to our school needs.”</td>
<td>Using content standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using PD standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Utilizing Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attending Synergy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustained Over Time</td>
<td>“Go with something concrete, a plan that we can bring back and that we can see it develop throughout the school year.”</td>
<td>Developing year-long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementing over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>“Technology integration always makes things a little more exciting.”</td>
<td>Using online resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using digital platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Data</td>
<td>“They completed a survey, and they told us their level of comfort. And then based on that, the PD aligned to what the teachers at the school were seeing that they needed more support on.”</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using school data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using student data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting action research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TL = Teacher Leader; PLST = Professional Learning Support Team; TDO = Teacher Driven Observations; PLC = Professional Learning Community; ELL = English Language Learners; PD = Professional Development
We referenced nine codes and applied them 2,091 times to teacher leader responses from the focus groups. Some excerpts were assigned more than one code. Adult Learning, Collaboration, and Resources were coded with the most frequency overall amongst all the codes referenced and among middle and high schools. See Table 18 for the distribution of a priori codes by school.
Table 18

Distribution of a priori Codes by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Level</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>CO</th>
<th>FB</th>
<th>JE</th>
<th>RE</th>
<th>IG</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>TE</th>
<th>UD</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/MS</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ES</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>205</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/MS</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &amp; 6/ES</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>316</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/K-8</td>
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<td>76</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/HS</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/HS</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count by Code</td>
<td>503</td>
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<td>204</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>122</td>
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<td>170</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>2091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% by Code</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. AL = Adult Learning, CO = Collaboration, FB = Feedback, JE = Job-embedded, RE = Resources, IG = School/District Improvement Goals, ST = Sustained over Time, TE = Technology, UD = Use of Data, ES = Elementary, MS = Middle School, HS = High School
Patterns among responses by elementary and secondary school level configurations, school tiers, M-DCPS TLA cohort, and high versus low fidelity implementation allowed us to identify salient themes teacher leaders felt had an impact on their level of preparedness in supporting teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the M-DCPS TLA. Salient themes from the responses of teacher leaders to the focus group interviews included *adult learning strategies to meet the diverse professional learning needs of colleagues, structures that promote collaborative professional learning experiences, and resources to support job-embedded professional learning*. In analyzing focus group data by Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools, we found that these themes still emerged. Cohort 1 teacher leader responses are more aligned with adult learning, while Cohort 2 teacher leader responses center more on collaboration.

**Theme one: Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding their ability to differentiate professional learning opportunities.** This theme relates to the *use of adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning*. Within theme one, 503 responses from teacher leaders participating in the focus group related to the use of adult learning strategies to plan and deliver differentiated professional learning experiences to colleagues. During focus group interviews, teacher leaders shared the different ways they planned professional learning activities for their colleagues and how they assessed their needs through surveys, observational data, student data, and the implementation of school and district initiatives to meet the diverse needs of teachers at their school. Terms that repeatedly came up were relevant, meeting needs, engaging, inquiry-based, and differentiated.
Theme one is further supported by the following excerpts from high school focus group participants, one high fidelity, one low fidelity of implementation. Excerpt one from School 8, Cohort 1 is:

You know, as a salesman, because we are essentially selling practices right. And they have to buy into it. You don't want to just force it down their throat. You want to wait for them to talk to you and be like, hey, you know, I was really interested in that technology strategy you were integrating into the classroom.

Excerpt two from School 10, Cohort 2 is: “So, engagement is extremely, I find that it’s extremely helpful. Those types of PDs are really the ones I feel are a lot more effective with teachers.”

**Theme two: Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding their ability to plan collaborative professional learning experiences.** This theme speaks to teacher leader’s ability to **collaborate with colleagues and building administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded.** A total of 462 responses from focus group participants related to collaboration. Teacher leaders as a whole said they were given the opportunity to be part of their school’s leadership team and work together with their colleagues on action research topics that were geared to their school. They spoke about being part of the Professional Learning Support Teams (PLST) and summer intensive professional learning institutes such as Synergy that gave them to opportunity to work as a team and plan their professional learning for the year. Teacher leaders expressed that at schools where they had a supportive administration, they were more inclined to collaborate. Terms that were most prevalent from respondents were team-based, support, trust, mentoring and coaching, and working together on a plan.
Theme two is further supported by the following excerpts from two middle school focus group participants, one high fidelity and one low fidelity of implementation:

Excerpt one from School 5, Cohort 2 is: “When you are all talking together, I think that is where all the like magic starts to happen. It made me a better teacher leader, more and more invested, gained confidence and that helped us to help others.” Excerpt two from School 2, Cohort 1 is:

We all get to go to professional training on becoming an effective teacher and helping them. This was best because I was able to find my voice, to be able to show them in a way as a teacher that we could learn and grow together.

Theme three: Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding lack of resources to support professional learning. This theme speaks to sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning. A total of 215 responses from focus group participants centered around the need for additional resources to plan and facilitate professional learning. Teacher leaders from all seven focus groups expressed that they needed additional resources to be able to provide meaningful professional learning opportunities for their colleagues. Teacher leaders felt they had insufficient time to fulfill all of their teacher leader duties, plan and deliver professional learning, and check in with colleagues, when they had their own classrooms and were accountable for their students’ achievement. Teacher leaders from elementary schools and the K-8 center felt that the role of teacher leader should be fully or partially released and that changes in administration made it difficult for them to receive the level of support they needed to fulfill their role. Terms that were most
prevail from respondents were lack of time, need for collaborative planning, additional compensation, and support from administration.

Theme three is further supported by the following excerpts from elementary school and K-8 center focus group participants. Excerpt one from School 3 is: “This position should not be filled by a classroom teacher. So, if it was filled with a person who was non-classroom, who, yes, they have other duties, I could be wrong, but they'd be more accessible.” Excerpt two from School 7 is:

I would have wanted that leadership would have seen the value of it in a larger scale. And even if it wouldn't have been the whole school, maybe a whole grade level, that would have meant that we could have shared the information with them because they could have seen how it would benefit them in their classroom and their students and the job that they do every day.

In analyzing the focus group responses by school level configuration, school, tier, and high versus low fidelity implementation, we discovered secondary themes related to providing feedback to colleagues, the use of data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning experiences, and the use of technology to support professional learning experiences.

School level configuration theme: Teacher leaders provide informal feedback to colleagues. This secondary theme speaks to teacher leaders providing constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice. A total of 204 responses from focus group participants centered around improving teaching and learning. When asked if they provide constructive feedback to colleagues, teacher leaders expressed that they do not have many opportunities to provide feedback through formal structures. Some
teacher leaders mentioned using the M-DCPS Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI) when doing walkthroughs with building administrators but that it was informal. They also expressed that they did not feel comfortable providing feedback since they did not have any formalized training, but that they did not mind offering a suggestion based on a strategy they may have tried in their classroom that worked for them. Terms that were most prevalent from respondents were using the framework and conducting walkthroughs. An excerpt from School 2, secondary school level configuration is:

Myself or the other members of our department will give a suggestion or say, this is what I have tried in the past and this has worked, or this didn't work that way.

So, we don't make each other feel bad about anything that's happening and everybody is free to just be candid about what is really happening.

An excerpt from School 4 (elementary school level configuration) is: “So, it's just giving each other feedback after a walkthrough and saying, you know what, maybe that was not the best strategy to use for the students to really master.”

**School tier theme: Teacher leaders use data to plan, develop, deliver, and evaluate professional learning.** In analyzing school tiers, we also found that teacher leaders’ responses support use of data as a secondary theme. This secondary theme speaks to working with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and learning. A total of 204 responses from focus group participants centered around using data to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional learning. Teacher leaders explained how they used school survey data, district needs assessment data, data from their school improvement plans, student achievement data, and walkthrough data from building administrators to plan and develop
professional learning experiences. When asked if they use data to evaluate professional learning, teacher leaders expressed that they survey participants after professional development activities, but that they do not evaluate whether the professional development was implemented in the classroom due to time limitations. They also mentioned the course evaluations completed through My Learning Plan, the district’s online professional development management system, and that they did not have the time to thoroughly review and reflect on this data to make changes to the professional development offerings at their school. Terms that were most prevalent from respondents were knowing your school and student data, conducting and analyzing needs assessments, and conducting action research. Excerpt one from School 2, a Tier 3 school is: “We received the survey and we asked them to give us input on anything about the survey, how they felt about the program.” Excerpt two from School 10, a Tier 2 school is: “They completed a survey, and they told us their level of comfort. And then based on that, the [professional development] was aligned to what the teachers at the school were seeing that they needed more support in.”

**Level of fidelity theme: Teacher leaders’ ability to use technology to support professional learning experiences.** This secondary theme speaks to using a range of digital innovation tools to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning. A total of 170 responses from focus group participants centered around technology used during professional learning sessions and in the classroom. When asked if they use technology to collaborate, plan and deliver professional learning experiences to colleagues, teacher leaders discussed digital resources the district is using to provide distance learning to students. Six of the teacher leaders that participated in the focus
group served in the role of Digital Innovation Leader. They all expressed how they provided professional development to teachers regarding technology integration in the classroom. They mentioned that building administrators would conduct walkthroughs to see if teachers were using technology with their students. Regarding the use of technology for collaboration and differentiated professional learning, teacher leaders mentioned conducting a book study and using the accompanying videos, using email and shared drives to share practices, incorporating Microsoft tools and applications such as Microsoft Teams, and viewing webinars and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) professional development In Focus vignettes. Excerpt one from School 3, with high fidelity:

We plumbed into the depths of the book, *Teach like a Champion*. So we read selected portions of the book each period of time, and then we would all come together, dive into the corresponding videos and so we used promethean technology and married those videos to the book, um, to kind of technologically dive into it.

Table 19 provides a detailed explanation of the secondary themes that emerged by school level configuration, school tier, and level of fidelity. We also found that teacher leaders’ ability to differentiate professional learning opportunities and their ability to plan collaborative professional learning experiences still emerged as primary themes among school level configuration, school tier, and level of fidelity. Patterns among school level configuration indicated that teacher leader responses from elementary schools focus on terms related to collaboration among colleagues, while secondary school teacher leaders’ responses refer to adult learning strategies. Teacher leaders from Tier 2 schools provided
more responses centered around adult learning when compared to Tier 1 and Tier 3 schools; however, teacher leaders from Tier 3 schools felt they had more opportunities for collaborative professional learning. When analyzing focus group responses of teacher leaders by level of fidelity, we found that teacher leaders from schools with high fidelity had more responses that support collaboration, while those with low fidelity referenced adult learning strategies.
Table 19

*Prevailing Themes from Focus Group Interviews by School Level Configuration, Tier, and Level of Fidelity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>AL Count</th>
<th>AL %</th>
<th>CO Count</th>
<th>CO %</th>
<th>FB Count</th>
<th>FB %</th>
<th>AL Count</th>
<th>AL %</th>
<th>CO Count</th>
<th>CO %</th>
<th>UD Count</th>
<th>UD %</th>
<th>Fidelity</th>
<th>AL Count</th>
<th>CO Count</th>
<th>TE Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES K-5</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS HS</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. AL = Adult Learning, CO = Collaboration, FB = Feedback, TE = Technology, UD = Use of Data, ES = Elementary, MS = Middle School, HS = High School*
Summary

Analysis of the qualitative data derived from the focus groups indicated that teacher leaders feel their participation in the M-DCPS TLA better prepared them to support the effectiveness of their colleagues. Frequency data collected from focus group responses served to identify three primary themes that included teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding their ability to differentiate professional learning and plan collaborative professional learning experiences, and the lack of resources to support professional learning. Excerpts from the teacher leader focus groups further supported these findings. Qualitative findings found when analyzing focus group responses on the theme of teacher leaders’ ability to plan collaborative professional learning experiences, indicated that teacher leaders felt they had the ability to collaborate with colleagues and building administrators to plan team-based, supportive, job-embedded professional learning. Focus group responses surrounding the perceived lack of resources to support professional learning, indicated a need for resources such as preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning.

In analyzing focus group responses by school level configurations, school tiers, and level of fidelity we identified three secondary themes. School level configuration patterns revealed that teacher leaders from secondary schools felt they were prepared to deliver feedback to colleagues related to teaching and learning. Teacher leaders expressed they felt prepared to provide informal feedback to colleagues, although they had not received training specific to this function and were not provided the structures to provide formal feedback at the school site. This finding is supported by terms teacher leaders
used during the focus group interviews such as using the framework, conducting walkthroughs, improving teaching practices and impacting student learning.

Focus group data by school tier showed that teacher leaders perceived they used data to plan, develop, deliver, and evaluate professional learning. Excerpts from teacher leaders show evidence that they work with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to planning and delivery of professional learning, but not on its effect on teaching and learning due to insufficient time and the demands of being in the classroom with accountability for the performance of their students. Teacher leaders used terms such as knowing their school and student data, conducting and analyzing needs assessments, and conducting action research.

Responses by level of fidelity reveal that teacher leaders perceive they had the ability to use technology to support professional learning experiences for their colleagues. Teacher leaders discussed the ways they assist their colleagues with integrating digital tools in the classroom to enhance and monitor student learning as well as using applications that promote collaboration and personalized learning. This finding is supported by terms teacher leaders used during the focus group interviews such as ASCD professional development InFocus, webinars, email, shared drives, Edmodo, Skype, Microsoft Tools, Duolingo, and Google Classroom.

Qualitative findings for this study indicate that teacher leaders as a whole felt better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness through the use of adult learning strategies to differentiate the learning needs of colleagues and facilitation of collaborative professional learning experiences as a result of their participation in the M-DCPS TLA.
Evaluation Question #4

Impact of the M-DCPS TLA on teacher leaders’ decision to remain as classroom teachers. Question four followed the same procedures and with the same participants as question three in this study. During focus group interviews, teacher leaders were asked, “Has participating in the Teacher LEADership Academy impacted your decision to remain in the classroom?” To ensure continuity, the facilitator remained consistent throughout the focus group interviews. We followed Saldaña’s (2013) definition of coding as defined in Chapter 3, as an interpretive act between data collection and data analysis.

When coding the first round for question four, we used In-Vivo coding to extract exact words and phrases derived from the focus groups, placed them into categories, and then used process coding to make inferences regarding which actions and ideas aligned best to the structured a priori codes (Saldaña, 2013). The second round of coding consisted of us utilizing pattern coding to look for commonalities, differences, and frequencies among the process codes to identify categories and determine salient themes, and patterns of actions. This process allowed us to make connections between teacher leaders’ responses and the possible reasons why they would remain in the classroom.

Focus group results. Focus group responses indicated that teacher leaders did not feel participation in the M-DCPS TLA impacted their decision to remain in the classroom. Table 20 includes the a priori codes, In-Vivo, and process codes.
Table 20

**Sample a priori, In-Vivo, and Process Coding Regarding TL Functions and Decisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A Priori Code</strong></th>
<th><strong>In-Vivo Excerpt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Process Codes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for Professional Resources</td>
<td>“I don’t think its financial. At least in our case it’s not financial. It’s more like the actual human body that sometimes we don’t have so it becomes difficult when you’re missing personnel that would allow you to do these things.”</td>
<td>Use of financial incentives&lt;br&gt;Use of compensation&lt;br&gt;Use of release time&lt;br&gt;Use of human resources/capital&lt;br&gt;Lack of time&lt;br&gt;Utilize common planning&lt;br&gt;Solicit outside experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>“It just solidifies more of what I already feel I want to do every day with the kids and do it with my colleagues, so I don’t want to say it validates but it definitely does provide more solid understanding.”</td>
<td>Meets the needs of teachers&lt;br&gt;Meets the needs of all students&lt;br&gt;Being held accountable&lt;br&gt;Maximize instructional time&lt;br&gt;Explore administrative role&lt;br&gt;Remain in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Professional Learning Community (PLC)</td>
<td>“I think we have a team together; you are coming in as a team, you’re leaving as a team, you’re reinforcing everything as a team versus as a single person.”</td>
<td>Working on school improvement goal&lt;br&gt;Implement PLCs&lt;br&gt;Observe classroom practice&lt;br&gt;Observe teacher practice&lt;br&gt;Utilize common planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share Information with Colleagues</td>
<td>“Communicating via email or phone calls with these advisors and that kind of down to earth relationship developed where you are just trying to solve problems together this is a formalized way of doing it but really just rolling up the sleeves and solving problems together. It was nice.”</td>
<td>Identify district trends, policies, initiatives&lt;br&gt;Identify state policies, statutes&lt;br&gt;Identify national policies, statutes&lt;br&gt;Share research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Research</td>
<td>“The research underlying a certain practice helps us embrace the rationale and really get them to buy in.”</td>
<td>Uses research&lt;br&gt;Share research&lt;br&gt;Share best practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. TL = Teacher Leader*

We referenced five codes and applied them 806 times to teacher leader responses from the focus groups. Some excerpts were assigned to more than one code: Developing
a Professional Learning Community, Advocating for Teaching and Learning, and Sharing Information with Colleagues were coded with the most frequency across all schools. See Table 21 for the distribution of *a priori* codes by school.

Table 21

*Distribution of *a priori* Codes by School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Level</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>ATL</th>
<th>DPLC</th>
<th>SIC</th>
<th>UR</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/MS</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ES</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/MS</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &amp; 6/ES</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/K-8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/HS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/HS</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Count by Code</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percent by Code</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* APR = Advocate for Professional Resources; ATL = Advocate for Teaching and Learning; DPLC = Develop a Professional Learning Community; SIC = Share Information with Colleagues; UR = Uses Research, ES = Elementary, MS = Middle School, HS = High School

In reviewing the frequency counts of teacher leader responses and excerpts regarding their perceptions on the impact participating in the academy had on their decision to remain as classroom teachers, we were able to identify three salient themes that aligned to the *a priori* codes. Salient themes from the responses of teacher leaders captured during focus group interviews included teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding
supportive social norms and working conditions, system-wide orientation toward inquiry and risk-taking, and structures that enable collaboration.

**Theme one: Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding supportive social norms and working conditions.** This theme aligns with a priori code of Developing a Professional Learning Community. This theme relates to the social norms and working conditions that need to be present for teacher leaders to lead professional learning of colleagues, establish positive relationships centered on improving practice, and increased collaboration. We applied 191 responses from teacher leaders participating in the focus group interviews to this code. Teacher leaders indicated the importance of professional learning communities to improve relationships among stakeholders. During focus group interviews, teacher leaders spoke about seeing better relationships between teachers and teachers and students. They expressed they felt valued and that staff identified them as leaders in their school. They also talked about their experience in teacher driven observations and how they have observed their colleagues being more receptive to receiving and delivering professional development because there was trust and it was not a situation where someone was trying to “get them.” Terms that repeatedly came up were sharing, learning more, professional learning communities, leader in my school, trust, and relationships.

Evidence from focus group participant responses that support this theme excerpt one form School 4 and School 6: “So, teachers will stay because they built this relationship and they work well together. So not only will you see the data go up, but you’ll also see the teachers remain at that same school.” Another teacher shared, “You
would definitely see teacher retention at the school site. Teachers will stay because they built this relationship and they work well together.”

Teacher leaders shared that when they sat in their teams to discuss topics, they were able to see their group come together with strategies and a game plan. They also shared that they appreciated being part of TDO’s because they were able to observe their colleagues and come back and have a conversation. We heard teacher leaders share that they are meeting after school hours to attend lectures or participate in team building activities. They shared that they have a sense of comradery with their colleagues. Teacher leaders also said that they want to learn from colleagues who are doing the work and also work with their colleagues whether it is unwrapping benchmarks or learning about new technology. One teacher leader shared that she tries to truly relate to her teachers and makes sure she knows her craft. She stated that it is important that she comes across as someone who knows what she is talking about.

**Theme two: Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding system-wide orientation toward inquiry and risk-taking learning.** This theme aligns with a priori code Advocating for Teaching and Learning. This theme relates to teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding the need for school and district environments that encourage inquiry and risk taking for both teachers and students. Within theme two, 178 responses from teacher leaders participating in the focus groups indicated the importance of meeting the professional learning needs of their teachers so they can better meet the needs of their students through problem solving and action research projects centered on student improvement goals. During focus group interviews, teacher leaders shared that they enjoyed contributing to helping someone else in the profession, that it solidified
more of what they already did with a little more solid understanding, and that what they are doing is meaningful and goes beyond the classroom. Terms that repeatedly came up were empowered, impact, and relevant. Evidence from focus group participant responses that support this theme include the following excerpts from School 5: “It made me consider that I might be really good at this,” and “For me, I think it propels me to love what I do even more. I love the classroom right now.”

One teacher leader shared that to her advocating for teaching and learning is when you allow others to come to the front and you step back. We heard teacher leaders say that teachers are enthusiastic about teaching, that their colleagues are willing to try new things and that they are innovative. Other teacher leaders shared that when you walk into their schools it looks like a place where people are learning, not just where they are teaching. Teacher leaders share that they enjoyed giving their colleagues something fresh, new and hands on. Finally, we heard teacher leaders say that attending the various professional development sessions helped them to build on their own knowledge of how to be a better teacher and that they were able to tailor professional development to meet the needs of their school.

**Theme three: Teacher leaders’ perceptions on the structures that enable collaboration.** This theme aligns with a priori code of Sharing Information with Colleagues. This theme relates to teacher leaders sharing best practices, data and information on district trends, local, state, and federal educational policies. Within theme three, 178 responses from teacher leaders participating in the focus group indicated the importance of being able to collaborate with their colleagues and building administrators to improve teaching and learning. Teacher leaders expressed that they enjoyed
collaborating with their colleagues and administrators but would have preferred if their administrators had been involved in the summer professional development in order to ensure that they could implement what they learned. Some teacher leaders expressed that the changes in administration made it challenging for collaboration to continue to occur as they may not be recognized as part of the new leadership team. Terms that repeatedly came up were collaborating, coming together as a team, and being accountable together for an end-product. Excerpt one from School 4 and School 6 is:

We had to work collaboratively together and then come up with something we agreed with to create a final product so it also made us accountable long-term, versus when you go to a [professional development], you go that one day, you do your evaluation and you keep moving on with life. But this has allowed us to create a project that we can be proud of that meets the needs of our school.

Excerpt two from School 10 is: “We just share. We communicate. It's a relationship and it's been having that common planning to me has been a huge, huge, help.”

Teacher leaders shared that the structures they have at their schools for collaboration to occur is in the form of face-to-face meetings, social media, Facebook, Instagram, Microsoft Teams, shared drives, and in professional learning communities and common planning. Teacher leaders expressed that they could share the wealth and share the knowledge with others. They found it beneficial to go to the sessions and bring back what they have learned and share it with their colleagues to find better and innovative ways to teach the lessons. We heard from teacher leaders that they found value in having the opportunity to sit with their administrators and pitch their ideas. Finally, teacher leaders at one of the middle schools expressed that participating in the academy and
collaborating with their staff on their action research project made their school more cohesive and that it may have had an impact on improving their culture and climate where everyone would share the love for continued professional learning that they have.

**Summary**

Qualitative data derived from the focus group interviews did not indicate that teacher leaders perceived participation in the M-DCPS TLA influenced their decision to remain as classroom teachers. When asked, teacher leaders expressed that they were “lifers” and participation simply validated what they were already doing. They said participation in the academy made them better teachers and helped them better fulfill their role as leaders in their school. Some teacher leaders expressed that they had the opportunity to leave the classroom and enjoyed what they were doing when helping their colleagues. Teacher leaders also shared that they were recognized as leaders in their schools. We identified three prevailing themes through the focus group interviews that indicated that supportive social norms and working conditions, system-wide orientation towards inquiry and risk-taking, and structures that enable collaboration are conditions necessary for them to fulfill their role as teacher leaders in their school. Teacher leaders expressed that participation in the M-DCPS TLA enabled them to experience these conditions.

Qualitative findings for this study do not indicate that participation in the M-DCPS TLA would impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers, nor do the findings suggest that the TLA has no effect on teacher leaders’ retention. However, findings indicated that when teacher leaders are empowered to lead and improve their practice and the practice of others, they are more satisfied in their role.
Teacher leaders perceived that establishing supportive social norms and working conditions, promoting inquiry and risk-taking environments, and experiencing structures that enable authentic collaboration, more satisfied in their role and more likely to remain as teacher leaders in their schools.
CHAPTER 5
RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary objective of this study was to explore the Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ (M-DCPS) human capital investment approach in the Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) and its effect in strengthening the capacity of teacher leaders to lead professional learning and retain teacher leaders that lead from the classroom. Many studies have examined the relationship of human capital investments in education without addressing fidelity of implementation. Levels of fidelity were determined by the number of indicators evidenced for each of the desired outcomes. This method of research allows for assumptions to be made regarding program effectiveness without examining what actually occurred. This study serves to connect the implementation gap. The process utilized in this study provides M-DCPS a systematic way of assessing program implementation and offers opportunities for discourse regarding improvement and enhancement of current practices.

Discussion of Findings

This section aligns the findings from the research to the literature review. The participants’ experiences with the implementation of the M-DCPS TLA and their resulting perspectives intersected with much of the information found during the literature review that was conducted at the beginning of this study.

Evaluation Question 1. To what degree of fidelity are the following key components of the M-DCPS TLA implemented across participating schools?
1a. Developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning.

1b. Serving as a leader of professional learning.

1c. Fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.

1d. Creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

The fidelity of implementation data for this study were collected utilizing an Innovation Configuration Map (IC Map). In this case, fidelity referred specifically to the implementation of the M-DCPS TLA key components: developing teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning, serving as a leader of professional learning, fostering shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles, creating multiple career pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools. Of the 165 total respondents from the four schools with the highest fidelity of implementation, 95% responded that the key components of the M-DCPS TLA are implemented with fidelity at their schools. Of the 104 total respondents from the four schools with the lowest fidelity of implementation, 87.5% responded that the key components of the M-DCPS TLA are implemented with fidelity.

In analyzing the results of the IC Map by cohort, results indicated that Cohort 2 schools were identified as having a higher fidelity than Cohort 1 schools (see Table 10 in Chapter 4). One possibility for this result could be that many lessons were learned during the implementation of Cohort 1 that might have positively impacted Cohort 2.

When looking for patterns among grade level configurations, the data shows that two of the three elementary schools were identified has having low fidelity of implementation. Fidelity of implementation results for this group can be found in Table
12 in Chapter 4. A possible reason for the lack of fidelity to the key components of the M-DCPS TLA in the elementary schools is the lack of early release days in elementary schools for professional learning. Structural conditions surrounding new initiatives, such as time can impact the implementation of new initiatives (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005).

When comparing the level of implementation of each of the eight schools participating in the study according to the school tier at the time of their participation in the M-DCPS TLA, we found all Tier 3 schools were identified as having low fidelity of implementation. A potential explanation for these results may be the overlapping support provided to Tier 3 schools. According to Carter and Pesko (2008), one aspect that affects fidelity of implementation is the extent to which a new initiative complements existing practices. New initiatives that compete for teachers’ limited time or the expectation that they would exceed their roles and responsibilities negatively influence teachers’ decisions to accept and adhere to a new initiative (Carter & Pesko, 2008).

From the results of this study, the findings evidenced that assessing fidelity of implementation is an essential component in making programmatic changes and enhancing current practices. In this study, fidelity of implementation is determined by measuring the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the level of implementation of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA at their schools. Systematically identifying and measuring the fidelity of implementation of key academy components will help us understand the potential importance of these aspects to producing the outcomes the academy aims to foster. Low response rates might
have negatively impacted this study because they limited the pool from which we could select schools with low fidelity of implementation.

**Evaluation Question 2.** What are the perceptions of building administrators (principals and assistant principals), teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the value of the TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning?

Quantitative data were collected through a perception survey administered to building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers from eight schools with either high fidelity or low fidelity implementation on key components of the M-DCPS TLA identified on the IC Map. Perception survey questions collected quantitative data regarding the value of the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning. Questions 1-4 collected quantitative data of the M-DCPS TLA roles while Questions 5-9 assessed teacher leaders’ implementation of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Findings related to the value of the M-DCPS TLA and its effect on improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning are further supported by the literature on professional development being job-embedded, collaborative, sustained over time, classroom-focused, and data driven (ESSA, 2015) and the four factors, identified by Eraut (2004), needed to support adult learning: (a) working in teams, (b) working collaboratively, (c) undertaking challenging tasks, and (d) working with stakeholders (p. 266).

To determine the value of the M-DCPS TLA, we used frequency counts, descriptive statistics, One-Way ANOVA, and t-tests. The results from the analysis identified the two M-DCPS TLA areas respondents found the most value in were in the
role of the Professional Learning & Growth Leader \((M=3.37)\) and the area of teacher leaders collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals \((M=3.46)\). This finding is supported by the literature on the value of professional development being job-embedded, collaborative, sustained over time, classroom-focused, and data driven (ESSA, 2015).

ANOVA results found a significant difference in the perceptions among respondents regarding these two areas. As part of the M-DCPS TLA, teacher leaders from the four roles participate in foundational and role specific professional learning over the summer. They serve on the Professional Learning Support Team (PLSTs) at their schools, attend two annual professional development sessions, participate in monthly webinars, and receive ongoing support from the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation. The Professional Learning and Growth Leader role, unlike the other three teacher leader roles, has a historical background within the district and is directly linked to professional learning. This role emerged in the district over a decade ago and has evolved as professional learning has shifted from a centralized function to school based professional learning. Initially this role was called the Professional Development Liaison. What started as a mechanical function where Professional Development Liaisons were solely responsible for proposing and closing out courses has evolved into these leaders identifying the needs of their colleagues, planning and delivering professional learning that is relevant and job-embedded, providing peer-to-peer learning and collaboration to encourage professional learning communities. Dufour and Dufour (2013) found that teachers need learning opportunities that are embedded within their
practice to improve instruction, while Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) found that transforming schools into professional learning communities is a main objective of teacher leadership.

The analysis also resulted in the identification of two M-DCPS TLA areas respondents found least valuable. Teacher leaders advocate for resources to support professional learning ($M=3.22$) and teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice ($M=3.23$). Both areas are related to the Teacher Leader Model Standards which are utilized to develop curriculum to support teacher leaders’ professional growth. The need for resources is supported by Goodwin (2011) who emphasizes that not creating enough release time counteracts the benefits of teacher leadership. Gordon et al. (2014) identify leading reflective inquiry, providing constructive feedback, as a top training need for teacher leaders.

ANOVA results found a significant difference in the perceptions among respondents regarding these areas while the results of the t-test conducted found there is no significant difference between respondents among schools with high and low fidelity implementation. The lower perception indicated in these findings is likely caused by the overwhelming demands of the teaching profession and the lack of resources such as preparation, time, and support available to teachers. Often building administrators capitalize on specific staff members who become their go-to people assigning them additional tasks. This practice is typically caused by the limited resources building administrators experience as it relates to offering staff release time to provide support. Teachers express dissatisfaction with additional demands expected of them and a
displeasure when they are voluntold to partake in additional tasks that are not linked directly to their roles and responsibilities as teachers.

From the results of this study, the findings evidenced that the role of the *Professional Learning and Growth Leader* and their ability to *collaborate to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive and job-embedded aligned with content standards and school/district improvement goals* was most valued among respondents. Killion et al. (2016) identified some attributes of quality teacher leaders as those who collaborate to support the goals of the school and the mission and vision of school districts, those who nurture the professional growth of peers and engage in continuous reflective practice and professional learning. These are attributes found in the role and area most valued by building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers. Results also indicated that respondents found least value in the area of *teacher leaders advocate for resources to support professional learning* and in the area of *teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice*. Elmore (2004) identified a lack of opportunity for teachers to participate in continuous and significant learning about their practice, while York-Barr and Duke (2004) found a need for resources when it comes to teacher leadership. The review of the literature by Elmore (2004) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) support the participants’ perception regarding *teacher leaders advocating for resources: sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning* as being least valuable. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found that establishing and sustaining feedback practices can provide growth and support colleagues in meaning improvement. Although teacher leaders are tasked with providing constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice
and the research indicates a need for this, participants found this to be least valuable. This indicates that teacher leaders are advocating for resources and providing feedback less than the other areas found in the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Findings related to insufficient resources and feedback processes may be interrelated. If teacher leaders have time constraints and are restricted from release time, the expectation to provide feedback may be unreasonable.

**Evaluation Question 3.** To what degree do teacher leaders feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of participating in the TLA?

Qualitative findings regarding the degree to which teacher leaders feel better prepared to support the effectiveness of their colleagues as a result of participating in the M-DCPS TLA were collected through focus group interviews of teacher leaders from eight schools with either high or low fidelity implementation on key components of the M-DCPS TLA identified on the IC Map. Focus group questions aimed at collecting qualitative data regarding the impact that participating in the M-DCPS TLA had on teacher leaders’ preparedness in supporting teachers’ effectiveness. To determine the impact, we used nine *a priori* codes aligned to Domain III, Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement, of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Responses to the focus group interviews were coded In-Vivo using exact words and phrases used by teacher leaders, placed into categories, and then process coded to make inferences regarding which actions and ideas aligned best to the structured *a priori* codes (Saldaña, 2013). The distribution of codes and the in-depth analysis of the excerpts by school enabled us to identify three prevailing themes regarding teacher leaders’ perceptions on their ability to differentiate professional
learning opportunities, their ability to plan collaborative professional learning experiences, and lack of resources to support professional learning.

Teacher leaders as a whole felt they were able to provide differentiated professional learning based on needs assessments and school/district initiatives or programs. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identified several factors that influence a teacher’s readiness to take on teacher leadership roles and responsibilities among which is an interest in adult development. Teacher leaders expressed that they found value in collaborating with colleagues and their administrators and they learned through the academy how to use tools and protocols during the time they have for collaboration but that the amount of time is often insufficient. Gordon et al. (2014) recommend the coordination of skills to facilitate the organizing of people, group processes, training, and coaching as training needs for teacher leaders. A case study by Shillingstad et al. (2015), supports the themes by pointing to the need to develop teacher leader skills in the areas of relationship-building and adult learning. The curriculum the teacher leaders received during their participation in the M-DCPS TLA addressed the teacher leader functions of Domain III, Professional for Continuous Improvement that focused on the use of adult learning strategies to identify, promote, and facilitate varied professional learning experiences that meet the needs of diverse learners and their ability to collaborate with colleagues and building administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, supportive, and job-embedded. These findings support ESSA’s (2015) definition of effective professional learning as one that is job-embedded and collaborative.

Teacher leaders emphasized that to successfully fulfill their role as a teacher leader, they needed more time, coverage for classes, common planning, additional
support from administration, and more training on how to plan different professional learning sessions and technology tools for teachers to collaborate and learn online. York-Barr and Duke (2004), state that “teacher leadership requires marshalling resources throughout the organization” (p. 263). In this light, teacher leaders are responsible for leading professional learning, supporting teacher effectiveness, and leveraging resources in support of teaching and learning. Teacher leader responses indicated they did not feel they had sufficient preparation, time, and support to optimize the professional learning of their colleagues.

In analyzing the data from focus group interviews by M-DCPS TLA cohorts, school level configuration, school tiers, and high versus low fidelity of implementation we discovered additional findings that included three secondary themes related to teacher leader perceptions on providing informal feedback, using data to plan, develop, deliver, and evaluate professional learning, and their ability to use technology to support professional learning experiences. Harrison and Killion (2007) define data coach as 1 of 10 formalized roles for teacher leaders and Gordon et al. (2014) identify use of technology as one of top 10 training needs for teacher leaders. Additional training needs identified by Gordon et al. (2014) include knowledge of curriculum and instructional innovations, mentoring, technology, and leading reflective inquiry.

These findings were unanticipated as we believed they would have surfaced as primary themes due to the district’s emphasis on digital innovation and data driven organizations.

Evaluation Question 4. To what degree does participation in the TLA impact teacher leaders’ decisions to remain as classroom teachers?
Across the 24 teacher leaders who participated in the semi-structured focus groups, regardless of school level configuration, school tier level, cohort year, and level of fidelity of implementation, participant responses do not indicate that participation in the M-DCPS TLA impacted their decision to remain as classroom teachers. Garcia and Weiss (2019), state that 79.7% of teachers with more than five years of experience leave the profession as compared to 20.3% of teachers with less than five years’ experience. Providing teachers with career lattice opportunities such as those afforded through the M-DCPS TLA is a human capital investment. Myung et al. (2013) state that a significant component of a human capital approach to education is the development of a stronger, richer teacher workforce. When building administrators identify, encourage and support teachers in teacher leadership roles, they provide the catalyst for teachers to examine and challenge their own practices (Meyers et al., 2017).

To determine the impact the M-DCPS TLA had on teacher leaders’ decision to remain in the classroom, we used five a priori codes aligned to Domain VII, Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession, of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). We used the same methodology to code focus group responses for questions three and four. After applying the codes to participant responses, we were able to identify three salient themes: (1) Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding supportive social norms and working conditions; (2) teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding system-wide orientation toward inquiry and risk-taking learning; and (3) teacher leaders’ perceptions on the structures that enable collaboration. Wurtzel and Curtis (2008), research states school districts should have a systemic method to developing human capital in K-12 education with systems in place that identify and
prioritize strategies, provide support structures, and engage outside community expert partners. This is the approach M-DCPS used when designing the structure and support systems of the academy. Teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA have role specific functions. This structure provides a method of distributive leadership, where teacher leaders are responsible for leading professional learning, supporting teachers’ effectiveness, and leveraging resources in support of teaching and learning (Helterbran, 2010; Nappi, 2014). Excerpts coded to theme one Developing a Professional Learning Community align to the role of the Professional Learning and Growth Leader. Nearly all (95%) building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers either strongly agree/agree that teacher leaders coordinate professional learning opportunities offered to all teachers. According to Lieberman and Miller (2008) professional learning communities occur when groups of teachers regularly meet to collaborate and learn from each other with the purpose of improving their own practice. Furthermore, the role of teacher leaders in professional learning is to promote continuous professional growth that elevate their practice and that of their colleagues.

Themes two and three were identified by 89% of excerpts coded to Advocating for Teaching and Learning and Shares Information with Colleagues. This supports the roles of the Professional Learning and Growth Leader, New and Early Career Teacher Support Leader, Digital Innovation Leader, and Instructional Coach/Content Expert. This finding is supported by a case study by Shillingstad et al. (2015), on the leadership development of mentor teachers. This case study states the need for developing skills in the areas of relationship-building, knowledge of adult learning, and the need for ongoing, sustained support models. Teacher leaders in each of the four roles of M-DCPS TLA
receive foundational support in the area of adult learning and collaboration as well as in their role specific professional learning.

Although the results of this study did not identify a credible relationship between the M-DCPS TLA and the retention of effective teachers in the classroom, teacher leader responses to the focus group interviews indicated that participation in the academy validated the commitment they had made to the classroom prior to participating in the academy. Quantitative and qualitative findings are supported by York-Barr and Duke (2004) who state that recognizing teacher leader expertise and facilitating opportunities for them to be change agents can support retention efforts. Excerpts from teacher leader responses to the focus group interview emphasize that they are “lifers” and participation in the academy validated their decision to remain in the classroom. These findings further support the notion that when teacher leaders are developed with foundational and role specific skillsets such as those of the Professional Learning and Growth Leader and afforded the opportunity to serve in formal teacher leader roles such as those represented on the M-DCPS TLA, they are more likely to remain as classroom teachers.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

This research study offers information to the educational community on the M-DCPS TLA on the fidelity of implementation of key components that are implemented across participating schools. Results of this study can also serve to expand the research on the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders and teachers on components of the teacher leadership academy they find most valuable, teacher leader perceptions regarding their level of preparedness in supporting teachers’ effectiveness as a result of the academy, and the influence of the M-DCPS TLA on teacher leaders decision to
remain as classroom teachers. Table 22 aligns the findings with their related recommendations.

Table 22

Summary of Finding and Related Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quantitative results from the IC Map indicated that Cohort Two schools implemented the key components of the M-DCPS TLA with high fidelity.</td>
<td>Survey new cohort participants to make programmatic decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Quantitative results from the IC Map indicated that 50% of the elementary schools (Cohort 1) implemented the key components of the M-DCPS TLA with low fidelity of implementation.</td>
<td>Collaborate with schools with high fidelity of implementation to identify best practices that could be replicated at schools with low fidelity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Quantitative results from the IC Map indicated that 50% of the Tier 3 schools (Cohort 1) implemented the key components of the academy with low fidelity.</td>
<td>Utilize the cross-bureau monthly Professional Development Alignment Committee to align overlapping professional development support structures for Tier 3 schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Findings from quantitative data collected from respondents on the perception survey found the highest value in the Professional Learning and Growth Leader role.</td>
<td>Identify best practices from the professional development provided to the Professional Learning and Growth Leader to incorporate into the professional learning provided to the other roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Findings from quantitative data collected from respondents on the perception survey found the highest value for teacher leaders collaborating with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td>Incorporating professional learning for principals on the role of the leader in creating shared leadership conditions at their schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Findings from quantitative data collected from the respondents on the perception survey found the least value for teacher leaders advocating for preparation, time, and support to optimize the professional learning of their colleagues.</td>
<td>Expand the Foundational Elements of Teacher Leadership course to include advocacy as a fundamental teacher leadership skillset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>Findings from quantitative data collected from the respondents on the perception survey found the least value for providing constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen practice.</td>
<td>Redefine the role of the Instructional Coach/Content Expert to focus on Teacher Driven Observations (TDOs). Incorporate the feedback process in TDOs.</td>
</tr>
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(continued)
Results
3. Qualitative results indicated that teacher leaders as a whole felt better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness by differentiated professional learning experiences and in their ability to plan collaborative professional learning experiences as a result of their participation in the M-DCPS TLA.

Recommendations
Continue to provide professional development opportunities aligned to the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Develop an intensive professional development session focused on diverse learning designs that can be used to plan professional learning at school sites. Include tools to facilitate collaboration for school-based professional learning through the Professional Learning Support Teams (PLSTs).

3a. Findings derived from the focus group interviews indicated that teacher leaders do not feel they have sufficient preparation, time, and support to optimize the professional learning of their colleagues.

Recommendations
Collaborate with different departments across bureaus to look for funding sources/grants that support partial release of teacher leaders, substitute funding, supplements, and common planning. Explore the feasibility of returning early release days for secondary schools and structuring early release days in elementary schools for professional learning. Provide substitute funding for teacher leaders and teachers in the M-DCPS TLA to participate in TDOs that incorporate the feedback process.

3b. Interpretation of findings from quantitative and qualitative data indicate show a significant difference among schools with high and low fidelity for providing constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen practice.

Recommendations
Add an internal district credential for teacher leaders. Credential teacher leaders at the state level. Explore the feasibility of providing a stipend to teacher leaders who have been credentialed.

4. Results demonstrate that the M-DCPS TLA did not have an impact on teacher leader decisions to remain in the classroom.

Recommendations
Add an internal district credential for teacher leaders. Credential teacher leaders at the state level. Explore the feasibility of providing a stipend to teacher leaders who have been credentialed.

Note. IC = Innovation Configuration, M-DCPS = Miami-Dade County Public Schools, TLA = Teacher LEADership Academy, PLST = Professional Learning Support Team, TDO = Teacher Driven Observation
Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers' perceptions of the fidelity of implementation of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA. Quantitative findings related to the fidelity of implementation of the M-DCPS TLA indicated a higher fidelity of implementation in Cohort 2 schools. The analysis by cohort illustrates that programmatic adjustments made as a result of lessons learned from the first year of implementation may have had an influence on the fidelity of implementation demonstrated by Cohort 2 schools. Analysis of the IC Map by school level configuration and school tier show that 50% of elementary schools and Tier 3 schools implemented the key components with low fidelity. One of the contributing factors may be that they were Cohort 1 schools. A second contributing factor affecting low fidelity implementation in the elementary schools may be the lack of a structured, designated time for professional learning. An additional contributing factor for low fidelity of implementation for Tier 3 schools may be the overlapping support provided from various district offices. Additional findings related to low response rates indicate a relationship between the average staff size and response rates. As the size of school staff increased, response rates decreased. This may be attributed to the number of teacher leaders participating in the academy per school. With only four teacher leaders, schools with large numbers of teachers may not have received sufficient support due to time constraints. The Office of Professional Development and Evaluation may want to consider increasing the number of teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA for schools with a staff above 50 or supplementing the support provided by the teacher leaders with district instructional support personnel. An additional recommendation would be working with building administrators to create a fifth teacher leader role chosen by the principal that gives them flexibility to select a
teacher leader that specializes in school/district programs or initiatives tailored to their school.

It is the intent of the M-DCPS TLA to be implemented in all schools across the district thus adding a new cohort of schools each year. As such, it is our recommendation that the district continue to survey cohort participants as there may be changes in administration, school tiers, and school/district priorities that may require programmatic changes. Another recommendation would be for the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation to identify those practices that schools with high fidelity of implementation are using that could be replicated at schools with low fidelity. According to O’Donnell (2008) fidelity of implementation is synonymous with adherence and integrity. In order to identify factors that may contribute to low fidelity of implementation in Tier 3 schools, we recommend having a standard item discussion on the agenda of the cross-bureau monthly Professional Development Alignment Committee meetings to streamline the professional development provided. For a program to yield statistically significant benefits for participants, the program must be implemented with fidelity (Durlak & Dupre, 2008). Sutherland et al. (2013) define fidelity of implementation as the degree to which a program is used in the manner in which it was intended. Participating teacher leaders’ adherence to the key components of the M-DPCS TLA increases the chances of better outcomes.

Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers’ perceptions on the value of the M-DCPS TLA teacher leader roles in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning. Quantitative findings related to the value of the M-DCPS TLA roles in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional
learning indicated that building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers found the greatest value in the role of the Professional Learning and Growth Leader. This finding may be a result of the foundational and role-specific professional development that teacher leaders participate in as part of the M-DCPS TLA, in addition to the historical role of the Professional Development Liaison. The literature surrounding the phases of teacher leadership concludes that the managerial role of teacher leaders has evolved to one that builds capacity and transforms their practice and that of their colleagues (Silva et al., 2000). Recommendations associated with this finding include the identification of best practices from the professional development provided to the Professional Learning and Growth Leader and incorporate such practices into the professional learning provided to the other teacher leader roles. In order to further develop the capacity of the New and Early Career Teacher, the Digital Innovation Leader, and Instructional Coach/Content Expert roles, the curriculum of the M-DCPS TLA should be re-designed to emphasize each teacher leader’s role in leading professional learning regardless of the role in which they serve, and the fact that each role may or may not have a specific need at each school, every year. It is important to note that for teacher leaders to be seen as valuable resources for their school, they must develop a teacher leader identity. Research suggests that in order for teacher leaders to develop an identity they must exercise leadership not only in their classroom but within and across schools (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). Another recommendation to improve the capacity of all teacher leader roles in leading professional learning is to explicitly develop the teacher leader identity of the New and Early Career Teacher Leaders, Digital Innovation Leader, Instructional Coach/Content Expert as leaders of professional learning that impact teaching and learning through
team-based, job-embedded professional learning activities aligned to content standards and school/district improvement goals.

*Building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers’ perceptions on the value of the M-DCPS TLA Teacher Leader Model Standards in terms of improving teacher leader capacity to lead professional learning.* Quantitative findings related to the value of the M-DCPS TLA Teacher Leader Model Standards in terms of improving teacher leader capacity to lead professional learning indicated respondents found least value in the area of *teacher leaders advocate for resources to support professional learning,* with a mean of 3.22, and in the area of *teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen teaching practice,* with a mean of 3.23. These findings indicated a need to provide additional professional development to teacher leaders surrounding the topic of advocacy and in re-defining the role of the Instructional Coach/Content Expert. We recommend expanding the Foundational Elements of Teacher Leadership Course to include advocacy as a fundamental teacher leadership skillset. Among the 10 teacher leader roles defined by Harrison and Killion (2007), resource provider and catalyst for change support the recommendation for this finding. For teacher leaders to transform schools and meet the demands of the 21st century, they must be prepared to advocate for student learning and the profession as one of the seven domains identified by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011). Coggins and McGovern (2014), identified teacher leaders as advocates as one of five measurable goals for teacher leadership. Implications for this finding suggest that teacher leaders should find avenues within their schools, and across the district and school community to advocate for additional
resources such as preparation, time, and support to lead professional learning. We provide further explanation on this implication in the findings for question three.

Recommendations for re-defining the role of the Instructional Coach/Content Expert include leading and promoting TDOs at the school-site. TDOs empower teachers to open their classrooms to their colleagues so they can collect classroom data on an identified practice with the purpose of improving instruction. We recommend incorporating the feedback process into the current structure for TDOs. According to Kaufman and Grimm (2013), it is time to re-evaluate traditional approaches to professional learning. Enhancing the TDO process with actionable feedback may embrace reflection as an opportunity for professional growth and peer-to-peer collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding their ability to differentiate professional learning opportunities and plan collaborative professional learning experiences for their colleagues. Qualitative findings related to teacher leaders’ ability to support the effectiveness of their colleagues as a result of their participation in the academy indicated that teacher leaders felt they were better able to plan collaborative professional learning experiences and provide differentiated professional learning opportunities. Interpretation of the findings from focus groups responses and from the quantitative data collected through perception survey indicate that teacher leaders could benefit from additional training in professional learning designs that meet the diverse needs of teachers at their school, and resources and structures for professional learning to occur collaboratively. The implication of such findings indicated a need to continue to provide professional development to teacher leaders that is aligned to the Teacher Leader Model Standards,
Domain III, Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement. The Office of Professional Development and Evaluation should consider an intensive professional development institute for teacher leaders that focuses on how to incorporate diverse learning designs that model the Learning Forward Academy. The institute should be designed to include virtual and face-to-face follow-up sessions throughout the school year. Implications for policy also include formalizing teacher leader roles throughout the district and streamlining their professional development to ensure a common language and foundational skillset. The Office of Professional Development and Evaluation should explore the feasibility of providing National School Reform Faculty training to all teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA and a building administrator from each participating school. The use of protocols that promote collaboration would enhance team-based, job-embedded professional learning at the school-site. Additionally, ensuring that the members of the PLST have participated in the M-DCPS TLA and including a building administrator such as an assistant principal would facilitate collaboration for school-based professional learning that is aligned to school/district improvement goals and tailored to the needs of the teachers in the school. Teacher leaders and building administrators that are trained in National School Reform Faculty protocols would then be able to turn-key this information to the teachers at their school to encourage more peer-to-peer professional learning. As stated by Jensen et al. (2016), “Individual teachers make behavioral shifts when they see colleagues—not just official leaders—role-modeling effective practices” (p. 5). Research also supports collaboration as a critical factor in adult learning. Barth (2001) argues that leadership itself promotes adult learning and enables teachers to become active learners as leaders. Leadership structures that
align to the growth and development of teachers are essential to the effective use of adult learning strategies.

Teacher leaders’ perceptions regarding the lack of resources to support professional learning. The interpretation of statistical findings derived from the perception survey and focus group interviews indicated respondents do not feel teacher leaders have sufficient preparation, time, and support to provide meaningful professional learning experiences to colleagues. Teacher leaders expressed that they needed more time to balance the demands of being in the classroom and their role as teacher leaders of professional learning, coverage for some of their classes to model best practices and provide more formal constructive feedback, additional support and shared leadership from their administration, more professional learning, and technology resources that allow teachers to collaborate online. The Office of Professional Development and Evaluation should consider revising the M-DCPS TLA Conceptual Framework to include ongoing differentiated professional learning opportunities for building administrators and district personnel aligned to the professional learning opportunities provided to the teacher leaders that participate in the M-DCPS TLA. Childs-Bowen, et al. (2000), define teacher leaders as key resources to student success in schools where teacher leadership is supported. In order for teacher leaders to serve as key resources to support teaching and learning, school districts must utilize shared leadership models and create conditions and structures for teacher leaders to lead professional learning, support teacher effectiveness, and leverage resources in support of teaching and learning (Helterbran, 2010; Nappi, 2014). Elmore (2004), identifies the problem as insufficient opportunities for teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning to improve their practice while they are actually
teaching. Implications of such findings indicated schools need additional resources to support school-based professional learning such as additional funding for release time, common planning, additional professional development days, and supplements for teacher leaders. Research on this topic concludes that teacher leaders are essential to the capacity building of their colleagues and to overall school improvement. According to Parsons (2011) building capacity is most effective when teachers coach teachers. Frey and Fisher (2009), state that “teachers need time to be able to talk with one another about curriculum, instruction, and assessment” (p. 279). Therefore, teacher leaders can have a positive impact in school improvement with adequate resources and structures that support collaborative professional learning.

*Teacher leaders provide informal feedback to colleagues.* Interpretation of the findings from quantitative data collected through the perception survey and their comparison to qualitative data from focus group participants from high fidelity and low fidelity implementation indicate that teacher leaders would benefit from additional professional development on providing constructive feedback to colleagues and resources that provide structures where formal feedback can occur. The findings may be attributed to the fact that two of the schools identified as low fidelity are Tier 3 schools and Tier 3 schools have instructional coaches as teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA. Instructional coaches participate in professional development sessions as part of the M-DCPS TLA as well as intensive professional development facilitated by the Education Transformation Office. Implications of such findings suggest that all teacher leader roles in the academy need more professional development in the area of providing constructive feedback to colleagues to improve practice using the M-DCPS Framework of Effective Instruction,
time to observe teachers in practice, and structured mentoring and coaching processes. Silva et al. (2000) describes the phases of teacher leaders and how teacher leaders evolved to become instructional leaders that build the capacity of their peers by mentoring and engaging with colleagues in professional learning activities that improve their practice. Therefore, developing the knowledge and skills of teacher leaders in the area of constructive feedback and providing them with opportunities to give feedback that are embedded in practice, can better prepare teacher leaders to support the effectiveness of their colleagues. The Office of Professional Development may want to consider involving teacher leaders in the M-DCPS TLA in TDOs (Kaufman & Grimm, 2013).

**Teacher leaders’ perceptions on their decision to remain in the classroom based on their participation in the M-DCPS TLA.** Qualitative findings from the focus group interviews with teacher leaders did not show that their participation in the M-DCPS TLA impacted their decision to remain in the classroom. Excerpts from teacher leaders highlight that they made the decision to remain in the classroom prior to their participation in the M-DCPS TLA; however, they felt that supportive social norms and working conditions, system-wide orientation towards inquiry and risk-taking, and structures that enable collaboration are conditions necessary for them to fulfill their role as teacher leaders.

Thirty years of research by Berry (2016) identified social norms and working conditions and system wide orientation toward risk-taking as one of the conditions critical to support teacher leadership. In addition, Jensen et al. (2016) stated that a strategic approach to retaining teacher leaders is through collaboration and support that creates new avenues for teacher leaders to lead from the classroom.
According to a report by the Center for Teaching Quality, teachers who are provided with opportunities to share their expertise and collaborate with colleagues are more likely to stay in the profession (Berry et al., 2010). Although we did not find a credible connection between teacher leaders’ participation in the M-DCPS TLA and their decision to remain in the classroom, teacher leaders stated that the academy validated their decision. An implication is that participation in the year-long program did not cause them to leave the school or district.

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2010) recognized teacher retention as strengthening the teaching profession. Barth (2001) also stated that taking on a leadership role strengthens one’s learning. Also, York-Barr and Duke (2004) support this position in their findings that increased teacher quality improves teacher leadership roles.

Approximately half a million teachers either move or leave the teaching profession each year. Teacher attrition is estimated to cost the U.S. $2.2 billion annually (Haynes, 2014). We recommend local school districts establish a mechanism to credential teacher leaders through formal structures. Ingersoll et al. (2017) recommend that school districts allocate resources in an attempt to plug the “leaky bucket.” In this study teacher leaders are viewed as key resources that support teaching and learning (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000). M-DCPS made a human capital investment in its TLA with the purpose of elevating professional learning through formalized teacher leader roles while retaining effective teachers in the classroom. We also recommend that school districts in Florida leverage the privilege of size to lobby state legislators to introduce a bill supporting statewide teacher leader credentialing. Much like school districts in
Florida can submit plans to the Department of Education on topics like professional development, alternative certification, principal preparation, and add-on endorsement programs. Florida districts should convene to propose a state-wide teacher leader credential on their Professional Educator’s Certificate. In addition to a teacher leader credential, the state should allocate funds to school districts to monetarily recognize teachers as teacher leaders.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Available research on the topics of teacher leadership, teacher leader roles, professional learning, and teacher retention provided us with a foundation from which to conduct this study. Furthermore, literature on IC Maps, the Teacher Leader Model Standards, the varying definitions of teacher leader roles, and teacher leaders’ role in professional learning, provided measures of reliability and validity to the instruments, focus group interview questions, and the collection and analysis of data. Our study focused on teacher leaders from two cohorts of schools with varied school level configurations and school tiers that participated in a year-long teacher leadership program that included both foundational training on the Teacher Leader Model Standards and differentiated, role-specific professional development. Our study expanded on the research of teacher leader roles in promoting professional development for school improvement and the impact of teacher leadership programs on the retention of effective teachers in the classroom.
Recommendations for future research include the following:

1. Conducting this same study with all participating schools in the M-DCPS TLA would provide more generalizable results as a larger sample size would be more representative of the school district.

2. Since there are PLSTs at each M-DCPS school, and teacher leaders are part of the PLST, a mixed methods study could be conducted that compares schools where teacher leaders on the PLST participated in the M-DCPS TLA and those schools whose teacher leaders on the PLST did not have any formalized teacher leadership training.

3. Additional research on the four roles of teacher leaders could be conducted to compare the four roles and any impact the roles may have on student achievement.

4. Expand the research from the IC Map to focus on degree of fidelity of each of the M-DCPS TLA key components across schools.

5. Refine questions on the connection between participation in the M-DCPS TLA to teacher leaders’ decision to remain in the classroom using grounded theory versus a priori codes.

Summary

This study focused on the perceptions of building administrators, teacher leaders and teachers regarding the fidelity of implementation of the key components of the M-DCPS TLA; the value of the academy in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to lead professional learning; the impact participating in the M-DCPS TLA had on teacher leaders’ preparedness to support teachers’ effectiveness; and, finally, the impact
participating in TLA had on teacher leaders’ decision to remain in the classroom. While extant data from all 72 TLA schools that completed the IC Map were used, we narrowed the study to a small, manageable size of eight schools based on their fidelity of implementation on the key components of the M-DCPS TLA.

Our results offer insights regarding investing in human capital development as a strategy to improving teacher leaders’ effectiveness in leading professional learning. Quantitative findings from the perception survey support and extend the literature on best practices in human capital development regarding teacher leaders who influence teaching and learning for their colleagues through greater involvement in school leadership. Responses to the perception survey indicate that as a whole, building administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers find value in the M-DCPS TLA in terms of improving teacher leaders’ capacity to coordinate, monitor, and support the fidelity of implementation in the a) professional learning opportunities offered to all teachers, b) mentoring and induction program provided to new and early career teachers, c) digital innovation tools used in the district to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning opportunities, and d) instructional coaching practices that positively and effectively impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Quantitative and qualitative results of this study support M-DCPS TLA human capital development conceptual approach which states that investing in human capital development enhances teacher leaders’ skills, knowledge, abilities, and experiences which in turn improves teacher leaders’ ability to lead high quality professional learning.
CHAPTER 6

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

Based on Northouse’s (2016) definition, “transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people” (p. 161). From this perspective, we have evolved from individual members of a cohort to a research team. In Chapter 6, we explore how working on the research team of a collaborative dissertation in the William and Mary School of Education afforded us a new and expanded frame of reference and how the experience helped us further develop as autonomous critical thinkers and consumers of research. This final chapter offered us rich insights and led us to reflect on our own personal style of leadership.

Throughout the dissertation, we faced many rewards and challenges while we worked as a group to identify a problem of practice, decide on research methods, and work collectively to conduct the research. As we close this final chapter of our dissertation, we share lessons learned and recommendations regarding how to succeed with collaborative work on complex projects. The personal reflections included in this chapter are presented in alphabetical order by the last name of each group member.

Carmen S. Concepción

Leadership transformation. Effective leadership is the ability to influence, inspire, and motivate others in order to meet the demands and goals of the team. It includes creating a culture that helps set and achieve short term goals while keeping
sight of the team’s vision and mission. The success of leadership in this process is directly influenced by the ability of the leader to support followers, build community, and develop high-quality relationships with all stakeholders.

In *Leadership and the New Science*, Margaret Wheatley (2006) argues that in today’s world, relationships are what matter the most. She states that life is an enormous network of interconnections where collaboration and participation are required. I have always believed that relationships are the key to success. Working on the research team of a collaborative dissertation has not only been a journey in which we have explored and deepened our understanding of the concept of teacher leadership as a human capital strategy to elevating professional learning, but also one of collaboration among team members. According to Northouse (2016), “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5). Based on this definition, leadership is not an inborn trait, but a relationship that can be developed and nurtured. As an instructional leader, this experience has provided me with an expanded frame of reference that sees success through the lens of the group and reinforces my belief in the power of relationships.

Being an autonomous critical thinker and a consumer of research is increasingly necessary for the success of our educational system. Changes in the contemporary education system in the United States and specifically in M-DCPS make these skills more important than they have ever been before. As an instructional leader, I am required to develop and evaluate projects and initiatives and make appropriate decisions based on this information. I believe that this experience, with its emphasis on engaging cohort members on a collaborative dissertation model has helped me further developed my
ability to synthesize, apply, and conceptualize my thinking. Additionally, it has validated my tendency to question and reflect more in order to become a better leader for the students, teachers and administrators I support.

The collaborative dissertation process coupled with my participation in the William and Mary cohort helped me become an autonomous critical thinking and a better consumer of research as I moved along the continuum from novice to expert. From identifying a problem of practice aligned to our district to reading, understanding, incorporating the relevant literature into our evaluation questions, designing and implementing a shared study as well as analyzing the data, discussing the results, and analyzing the implications as a team provided me the time and practice I needed to use the new knowledge and skills in a setting where I felt supported and where my performance was monitored. I now have the tools and I feel that it is my duty to put my knowledge and skills to use.

Leaders who focus on their followers have a greater chance of influencing them to achieve a shared goal. I define leadership as a process by which the leader is able to help those, they lead to reach their full potential. The Path-Goal Leadership Theory is about making the path-goal clear through coaching and providing direction, removing obstacles that followers might encounter in the process of attaining the goal, and increasing work satisfaction (Northouse, 2016). It aligns with my personal definition of effective leadership because it highlights how I believe effective leaders should lead. Effective leaders enable people, teams, and organizations to perform and develop in order to achieve an alignment among people, teams’ needs, and the goals of the organization. According to Fullan & Quinn (2015), leadership will be judged not by who you are but
by the leadership you are able to generate in others. This experience enhanced my awareness of my own personal style of leadership as I supported my team members, helped build community among we, and forged stronger relationships with each other.

Northouse (2016), emphasizes that leaders should pay attention to the concerns of their followers, empower them, and help them develop their full potential. Throughout this experience, we displayed a combination of values which were based on our individual core values and our own world views. We were passionate and confident in our abilities, always maintained high standards and inspired each other to do the same. Our role was always to support one other, enhance our capacity, and to constantly reflect on the impact our contributions would have on the final outcome of our study. By building community, we created a sense of unity and coherence that highlighted each other’s personal style of leadership.

**Collaborative scholarship.** The traditional dissertation process has often been referred by many of my colleagues as a marathon designed to measure who has the stamina to produce a final product. Working collaboratively on a team-conducted dissertation made it possible for us to create our own community of practice where we developed expertise through shared learning and knowledge refinement (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). As we worked as a group to identify a problem of practice, decide on research methods, and work collectively to conduct the research, we engaged in an intentional, collaborative effort of community building. It was very rewarding to see how we developed as a team and appreciated each other’s uniqueness while at the same time feeling comfortable expressing our own views about relevant
issues. We shared leadership for the learning and experienced joint accountability for the outcomes.

At first, we experienced many challenges, but we held each other accountable and were very intentional at assigning tasks, developing team structures, and creating flexible timelines. We realized early on that to be effective, we needed to be intentional and that our effectiveness relied on having deliberate discussions before launching out into a new chapter or section within the dissertation (Burke, Preston, Quillen, Roe, & Strong, 2009). This was crucial for group cohesion, the development of our study, and helping us overcome challenges. Through the process, we became more aware of our interpersonal interaction and how our styles could impact each other.

There were times during this experience when we were called to be leaders and times when the situation called for us to be followers. This required collaboration, planning, and practice. As team members, each of us recognized when it was better to take a step back and take direction and when to step in and take the lead (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). Through the process, we evolved and transformed our leadership style in order to meet the demands of the team.

Wheatley (2006) emphasizes that chaos and change are the only path to transformation. According to Wheatley (2006), in order to survive in a world of change and chaos, we need to (a) accept chaos as a fundamental process by which organizations renew and revitalize themselves, (b) share information as the main organizing force of the organization, (c) cultivate the rich diversity of relationships that are all around us to strengthen our teams, and (d) embrace vision as an invisible field that can enable us to recreate our organizations. Wheatley’s principles guided our work as we developed a
sense of responsibility and togetherness that helped us reach the finish line and move from individual members of a cohort to a research team. This transformation was only possible by accepting chaos as an essential process in which we functioned as a team while at the same time taking personal ownership for our work and outcomes to optimize results.

Through this process I have learned that to succeed with collaborative work on complex projects, it takes a lot of planning and commitment from every team member. Working as a team can be very difficult when everyone has outside professional and personal responsibilities, but if you capitalize on the expertise of the team members success is possible. Some of us had more skills and knowledge in research methodologies while others were better at organizational skills. The process was very organic, each of us assumed a role for which we had some sort of expertise. Careful refinement of our collaboration skills, strong relationships based on trust, and having structured our experiences and expertise in support of a common goal has been our greatest accomplishment.

**Tricia Fernandez**

**Leadership transformation.** Woven throughout Margaret Wheatley’s (2006) *Leadership and the New Science* and Peters and Waterman’s (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, is the idea of relationships and their importance to the organization and work at hand. A values-driven organization is more than having a mission and vision statement. It means supporting employees and understanding their needs. It starts at the top and trickles down. Leadership must exude passion for the work and allow for creativity. It also means that leadership must allow for failure and not ostracize or punish
those who take a risk or fail. Organizations must break down barriers and silos and empower employees to share ideas. Through the work of the M-DCPS William and Mary cohort, I have been able to collaborate and work with colleagues on a problem of practice that will have an impact on M-DCPS.

Northouse defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). Throughout this process, each one of our group members have assumed this definition of leadership. A couple of times, each one of us assumed a take charge role. We never stepped on each other’s toes or assumed we were the expert. We were able to read each other and know when it was time to lead and time to sit back and let others lead. When it came to me, I was very comfortable sitting back and letting my colleagues lead, for I have trust in the ability and sound judgment.

I have always welcomed others’ point of view and sometimes those with very strong viewpoints have a way of swaying the work at hand. Through my participation in this cohort I have become more deliberate in focusing issues of concerns on effectiveness and becoming a more reflective practitioner of the who and next steps needed to achieve an outcome, task, or objective (Wheatley, 2006).

There are great responsibilities in being an autonomous critical thinker and a consumer of research. Through my participation in the M-DCPS William and Mary cohort, I have a deeper appreciation for those conducting research, the process, and the findings. The work in this cohort has strengthened my fact-sorting skills from those practices that I believed to be facts. Many times, what we believe to be facts are traditional and outdated approaches to the work. As a reflective practitioner and creating
an inclusive work environment which focuses on building relationships has fostered new ideas and initiatives.

Through this work, I quickly learned the need to rely on research-based strategies and practices and discard those that were grounded in long established, and sometimes antiquated systems and thinking. As a consumer of research, I equip myself with facts and best practices so that it supports my actions and decisions. I have improved my ability to collect, analyze and synthesize information, allowing me to be a better decision maker and improve my capacity to lead those around me. I am more reflective on my day-to-day decisions, allowing me to learn from my mistakes and grow as a person and as a leader.

I have always thought of myself as a transformational leader, one who motivates and raises the level of standards (Northouse, 2016). Through the work of the cohort, my belief that I am a transformational leader has been confirmed. I take great pride in working with colleagues to identify a problem, create a plan to tackle the problem and seeing the process through to completion. I am able to lead with enthusiasm and motivate those around me so that we are successful in reaching our goals. My desire to build strong relationships lets me assign tasks and responsibilities to those I lead based on their knowledge and expertise.

**Collective scholarship.** There are many rewards and challenges when working on a group dissertation. I have learned many lessons from this experience. As a group we were able to agree on our dissertation study right away. Prior to entering the doctoral program, our group worked in the same department for several years. This prior knowledge of self and leadership allowed us to quickly capitalize on our strengths.
During various parts of this project, each of us took on the role of group leader. Distributive leadership was evident in the way we operated as a group. Each one of us emerged as a leader for the good of the group (Northouse, 2016). I believe our history of working together and the trust established prior to this project, allowed us to adapt depending on the workload of others. As much as we say, we all play an equal role, the equity of that role was not constant, it was fluid. Each of us have stepped up and assumed the role of group leader throughout this process.

As a group and individually, we encountered many challenges and obstacles. Time as a resource has been a challenge for us. We found ourselves scheduling meetings and quickly canceling if one member was unavailable. We quickly transitioned to keeping our meetings as scheduled and those who could meet, did so. We also relied on email, texting and Zooming in evenings and weekends. Zoom soon became our new best friend! Each member of our group has demanding work, family, and social responsibilities. However, we made a commitment to M-DCPS, the College of William and Mary, ourselves, and each other. I believe it is the commitment to each other that has driven the work. We identified responsibilities, set deadlines, and held each other accountable.

Going into this project, we knew the value of M-DCPS TLA and we wanted to validate the work. The Academy was designed to give teachers an opportunity to become teacher leaders, to lead from their classrooms and school-site with role specific guidelines, professional development, and support. It is important to us as researchers to reflect, review and evaluate the Academy so that programmatic changes may be made.
Our dissertation findings allow us to make programmatic adjustments for the 2020-2021 year.

Through this process I have become a better consumer of research and a more reflective thinker especially in the area of local, state and federal educational policies and their impact on local school systems. I know that my commitment to this endeavor not only contributed to my success, but that of my colleagues.

Alexandra Goldfarb

Leadership transformation. The collaborative dissertation brought four leaders together for one common purpose, Northouse (2016) identifies this practice as leadership. Northouse (2016) describes, “leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). Throughout this process each of us shared an influential role with the mutual purpose of completing the collaborative dissertation. At different times each of us exhibited emergent leadership through our different talents and abilities (Northouse, 2016). We shared the responsibility of ensuring we kept in constant communication and continuously monitored our progress.

Wheatley (2006) explains the importance for leaders to, “help the whole organization look at itself, to be reflective and learningful about its activities and decisions” (p. 131). As we evolved as leaders, through our collaboration, we learned about each other as leaders and came together through our mutual purpose and the decisions we made. At times of “chaos” as Wheatley describes, we thrived through our “guiding visions, sincere values, and organizational beliefs” (p. 130). We shared a clear purpose and gave each other the encouragement needed to persevere. Of the values we had in common respect, commitment, resilience, adaptability, and accountability steered
us in the right direction. We respected and welcomed each other’s ideas, even when we did not agree. We were flexible with each other and made accommodations based on our needs. We were committed to the research and were resilient through the obstacles we encountered. Throughout the process we cultivated a positive culture and empowered each other. Lastly, we held each other accountable.

As an individual leader this experience provided a comprehensive outlook on the importance of being reflective and the need to become well versed in areas, that may impact my work directly and indirectly. Through this process this need for understanding how areas outside my immediate line of work can affect the goals and objectives of my work was magnified.

Based on the experience throughout the dissertation process as a leader, I have become a stronger critical thinker and consumer of research. Each step of the process helped me embrace others’ thinking. It encouraged me, as a leader, to make connections with worldview, national and local policies. I also experienced how concepts can evolve and be enhanced as findings surface. This was especially important to my development as an autonomous critical thinker and consumer of research as I acquired a sense of curiosity to learn and uncover information regarding each area of our research. This curiosity ingrained the desire to ask more questions regarding my work and its impact.

Throughout the process it was critical to be self-disciplined and purposeful which highlighted the leadership characteristics of my personal leadership style. Being a part of a team amplified the accountability for each team member. It also made me aware of how hands-on and goal oriented I needed to be to work efficiently and timely. Additionally, the process enhanced my awareness of how as a leader I can identify with
other leaders and accept their point of views although they may not be aligned with mine. Working with a team that was willing to share control and empower each other to have an equal voice during the process aligned well with my servant leadership style. The servant leader attributes that were especially highlighted during this experience were the ability to conceptualize, empower others and behaving ethically (Northouse, 2016). Together we grappled through the challenges and worked collaboratively framing meanings and developing our ideas, cheered each other on and developed parameters from the onset.

**Collaborative scholarship.** From the initiation of working as a group a challenge was in identifying a problem of practice not directly linked to my work. My work focuses on providing support for new teachers and the impact it has on retention therefore I kept on looking for those pieces to emerge. It was not until I made a connection of how each area of the TLA could impact my work that I was able to release the need to make a direct link to my area of expertise. Journaling and keeping anecdotal notes were critical to remain unbiased throughout the process. Although anecdotal record keeping was time consuming the benefits outweighed the time constraints. Gonzalez (n.d.) explains the benefits of journaling to gather and organize your ideas, document data points, and surpass mental block. Being a part of the department that is responsible for implementing the M-DCPS TLA heightened the need for journaling especially in the data collection part. The journaling reassured me that I was consistently focused on the facts removing biases that may have existed. It became a critical component of the process.

Working with strong women leaders had its challenges as well. As we moved further into the process our strengths and weakness became apparent which helped us capitalize on our strengths and in turn learn from our weaknesses. Ultimately, although
the group was composed of strong women leaders, we demonstrated collegial leadership throughout the process (DiPaola & Wagner, 2018). We supported each other making sure we maintained ourselves focused on our objective. Throughout the process we practiced shared decision-making and high motivation, participative and supportive leadership, professional autonomy and open, authentic interactions as we identified the problem of practice, decided on research methods for each question, and worked collectively to conduct the research (DiPaola & Wagner, 2018). This balance along with a cooperative problem-solving approach allowed us as a group to bounce ideas off each other in a nonjudgmental safe environment.

The way we evolved into individual members of a cohort into a research team was organic. As individuals each of us brought value and a set of expertise to the team that made our research stronger. Bringing our own perspectives and having continuous dialogue about each area of the research strengthened the groups’ ability to overcome obstacles that arose along the process.

Meeting regularly is a best practice that should be established from the onset. This practice is instrumental in keeping the momentum and establishing accountability. Determining a neutral location where team members can remain focused also promotes more group productivity. Although there is a significant importance to meeting regularly and establishing a neutral meeting location flexibility is key. Having both face-to-face and virtual meetings should be considered when busy schedules are a factor. Also identifying the best time of the day to meet is critical to ensure team members are able to keep the commitment. Developing timelines and outlining each team members’ responsibilities throughout the entire process also reinforces accountability. Finally,
setting deadlines for each task and area of the research ensures all team members remain on task and moves the team closer to their goal.

This collaborative experience has been an invaluable learning opportunity. I feel fortunate to have collaborated with such strong women leaders and to have had the chance to learn from them and grow with them.

Milagros Gonzalez

Leadership transformation. Leaders come in a variety of manifestations through formal or informal leadership positions each with a distinct set of characteristics, values, and behaviors that define their leadership style. Northouse (2016) defines transformational leadership as an approach that causes change in individuals, groups, organizations, and social systems. Transformational leaders foster environments of change through inspiration, motivation, and commitment to a common vision, established goals, values, and emotions. Participating in the William and Mary Executive Educational Doctorate program has transformed the way I fulfill my role as a leader in M-DCPS’ Office of Human Capital Management by embracing change and making sense of chaos to solve problems within the organization.

As a leader, I now have an expanded frame of reference that enables me to adapt my leadership style to suit the needs of followers and the organization in order to maximize potential and increase performance and productivity. Both Wheatley (2006) and Peters and Waterman (1982) identify leadership traits that I uphold such as the value of relationships, human caring, and creativity to solve problems and those that I would like to further develop, like a bias for action because I tend to over think my decisions. In my hope to continue to grow as a leader, I want to ensure that I keep a hands-on and
values-driven approach to my work. In their book, *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman (1982) refer to the need to stay close to the customer as one of eight qualities possessed by companies that excel. To me, this means knowing the who, what, and why for which I am working. Through this program of study and the research I have conducted, I have reaffirmed my commitment to ensure that everything I do in my role as a leader has a direct impact on teaching and learning—that my actions and those of the people I lead create better conditions for teachers and students.

Pursuing this degree has been a journey of self-reflection, persistence, and thinking interdependently (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Employing these habits of mind ensured that we could successfully complete the requirements of this program of study. Each of us have had personal and professional challenges throughout this process yet, *persisting* enabled us to stick to the task and systematically strategize to solve problems and overcome obstacles. Working on the dissertation study required us to continuously self-reflect and practice the skill of *metacognition* to develop a plan of action in identifying a problem of practice and searching for information to answer our evaluation questions. There were several instances when we had to pause, reflect, and change our course of action because we were too close to the work. As leaders, each of us has distinct characteristics and diverse leadership styles that guide our decision-making, but we were grounded by a common vision surrounding the value of effective professional learning and the role of teacher leaders. We addressed our diverse perspectives by *thinking interdependently*: working collaboratively to identify a problem of practice, develop the evaluation questions, conduct the literature review, design the methodology, and collect and analyze our data. At different times, we came to an impasse and this
required that we each assume the role of leader and employ a situational leadership style to keep us moving forward. According to Northouse (2016), “the situational approach stresses that leadership is composed of both a directive and supportive dimension, and that each has to be applied appropriately in a given situation” (p. 93). *Managing impulsivity* and *listening to others with understanding and empathy* are two habits of mind that I personally employed through the situational leadership approach.

Conducting research throughout this program of study and, in particular, the dissertation process has enhanced my ability to think autonomously and ask critical questions about the programs and initiatives I oversee and their return on investment related to teacher practice and student learning. As a school district, we are governed by federal and state policies we must implement with either limited guidance or overwhelming oversight from policymakers. In implementing such policies, we often develop programs and initiatives based on subjectivity and past experiences rather than relying on research to formulate hypotheses, explore innovative ideas, design plans of action, and evaluate outcomes to make programmatic decisions that are in the best interest of teachers and students. I have learned the benefits that conducting research affords to my position in developing and delivering effective professional learning, writing and managing grants, and implementing innovative programs to address teacher recruitment, retention, and development.

**Collaborative scholarship.** I have always believed that people and relationships are the key to personal and/or professional success. This belief was validated by my participation in the group dissertation experience. When groups of people gather for the same purpose, wonderful things can emerge. Both Wheatley (2006) and Peters and
Waterman (1982) claim that investing in people, their growth, and the comraderies of building effective teams are key to organizational success and I am grateful that M-DCPS shared this belief and invested in us as leaders.

The rewards of working as a team to identify a problem of practice, decide on research methods, and work collectively to conduct the research greatly outweigh any of the obstacles and challenges we faced along the way. Working as a team enabled us to rely on each other’s strengths and compensate for each other’s weaknesses. Each of us have diverse roles and varied responsibilities within the Office of Human Capital Management but they converged around the need to develop teacher leaders and create meaningful professional learning experiences for all teachers. Identifying a problem of practice was not a difficult task. We all agreed in the merit of the M-DCPS TLA and its worthiness of a research study to determine the impact on improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning. We met our first challenge when developing the evaluation questions. We had several iterations and we all wanted to address too many different topics from different angles. This did not allow us to articulate a clear focus when we submitted the draft of Chapter 1. After this stumbling block, we realized some of us were too close to the work, myself included, and we needed to reflect on what questions would provide the most insight regarding the fidelity of implementation of the components of the M-DCPS TLA and their value in terms of improving teacher leader capacity to lead professional learning.

One of the greatest challenges we faced was the fact that we all work in the same bureau. Our work is closely aligned and interdependent, so it was difficult to find a consistent time to meet because we were all attending the same meetings, after work
events, and working at home or on Saturdays on the same initiatives. We addressed this challenge by scheduling bi-weekly Zoom sessions in the late evenings and whoever was able to attend, logged on. We also used the divide and conquer approach while drafting the first three chapters and addressing the evaluation questions. We tapped into each of our strengths to determine which question we were going to address and the methodology we were going to use to answer each question. Working collaboratively allowed us to look at the data we collected from different perspectives and this was invaluable when we coded the focus group responses and identified the most prevalent themes.

Being a member of this cohort was a remarkable experience. I learned so much from my colleagues through the readings, group work, and discussion posts assigned by each professor. Learning from a diverse group of highly qualified, experienced, and passionate professionals gave me insight into many facets of our school district and the critical thinking that is behind the daily decision-making processes of our school and district leaders. Moving from being an individual member of a cohort to a research team was a seamless process for me. I enjoy working with others and find value in other’s thinking as it expands my frame of reference. I believe this ease is also associated with the relationships I have established with the members of my research team and the vision we share regarding our problem of practice and the respect and trust we have in each other and in our collective expertise.

I learned that to succeed with collaborative work on complex projects, one must capitalize on each other’s strengths. Fear of failure must be approached as an opportunity to innovate and collectively solve problems and overcome challenges. Establishing trusting and respectful relationships where everyone is held accountable are key to the
success of processes such as this collaborative group dissertation. The concept of a collaborative group dissertation is complex and innovative, and I commend the College of William and Mary for embarking on this journey with us. I recommend the continuation and expansion of such programs that allow for groups of individuals with a common vision and a passion to improve teaching and learning to come together to ask hard questions, conduct research, and solve complex problems that can be successfully replicated by others who share the same interests.
APPENDIX A

M-DCPS Framework of Effective Instruction

ASSESSMENT Effective teachers...
- Use local and state summative assessment data to design instruction that meets students’ needs
- Use pre-assessment data, formative and summative assessments to inform instruction
- Use formative assessments to adjust instruction for re-teaching, re-mediation, and enrichment
- Help students understand assessment criteria, monitor, and reflect on their work
- Maintain sufficient assessment data to support accurate reporting of student progress
- Align student assessments to learning goals and standards
- Provide timely and specific feedback to students, parents, and stakeholders

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY Effective teachers...
- Demonstrate current knowledge of content in a sequential manner
- Use multiple levels of questions, make necessary adjustments
- Correct students’ knowledge, experiences, interests to learning goals
- Present lessons clearly and skillfully use explicit instruction
- Use appropriate literacy strategies to build academic vocabulary
- Use technology to differentiate instruction and enhance learning
- Provide engaging, timely, and specific feedback to students

ENGAGEMENT Effective teachers...
- Engage students in diverse activity structures
- Use a variety of strategies to engage students in higher-order learning tasks
- Engage students in authentic learning, real-life applications, and interdisciplinary connections
- Use appropriate pace and maximize instructional time for student learning
- Reinforce learning goals throughout the lesson

KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNERS Effective teachers...
- Respond to students’ developmental levels
- Present concepts at different levels of complexity
- Provide a range of differentiated activities
- Provide instruction based on students’ learning needs

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT Effective teachers...
- Establish and maintain effective classroom rules and procedures
- Create an environment that is stimulating, challenging, and fosters intellectual risk-taking
- Organize a safe physical environment that is conducive to student learning and collaborative work
- Maintain an environment that reflects a culture of inclusivity, equity, and respect
- Promote accountability for learning and hold high academic expectations for all students
- Use verbal, nonverbal, and electronic communication tools to challenge and support students in a positive and supportive manner
- Encourage students to receive and accept constructive feedback on individual work and behavior

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING Effective teachers...
- Use both formative and summative student learning data to guide planning
- Develop plans that are clear, logical, sequential, and aligned to standards-based learning
- Plan instruction effectively for content mastery, pacing, and transitions
- Identify and plan for the instructional and developmental needs of all learners
- Gather, analyze, and/or create appropriate instructional materials
Millennial Access Platform – (Inspired Idea)
MAPS to Radically Different Learning Environments

**MAP name:** M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy – Leading from the Classroom

__X__ NEW _____ Continuation from 15/16

**Strategic Pillar:** III Highly Effective Teachers, Leaders, and Staff

**Strategic Priority:** 2 Recruit and hire the most qualified people, develop them deliberately, and retain them strategically

**Responsible Cabinet Member:** Mr. Jose L. Dotres

**Description:** The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy (Leading Education and Development) is designed to challenge and support teacher leaders across the District in developing the andragogical knowledge, content expertise, and facilitative leadership skills needed to guide instructional improvements in schools. The program will enhance the leadership abilities of highly skilled teachers as they facilitate the professional learning of their colleagues. The Teacher LEADership Academy will also provide principals and assistant principals an opportunity to cultivate shared leadership and embed effective teacher leadership structures and practices within their school community.

With the Professional Learning Support Teams (PLSTs) fully implemented at each school-site, the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy will create opportunities for effective teachers to lead through new career opportunities and advancement initiatives that promote professional growth and emphasize multiple career paths. Miami-Dade County Public Schools will make use of the current PLST structure to develop a cadre of teacher leaders by clearly identifying differentiated teacher leadership roles in the areas of new and early career teacher support, professional learning and growth, instructional coaching, and digital innovation. The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy will address the specific professional learning needs of each teacher leadership role by differentiating the context, process, and content of the professional development provided. The model will support teacher leaders who lead from the classroom.
Objectives:
1) Recruit, retain, motivate, and reward accomplished teachers;
2) Develop teacher leaders in the areas of new and early career teacher support, professional learning and growth, instructional coaching, and digital innovation through professional learning institutes led by university partners and national experts in each area;
3) Provide teacher leaders the opportunity to lead beyond their classrooms, engage in reflective dialogue, collaborate with peers, grow professionally, and improve the quality of instruction for students through the M-DCPS Framework of Effective Instruction;
4) Support teacher leaders to facilitate the development of high-performing, reflective practitioners through adult learning principles;
5) Increase support for new and early career teachers;
6) Strengthen teacher leadership capacity to plan professional learning that is school-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals;
7) Provide teacher leaders with competencies and content expertise that will equip them to transform instructional coaching practices to positively and effectively impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness;
8) Build teacher leadership capacity to lead technological innovation and transformation that supports rich and rigorous instruction aligned to district standards, honors individual learning styles, and increases access to and usage of current high-quality content and digital resources;
9) Increase teacher effectiveness with technology integration in classroom instruction by creating a cadre of Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) Teacher Leaders;
10) Increase professional development opportunities for teachers in effective technology use and cultivate a growth mindset to promote student inquiry through project-based and problem-based learning;
11) Integrate teacher leaders into the culture of the school, community and District;
12) Create pathways for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools, and establish models of teacher-led schools.

Deliverables:
1) Cadre of Certified Teacher Leaders in the areas of teacher induction, professional learning and growth, instructional coaching, and digital innovation;
2) Cadre of MIE Teacher Leaders;
3) Differentiated Teacher Leadership Roles;
4) Pathways for teacher leaders to lead within and across schools;
5) Ongoing professional learning communities of practice;
6) Support for school leaders in the differentiated roles of teacher leaders within the Teacher LEADership Academy.

Connection to Student Achievement:
Teacher leadership is essential to serving the needs of students, schools, and the teaching profession. The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy is grounded in improving students’ learning and teacher effectiveness. It promotes student achievement by retaining and empowering effective teachers to develop as instructional leaders through the M-DCPS Framework of Effective Instruction.
Implementation Timeline:
Fall, 2016 through Summer, 2019
- Identify differentiated roles for teacher leaders within the PLST;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders who serve on the PLST;
- Provide targeted, differentiated, job-embedded professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders in the areas of new and early career teacher support, professional learning and growth, instructional coaching, and digital innovation;
- Provide structures and support for teacher leaders to function as effective leaders within the PLST;

Projected Costs:

Is new/additional funding required?
- $100,000
  - Funds to contract with a nationally recognized institute for teacher leaders to provide systemic and sustained professional development sessions to certify teacher leaders.
  - Funding for substitute coverage for teacher leaders to participate in certification training.

Is new/additional personnel required?
- No additional personnel required at this time.

Performance Measure(s):
- Number of certified teacher leaders who serve on the PLST
- Number and completion rate of teacher leaders who participate in the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy
- Number of certified MIE Teacher Leaders
- Number of certified Transformational Coaches
- Sixty percent of teacher leaders who serve on PLSTs will be considered effective as determined by perception surveys
- Usage and effectiveness of technology integration in schools as determined by perception surveys

Summary:
The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy will provide the District with a structure to identify effective teacher leaders in differentiated roles that support instructional improvement and positively impact student achievement. Teacher leaders will participate in sustained, systemic professional development to become certified as school-based leaders that facilitate job-embedded professional learning and growth, support new and early career teachers, transform instructional coaching, and promote digital innovation for teaching and learning. Pathways within the Teacher LEADership Academy will create a career lattice for effective teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.
# APPENDIX C

M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy Foundational Course – Sample Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opening Session</strong> 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Welcome Connections Protocol</strong> 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Welcome Connections Protocol</strong> 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Welcome Connections Protocol</strong> 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Welcome Connections Protocol</strong> 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week @ a Glance 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leading Self: Personality and Decision-Making</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leading Change: Leading Teams</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leading Change: Leading Teams</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leading Change: Leading Teams</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leading Change: Leading Teams</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths-Based Approach to Leadership</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Leadership Model Standards</strong></td>
<td><strong>Action Research: Pathway to Inquiry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Rotational Breakout Sessions:</strong> 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with Others</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pete Hall - Building Teacher Leaders Capacity for Success</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pete Hall - Building Teacher Leaders Capacity for Success</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Action Research: Mapping the Journey</strong></td>
<td><strong>Action Research: Mapping the Journey</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Leaders Role Within the PLST</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Leaders Role Within the PLST</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflections Protocol 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy - Teacher Leader Roles

New and Early Career Teacher Support
Supporting new and early career teachers
On-site mentoring, coaching, learning walks

Professional Learning & Growth
Building capacity, faculty empowerment, growth and development
PLCs, School-wide PD, PD Blueprint, TDO, DPGT

Digital Innovation
Increasing teacher effectiveness with technology integration in classroom instruction
Discovery Ed, iReady, MyOn, Microsoft Office Tools, Promethean Board

Instructional Coaching
Developing teachers’ expertise in curriculum and FSA Standards-based instruction anchored through the FEI Instructional coaching cycles, model lessons, effective evidence-based feedback, mentoring, coaching

Multiple Pathways to Teacher Leadership
APPENDIX E

M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 schools</td>
<td>34 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 13 Elementary schools</td>
<td>• 13 Elementary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 7 K-8 Centers</td>
<td>• 6 K-8 Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 8 Middle schools</td>
<td>• 9 Middle schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1 6-12 Preparatory academy</td>
<td>• 6 High schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 10 High schools</td>
<td>• Summer Academy Foundational professional learning sessions facilitated by select teacher leaders from cohort 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Leader Selection Criteria**

- Hold a Professional Educator’s certificate
- Mid-career professional (5 to 12 years experience) with a demonstrated history of school-based formal and informal instructional leadership experience
- Effective in the areas of oral language, written, and interpersonal communication skills
- Effective or Highly Effective on IPEGS Summative Performance Evaluation on previous two (2) years’ evaluation
- Certification in Clinical Supervision (preferred, not required)
- Master’s degree in education or a related field (preferred, not required)

**Composition**

Three to four participants per school

- Professional Learning & Growth Leader
- New and Early Career Teacher Support Leader
- Digital Innovation Leader
- Instructional Coach

**Roles & Responsibilities – Role Specific**

**Professional Learning & Growth Leader**: Coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation in the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers in support of teaching and learning.

1. Facilitates on-site professional development opportunities by proposing and/or instructing school-based professional learning that supports the school’s strategic goals and objectives.
1. Leads mentors of new teachers.
2. Supports and facilitates implementation and follow-up of the school’s plan for mentoring and induction of new and early career teachers by serving as a member of the Professional Learning Support Team.
3. Assists principals in the selection of instructional mentors for new teachers.
4. Maintains confidentiality while working with new teachers, mentors, administrators, and new teacher support staff.
5. Acts as a liaison between the school administration and the District new teacher support staff.
6. Implements adult learning theories to provide a positive learning environment which supports new teachers.
7. Uses instructional mentoring language to effectively communicate with lead mentors and mentees.
8. Participates in professional learning programs to increase the individual’s skill and proficiency related to the assignment.
9. Facilitates professional learning opportunities, modeling and coaching, action research, Learning Walks and mentor forums.

**New and Early Career Teacher Leader:** Coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation in the mentoring and induction program provided to new and early career teachers in support of teaching and learning.

1. Leads mentors of new teachers.
2. Supports and facilitates implementation and follow-up of the school’s plan for mentoring and induction of new and early career teachers by serving as a member of the Professional Learning Support Team.
3. Assists principals in the selection of instructional mentors for new teachers.
4. Maintains confidentiality while working with new teachers, mentors, administrators, and new teacher support staff.
5. Acts as a liaison between the school administration and the District new teacher support staff.
6. Implements adult learning theories to provide a positive learning environment which supports new teachers.
7. Uses instructional mentoring language to effectively communicate with lead mentors and mentees.
8. Participates in professional learning programs to increase the individual’s skill and proficiency related to the assignment.
9. Facilitates professional learning opportunities, modeling and coaching, action research, Learning Walks and mentor forums.
**Digital Innovation Leader:** Coordinates, monitors, and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of digital innovation tools used in the District in support of teaching and learning.

1. Builds teacher capacity and provides professional learning opportunities to educators and school leaders on the effective use of technology in teaching and learning.
2. Supports and facilitates implementation and follow-up of the school’s plan for digital innovation by serving as a member of the Professional Learning Support Team.
3. Increases teacher effectiveness with technology integration in classroom instruction.
4. Increases access and usage to current, high-quality content and digital resources.
5. Facilitates instructional shifts from teacher-centered to learner-centered.
6. Promotes student engagement through teacher use of interactive digital tools and implementation of a blended learning model.
7. Models the use of digital resources and technology tools to implement individualized and personalized instruction.
8. Facilitates changes in teacher mindset and teaching practices to increase student inquiry through project-based and problem-based learning.
9. Integrates 21st century skills such as collaboration and communication into classroom instruction to move students from consumers to producers of information.

**Instructional Coach Leader:** Coordinates, monitors and supports the fidelity of implementation of a range of instructional coaching practices to positively and effectively impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

1. Coordinate and monitor teacher planning to support the development of rigorous standard-based lessons.
2. Utilize the coaching model (planning, demonstrating, and providing feedback) with the implementation of evidenced-based instructional strategies to improve students’ academic success.
3. Meets regularly with school-site administration to develop the weekly coaching calendar, reflect on the impact of coaching support provided and prioritize future support as evidenced through the coaching log.
4. Provides on-site embedded professional learning opportunities aligned to the needs of students based upon student assessment data.
5. Assists the administration in the interpretation of student assessment data to prioritize support.
6. Assists the classroom teacher in the interpretation of student assessment data and supporting the teacher in planning appropriate lessons to support the academic needs of students.
7. Supports the coordination and monitoring of intervention services to identified students.
8. Participates in professional development and implements instructional practices with school-site personnel to improve student outcomes.

**Teacher Leaders’ Commitment**

1. Attend all Teacher LEAdership Academy sessions and showcase
   - Foundational Elements of Teacher Leadership Development
   - Role Specific Professional Learning
     - Only applies to the following teacher leaders: Professional Learning and Growth, New and Early Career Teacher Support, Digital Innovation Leader
   - Clinical Supervision
     - Only applies to New and Early Career Teacher Support Leaders who have not been certified in Clinical Supervision
   - PLST Fall Session
   - PLST Spring Session
   - Monthly Virtual Check-ins
   - Learning Showcase
2. Serve as an active member of the Professional Learning Support Team (PLST)
3. Commit to an active role as a learner throughout the period of the academy
4. Design and conduct action research based on school’s needs as they relate to the Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI) and as determined by the District-wide Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey.
5. Submit a proposal to present the results of my action research at the Learning Showcase.
Desired Outcome 1: Teacher leaders develop capacity to lead professional learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Ideal Application</th>
<th>Level 2 Acceptable Application</th>
<th>Level 3 Less than Acceptable</th>
<th>Level 4 Inadequate Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy.</td>
<td>• Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy.</td>
<td>• Identifies a problem of practice as a participant in the Teacher Leadership Academy.</td>
<td>• No evidence that teacher leaders improve ability to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.</td>
<td>• Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.</td>
<td>• Generates potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fosters trust among colleagues, develops collective wisdom, builds ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills.</td>
<td>• Fosters trust among colleagues, develops collective wisdom, builds ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creates an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges.</td>
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</table>
Desired Outcome 2: Teacher leaders serve as leaders of professional learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Application</td>
<td>Acceptable Application</td>
<td>Less than Acceptable</td>
<td>Inadequate Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plans, implements, and evaluates school-based professional learning.</td>
<td>• Takes an active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
<td>• Takes an active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
<td>• No evidence that teacher leaders take an active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participates in and applies models of professional learning that are job embedded and sustained over time.</td>
<td>• Participates in and models professional learning that is job embedded and sustained over time.</td>
<td>• Participates in and models professional learning that is job embedded and sustained over time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advocates school-wide conditions and procedures for effective school-based professional learning.</td>
<td>• Advocates schoolwide conditions and procedures for effective school-based professional learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Acknowledges responsibility for the quality and results of school-based professional learning.</td>
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</table>
Desired Outcome 3: Principals and assistant principals foster shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Ideal Application</th>
<th>Level 2 Acceptable Application</th>
<th>Level 3 Less than Acceptable</th>
<th>Level 4 Inadequate Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Articulates the role of teacher leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engages teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Supports teacher leaders in implementing conditions for effective school-based professional learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shares responsibility for the quality and results of school-based professional learning with teacher leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Articulates the role of teacher leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engages teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Supports teacher leaders in understanding and implementing conditions for effective school-based professional learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Articulates the role of teacher leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engages teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No evidence that principals and assistant principals articulate the role of teacher leaders.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Desired Outcome 4:** The school district leaders create multiple career pathways for teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Ideal Application</th>
<th>Level 2 Acceptable Application</th>
<th>Level 3 Less than Acceptable</th>
<th>Level 4 Inadequate Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following school-based roles:  
  o Department head  
  o Grade level chair  
  o EESAC member  
  o Club sponsor  
  o School leadership team member  
  o Lead teacher  
  **AND**  
  • District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following district-based roles:  
    o Adjunct instructor  
    o TFA Summer Mentor Teacher  
    o Curriculum writer  
    o Master teacher  
    o District PD course approver | • District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following school-based roles:  
  o Department head  
  o Grade level chair  
  o EESAC member  
  o Club sponsor  
  o School leadership team member  
  o Lead teacher  
  **OR**  
  • District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following district-based roles:  
    o Adjunct instructor  
    o TFA Summer Mentor Teacher  
    o Curriculum writer  
    o Master teacher  
    o District PD course approver | • No evidence that teacher leaders are afforded multiple career pathways within and across schools. |
APPENDIX G

Innovation Configuration Map Administered through Survey Monkey

2018-2019 Teacher LEADership Academy Survey

Welcome to the Teacher LEADership Academy Survey. Your input is valuable to us in order to measure the fidelity of implementation of the major components of the Teacher LEADership Academy during the 2018-2019 school year. Data collected from the survey will be used to customize the professional learning opportunities and support which will be offered to teacher leaders during the 2019-2020 school year.

Please choose the option that best describes implementation of each of the major components of the academy at your school site.

* 1. Please provide your work location number.

* 2. Which of the following best describes your role at your school?

  ○ Teacher
  ○ Teacher Leader
  ○ Assistant Principal
  ○ Principal

* 3. How long have you been teaching?

  ○ 0 - 3 years
  ○ 4 - 7 years
  ○ 8 years or more
4. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

- 0 - 3 years
- 4 - 7 years
- 8 years or more
5. **Component 1 - Teacher leaders develop capacity to lead professional learning.**

**Ideal Application:**

Teacher leaders identify a problem of practice as participants in the Teacher LEADership Academy.

Teacher leaders generate potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.

Teacher leaders foster trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, and build ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills.

Teacher leaders create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges.

**Acceptable Application:**

Teacher leaders identify a problem of practice as participants in the Teacher LEADership Academy.

Teacher leaders generate potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.

Teacher leaders foster trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, and build ownership and action that supports student learning through the application of facilitation skills.

**Less than Acceptable:**

Teacher leaders identify a problem of practice as participants in the Teacher LEADership Academy.

Teacher leaders generate potential approaches to address a school-based problem of practice.

**Inadequate Application:**

No evidence that teacher leaders improve ability to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges.
* 6. **Component 2** - Teacher leaders serve as leaders of professional learning.

- **Ideal Application:**

  Teacher leaders plan, implement, and evaluate school-based professional learning.

  Teacher leaders participate in and apply models of professional learning that are job embedded and sustained over time.

  Teacher leaders advocate school-wide conditions and procedures for effective school-based professional learning.

  Teacher leaders acknowledge responsibility for the quality and results of school-based professional learning.

- **Acceptable Application:**

  Teacher leaders plan, implement, and evaluate school-based professional learning.

  Teacher leaders participate in and apply models of professional learning that are job embedded and sustained over time.

  Teacher leaders advocate school-wide conditions and procedures for effective school-based professional learning.

- **Less than Acceptable:**

  Teacher leaders plan, implement, and evaluate school-based professional learning.

  Teacher leaders participate in and apply models of professional learning that are job embedded and sustained over time.

- **Inadequate Application:**

  There is no evidence that teacher leaders take an active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.
7. **Component 3** - Principals and assistant principals foster shared leadership through formal teacher leadership roles.

**Ideal Application:**

Principal and assistant principals articulate the role of teacher leaders.

Principal and assistant principals engage teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.

Principal and assistant principals support teacher leaders in implementing conditions for effective school-based professional learning.

Principal and assistant principals share responsibility for the quality and results of school-based professional learning with teacher leaders.

**Acceptable Application:**

Principal and assistant principals articulate the role of teacher leaders.

Principal and assistant principals engage teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.

Principal and assistant principals support teacher leaders in implementing conditions for effective school-based professional learning.

**Less than Adequate:**

Principal and assistant principals articulate the role of teacher leaders.

Principal and assistant principals engage teacher leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based professional learning.

**Inadequate Application:**

There is no evidence that principals and assistant principals articulate the role of teacher leaders.
8. **Component 4** - School district leaders create multiple career pathways for teacher leaders to lead within and across schools.

- **Ideal Application:**

  District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following school-based roles:

  - Department head
  - Grade level chair
  - EESAC member
  - Club sponsor
  - School leadership team member
  - Lead teacher

**AND**

District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following district-based roles:

- Adjunct instructor
- Teach for America (TFA) Summer Mentor Teacher
- Curriculum writer
- Master teacher
- District PD course approver
Acceptable Application:

District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following school-based roles:

- Department head
- Grade level chair
- EESAC member
- Club sponsor
- School leadership team member
- Lead teacher

OR

District leaders create opportunities for school-based teacher leaders to engage in at least three of the following district-based roles:

- Adjunct instructor
- Teach for America (TFA) Summer Mentor Teacher
- Curriculum writer
- Master teacher
- District PD course approver

Less than Acceptable:

There is no evidence that teacher leaders are afforded multiple career pathways within and across schools.
APPENDIX H

Perception Survey Invitation Email

We are doctoral students from the College of William and Mary, and we are conducting a research study as part of our doctoral degree requirements. Our study is entitled, *Teacher Leadership: A District’s Human Capital Investment Approach for Elevating Professional Learning*. This is a letter of invitation to participate in a perception survey as part of the overall research study.

This research study concerns the impact of participation in a teacher leadership academy on teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning of colleagues and their decision to remain in the classroom. The perception survey is designed to gather data that provides information on the value of the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy.

By agreeing to participate, you will be giving your consent to include your responses in the data analysis. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. You may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequences. Your consent is implied by submission of a completed survey.

An informed consent agreement will appear on the first screen page of the survey. There will be no individually identifiable information, remarks, comments or other identification of you as an individual participant. All results will be presented as aggregate, summary data.

The survey will last no more than 10 minutes. Your participation will contribute to the current literature on teacher leadership and professional learning.

If you decide to participate after reading this email, you can access the survey by clicking on the following link [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TeacherLEADershipAcademy](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TeacherLEADershipAcademy)

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact:

  Carmen S. Concepcion  csconcepcion@email.wm.edu
  Tricia Fernandez  tmfernandez@email.wm.edu
  Alexa Goldfarb  amgoldfarb@email.wm.edu
  Milagros Gonzalez  mgonzalez01@email.wm.edu

  Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher R. Gareis  crgare@wm.edu.

Thank you for your participation. We value your feedback.

Carmen Concepcion, Patricia M. Fernandez, Alexandra Goldfarb, Milagros Gonzalez, Principal Investigators
APPENDIX I

Perception Survey Administered through Survey Monkey

Teacher LEADership Academy Perception Survey
The following survey is designed to gather data that provides information on the value of
the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. You may withdraw consent and
terminate participation at any time without consequences. Your consent is implied by
submission of a completed survey.

Instructions: Answer the questions as they relate to the teacher leaders at your school
site.

* 1. Please provide your work location number.

* 2. Which of the following best describes your role at your school?

  ○ Teacher
  ○ Teacher Leader
  ○ Assistant Principal
  ○ Principal

* 3. How long have you been teaching?

  ○ 0 - 3 years
  ○ 4 - 7 years
  ○ 8 years or more
4. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

- 0 - 3 years
- 4 - 7 years
- 8 years or more

5. Teacher leaders at your school coordinate, monitor, and support the fidelity of implementation in the professional learning opportunities offered to all teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. Teacher leaders at your school coordinate, monitor, and support the fidelity of implementation in the mentoring and induction program provided to new and early career teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. Teacher leaders at your school coordinate, monitor, and support the fidelity of implementation of a range of digital innovation tools used in the district to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning opportunities.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
8. Teacher leaders at your school coordinate, monitor and support the fidelity of implementation of a range of instructional coaching practices to positively and effectively impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. Teacher leaders at your school collaborate with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Teacher leaders at your school use information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. Teacher leaders at your school work with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
* 12. Teacher leaders at your school advocate with building and district leadership for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

* 13. Teacher leaders at your school provide constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3968) ON 2019-12-02 AND EXPIRES ON 2020-12-02.
APPENDIX J

Focus Group Invitation Email

Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 17:15:18 Eastern Standard Time

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group Regarding the Teacher LEADership Academy
Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2020 at 9:23:35 PM Eastern Standard Time
From: Concepcion, Carmen S.
To: Chandler, Angela W., Monica, Lisa E., Case, Judith A., Garcia, Jennifer L.
CC: Fernandez, Patricia M., Gonzalez, Milagros, Martillo, Alexandra V.

Dear Teacher Leaders,

Eight of the 72 schools that participated in Cohorts 1 and 2 of the M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) have been selected to participate in focus groups. The focus groups are intended to provide you an opportunity to express your thoughts, experiences, and observations regarding the impact of the academy. Questions for discussion will relate to the components of the M-DCPS TLA you find to have had the greatest impact in supporting your ability to lead professional learning and the impact the academy had on your decision to remain in the classroom.

Your school has been scheduled to participate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. The discussion will last approximately 45 minutes. Focus groups will take place at the Center for Professional Learning located at 525 NW 147th St, Miami, FL 33168. If you agree to participate, please respond to this email. Teacher leaders from all grade levels, subject, and years of experience are encouraged to participate.

Thank you so much for your support. We value your feedback!

Carmen Concepcion, Patricia M. Fernandez, Alexandra Goldfarb, Milagros Gonzalez
APPENDIX K

Consent Form

TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A DISTRICT’S HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT APPROACH FOR ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
The College of William and Mary

This research study concerns the impact of participation in a teacher leadership academy on teacher leaders’ ability to lead professional learning of colleagues and their decision to remain in the classroom.

Presentations and manuscripts may result from the analysis of these data. Information gathered through this study may benefit and inform others on the impact teacher leaders may have in elevating professional learning among their colleagues. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating other than those encountered in daily life. The researchers are conducting this study as part their doctoral dissertation at the College of William and Mary.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Carmen Concepcion, csconcepcion@email.wm.edu; Patricia M. Fernandez, tmfernandez@email.wm.edu; Alexa Goldfarb, amgoldfarb@email.wm.edu; Milagros Gonzalez, mgonzalez01@email.wm.edu the principal investigators; our faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Gareis, crgare@wm.edu; chair of the Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC), Dr. Steve Constantino, smconstantino@wm.edu; or Dr. Peggy Constantino, meconstantino@wm.edu.

Please read the following statements and indicate your permissions below.

I understand that my involvement in this study is purposeful in that permissions and consent will be obtained only for those included in the narrative. I understand that I may be asked for additional permissions regarding the use of text communications, such as email correspondence, social media posts, and/or cell phone texts.

I understand that I may be asked to voluntarily read portions of the narrative that are associated with my involvement in the researcher’s experience as they are composed. Additionally, I may be asked to offer feedback on the written representation using specific guidelines prepared by the researcher.

I further understand that the researcher will hold my information in strict confidence and that no comments will be attributed to me by name without my specific permission. I have the option to provide a pseudonym of my choice, but I also recognize there is a possibility of identification given the nature of the study.
I recognize that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time or decline to give permission in a particular instance. Any artifacts provided or created during the course of the study may become part of the permanent research files unless otherwise requested.

By signing below, I give consent that my involvement and interactions may be included in the study.

Participant ________________________________ Date______
Pseudonym (if desired) ________________________________
Researcher ________________________________ Date ______

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2019-12-02 AND EXPIRES ON 2020-12-02.
**Introduction**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) established the Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) as a means of increasing school-based, job-embedded professional development learning opportunities anchored on the District’s Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI). The M-DCPS TLA extends and supports existing structures and incorporates differentiated professional learning opportunities and career lattice pathways aimed at improving teacher leaders’ ability to lead high quality professional learning.

As you know, we are conducting focus groups to determine your level of preparedness in supporting teacher’s effectiveness as a result of having participated in the M-DCPS TLA and the impact of the academy on your decision to remain in the classroom. The semi-structure interview process will allow us to ask “base” questions and to ask follow-up questions based on your responses. We hope to facilitate an open dialogue where you feel comfortable sharing your personal experiences with the M-DCPS TLA.

*Ask interview participants to read and sign consent form.*

*Obtain permission to audio-record interview.*
Focus Group Questions

Directions

This is a semi-structured focus group. The main questions are numbered in Arabic numbers with probing questions listed alphabetically. Each focus group will be conducted by two of the researchers. One of the researchers will serve as a facilitator and the other as a recorder. Each question will be asked by the facilitator and participant responses will be audio recorded and their responses will be transcribed at a later time.

One of the researchers will take notes to allow for analytic review.

1. Do you feel better prepared to support teachers’ effectiveness as a result of your participation in the Teacher LEADership Academy?

   a. What is your definition of effective professional learning? Would your colleagues agree with your definition of professional learning?

   b. How do you think your own comfort with the Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI) has influenced your choice of adult learning strategies when planning and delivering professional development at your school site?

   c. What would the teachers at your school site say about the support they’ve received from you?

   d. How have your perspectives on the use of technology to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning influenced how you have structured the support you have provided your colleagues?

   e. What evidence do you have from your fellow teacher leaders about the quality of professional learning you have provided at your school site and its effect on teaching and student learning?

   f. How might your assumptions about sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning have influenced what you have tried so far?

   g. Do you provide constructive feedback to your colleagues? If so, do you think it has strengthen their practice and improved student learning? Please explain.
2. Has participating in the Teacher LEADership Academy impacted your decision to remain in the classroom?

a. What is the connection between the M-DCPS TLA and your decision to lead from the classroom?

b. What are some ways you might share information with colleagues within your school and across the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning?

c. What might you see happening in your school if you worked with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students?

d. What sort of an impact do you think collaborating with colleagues to secure additional resources within the building or district for professional development would have on teachers’ professional growth and student learning?

e. What resources do you think are needed to significantly increase the time teachers spend learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on student improvement goals?

Additional Probing Questions

1. Why do you think your colleagues have or have not requested your support?
2. What would understanding of the M-DCPS TLA look like? How would you know that your colleagues have “gotten it”?
3. What do you think would happen if you restated your professional goals as questions?
4. What other approaches have you considered for communicating with colleagues about their professional learning needs?

Researchers may also use the following questions and/or question stems to craft additional probing questions (Mattoon & McKean, 2015):

1. Why do you think this is the case?
2. What would have to change in order for…?
3. What do you wish…?
4. What would it look like if…?
5. What do you think would happen if…?
6. How was… different from…?
7. What criteria did you use to…?
8. When have you done/experienced something like this before?
9. How did you decide/determine/conclude…?
10. What is your hunch about ….?
11. What was your intention when ….?
12. What do you assume to be true about ….?
13. What if the opposite were true? Then what?
14. Why is this such a dilemma for you?
APPENDIX M

A Priori Codes for Focus Group Interview Responses

Research Question 3 Focus Group Responses

A priori Code One: Professional Learning Leader

Domain III: The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Function</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
<th>Researcher/Coder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Works with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Advocates for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 4 Focus Group Responses

*A priori* Code Two: Advocate for Student Learning and the Profession

**Domain VII:** The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Function</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
<th>Researcher/Coder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. <em>Shares information with colleagues</em> within and/or beyond the district regarding how <em>local, state, and national trends and policies</em> can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <em>Works with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes</em> that meet the needs of all students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. <em>Advocates for access to professional resources,</em> including <em>financial support and human and other material resources,</em> that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a <em>professional learning community</em> focused on <em>school improvement goals.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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VITA

CARMEN S. CONCEPCIÓN

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND


Educational Specialist (Ed.S.), Reading Education. (2006). University of Miami, Miami, FL.

Master of Arts in Education (M.A.Ed.), Teaching English to Students of Other Languages. (2000). Nova Southeastern University, Davie, FL.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Social Studies Education. (1993). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Executive Director, (2016-present). OPDE, M-DCPS, Miami, FL.

Director at Large, (2016-present). Learning Forward Florida, Panama City, FL.


Educational Specialist, (2012-2014). OPDE, M-DCPS, Miami, FL.

Adjunct Professor of English for Academic Purposes Program, (2011). Miami-Dade College, Miami, FL.

Adjunct Instructor of Reading Endorsement Program, (2009-2014). OPDE, M-DCPS, Miami, FL.

Adjunct Instructor of ESOL Endorsement Program, (2013-present). Beacon Educator, Panama City, FL.


Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence Center (FLaRE) Coordinator, (2007-2008), University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL.


Middle School ESOL and Reading Teacher, (2000-2006). M-DCPS, Miami, FL.


Cadre Graduate, Learning Forward Academy, (2017), Learning Forward Professional Learning Organization, Dallas, TX.
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TRICIA M. FERNANDEZ

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND


Master of Science (M.S.), Educational Leadership. (2003). Nova Southeastern University, Miami, FL.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Elementary Education. (1998). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE


Principal, (2009-2013). Miami Shores Elementary School, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.

Assistant Principal, (2007-2009). Carol City Middle School, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.

Assistant Principal, (2004-2007). North County Elementary School, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.


Cadre Member, Impact FL, (2019-2020). Tallahassee, FL.

Cadre Member, Urban Schools Human Capital Academy, (2019-2020). Rockville, MD.

Cohort Member, Florida Department of Education, Teacher Table, (2018-2019). Tallahassee, FL.

Cadre Member, Principals Leadership Development Program, (2010-2011). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

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ALEXANDRA M. GOLDFARB

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND


Educational Specialist (Ed.S.), Leadership. (2009). Nova Southeastern University, Davie, FL.

Master of Science (M.S.), Computing and Technology Education. (2006). Barry University, Miami, FL.

Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Elementary Education. (2000). Barry University, Miami, FL.

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Executive Director, (2017-present). OPDE, M-DCPS, Miami, FL.


Assistant Principal, (2011-2013). M-DCPS, Miami, FL.


Adjunct Professor of Computer Competency, (2011-2013). Miami-Dade College, Miami, FL.


Cohort Member, Women Leaders Program, (2019). Florida International University, Miami, FL.
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MILAGROS GONZALEZ

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

**Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership.** (2020). The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

**Master of Science (M.S.), Educational Leadership.** (2006). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

**Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Elementary Education.** (1995). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**District Director,** (2016-present). Bureau of Human Capital Management, Human Resources, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.

**Executive Director,** (2013-2016). Office of Professional Development and Evaluation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.

**Instructional Supervisor,** (2008-2013). Office of Professional Development and Evaluation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.


**Teacher,** (1995-2006). Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL.

**Cadre Member,** Urban Schools Human Capital Academy, (2019-2020). Phoenix, AZ.

**Cadre Graduate,** Learning Forward Academy, (2018), Learning Forward Professional Learning Organization, Dallas, TX.

**Cohort Member,** Women Leaders Program, (2018). Florida International University, Miami, FL.

**Cohort Member,** Florida Department of Education, Professional Development System Redevelopment, (2012-2013). Tallahassee, FL.

**Cohort Member,** Harvard’s Art of Leadership, (2011). Cambridge, MA.

**Cadre Member,** Introduction to Instructional Mentoring (2008), The New Teacher Center, Aptos, CA.