An Examination of the Structures, Functions, and Perceived Effectiveness of

School Leadership Teams in Underperforming High Schools

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education and Human Development

University of Virginia

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

_____

by

Bryan A. VanGronigen, M.Ed., B.S.Ed.

May 2019

ABSTRACT

Whether by choice or necessity, many of today's educational leaders have implemented ways to share leadership and management responsibilities with staff members. One approach is to create a school leadership team (SLT), an organizational structure composed of a group of staff members who aid the principal. Despite the popularity of SLTs, few studies have investigated them, especially as a potential lever for building schools' capacities for leadership and for continuous improvement. This study employed a two-phase mixed-methods design to examine the structures, functions, operations, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs in 17 underperforming high schools in the United States. Phase 1 entailed conducting semi-structured interviews with 40 SLT and non-SLT members in 15 high schools. Phase 2 consisted of administering a five-part survey, the *School Leadership Team Inventory* (*SLTi*), to 73 SLT members in 12 high schools in the United States. The findings inform the field's understanding on how educational leaders in challenging school contexts distribute leadership, particularly with respect to planning and implementing school improvement efforts.

Bryan A. VanGronigen
Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Policy
Curry School of Education and Human Development
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, An Examination of the Structures, Functions, and Perceived
Effectiveness of School Leadership Teams in Underperforming High Schools, has been
approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education and Human
Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

_____
Dr. Daniel L. Duke, Chair

_____
Dr. Pamela D. Tucker

_____
Dr. Michelle D. Young

_____
Dr. Coby V. Meyers

_____
Dr. Donald J. Peurach

_____
Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who make the deliberate choice to serve others or to invest in the development and success of others. For many, these people are often teachers, administrators, professors, doctors, nurses, law enforcement officials, emergency medical personnel, social workers, public defenders, coaches, advisors, mentors, and volunteers. For me, they are my teachers, my professors, my advisors, my mentors, my colleagues, my partners in service, my dear friends, and—most importantly—my family, especially my parents. As the old adage goes, "We stand on the shoulders of giants." Chuck and Debbie VanGronigen, thank you for being my giants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The jobs of educational leaders in the 21st century, from assistant principals to superintendents, are more complex than ever before (Duke, 2015; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Peterson, 2001; Sebastian, Camburn, & Spillane, 2018). Within schools, principals face ever-expanding lists of functions to perform and tasks to complete, such as leading the school improvement process (Duke, Carr, & Sterrett, 2013), devising subject-specific professional development workshops (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), strengthening school-wide instructional coherence (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001), and managing the school's presence and image on social media (Fox, 2016). Each added function and task demands more of principals' most precious resource—their time (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015).

For high school principals, the workload increases in size and scope since the school itself is more complex, with larger numbers of students, faculty, staff members, departments, and programs needing coordination and supervision (Siskin, 1997; Valentine & Prater, 2011). For principals of state-designated underperforming schools, the workload increases even more. These leaders have to satisfy federal, state, and local accountability policy requirements while leading schools that often have lower daily attendance rates, higher dropout rates, fewer engaged parents, higher rates of staff turnover, and less connection to their surrounding communities (Berliner, 2006; Duke, 2004, 2015; Trujillo & Renée, 2015).

To contend with expanding workloads, many principals have implemented an array of approaches and strategies to share leadership and management responsibilities among staff (e.g., teachers) and community members (e.g., parents, students). One common practice involves principals creating a variety of temporary or standing teams (Cardno, 2012), such as behavioral intervention teams, professional learning community (PLC) teams, school improvement teams, school leadership teams, site-based management teams, and teacher leadership teams. Growing evidence demonstrates how more collaborative approaches to school leadership and management can positively influence student learning outcomes and enhance schools' abilities to improve (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017). Little is known, however, about the specific methods by which principals share responsibilities with others (DeMatthews, 2014).

One approach noted above calls for principals to create a school leadership team (SLT), an organizational structure composed of a select group of staff members, to aid in leading and managing the school (Chrispeels & Martin, 2002). Extant research suggests the definitions, forms, and purposes of SLTs can vary from school to school, and that a single school might have more than one SLT (e.g., administrative team, SLT; Collins, 2016). A synthesis of the literature reveals that a typical SLT includes the principal, any assistant principals, grade level leaders/department chairs (depending on school level), and other administrative staff members, such as an athletic director (Collins, 2016). With roots in the business world, the SLT approach is by no means new or revolutionary, having existed for some time—especially in high schools (Sprague, 1973). Despite SLTs' longevity and omnipresence, few studies have investigated them, particularly in high

schools, underperforming schools, and underperforming high schools (Collins, 2016; Markette, 2012). Not much is known about the composition, structures, functions, and operations of SLTs, especially in schools in the United States. With scholars asserting that the days of "hero principals" that single-handedly improve schools are unlikely to return (Bush & Glover, 2014; Thomas, 2009), it is incumbent upon researchers to examine in greater depth the approaches and strategies principals have used to share responsibilities. Thus, the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of SLTs in underperforming high schools, in particular, by examining their composition, structures, functions, and operations, along with how staff members defined and evaluated perceived SLT effectiveness.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. The chapter first discusses the evolution of the job of educational leader along with the ways those leaders, due to the job's increasing complexity, have started sharing leadership and management responsibilities with others. The next sections describe the additional complexities of the jobs of educational leaders in underperforming high schools, and then discusses the present study's rationale, purpose, research questions, definitions of terms, and significance. The chapter closes with summaries of the study's conceptual framework and methodology, which are explained in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

The Evolving Complexity of the Job of Educational Leader

From the early to mid-1900s, educational leadership preparation and practice focused on the "technical and mechanical aspects of administration" (Gregg, 1969, p. 994; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Superintendents and principals performed mainly administrative tasks, such as creating schedules, procuring supplies, and supervising

facilities (Rousmaniere, 2013). Many of those training educational leaders at the time came directly from the superintendency, concerned themselves with the practical aspects of the job, and "showed little proclivity for research" (Murphy, 1998, p. 363; Newlon, 1934). Reflecting the scientific management movement's influence on public and private organizations of the time (Taylor, 1914), the role and functions of an educational leader dealt more with managing, not leading, a school (Bush, 2011; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

During the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, though, the results of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study, better known as the Coleman Report (Coleman, 1966), directed the attention of both the public and of scholars toward an important question: How can schools be more effective? Two of the report's most salient conclusions centered on (a) schools' apparent limited influence on student outcomes, particularly achievement on standardized tests; and (b) the pervasive influence of out-of-school factors, such as poverty, family structure, and segregation, on students' experiences in schools (Coleman, 1966). While scores of scholars have since debated the report's methodology and assertions (e.g., Hanushek & Kain, 1972), it sparked a line of inquiry among researchers about how to create more effective schools, school districts, and educators (Trujillo & Renée, 2015).

What constituted an "effective" school, however, remained contested (Murphy, 1998). Research did start to coalesce around a number of characteristics of an effective school, though—one of which was having a principal who balanced attention to three areas of responsibility: (a) routine administration, (b) instructional leadership, and (c) human relations (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Lorzeau, 1977). An effective principal served as the school's chief instructor by assessing teachers' content knowledge

and pedagogical skills and crafting professional development opportunities for staff members (Hallinger, 1992). The job no longer entailed just administrative tasks. Additionally, the very view of leadership started to shift from transactional to transformational (Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973). Rather than seeking to maintain the status quo via compliance as a transactional leader, an effective principal cultivated relationships with staff members to identify changes, establish a guiding vision, and work hand-in-hand to realize that vision (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Principals were now expected to transform schools into more effective organizations, but to do that, they needed to secure and sustain staff member commitment, which required a combination of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Bass, 1985; Leithwood, 1990).

The roles and responsibilities of educational leaders further expanded after the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which ushered in the modern era of school accountability (Placier, 1993). The report asserted that a "rising tide of mediocrity" in schools threatened the economic competitiveness of the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). At the time, the U.S. Congress left it up to states to devise their own solutions to stem the rising tide, which led to states creating of a variety of accountability systems that ranged in depth and scope (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005). States introduced reporting requirements, implemented educator measurement and evaluation systems, revised educator licensure standards, and broadened standardized testing (Bales, 2006; Linn, 2001). In addition to state directives, the U.S. Congress' 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965—the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—introduced new federal stipulations for schools. While some federal and state policies

targeted state education agency (SEA) staff members, school- and district-level leaders were the ones largely responsible for implementing governmental directives. Principals, for instance, had to draft and submit a yearly school improvement plan (SIP), evaluate teachers using a district or state evaluation system, and coordinate and supervise the administration of additional standardized testing (Bales, 2006). These new responsibilities were in addition to their roles as chief instructional leader, chief organizational transformer, and chief administrator. In fact, as Manna (2006) notes, a number of federal and state policies simply added, and did not remove, responsibilities and requirements for educational leaders.

An Increasing Need to Distribute Leadership in Schools

Copland (2001) cautions that the role's increasing demands are running the risk of many schools needing to hire "superprincipals" (p. 528). Grubb and Flessa (2006) argue that the standards-based accountability movement (e.g., NCLB) called into question whether the traditional, rational model of organization—which places a single principal atop and in charge of a defined hierarchy of staff members—is still capable of structuring schools in the 21st century. The principalship has become a job that scholars and practitioners (e.g., Bush & Glover, 2014) now assert cannot be done alone. Not only do educational leaders need to focus on improving teaching and learning, but they also must lead efforts to foster family-school engagement (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014), review student formative assessment data (Anderson, Leithwood, & Strauss, 2010), implement restorative justice discipline programs (Lustick, 2017), and coordinate contracting and procurement processes with third-party vendors (Finnigan & Stewart, 2010).

These and other functions and responsibilities have forced schools to rethink and repurpose a number of traditional structures, functions, and operations. Many principals—whether by desire, mandate, or necessity—have started implementing more collaborative approaches to school leadership and management, such as delegating (Wallace, 2001), distributing (Gronn, 2000), and sharing (Marks & Printy, 2003) responsibilities. The distributed approach to school leadership, in particular, has received a significant amount of attention from researchers and practitioners within the past two decades (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Spillane, 2012), and the term itself has come to stand for a number of collaborative leadership approaches, which often include forming temporary or standing teams of various staff members (Cardno, 2012; Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Harris, 2008).

Examples of distributed approaches include the creation of (a) site-based management teams, a group of staff members and local community members charged with governing the school (Wallace & Hall, 1994); (b) teacher leadership teams that perform a range of instructional functions within a school, such as coaching peers on instructional improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004); (c) PLCs, which are groups of educators that work together and share expertise to improve their teaching and, ultimately, student learning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Hord, 1997); and (d) school leadership teams (SLTs), a group of staff and/or community members who assist in leading and managing the school (Chrispeels & Martin, 2002).

Emerging evidence helps build the case that groups of people working interdependently and leading together within schools accomplish much more than a single educational leader can alone (Bush & Glover, 2012). Studies have found that more

collaborative approaches to school leadership, such as creating teams and involving more formal and informal leaders in school decision-making, can increase student learning and improve teacher working conditions (Cucchiara, Rooney, & Robertson-Kraft, 2015; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane & Healey, 2010). This research continues to promise that collaborative approaches can improve individual student and overall school performance.

In some cases, though, principals may choose *not* to implement a collaborative approach. Distributing leadership, for instance, requires a normative shift in how schools operate and how principals and staff members view one another (Bush & Glover, 2014; Murphy, 2015). Wallace and Hall (1994) suggest that "adopting a team approach in more than name is a high-risk strategy" (p. 183), especially since accountability policies hold principals largely responsible for their school's performance (van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). Principals of underperforming schools might prefer to consolidate responsibilities and power early on in their tenure in order to make much-needed, long overdue changes (Duke & Landahl, 2011; Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010; Meyers & Hitt, 2017).

Alternatively, principals might desire to distribute leadership in order to create a more democratic school (Murphy & Beck, 1995), but hesitate because they believe their staff members lack the ability and/or capacity to take on the additional leadership responsibilities (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Moreover, some principals have been shown to distribute too much responsibility too soon in their tenures, leading to overwhelmed staff members and stunted reform implementation (Duke & Landahl, 2011). Thus, when principals decide to distribute leadership and management responsibilities to other staff members, they need to take into consideration

the schools' context and short- and long-term goals, as not every situation is appropriate

for a collaborative approach (McLaughlin, 1987; Reiser et al., 2000).

Compounding the Complexity of the Job of Educational Leader

While the prior section discussed the evolution of the job of educational leader in

general, complexity compounds for leaders of high schools and underperforming schools.

Payne (2008) notes how high schools, in particular, have been resistant to many

improvement and reform initiatives. Recent federal accountability policies (e.g., NCLB,

the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 [ESSA]) calling for the rapid improvement of

underperforming schools only exacerbate the situation for U.S. high schools.

Duke and Jacobson (2011) list several factors that can impede rapid change

efforts in high schools, such as schools' size and level of fragmentation along with

students who might be unprepared for high school-level work. Among the studies

examining rapid school improvement efforts, some found examples of high schools that

have seen success (Galindo, Stein, & Schaffer, 2016), but there are far more success

stories of elementary and middle schools (Herman, 2012; McMurrer, 2012a, 2012b; Stuit,

2012). Thus, there is a need to explore ways to better position underperforming high

schools for future success.

Addressing Duke and Jacobson's (2011) first concern—size—federal education

data lists the average enrollment of U.S. high schools as 854 students, nearly double the

average U.S. elementary school's enrollment of 450 students. With one teacher for every

18 students plus administrative and support staff members, the total can increase to

around 925—a population greater than some small U.S. towns. At the helm, similar to a

small-town mayor, is usually a single principal charged with creating coherence while

leading and managing the school (Newmann et al., 2001). The sheer size and complexity of high schools can resemble, as one high school principal in Siskin's (1997) study noted, a "36-ring circus" (p. 606).

Addressing Duke and Jacobson's (2011) second concern—fragmentation—most high schools are departmentalized with little horizontal and vertical communication and collaboration among staff members (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). In his review exploring the barriers and constraints to building more collaborative communities of staff members within U.S. schools, Murphy (2015) argues that schools' time use—that is, how they design their schedules—can "make shared work a mere footnote in the teacher workday" (p. 157), and professional norms encourage teachers to "spend very little time attending to the work of their colleagues" (p. 158). These structural and cultural aspects of the profession help preserve the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 88) and hamper efforts aimed at reshaping individualistic school cultures into more collective enterprises (Murphy, 2015).

In addition to size and fragmentation issues, underperforming high schools in the U.S. face a number of additional challenges, most notably the threat of outright closure after persistent low performance. High schools are in acutely different situations compared to elementary schools since scores of students who enroll in ninth grade may be unprepared for high school work (Farrington, 2014). The high school, however, is ultimately held responsible for students' performance, regardless of prior preparedness. As a result, there exists a significant impetus for high school administrators and teachers to ascertain students' current abilities and devise plans of action to quickly improve performance. While such an endeavor is possible, many underperforming schools,

particularly high-poverty and/or urban high schools, tend to employ more inexperienced

administrators and teachers and face higher rates of staff member turnover (Fuller &

Schrott, 2015; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2015). These two

realities, among many others inside and outside underperforming schools (Berliner, 2009;

Duke, 2015), can stymie improvement efforts.

Building the Capacity for Leadership within Schools

According to Stoll (2009), improvement efforts are more likely to be sustained

when schools build and strengthen their capacity for continuous improvement. Forman,

Stosich, and Bocala (2017) assert that a school's capacity for continuous improvement

consists of a number of domains, such as leadership for school improvement,

collaborative organizational processes, and collective efficacy beliefs. Schools can build

their capacity for continuous improvement by building their capacity for leadership,

which Lambert (2002) defines as the "broad-based, skillful participation in the work of

leadership" among staff members (p. 4). Schools with a greater capacity for leadership

involve larger numbers of staff members in leading and managing various aspects of the

school (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris & Lambert, 2003).

The actual efforts to build schools' capacity for leadership, however, can clash

with longstanding norms in the education profession. While scholarship shows that staff

members do raise concerns about school structures and operations, they rarely initiate and

lead improvement efforts in schools (e.g., Harris & Lambert, 2003). Murphy (2015) cites

two powerful norms that lead to this behavior: (a) the norm dividing teaching and

administration, and (b) the norm of the managerial imperative (Cuban, 1988). According

to the first norm, the traditional task of teachers is to teach and the traditional task of

administrators is to lead—this role separation dictates that administrators mandate

initiatives and teachers implement those initiatives (MacBeath, 2009; Murphy, 2005;

Teitel, 1996). According to the second norm, the domain of "school" outside individual

classrooms belongs to administrators, not teachers. Teachers view school-wide initiatives,

such as school improvement efforts, as something that falls under the principal's

jurisdiction (Keedy, 1999; Smylie, 1992). As a result, principals of underperforming high

schools are in a powerful position to initiate meaningful improvement efforts within their

schools. One way forward might be for principals to implement the SLT approach in

order to strengthen their schools' capacity for leadership, which, to Forman and

colleagues (2017), could strengthen their schools' capacity for continuous improvement

(see Figure 1).
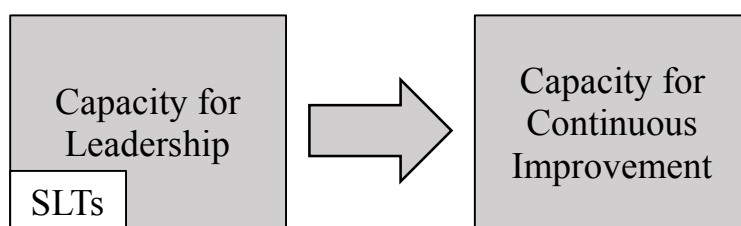
Figure 1. SLTs' potential as a way for schools to increase their capacity for leadership to, in turn, increase their capacity for continuous improvement.

Study Rationale

As prior sections noted, the leaders of today's underperforming high schools face

many challenges that are often too multifaceted to tackle by themselves (Duke, 2015;

Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). A potential solution may be

to adopt a more collaborative approach to school leadership and management by forming

an SLT. Cardno (2012) maintains that SLTs are one of the most prevalent standing teams

in schools, meaning that they are built into the organizational structure of the school. An

SLT might be a critical structure and center of leadership activity for improving student and school performance and, eventually, improving an underperforming high school.

Much of the substantive work on SLTs examines U.K. primary and secondary schools in the 1990s—a time period bracketed by two influential laws passed by the U.K. government that permitted the devolution of governance authority from local education agencies (LEAs) to individual schools (Wallace & Hall, 1994; Wallace & Huckman, 1996, 1999). While some findings can be applied to schools outside the U.K., the U.S. policy context, especially after NCLB's passage in 2001, created a markedly different environment in which schools operated (Elmore, 2004). For the first time in U.S. history, schools that consistently failed to meet federal accountability requirements could be closed outright (Johnson, 2013), making the need for rapid improvement all the more important. A considerable amount of research on rapid school improvement efforts, however, focuses on elementary schools, not high schools (Duke & Jacobson, 2011). Furthermore, in many studies examining leadership of underperforming schools, the unit of analysis is often the principal, not a collaborative leadership and management structure like an SLT (Chenoweth, 2007).

Given the multitude of issues in underperforming high schools, scholars (e.g., Cosner & Jones, 2016) argue these schools no longer can rely upon the rare "hero principal" to lead improvement efforts; they require collaboration to realize progress. Based on their extensive work in Chicago Public Schools, Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) argue that leadership is the "driving subsystem" (p. 61) for improvement efforts in schools—and perhaps SLTs are a way to leverage a group of staff members to build a stronger subsystem to implement and sustain change.

However, SLTs should not be viewed as a panacea to improving student and school performance (Chapman et al., 2008). Locke and colleagues (2001) caution against the current "age of groupism" (p. 501), recommending collaborative structures like SLTs supplement—not replace—hierarchical leadership. SLTs, as organizational structures, stand to increase the complexity already present in high schools (e.g., Siskin, 1997). Moreover, the SLT approach introduces a number of staff members into the school decision-making process, which can hinder abilities to quickly identify and implement much-needed improvement efforts (e.g., Le Floch et al., 2016). Still some principals of underperforming high schools may face a shortage of qualified staff members to join SLTs (e.g., Thompson, Brown, Townsend, Henry, & Fortner, 2011). Those they select receive a set of responsibilities that are layered on top of existing responsibilities, which raises concerns about overwhelmed staff members who might, themselves, underperform (e.g., Duke & Landahl, 2011). Thus, whether principals should implement the SLT approach, especially in underperforming high schools facing heightened accountability pressures, remains an open question.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

SLTs have been around for some time (Sprague, 1973), often in large and complex high schools (Wallace & Hall, 1994). Despite their prevalence, surprisingly few studies have explored the variability in composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceptions of SLTs, much less how such variation may influence improvement efforts. The purpose of the present study was to develop a better understanding of SLTs in underperforming high schools: who is involved, what do they do, how do they do it, and how effective they are.

Specifically, this study addressed the following three research questions within the context of underperforming high schools:

1. What are the composition and structures of SLTs?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLT composition and structures?

2. What are the functions of SLTs, and how do SLTs organize to perform their functions?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLTs' functions and how SLTs organize to perform their functions?

3. How do staff members define and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in how staff members define and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

These exploratory research questions were intended to help establish a foundation upon which to build future, larger-scale studies of teams in high schools. To eventually collect and analyze data at scale, though, it is necessary to create surveys that capture data—especially variability—across an array of schools. Presently, few publicly-available surveys exist for researchers and practitioners to inventory and assess schools' leadership and management structures, particularly teams (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009; Kelley, 2010). One of this study's products is the *School Leadership Team Inventory (SLTi)*, a multi-part survey that gathers descriptive data on SLT composition, structures, functions, and operations along with perceptual data about perceived SLT effectiveness.

Definition of Terms

The term "*delegating leadership*" represents the assignment of a responsibility, role, or task by a principal to another staff member with little to no interaction with and/or input from the staff member about subsuming the responsibility, role, or task into their existing work (Bush & Glover, 2014; Chapman et al., 2008; Wallace, 2002).

The term "*distributing leadership*" represents when a principal interacts and collaborates with one or more staff member(s) to discuss and arrive at a decision about having the staff member(s) subsume the responsibility, role, or task into their existing work (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). These interactions and collaborations are stretched over the school's social and situational contexts (Spillane, 2006, 2012).

The term "*underperforming high school*" is defined as a school comprised of at least three grade levels that range from grades 9 through 12 that received the lowest or second-lowest accountability rating based on an individual state's school tiered accountability system for the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and/or 2017-2018 school years. The Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Standards of Accreditation, for example, divide schools into three major groups based on a set of state-determined criteria: (a) fully accredited, (b) partially accredited, and (c) accreditation denied (VDOE, 2018). High schools receiving partial accreditation or accreditation denied would be considered underperforming.

The term "*leadership responsibilities*" is defined as the set of responsibilities that align with the inclusive-facilitative dimension of Bryk and colleagues' (2010) three-dimensional school leadership subsystem. This dimension focuses on leaders' ability to

nurture individual and collective agency among staff members and build collective capacity to consistently perform at high levels. The inclusive-facilitative dimension is the "lubricant" (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 64) that keeps all of the parts associated with strong organizational performance moving forward efficiently and successfully (Bush & Glover, 2014).

The term "*management responsibilities*" is defined as the set of responsibilities that align with managerial and instructional dimensions of Bryk and colleagues' (2010) three-dimensional school leadership subsystem. The managerial dimension, such as developing budgets, focuses on operations and systems that are essential to running the school. The instructional dimension focuses on leaders' role as supervisor of the school's "core technology" (Mintzberg, 1979) of teaching and learning (Bush, 2011).

The term "*policy*" is defined as "any official action taken at the district or school level for the purpose of encouraging or requiring consistency and regularity" (Duke & Canady, 1991, p. 2). An example of a policy would be the creation of a discipline program rooted in restorative justice principles that staff members are charged with implementing.

The term "*school leadership team (SLT)*" is defined as a group of staff and/or community members (e.g., administrators, teachers, support staff members, parents, students) that are involved in discussing and/or making major policy, leadership, and management decisions on behalf of other staff members (Wallace, 2001). Depending on context, a single school might have multiple SLTs that perform different functions.

The term "*sharing leadership*" is defined using Marks and Printy's (2003) framework as when teachers formally or informally assume "leadership responsibility

when they interact with other adults in the school community around school reform efforts, encourage others to improve their professional practice, or learn together with their school colleagues" (p. 574).

The term "*perceived SLT effectiveness*" is defined as the extent to which the SLT's performance aligns with the expectations for performance held by staff members. For example, the SLT might decide, as a group, to focus their actions on increasing authentic collaboration between academic departments in a high school. To be considered effective, teachers in the academic departments must perceive both a need for engaging and that they now engage in more authentic collaboration because of the SLT's actions. Duke (1986) maintains that "leadership" is regarded as a perception, and actions do not constitute "leadership" until observers perceive them as such. In other words, actions taken by positional leaders (e.g., principals) are not considered "leadership" until others (e.g., staff members) perceive those actions to be "leadership."

The term "*team*" is defined as a "distinguishable set of two or more people who interact, dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively toward a common and valued goal/objective/mission, who have been assigned specific roles or functions to perform" (Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992, p. 4).

Significance of the Study and Contribution to the Field

Studies have found that when principals employ a collaborative approach to school leadership and management, they can strengthen schools' abilities to improve (e.g., Chapman et al., 2008), which can enhance students' performance (e.g., Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). However, context matters, and much of the existing literature examines high-performing schools or schools not contending with high-stakes

accountability pressures. This study updates and extends the extant literature by providing insight into how principals in some of the most challenging school contexts—underperforming high schools—distributed leadership and management responsibilities.

Findings suggested that SLTs existed alongside a number of other leadership teams in underperforming high schools and included staff members from a variety of departments, offices, and programs. SLTs commonly served as a voice of the staff at-large, relayed information among staff members, and participated in specific school improvement efforts, such as drafting SIPs. Few SLTs, however, engaged in leading instruction or creating professional development initiatives—a surprising finding given the contexts in which this study occurred. While participants considered their SLTs to be enabling structures within underperforming high schools, certain features raised questions about the extent to which SLTs actually improved school performance. Thus, principals of underperforming high schools—many of whom were viewed as powerful, positive influences on the SLTs in the present study—should consider implementing the SLT approach with care, as implementation remains an open question.

This study is the first step into a larger consideration of SLTs in an array of school types and helped frame part of the puzzle's outer boundaries. Based on the literature regarding groups and teams outside the education field (Burke et al., 2006; Cox, Pearce, & Perry, 2003; Pentland, 2012), it can be hypothesized that the composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs may influence how they operate, which, in turn, may influence how schools operate. Studies (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010) have found school leadership to be a mediating influence on student performance, especially when leaders foster more positive

teacher working conditions (Cucchiara et al., 2015) and provide high-quality and

appropriate professional development (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). When school

leadership is expanded beyond a single person (e.g., principal), SLTs may become a

powerful mediating influence to aid schools in accomplishing their most important goal:

improving student learning (Dimmock & Walker, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

In their seminal work on organizational theory, Bolman and Deal (2003) identify

four "frames" (i.e., perspectives) for use in studying organizations: (a) *structural*, (b)

political, (c) *human resources*, and (d) *symbolic*. While each frame has its own set of

assumptions for use in analyzing organizational phenomena, Bolman and Deal (2003)

suggest integrating (p. 304) the frames in order to enrich the examination of the

phenomenon of interest. Since this study explored the composition, structures, functions,

operations, and perceptions of SLTs, the conceptual framework foregrounded the

structural and political perspectives, but retained the human resources and symbolic

perspectives in the background as additional influences on SLTs.

Chapter 2 provides a full explanation of the conceptual framework. The

assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of each perspective are discussed, integrated,

and then applied to underperforming high schools and their SLTs.

Methodology

Creswell (2014) suggests that a study's conceptual framework drives the creation

of the research questions, which then informs a study's research design and methodology.

In reality, the process is less linear and more iterative (e.g., Schwartz-Shea & Yanow,

2012). An initial interest in SLTs led to existing theories on organizational structures and

groups within organizations. These theories permitted the creation of a preliminary list of research questions, and subsequent readings on SLTs influenced revisions of both the conceptual framework and the list of research questions.

Coupled with the literature review, the final conceptual framework—which foregrounded the structural and political perspectives and backgrounded the human resources and symbolic perspectives—necessitated collecting data on: (a) SLT structural characteristics, such as composition and organizing features; (b) SLT political characteristics, such as perceptions of consensus, conflict, and power; (c) SLT human resources characteristics, such as perceptions of empowerment and interpersonal dynamics; and (d) symbolic characteristics, such as the image of SLTs and the influence of SLTs on school culture.

Regarding research design, Rossman and Rallis (2003) recommend an exploratory approach to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest, especially when there is a dearth of extant literature. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that the intentional use of both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study can bolster quality because it leverages the advantages of each set of methods.

Since little literature exists on SLTs in underperforming high schools, this study employed a two-phase, sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008) to better understand the composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceptions of SLTs. Moreover, DeVellis (2003) and others (e.g., Rea & Parker, 2005) argue that strong surveys are developed and refined through an iterative process of administration and revision. A sequential study aligns well with this assertion since data collected and analyzed from one phase can inform the data collection and analysis of

future phases, which can provide methodological flexibility as a study unfolds (Teddlie &

Tashakkori, 2009).

Phase 1 consisted of conducting a systematic review (Hallinger, 2013) of the

literature on SLTs to develop a "working skeleton" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45) of the *SLTi*.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with current SLT members (e.g.,

principals, department chairs) and non-SLT members (e.g., teachers not on the SLT) in a

stratified purposeful sample of 15 underperforming high schools in the U.S. (Patton,

2002). The conceptual framework and literature review provided an etic view and the

interviews provided an emic view of SLT composition, structures, functions, and

operations along with how perceived SLT effectiveness is evaluated by staff members.

Data from Phase 1 was then used to create the *SLTi* pilot.

Phase 2 consisted of administering the *SLTi* pilot to SLT members in a stratified

purposeful sample of 12 underperforming high schools in the U.S. (Patton, 2002). The

SLTi pilot included items about SLT structures, functions, operations, and perceived

effectiveness along with items about participant characteristics.

Chapter 3 provides a full explanation of the research design and methodology,

including sampling, data sources, data collection and analysis procedures, validity and

trustworthiness criteria, and a researcher bias and ethics statement.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to the present study:

1. This study included only underperforming high schools in the U.S. This sampling

   decision permitted a deeper analysis of within-group variation as opposed to

between-group variation, which might entail studying underperforming high schools alongside their higher-performing peers.

2. This study did not employ observational methods to study the internal workings of SLTs, such as observations of SLT meetings or in-person interactions among SLT members and/or between SLT members and non-SLT members.

3. The *SLTi* was administered only to SLT members. This sampling decision permitted a deeper analysis of within-group variation as opposed to between-group variation, which might entail administering the *SLTi* to both SLT and non-SLT members within the same schools.

4. While recognizing that school districts are a likely influence on the composition, structures, functions, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs, this study included only school-level perspectives and not school-district level perspectives.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the present study:

1. Only underperforming high schools in the U.S. were examined. Findings may not transfer to non-underperforming high schools or underperforming schools outside the U.S.

2. The *SLTi* was administered in multiple schools in multiple school districts in multiple states. This arrangement likely introduced extraneous factors (e.g., a state policy context in which SLTs have been or are an explicit focus of SEA professional development efforts) that may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

3. The *SLTi* collected perceptual data, which has limitations. Perceptions can be unstable and shift over time because of current or prior personal or external circumstances. These factors may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

4. The *SLTi* is a cross-sectional survey, so data were only collected at one point in time. Different SLT members completed the *SLTi* at different times during the survey completion window (e.g., during the end of the Fall 2018 semester, during winter break, during the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester), which may have influenced respondents' answers to items and decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

5. The *SLTi* is a self-report survey that collects data from superiors and subordinates within the same organizational context. Respondents may have provided answers to items that were not reflective of their actual beliefs because of a fear of sanction, which may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

6. The *SLTi* was administered only to SLT members. It was not possible to compare the perspectives of SLT members with non-SLT members in the same organizational context.

7. Per their research review policies, some school districts and/or principals selected Phase 1 interview participants, which likely introduced selection bias and may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

8. Due to time constrictions and access restrictions, staff members from 10 underperforming high schools participated in both Phase 1 (interviews) and Phase

2 (*SLTi* administration), which may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

9. The decision to use a survey to collect data at scale was made at the expense of collecting more in-depth data using observational methods and/or additional interviews, which may have decreased the precision and interpretation of the findings.

Summary

Much of the existing literature on the leadership of underperforming schools focuses on the principal (e.g., Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). Few studies have examined the distributed leadership structures and operations within underperforming schools and staff members' perceptions of those structures and operations. An SLT is one such structure, especially in high schools, and prior research outside of underperforming contexts demonstrates how collaborative approaches to school leadership and management like SLTs can enhance schools' abilities to improve (e.g., Chapman et al., 2008). Thus, an SLT could be a lever for improving underperforming schools, particularly high schools that face the added challenges of size, fragmentation, and older student populations (Duke & Jacobson, 2011). However, the substantive literature on SLTs has been conducted outside the U.S., outside underperforming contexts, and before NCLB's effects manifested in U.S. schools.

Given these gaps in the literature, this study aimed to establish an understanding of the "what" of SLTs in underperforming high schools (e.g., composition, structures, functions, operations). A two-phase, sequential mixed-methods design using a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and survey data were used to conduct this study.

Moreover, a product of this study entailed creating the *SLTi*, a survey that collects descriptive and perceptual data about SLTs. Hulpia and colleagues (2009) note the lack of surveys that gather data on distributed leadership structures and operations within schools. The *SLTi* is intended to be a tool for researchers and practitioners to use to self-assess the capacity and perceived effectiveness of schools' leadership and management. The findings of this study—which update and extend the literatures on SLTs generally and leadership of underperforming high schools specifically—offer possible implications for educational leadership practice, preparation, and policy.

Organization of the Remainder of the Dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the study's conceptual framework, which draws upon and integrates concepts from the structural (e.g., Weber, 1947), political (e.g., Pfeffer, 1992), human resources (e.g., Argyris & Schön, 1996), and symbolic (Schein, 2004) perspectives on organizations. Based on the conceptual framework, Chapter 2 then examines two literatures: (a) the challenges facing and efforts to improve underperforming high schools since the 2001 passage of NCLB, and (b) school leadership teams (SLTs). Chapter 2 concludes by synthesizing the two literatures and notes how few studies have examined distributed leadership structures within underperforming high schools.

Chapter 3 describes the study's research design and methodology, including rationales for a two-phase, sequential mixed-methods design and survey creation. The chapter then describes site selection and sampling procedures before articulating, for each phase, the data sources and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 3 closes with a discussion of validity and trustworthiness criteria along with researcher bias and ethics.

Chapter 4 reports the study's findings by research question using data from the Phase 1 interviews and the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot. Phase 1 interview findings include illustrative quotations to enrich the narrative. Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot results are reported in aggregate. At the end of each research question's section, Phase 1 and Phase 2 findings are summarized to note similarities and differences.

Chapter 5 analyzes and discusses the study's findings, particularly with respect to the conceptual framework and prior literature. Implications for educational leadership practice, preparation, and policy are then identified along with recommendations for future research studies. Chapter 5 closes with a brief conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE

LITERATURE

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section articulates this study's conceptual framework, which foregrounds the structural and political perspectives on organizations and backgrounds the human resources and symbolic perspectives on organizations. The first section closes with a discussion on integrating the structural and political perspectives and then applying them to this study.

The second section examines two literatures: (a) the challenges facing and efforts to improve underperforming high schools since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, and (b) school leadership teams (SLTs). The third section concludes this chapter by synthesizing the literatures.

Conceptual Framework

High schools are complex organizations with generally large numbers of administrators, teachers, staff members, and students working and interacting in many different classrooms, departments, offices, and programs (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Rowan, Raudenbush, & Kang, 1991). Similarly, underperforming schools are complex organizations with internal and external pressures to improve, often rapidly, which influences the work of and relationships among administrators, teachers, staff members, and students (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2007; Le Floch et al., 2016; Orr, Byrne-Jiménez, McFarlane, & Brown, 2006). It stands to reason, then, that underperforming high schools are doubly complex,

contending with challenges based on both their scale and prior performance (Duke & Jacobson, 2011).

To study such complex phenomena in complex organizations, scholars (Chrispeels & Martin, 2002; Wallace, 2000; Wallace & Hall, 1994; Wallace & Huckman, 1999) suggest using multiple perspectives—or, to employ Bolman and Deal's (2003) term, frames. As a result, the conceptual framework for this study considers concepts from each of Bolman and Deal's (2003) four perspectives.

Two perspectives are intentionally foregrounded: (a) *the structural perspective* (Blau, 1968; Mintzberg, 1979; Weber, 1947) because this study's unit of analysis—a school leadership team (SLT)—is an organizational structure embedded within schools (Cardno, 2012; Wallace, 2002); and (b) *the political perspective* (Cyert & March, 1963; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992) because SLTs in underperforming high school engage in the inherently political work of contending with and responding to high-stakes accountability pressures (Finnigan & Stewart, 2010; Schueler, 2019). Given the exploratory nature of this study, *the human resources perspective* (e.g., Argyris & Schön, 1996; Pfeffer, 1994) and *the symbolic perspective* (e.g., Schein, 1992, 2004) are backgrounded, not omitted, in order to enrich the examination of SLTs.

The next sections describe each foregrounded and backgrounded perspective and then "integrate" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 304) and apply them to studying SLTs in underperforming high schools.

Foregrounding the Structural Perspective on Organizations

Early conceptualizations of structure. Considered the traditional approach to studying organizations, the *structural perspective* aims to understand "social architecture

and its consequences" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 41) and argues an organization's structures ultimately influence its performance. Mintzberg (1979) defines structure as "the sum total of the ways in which [an organization] divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them" (p. 2). This definition highlights the structural perspective's conceptual roots in Taylor's (1914) work on scientific management and Weber's (1947) notion of the modern bureaucratic organization. Weber's (1947) work, in particular, has been the subject of much research, especially his assertion that bureaucracies are goal-oriented organizations characterized by five features:

1. *A hierarchical organization with formal lines of authority* that centralized planning and decision-making and where each level controlled the level below and was controlled by the level above,

2. *Specialization via division of labor* where all employees were assigned specific roles and tasks,

3. *Technical competence* where tasks were performed by employees with specific training and expertise,

4. *Formal rules and procedures* that specified how tasks were to be performed so as to continually increase efficiency and consistency, and

5. *Impersonality* where rules called for treating everyone equally and no one person received special treatment.

Weber (1947) believed bureaucracy to be the most rational and efficient way to organize activity, supporting Taylor's notion that there is, in fact, "one best way" to structure organizations. However, he also expressed reservations about how the highly

formalized, rational, rule-based control of bureaucracies threatened employee freedoms,

eventually trapping them in an "iron cage" with no escape (Weber, 1930, p. 181).

Expanding conceptualizations of structure. Scores of scholars since Weber

have examined empirically his conflicting views, finding—perhaps unsurprisingly—

conflicting results. On one hand, bureaucratic structures, such as strict hierarchies and

formal procedures, can reduce role conflict and increase job satisfaction (Jackson &

Schuler, 1985; Stevens, Diederiks, & Philipsen, 1992). On the other hand, those same

types of bureaucratic structures can stifle innovation and employee commitment,

decreasing job satisfaction (Arches, 1991; Burns & Stalker, 1961; Raelin, 1985). To

reconcile some of these contradictions, Adler and Borys (1996) conducted a theoretical

analysis of formalization, a common characteristic of bureaucracies. Rather than viewing

formalization dichotomously, as either something good or bad, they characterized

formalization along two dimensions: type and degree. An organization could adopt one of

two types of formalization (enabling or coercive) in one of two degrees (low or high).

Their resulting four-cell typology (see Figure 2) introduced a new type of organization:

the *enabling bureaucracy*. Unlike a coercive bureaucracy, an enabling bureaucracy uses

formalization to enable employees to master their jobs rather than coerce them into

compliance.

		Type of Formalization	
		Enabling	Coercive
Degree of Formalization	Low	Organic	Autocratic
	High	Enabling Bureaucracy	Mechanistic

Figure 2. Adler and Borys' (1996) typology of organizations.

Adler and Borys' (1996) work was also built upon a more contemporary view of organizations themselves. Early theorists (e.g., Fayol, 1949, Taylor, 1914, Weber, 1947) considered organizations to be *closed systems* (Daft, 2001; Scott, 1992) and made two key assumptions: (a) tinkering with and perfecting an organization's internal workings, such as hierarchy or division of labor, would lead to more effective and efficient performance; and (b) the external environment, including policymakers or macro-level economic forces, did not influence an organization's internal workings and performance. Utilizing von Bertalanffy and Rapoport's (1956) work in biology, Katz and Kahn (1966) were among the first to argue that organizations were, by contrast, *open systems* that interacted with, depended upon, and were influenced by their external environments. Thus, to Adler and Borys (1996), the type and degree of formalization an organization adopted, for example, was likely dependent upon a combination of internal and external factors (e.g., Woodward, 1965).

Building on of the work of Adler and Borys (1996), Hoy and Sweetland (2001) investigated two characteristics of schools as bureaucracies: (a) formalization, and (b) centralization. They first theorized a four-cell typology of organizations consisting of two dimensions (see Figure 3). Along the first dimension, an organization adopted one of two types of formalization: enabling or coercive (Adler & Borys, 1996). Along the second dimension, an organization adopted one of two types of centralization: enabling or hindering. Thus, an organization (or school, in their case) could be one of four types of bureaucracies with the ideal being, similar to Adler and Borys (1996), an enabling

bureaucracy. Schools could become enabling bureaucracies by creating *enabling structures*, such as an administrative hierarchy that fostered trust among staff members.

Hoy and Sweetland (2001) tested their typology using surveys of teachers from five states. Factor analyses yielded a one-factor structure with the enabling items loading positively and the coercive and hindering items loading negatively. Their final conceptual model reduced the four-cell typology into a single continuum with *enabling bureaucracy* on one end and *hindering bureaucracy* on the other. They concluded that rules (i.e., formalization) and hierarchy (i.e., centralization) varied together—schools with enabling structures had enabling formalization and enabling centralization while schools with hindering structures had coercive formalization and hindering centralization.

		Formalization	
		Enabling	Coercive
Centralization	Enabling	Enabling Bureaucracy	Rule-bound Bureaucracy
	Hindering	Hierarchical Bureaucracy	Hindering Bureaucracy

Figure 3. Hoy and Sweetland's (2001) typology of school bureaucracy.

Taking into account the enabling or hindering influence of bureaucracies, Bolman and Deal (2003) argue that "[i]f structure is overlooked, an organization often misdirects energy and resources" (p. 67). Given that organizations, from the structural perspective, are theorized to be goal-oriented, a lack of alignment between an organization's goals and the structures created to realize those goals can lead to inefficient and ineffective performance. As the work of Adler and Borys (1996) and Hoy and Sweetland (2001) demonstrates, the *type* of structures and the ways those structures are *designed* and used

within organizations can either enable or hinder the performance of both employees and the organization at-large. These findings expand Weber's original model of a bureaucratic organization and provide empirical evidence supporting Weber's conflicting views on bureaucracies.

Foregrounding the Political Perspective on Organizations

Bolman and Deal (2003) define politics as the "realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests" (p. 181). The definition highlights the political perspective's conceptual roots in Follett's (1924) work on informal organizations and Selznick's (1948) work on the potential conflict between organizational and individual goals. From this perspective, organizations are viewed as "political arenas" (Mintzberg, 1985, p. 133) where shifting coalitions of individuals and groups with differing goals compete for scarce resources by exercising power (Cyert & March, 1959; Etzioni, 1961; Mintzberg, 1983).

Coalitions and conflict in organizations. As mentioned above, Taylor's (1914) scientific management movement posited that formal structures within organizations shaped employee work and interactions. Follett (1926) was among the first to challenge this view, arguing that informal organizations existed within formal organizations—an assertion later supported by the likes of Barnard (1938), Selznick (1948), and Blau and Scott (1962). While the formal organization created the structures in which employees worked and interacted, informal organizations, such as an individual department or a group of people who agreed on a certain issue, also influenced employees. Moreover, informal organizations—or, using March's (1962) term, *coalitions*—often developed

their own goals and sets of tasks to realize those goals, which, in some cases, differed

from and directly conflicted with the formal organization (e.g., Blau & Scott, 1962).

Conflict between formal and informal organizational goals challenged the then-common consensus model of organizations, which assumed employees united around and

worked toward a shared vision (e.g., Mawhinney, 1999). Burns and Stalker (1961)

suggested that organizations should be studied as places of both cooperative (i.e.,

consensus) and conflictual behavior. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) extended this view,

noting how employees and groups might be driven by their own individual or collective

interests—not the organization's shared vision. For example, a department might secure

financial resources to maximize its short-term position within the organization, but at the

expense of the organization's long-term financial viability. In this case, informal goals

were not aligned with formal goals, setting up potential conflict. Pfeffer (1981) notes that

when goal alignment exists within organizations, no conflict exists. When conflict does

exist, though, individuals and groups exercise *power* to get what they want, when they

want it, and how they want it (Lasswell, 1936).

Power in organizations. From a structural perspective on organizations, power is

vested in positions that permit superiors to issue orders to subordinates, expecting them to

be obeyed and implemented (e.g., Weber, 1947). Those at the bottom of the hierarchy

often had little control of and influence over their daily work (e.g., Follett, 1924). From a

political perspective, though, power is more than simple positional authority: it is

something "inherent in the constitution of social life" (Giddens, 1984, p. 227) that is,

according to Foucault (1975), "everywhere" (p. 205).

While the word "power" has an array of connotations, Pfeffer (1992) maintains that the traditional view is often negative. People associate it with competition, deceit, zero-sum games, and nefarious tactics (e.g., Mintzberg, 1985) and consider power to be a force that harms more than helps. Foucault (1975) offers a more nuanced consideration, asserting that power can be either a negative *or* positive force depending on when and how it is exercised. Giddens (1984) agreed, defining power simply as individuals' "capacity to achieve outcomes" (p. 257). From Giddens' (1984) standpoint, which Figure 4 depicts, power is not defined by the ends for which it is exercised—power is viewed as the *means*, or process, through which people aim to change their social context. Changes to that social context, for better or worse, then provide the new conditions under which people exercise power in the future.
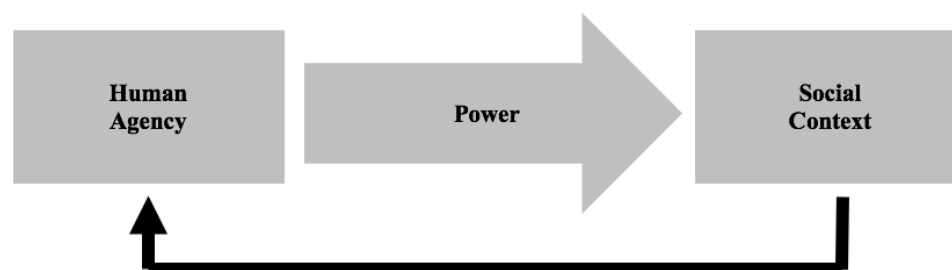
Figure 4. Giddens' (1984) conception of power. Humans have agency and exercise power to influence the social context in which they reside. Changes to that social context then create new conditions for future exercises of power.

Sources to build power in organizations. Giddens' (1984) conception of power as individual capacity provides a useful way to discuss who exercises power within organizations and how they do it. While Bolman and Deal (2003) briefly describe eight "wellsprings of power" (p. 194) that people use to build their capacity, Pfeffer (1992) delves into power in greater depth with four sources. First, *positional authority*, mentioned earlier, is derived from an individual's formal position within the organization

(e.g., Weber, 1947). Second, *personal characteristics*, such as charisma, the abilities to

negotiate and persuade, and physical stamina, can advantage individuals (Bolman &

Deal, 2003), such as an informal leader who lacks positional authority, but successfully

uses political skills to persuade others (Spillane, 2006; Thrasher, 1936). Third, an

individual's *location within the organization*'s "network of communication and social

interaction" (Pfeffer, 1992, p. 111) can provide valuable access to information that others

may not know (Foucault, 1981). Finally, *framing* is how issues are presented to and

perceived by individuals. What is said, how it is said, and by whom influences people's

perceptions, and Pfeffer (1992) notes the immense influence people's perceptions can

have on their mindsets, attitudes, and actions (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Starratt,

1993; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Both Bolman and Deal (2003) and Pfeffer (1992) argue that some people build

their individual capacity by combining different sources, such as securing a position of

authority while polishing their abilities to frame negotiations as disadvantages for

themselves and advantages for others. The more "wellsprings" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.

194) people tap, the better position they will be in to exercise power—for whatever

ends—within organizations (Pfeffer, 1992).

Viewing organizations as political arenas suggests that coalitions of people act

and interact with one another to achieve their desired outcomes (e.g., Mintzberg, 1985).

Based on Giddens (1984) and Pfeffer (1992), these desired outcomes may align or

misalign with the organization's goals. From a political perspective, organizations are

theorized to be irrational, uncertain, and fragmented. They are continuously influenced by

the political ideologies and motives of their employees (Mawhinney, 1999; see also

Simon, 1946 for a general discussion on the irrationality of organizational actors).

Backgrounding the Human Resources Perspective on Organizations

While a focus on structures, design, politics, and coalitions is important for

improving organizational performance, they help paint only part of the portrait. The

human resources perspective places emphasis on the people within organizations,

specifically "how characteristics of organizations and people shape what they do for one

another" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 111). This section briefly discusses two key

considerations related to this perspective: (a) meeting people's needs, and (b) attending to

the relationships among people.

People are more than just employees in a one-way relationship in which they give

to, but never receive from, organizations. People have needs, too, so a key consideration

is the extent to which organizations respond to and are able to satisfy people's needs

(Bolman & Deal, 2003). A first response involves organizations creating opportunities

for employees' professional (and perhaps personal) growth (e.g., Waterman, 1994).

These opportunities can be advantageous for organizations and employees, but only if the

opportunities align with employees' needs. When fit does exist—such as an employee

desiring to acquire a new skillset that a new project will provide—employees typically

feel more motivated and have a greater sense of satisfaction, which enhances their and

the organization's performance (Applebaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000). Another

response involves organizations implementing a participative management approach

(Lawler, 1986), which calls for "opening up" (Saxton, 2005, p. 37) decision-making

processes in order to empower employees and democratic leadership. Involving more

employees in organizational governance presents opportunities to increase the quality of decision-making, reduce status differences, and promote a greater sense of collective ownership of organizational performance (Pfeffer, 1994).

A second key consideration centers on organizations attending to the relationships among their employees as they go about their work. This attention is of particular importance for complex organizations, which, by their very nature, often have to divide up tasks among an array of teams (Salas, Goodwin, & Burke, 2008). As a result, how employees interact with one another in team settings can positively or negatively affect organizational performance (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). One salient influence on team dynamics is the development of and adherence to an agreed-upon set of norms, such as team members deciding not to share members' individual stances with non-team members after a decision has been made (Levi, 2015). The team leader's style of managing also influences dynamics, such as the extent to which the leader is able to create a shared sense of direction and foster greater commitment among team members to moving in that direction (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).

Backgrounding the Symbolic Perspective on Organizations

The *symbolic perspective* to studying organizations highlights the power of symbols and how they "embody and express an organization's *culture*: the interwoven pattern of beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that defines for members who they are and how they do things" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 243). This section briefly discusses two key considerations related to this perspective: (a) teams as "subcultural" elements (Schein, 2004, p. 281) within organizations, and (b) the role of meetings.

Schein (2004) asserts that organizations face two core problems: (a) surviving within and adapting to their external environment, and (b) integrating internal work to develop the capacity to survive and adapt (p. 87). Teams within organizations are often charged with addressing these issues of external adaptation and internal integration. To contend with external adaptation, teams must decide on the definitions and criteria used to evaluate their effectiveness (e.g., hard data, such as profit margins; soft data, such as perceptions of meetings) (Schein, 2010). To contend with internal integration, teams need to define their boundaries—what they do and do not do—and develop criteria for membership inclusion and exclusion (Schein, 2004). These "subcultural" elements (Schein, 2004, p. 281) ultimately become part of an organization's culture and influence performance. Thus, teams coming to a consensus on these issues, Schein (2004) argues, is "crucial to [organizational] effectiveness" (p. 107) and to organizations surviving in their environments.

Turning to the second consideration, the symbolic perspective theorizes that organizations are assessed by their appearance—it matters more if things look and feel right rather than if things are working and progressing (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Oftentimes, organizational structures (e.g., teams) and work processes (e.g., planning) can be more show than substance, which plays a vital role in shaping employees' perceptions (Hatch, 1993). Formal meetings are one common work process within organizations and serve as "symbolic arenas . . . for self-expression . . . [where] [a]udiences take comfort that issues are getting attention" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, pp. 278-279). The characteristics of formal meetings—such as who can attend, what topics are discussed, and how discussions are framed to outsiders—are likely to become

powerful symbols that reflect an organization's culture (Schein, 1990). Even if a product

does not come out of formal meetings (e.g., action plan), they can still serve as important

opportunities for exchanging information, reaffirming resolve, and encouraging cohesion

(McComas, Besley, & Black, 2010).

Integrating and Applying the Four Perspectives on Organizations to Study School

Leadership Teams in Underperforming High Schools

The old adage "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" is particularly

apropos for this section, which follows Bolman and Deal's (2003) suggestion to

"integrate" (p. 304) the perspectives on organizations to enrich the examination of the

phenomenon of interest. To devise this study's conceptual framework, concepts from

each of the four perspectives were integrated and then applied to SLTs in

underperforming high schools. Figure 5 offers a visual representation of this integration

and application, which the following sections detail.

First, an underperforming high school is considered to be an open system and thus

subject to influence by its external environment (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Federal, state, and

local accountability policies both (a) create a high-stakes context within which the high

school operates, and (b) influence the structures, people, politics, and culture of the high

school. The "boundary" between the internal environment of the high school and the

external environment of the high-stakes accountability context is permeable.

Second, an SLT is considered to be an organizational structure within a high

school—and how it is designed along with the functions that it is charged with

performing can make an SLT either an enabling structure or a hindering structure (Hoy &

Sweetland, 2001). To perform its functions, SLTs likely conduct formal meetings, which

External Environment (High-Stakes Accountability Context)

Internal Environment (High School)

School Leadership Team Members (Coalition)

School Leadership Team

- Structural type and design (S,H)
- Functions (S,P,H,C)
- Formal meeting characteristics (S,C)

- Exercise of power (P)
- Reason for involvement (H)
- Interpersonal dynamics (P,S)
- Role of the team leader (P,S)
- Definitions and evaluations of effectiveness (S)

Other Organizational Structure (e.g., department)

Coalition

- Selection criteria (S,P,C)
- Selection processes (S,P,C)

Other Organizational Structure (e.g., program)

Coalition

Other Organizational Structure (e.g., office)

Coalition

Figure 5. Applying concepts from the four perspectives on organizations to visualize a study of school leadership teams (SLTs) in underperforming high schools. An SLT is one of many organizational structures present within a high school (with others being departments, offices, or programs) and can play either an integrative or a divisive role. As an organizational structure, an SLT is charged with performing a set of functions, often by hosting formal meetings. SLT members are a coalition of staff members from around the high school. As they go about performing the SLT's functions, SLT members exercise power, engage and interact with one another and a team leader, and come to a consensus on how they define and evaluate the SLT's perceived effectiveness. SLT members are selected for SLT membership from among the entire staff using a process and set of criteria. The dashed lines signify that organizational structural boundaries are permeable, that SLT members are members of more than one organizational structure and coalition, and that the internal environment (the high school) is influenced by the external environment (high-stakes accountability context). *Perspective Abbreviation Key*: S = Structural; P = Political; H = Human Resources; C = Symbolic.

can play a number of roles within the high school. On one hand, for example, they might

be authentic arenas of work activity. On the other hand, they might be more symbolic in

nature, serving as a façade of work activity that provides a sense of comfort for staff

members, but has little actual influence on school performance (McComas et al., 2010).

Thus, the characteristics of SLT meetings—how they are structured, who can attend, and

how meeting results are shared and discussed—can shape staff members' perceptions and

reflect the high school's culture in general (Hatch, 1993). This perspective assumes that

SLTs are "visible" to staff members, especially with respect to SLT formal meetings, so

the "boundary" between an SLT, as an organizational structure, and staff members is

permeable. Finally, an SLT is just one of many other organizational structures within a

high school (e.g., departments, offices, programs).

Third, SLT members are considered to constitute a coalition of staff members

(March, 1962) from around the high school and have a minimum of two "memberships"

within the school: (a) one as an SLT member, and (b) one as a staff member. SLT

members may have other "memberships" as well, such as being part of a department,

overseeing a program, or serving as an administrator (Follett, 1926). Each of these

"memberships" has its own goals that may or may not comport with the SLT's goals and

the goals of the high school (Blau & Scott, 1962), and SLT members occupy a space

within the high school between these "memberships." Thus, an SLT, as an organizational

structure, can play either an integrative role by bringing together members from different

coalitions or a divisive role by becoming yet another organizational structure that

competes with other organizational structures.

As they go about performing the SLT's functions, SLT members exercise varying

degrees of power depending on the number of "wellsprings" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.

194) they tap. For example, principals likely exercise more power because they have

positional authority (Weber, 1947) and occupy a central location within the high school

(e.g., main office) (Pfeffer, 1992). Other SLT members might exercise power from two

wellsprings depending on their personal characteristics and how they frame their opinions

about concerns, issues, or problems (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Pfeffer, 1992). Finally, SLT

members are likely to be involved in the SLT for a variety of reasons, such as a personal

desire to grow professionally (Waterman, 1994) or an administrator's desire to share

school decision-making (Lawler, 1986). Despite being involved in their SLT, however,

one or more SLT members might have little influence over the SLT and the decisions it

makes (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980).

Fourth, SLTs are a group of staff members who engage and interact with one

another, especially during SLT formal meetings. These interactions along with the

relationships that SLT members have with one another influence what SLT members

think of the SLT and their fellow SLT colleagues (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). Moreover,

the SLT leader, if there is one, influences the SLT's dynamics and, ultimately, its

performance (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).

Fifth, to ensure they survive within the high-stakes accountability context (e.g.,

external adaptation; Schein, 2004), SLT members define the criteria they use to assess

perceived SLT effectiveness and then evaluate the SLT's perceived effectiveness using

those criteria. Criteria might vary from SLT member to SLT member, with some

evaluating perceived team effectiveness using hard data sources (e.g., numbers) while

others use soft data sources (e.g., judgments) (Schein, 2004). To contend with internal integration, the SLT defines its boundaries—what it does and does not do—and develops criteria for membership inclusion and exclusion (Schein, 2004). Since SLT members are drawn from the staff at-large, the membership criteria reside on the "boundary" of the SLT members, who are part of the SLT, and the rest of the staff within the high school.

To provide further insight into the context in which Figure 5 displays, the next section of this chapter sets the stage by discussing the characteristics and challenges of underperforming high schools and then reviews the extant literature on SLTs.

Review of the Literature

To support the conceptual framework, this section offers a review of two literatures: (a) the challenges facing underperforming high schools since the passage of NCLB in 2001, and (b) SLTs. The former sets the stage by shedding light on the context in which this study will be conducted, beginning with the rise and continued prevalence of the comprehensive high school in the U.S. and finishing with a synthesis of the common efforts to improve underperforming high schools. The latter, organized as a systematic review (Hallinger, 2013), describes prior work examining SLTs, beginning with their rise in prevalence and finishing with an elaboration of their functions and functioning. A critique of the literature on SLTs is then discussed before the section closes by summarizing how few studies have examined distributed leadership structures (e.g., SLTs) within underperforming high schools, particularly as a potential lever for improvement.

Underperforming High Schools

  The rise and continued prevalence of the comprehensive high school. In their

history of the U.S. comprehensive high school movement, Copa and Pease (1992) credit

the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education ("The Commission")

with devising a new model of secondary education for the 20th century. The Commission,

whose members were appointed by National Education Association Board of Directors in

1913, issued a final report in 1918 that sought to redefine secondary education in the U.S.

(Raubinger, Rowe, Piper, & West, 1969). Drawing upon themes from the 19th century

common school movement, particularly Horace Mann's words, the Commission argued

that it was imperative to the future of democracy that secondary education be expanded to

include all children, not just those who could afford it (Raubinger et al., 1969).

  Secondary education, the Commission said, should "contribute to the social

efficiency of society" (Copa & Pease, 1992, p. L10) by creating a new type of school: the

comprehensive high school. These high schools should be accessible to and unify groups

of local students, adapt to local needs, and, perhaps most importantly, focus on both

vocational and non-vocational subject areas. Administrators managed the complex

schedule and allocated resources; teachers were grouped based on their subject area; and

students with diverse end goals enrolled in both academic and elective courses to receive

a well-rounded education preparing them to become effective citizens (Copa & Pease,

1992; Raubinger et al., 1969).

  Fast forward 100 years from the Commission's 1918 report, and the basic

structures and operations of today's U.S. high schools have remained stable and, in many

ways, unchanged (Cuban, 1982; Freshwater, 2012; Sizer, 2004). Tyack and Cuban (1995)

call this phenomenon the "grammar of schooling" (p. 88)—things have been done in similar ways for so long that they have become "the way we do things around here" (Schein, 1992, pp. 8-9; see also Lieberman & Miller, 1999 and Van Maanen, 1979). This stability has made it difficult to improve and reform the typical U.S. high school even as the world in which it resides, particularly the 21st century economy and workforce, has transformed dramatically (Fullan, 2000; Sarason, 1990). McDonald (2004) argues that today's high schools are behind the times, a situation with unrealized and likely negative consequences for both our civic and economic futures, and that improvement is long overdue.

Difficulties improving high schools. Chapter 1 briefly introduced Duke and Jacobson's (2011) three main factors that can impede rapid change efforts in underperforming high schools: (a) size, (b) fragmentation, and (c) student populations. As the next sections describe, a broader review of the literature on improvement efforts in high schools generally—not just underperforming schools—supports and extends Duke and Jacobson's (2011) work.

Increasing demands on administrators and teachers. Regarding size, the modern U.S. comprehensive high school has become a large, complex, and multifaceted organization that places a number of demands upon administrators and teachers (e.g., Terrell, 2015). In their seminal study on high school size, Lee and Smith (1997) recommended high schools enroll between 500 students and 1,000 students—the floor offered a critical mass to ensure diversity of curricular and extracurricular offerings while the ceiling preserved an environment of intimacy and community. As student enrollment surpasses that ceiling, complexity grows alongside, especially for staff members.

One of the main tasks of contemporary high school principals—leading instruction—has fallen down the list of priorities because principals simply have too much to do; there is not enough time in the day to manage, much less lead, the school (e.g., Louis et al., 2010). With the potential for 200 teachers to be employed in a given large high school, for example, it is unreasonable to expect a single principal to have the content knowledge and pedagogical expertise to satisfactorily aid individual teachers in improving their performance (Grubb, 2015; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). In their extensive review of the educational leadership literature, Louis and colleagues (2010) found department chairs—the next likely administrator to aid in teacher improvement—exhibited little instructional leadership. This abdication, coupled with beleaguered principals, has created "leadership deficits" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012, p. 6) in some high schools, much to the detriment of instruction (Boyle, Le Floch, Therriault, & Holzman, 2009).

The demands on high school teachers have increased as well, which influences not only their craft, but how administrators respond to and work with teachers. States and districts have taken advantage of high schools' economies of scale by enrolling more students in existing schools as opposed to creating and staffing additional high schools (Copa & Pease, 1992; Raubinger et al., 1969). Sizer (2004) discusses an important consequence of this decision: high teacher load. A typical teacher in a U.S. high school, Sizer (2004) argues, teaches two to three courses and 125 to 175 students over five to seven class periods. This workload provides teachers with little opportunity to develop strong relationships with and offer detailed personalized feedback to individual students; it also leaves teachers with little time during the school day to invest in their own

professional growth and speak with their colleagues, much less collaborate on instruction

and assessment (Cuban, 1982; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Noguera, 2002).

While the empirical evidence on teacher load is mixed, one notable study found a

30-student reduction (e.g., 120 students to 90) increased student scores on state

standardized tests by an average of 16 points (Ouchi, 2009). An important limitation of

that study, though, was that gains occurred in schools where principals had increased

control over operations and staffing. Such autonomy is not common in many high

schools, but the results prompt educational leaders and policymakers to consider how

load reductions—a structural change—may be used as a lever to free up time for teachers

to engage in other activities, such as participating in professional development or

collaborating with administrators and colleagues (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997; Freshwater,

2012; Stoll & Louis, 2007).

Among others (e.g., Levine & Marcus, 2007), Boyle and colleagues (2009)

suggest high teacher load creates a culture focused more on content than students and

leads to fragmentation and balkanization in high schools. Comprehensive high schools

offer courses in many content areas, and the teachers of those subjects have been

organized into departments (Sizer, 2004). Many high school teachers consider themselves

to be content area specialists who mostly interact with their departmental colleagues,

especially in larger high schools (e.g., Ancess, 2003; Siskin, 1997). Moreover, as Sizer

(2004) noted, the taxing schedule leaves teachers with little time to converse with other

adults, so high school teachers get used to operating as solo practitioners immersed only

in their content area. Murphy (2015) discusses the consequences of this structural

arrangement in high schools, most notably how it creates and institutionalizes a series of

norms that discourages working with other adults, instructional and pedagogical entrepreneurship and risk-taking, and upsetting the status quo.

A continued lack of progress. The characteristics of high schools have made them particularly impervious to scores of reform efforts over the past several decades (Cuban, 1982; Noguera, 2002; Elmore, 2004; Payne, 2008). Researchers (e.g., Chenoweth, 2007, 2009) identify few examples of successful and substantial change efforts in high schools. In those high schools where fundamental shifts have occurred, they rarely last or spread throughout the school (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006) as the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 88) continues to exercise its powerful influence.

Because of size, for instance, a larger number of high school staff members, mostly teachers, is needed to move most improvement efforts forward (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010). Teachers operate on the "street level" (Lipsky, 1980) of schools, meaning that they have considerable power to determine if an initiative succeeds or fails. Because of fragmentation, it can be difficult for high school teachers to get behind a common vision for the school if they continue to see themselves as solo content specialists (Boyle et al., 2009). If administrators cannot motivate teachers and students to invest, set high expectations for themselves, and engage in continuous improvement, improvement efforts are likely to die on the vine (e.g., Reynolds, Teddlie, Chapman, & Stringfield, 2016; Kutash et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2011).

Increasing pressure to hold schools accountable. The findings of *A Nation at Risk* sparked a wave of responses from the public, bureaucrats, and politicians. Perhaps most notably, Placier (1993) suggests, the report introduced the modern era of

accountability, as many states either devised or revamped systems to measure and publish school performance.

However, states' and districts' lackluster progress in improving school performance during the 1980s and 1990s helped create the conditions for the passage of NCLB in 2001 (Johnson, 2013), a bipartisan effort spearheaded by Republican President George W. Bush and Democratic Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts. The law, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, laid out an ambitious agenda for U.S. public schools with the signature goal being that all students would score proficient on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standardized tests by 2014 (NCLB, 2002). Between 2002, when the law went into effect, and 2014, schools needed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward that goal. However, NCLB left the tasks of defining and assessing proficiency up to individual states, which led to the creation of 51 different accountability systems that ranged in depth and stringency (VanGronigen & Meyers, 2019; Wong, Wing, Martin, & Krishnamachari, 2018).

The law also increased the federal government's investment in improving underperforming schools. Language in Title I of NCLB, in particular, provided a number of financial supports for school improvement efforts to supplement the recently-created Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program. Such investment came at a cost, as NCLB permitted—for the first time in history—the permanent closure of schools that did not meet AYP for five consecutive school years (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). NCLB established a sense of urgency for school improvement efforts (Duke, 2016), leading Johnson (2013) to contend that NCLB-era accountability policies advocated "shock

therapy" (p. 232) for underperforming schools. By setting the same goal for all U.S public elementary and secondary schools—regardless of context—federal lawmakers seemed to assume that support from federal and state grants, coupled with the threat of closure, would provide the necessary motivation for underperforming schools to improve (Trujillo & Renée, 2015). As Bryk and colleagues (2010) maintain, though, not all schools "start in the same place, and those that are truly disadvantaged have enormous barriers to overcome" (p. 25), as the next sections discuss.

The impetus to improve underperforming high schools. While underperforming high schools can be found in many areas around the U.S., they predominantly reside in rural and urban communities with high concentrations of minorities and/or poverty (Hassel & Steiner, 2003; Malen & Rice, 2004). In urban areas, for example, Balfanz (2009) proposes that the U.S. has a "two-tiered system" (p. 22) with selective high schools and programs sitting above their non-selective counterparts. Students with high standardized test scores, course grades, and attendance rates and records of good behavior are more likely to gain admission to a selective high school or selective program within a high school. This arrangement charges non-selective, or neighborhood, high schools to educate the students with low standardized test scores, course grades, and attendance along with records of less than stellar behavior (Balfanz, 2009; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Many underperforming schools in high-poverty neighborhoods also educate higher percentages of English language learners and students with learning disabilities (e.g., Berliner, 2006, 2009). Moreover, Lee (2002) suggests that the decrease in busing of students to schools outside urban areas has changed the demographics of many previously integrated schools. More recent research (e.g.,

Reardon, Grewal, Kalogrides, & Greenberg, 2012) supports the notion that today's U.S. schools, especially those in urban and suburban areas, are resegregating—a phenomenon that may eventually nullify the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012).

As a consequence, scores of non-selective high schools have become "dumping grounds" (Balfanz & Legters, 2004, p. 29) for recalcitrant students and inexperienced and/or ineffective educators. Some call these schools "dropout factories" (Zehr, 2010, p. 16) that commit, in the words of one North Carolina judge, "academic genocide" (Manzo, 2005, p. 21). Despite this rhetoric, Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012) argue that the U.S. appears "alarmingly comfortable with high schools that are islands of dysfunction" (p. 2). This general disposition, they go on to say, masks what is a real crisis with the state of U.S. underperforming high schools, especially for the communities in which they reside. In a 2013 interview with the non-profit Bridgespan Group, Paul Castro, then of KIPP Schools Houston, said that "[i]n many neighborhoods, these chronically low-performing high schools represent a last community outpost. The livelihood of these communities depends on improving these high schools" (Doyle & Iyengar, 2013, p. 8).

To Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012), the impetus to improve underperforming high schools extends beyond individual neighborhoods. Citing a 2009 report by McKinsey and Company, they suggest that "the loss of potential represented by dropouts and poorly prepared high school graduates is equivalent to a *permanent national recession*" (p. ii; emphasis original; see also McKinsey and Company, 2009). The stakes are increasingly high because, for many young people, high school is often the last stop before pursuing college, receiving advanced vocational training, entering the workforce,

or, most grimly, dropping out (e.g., Boyle et al., 2009; Doyle & Iyengar, 2013). Thus, high schools represent the U.S.'s "last chance" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012, p. 1) to prepare students with the habits, knowledge, and skills they need to be successful in their future endeavors.

Challenges facing underperforming high schools. The myriad challenges that underperforming high schools face stem from both external and internal factors (Berliner, 2006, 2009; Duke, 2015; Murphy & Meyers, 2008). While some challenges are not unique to underperforming high schools, these schools often face a greater number of challenges that, when interacting with one another, create conditions that are ripe for persistent underperformance. Returning to Bryk and colleagues' (2010) words, this section discusses the barriers and challenges that plague some of the U.S.'s most "disadvantaged" (p. 25) high schools.

External factors. Berliner (2006, 2009) offers an extensive investigation into the macro- and micro-level community influences on underperforming high schools (see also Bryk et al., 2010 for a specific focus on Chicago public schools). In rural areas, for instance, poverty is often the dominant influence (e.g., Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009) while urban areas, particularly central core cities, contend with both high-minority and high-poverty populations (e.g., Malen & Rice, 2004). Compared to their wealthier peers, poverty-stricken families are less likely to provide educational resources for their children, schools, and local communities, such as buying books for home libraries or providing tax revenue for capital improvement projects (Olson, 2013).

As of 2015, 45% of black students in the U.S. attend a high-poverty school (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2015). Whitman (2008) found the majority of black

and Latino students in the U.S. graduated from high schools with standardized test scores

around the 8th grade level while white students scored around the 12th grade level. In her

extensive work in U.S. high schools, Chenoweth (2007) maintains that few high schools

have been able to close the racial achievement gap—and that the resegregation of U.S.

schools only exacerbates efforts to close the gap (Reardon, 2016).

These factors are designated external for a reason—schools have little control

over many of them, especially larger structural inequities like funding models. What they

have greater control over are factors internal to schools, which the next section describes.

Internal factors. Underperformance is about more than just demographic and

community factors, though. Turning to internal factors, Meyers and Hitt (2017) offer two

groups to categorize the origins of underperformance in schools: (a) unfit organizational

structures, and (b) inadequate capacity of organizational members (p. 54).

Meyers and Hitt (2017) suggest that one key behavior of principals in

underperforming schools is cultivating leadership in other staff members (p. 48).

However, traditional organizational structures in schools present few opportunities for the

distribution of leadership and management responsibilities (e.g., Chrispeels & Martin,

2002). Meyers and Hitt (2017) chronicle several principals' "attempt[s] to widen the

distribution" (p. 48) of school decision-making authority in order to promote more

collective ownership over school performance (see also Ylimaki, Brunderman, Bennett,

& Dugan, 2014). The most common strategy was creating a series of committees, teams,

and working groups to increase communication and improve school decision-making

(Aladjem et al., 2010; Duke & Landahl, 2011; Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson,

2005). An end goal for several principals, Meyers and Hitt (2017) conclude, centered on

using the redesigned organizational structures to build a leadership pipeline so that when formal and informal leaders did turnover, new staff members could take their place to continue improvement efforts (e.g., Aladjem et al., 2010).

Turning to Meyers and Hitt's (2017) second category—inadequate capacity of organizational members—three main groups of people are present in high schools: (a) administrators, (b) teachers, and (c) students. In studies exploring what explains the variance in student learning, research demonstrates that teachers have the largest influence with administrators having the second largest (Harvey, Holland, & Cummings, 2013; Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Mitgang, 2012).

Administrators. Underperforming high schools are "labeled" (Saw et al., 2017, p. 585) underperforming because they fail to meet state accountability requirements for one or more school years. A key part of administrators' jobs in underperforming high schools is to develop a plan of action so their schools can shed the label (e.g., Duke, 2015; Duke et al., 2013; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). A common adage in research argues that underperforming schools need "superprincipals" (Copland, 2001) in order to improve and sustain progress (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). While there are certainly examples of "hero principals" leading underperforming schools (e.g., Hewitt & Reitzug, 2015), Meyers and Hitt (2017) contend that "evidentiary support for such expectations is mostly anecdotal . . . [and] bolstered by only a few case studies" (p. 53).

Much the work of improving underperforming high schools is grueling, demanding, and political (Finnigan & Stewart, 2010; Fleischman & Heppen, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Schueler, 2019). Thompson and

colleagues (2011) support this assertion using data from their examination of underperforming high schools in North Carolina. They found principals, in many cases, failed to inspire and motivate teachers and students to hold high expectations for themselves and perform at high levels, which only intensified the lack of inspiration and motivation present in classrooms. This finding is disconcerting because strong instruction and rich teacher-student interactions are necessary ingredients for school-wide improvement (e.g., Davis & Dupper, 2004). Because of the urgent need to improve student performance on standardized tests, Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012) suggest principals of underperforming high schools are more likely to practice instructional leadership that focuses on test preparation than authentic instruction. Such an orientation can alienate teachers, students, and staff members and hinder efforts to build a cohesive culture where everyone subscribes to and works toward realizing the same vision (Balfanz, Legters, West, & Weber, 2007; Boyle et al., 2009).

A consequence of the high-stakes environments of underperforming high schools is administrator turnover. Fuller and Young (2009) found that three types of Texas high schools had the largest rates of principal turnover: (a) those with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students, (b) those with high percentages of students who scored the lowest in state standardized tests, and (c) those in rural areas and small-town school districts. Thompson and colleagues (2011) bolster these results using data from North Carolina, identifying higher rates of principal turnover in underperforming high schools compared to higher-performing high schools. Fuller and Young (2009) argue that principal and teacher retention are "inextricably linked" (p. 3) and that when schools fail

to attract high-quality principals, they are far less likely to attract high-quality teachers (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012).

Teachers. At many underperforming high schools, the quality of teaching—for a multitude of reasons—is often low (Cibulka, 2003). In a review of NCLB's effects on U.S. schools, Mintrop and Trujillo (2005) found that teachers in underperforming high schools were more inexperienced and unprepared for the job of teaching in high-needs contexts. High rates of teacher turnover only compound the challenges and plague efforts to provide much-needed consistency for at-risk and underprivileged students (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Thompson et al., 2011).

A large study of North Carolina underperforming schools found that students in underperforming schools who had teachers with temporary or provisional licenses, on average, scored lower on end-of-course examinations compared to students with fully-licensed teachers outside underperforming schools (Henry & Thompson, 2008). Such findings comport with rigorous quantitative work investigating teacher quality in various types of school settings. While the definition of quality (e.g., teacher credentials or teacher scores on state or district evaluation systems) differs by study, results demonstrate that higher-quality teachers are less common in—and, in some instances, seem to avoid—underperforming schools (e.g., Boyd, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2007). As a result, lower-quality teachers abound in both urban and rural underperforming schools (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2010; Sipple & Brent, 2007). Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012) argue that U.S. schools persist in putting their least capable and skilled educators in the most demanding and challenging of situations: raising to proficiency the country's lowest-performing students (p. 4).

Within the classrooms of underperforming high schools, Thompson and

colleagues (2011) learned many teachers in North Carolina operated in "survival mode"

(p. 22). Other studies have found teachers to hold low expectations of themselves and

their students (Duke, 2015; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Tillman,

2006), leading to unchallenging, uncoordinated, and unengaging instruction (e.g.,

Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). Moreover, while the world has changed considerably

over the past century, the typical high school curriculum has not changed much since the

genesis of the comprehensive high school movement in the 1920s (Copa & Pease, 1992).

This mix of low expectations, unengaging instruction, and outmoded curriculum creates

an atmosphere ripe for students and teachers to disconnect from both the classroom and

one another (Farrington, 2014). Teachers and students often fail to cultivate close,

trusting relationships with one another (Sizer, 2004), an essential element to building

student resilience (Davis & Dupper, 2004; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008) and a

strong school climate (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Students. Characteristics of the student populations of underperforming high

schools, a key point from Duke and Jacobson (2011), can intensify the aforementioned

instructional shortcomings. Prior research (e.g., Doyle & Iyengar, 2013; Whitman, 2008)

demonstrates that students who enter an underperforming high school are more likely to

be unprepared for the rigors of the curriculum—regardless of how obsolete it might be.

Farrington (2014) interviewed 14 students in three urban high schools about their

experiences with failure inside the classroom. In one high school, students felt they had

little support from "adults" (p. 63) and did not know, on their own, how to improve their

academic performance. Some students fell behind early on because they lacked proper

study habits or failed to turn in assignments on time. One high school's grading policies assigned a zero to missing assignments and left students with little opportunity to make up the work, leading to disengagement and sporadic attendance. Because of her investigations, Farrington (2014) became interested in learning why and how 9th grade was so foundational for eventual high school graduation. Olson (2013) and others (e.g., Duke & Jacobson, 2011) make the point that high schools only have four years to make up for the potentially serious inequalities in the preparation of the 9th grade students they enroll. In some cases, years of academic struggles accumulate, putting entering 9th grade students several grade levels behind their better-prepared peers (Doyle & Iyengar, 2013).

A place of gloom? The aforementioned external and internal challenges can create an atmosphere of gloom in many underperforming high schools (Elmore, 2004; see also Tyack & Cuban, 1995 for another discussion of school improvement before NCLB). In the non-selective, neighborhood high schools that Balfanz (2009) studied, a lack of hope stymied chances of significant progress. Administrators, teachers, staff members, and students had little sense of collective ownership over the school and one another's future because of an "overarching sense of futility" (Olson, 2013, p. 49). Additionally, political struggles among teachers and administrators, particularly new administrators, have been found to impede meaningful progress (Payne, 2008), especially around decisions to introduce new programs and reorganize school personnel. In their extensive study in North Carolina, Thompson and colleagues (2011) concluded that progress in underperforming high schools was "undermined by stop-and-start reform initiatives with no sustained follow-through" (p. ii). The tendency to implement "silver bullet" programs—coupled with high administrator and teacher turnover—has caused many

underperforming high schools to resemble a "Christmas tree" (Schmidt-Davis &

Bottoms, 2012, p. 24); a number of ornamental programs introduced over the years

weighed down the branches, which, in some cases, eventually collapsed.

Responses to the challenges of improving underperforming high schools. A

review of the literature on efforts to improve underperforming high schools in the post-

NCLB era yields few success stories, especially when success is defined by increases in

student success on state standardized tests (Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Herman, 2012).

There are more stories of progress and sustaining improvement efforts in elementary and

middle schools than in high schools (Freshwater, 2012). This characteristic of the

literature could be for myriad reasons, such as the notion that the U.S. simply has fewer

high schools than elementary schools, leaving fewer sites for potential study—or perhaps

researchers prefer to conduct studies in elementary schools because they might be less

complex than high schools, making it easier to isolate specific phenomena (Olson, 2013).

Regardless of the reason, Salmonowicz (2009) suggests that "it is hard to know

what works and what doesn't" (p. 24) with the efforts to improve underperforming high

schools because of a lack of rigorous documentation. While policymakers and others

desire a "silver bullet," scholars say that there is no one-size-fits-all recipe for

jumpstarting and sustaining improvement efforts in underperforming high schools

(Fullan, 2006; Leithwood, 2012; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; Pappano, 2010). Among the

existing research, the bulk comes in the form of individual case studies of schools

(Herman, 2012; Meyers & Hitt, 2017) along with a handful of quantitative studies

(Thompson et al., 2011; Dee, 2012). The work shows how underperforming high schools

have proven difficult to improve, especially in urban areas (de la Torre et al., 2012; McMurrer, 2012a; Payne, 2008; Sesky, 2014).

Despite the immense difficulties, though, there have been success stories (Freshwater, 2012). Kowal and Hassel (2005) offer a useful analogy to frame improvement efforts in underperforming high schools. They suggest considering the differences between high-performing organizations and start-up organizations—high-performing organizations focus on the "delegation of core responsibilities, incremental staff member development, long-term relationships, and a wide array of other culture change levers" while "successful start-up[s] . . . thrive on immediate results" (p. 26). While there are, of course, significant differences between the typical start-up entity and an underperforming high school, the core idea that action and change need to happen *now* is the main takeaway—and Duke (2015) argues the school principal is the one who must begin and commit to the process of improving an underperforming high school.

The role of a principal in improving an underperforming high school. According to Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012), the main job of an underperforming high school principal is to "pull apart the strands of demoralization, low expectations, poor teaching and unengaged students and rebuild a coherent, learning-centered school" (p. 1). Accomplishing such an endeavor requires what Duke (2015) calls "never give up leadership" (p. 2) from principals—they need to believe that their high school can and will improve. In their seminal review of the literature on educational leadership, Louis and colleagues (2010) did not find "a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership" (p. 9). While principals are not the only ingredient in improvement efforts, they are the "driving subsystem" (Bryk et al.,

2010, p. 61) and "critical lynchpin" (Kowal & Hassel, 2005, p. 17). A synthesis of the

literature reveals two major categories of tasks for principals to undertake: (a) reshaping

school climate, and (b) creating the capacity for continuous improvement. Each is

discussed in the next sections.

  Reshaping school climate. Principals need to lead efforts to ensure that the

learning environment is safe and orderly (Duke, 2001; Duke, 2015; Hill & Christensen,

2007). This charge might entail working with teachers, staff members, students, and

parents to implement a new school-wide discipline policy that helps teachers better

address classroom management issues (Thielman, 2012). Creating a safe and orderly

school improves teacher and student working conditions, which, in turn, positively

influences their motivation and performance (Cuccharia et al., 2015; Johnson, Kraft, &

Papay, 2012; Ladd, 2011; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005).

  Unlike higher-performing schools, Meyers and Hitt (2017) argue that principals

of underperforming high schools often need to shift the mindsets of teachers and students,

particularly each group's perception of its and the other's abilities to learn and develop.

Principals have gone about altering the perceptions of teachers and staff members by

disseminating research on specific topics, such as deficit thinking (Aladjem et al., 2010;

Salmonowicz, 2009). By sharing scholarly work, principals sought to have continuous

professional learning become part of the school's culture. For students, one principal in a

report by Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012) read the names of honor roll students

during sporting events, telling his students, "You stood up for a touchdown, you can

stand up for the honor roll" (p. 8). These kinds of actions can present academic

achievement in a different light and help shift student perceptions about their ability to

grasp and climb the "ladder of social mobility" (Freshwater, 2012, p. 20; see also

Farrington, 2014 and Sizer, 2004).

Reframing mindsets, attitudes, and perceptions lays the foundation for principals

to revise and heighten expectations for teachers and students. In underperforming high

schools in North Carolina, Thompson and colleagues (2011) found more successful

principals clearly communicated high expectations for all adults—and then held them

accountable for meeting those expectations. It is essential that principals set the tone for

their school by serving as the model of high expectations and professionalism, as Hewitt

and Reitzug (2015) found. While they are charged with improving the school, principals

of underperforming schools can apply support and accountability together (Meyers &

Hitt, 2017). Holding teachers and students accountable, they argue, is not just about

compliance, but a "commitment to adult and student learning" (p. 55). Eventually,

everyone in the school—administrators, teachers, staff members, and students—hold one

another accountable because it becomes part of the culture (Boyle et al., 2009; Doyle &

Iyengar, 2013; Griffin & Green, 2013).

Developing the capacity for continuous improvement. Addressing school climate

issues permits principals to start building their school's capacity for continuous

improvement (Duke, 2015; Leithwood et al., 2010; Forman et al., 2017). Building this

capacity, according to Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2012), requires the principal to create

or revise structures, systems, and routines (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011) that will

outlast their tenure. To know what to build or revise, though, principals and staff

members need to first develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing the

school (Duke et al., 2013; Mintrop, 2016). A critical and often overlooked initial task is

engaging in root cause analysis to identify what problems require attention, both in the

short-term and long-term (Meyers & Hitt, 2017). Recognizing the urgency to improve,

this vital process can prevent underperforming high schools from falling into an all-too-

common routine of jumping to solutions without fully knowing the problems that need

solving (Murphy & Meyers, 2008).

Once problems are identified, they need to be solved, and Duke (2015)

recommends underperforming high schools take a project management approach to

addressing each issue. The principal, according to Duke (2015), should not lead the

efforts for any particular project, but should identify project managers for the various

issues, help project managers sketch out the tasks that need completing, aid in assigning

staff members to various project teams, and then check in to monitor and evaluate

progress. This approach assumes, however, that underperforming high schools have the

personnel with the requisite knowledge and skills to carry out the work. As prior sections

noted, underperforming high schools tend to be staffed with inexperienced and/or

ineffective educators (Clotfelter et al., 2010; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005).

Thus, staffing is another essential ingredient in the recipe for building capacity for

continuous improvement. Some principals of underperforming high schools do not have

rich sources from which to draw new teachers, especially in rural areas (Cowen, Butler,

Fowles, Streams, & Toma, 2012). Despite being located in the second-largest city in the

U.S., the principal of one persistently underperforming high school in south Los Angeles

filled over half his staff member vacancies with teachers displaced from other schools in

the Los Angeles Unified School District (Blume, 2010). While the principal said he "was

able to fill slots as needed with equally talented educators" (Blume, 2010, para. 5), the

district often moved displaced teachers because of budget cuts and seniority rules. Principals of underperforming high schools more often have to work with the staff members they inherit until they can either redevelop current staff members or replace them with new staff members (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012; see also Duke & Landahl, 2011 for an example of a principal replacing staff members in an underperforming elementary school).

A relentless focus on instructional improvement should drive principals' efforts to develop the capacity of teachers in underperforming high schools (Chenoweth, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008). Payne (2008) notes that the "essential problem in our schools isn't children learning; it is adult learning" (p. 179). Principals play a critical role in creating the conditions (i.e., climate in the short-term, culture in the long-term; see Schein, 1992 for a general discussion on how actions targeting organizational climate influence organizational culture) for the adults in underperforming high schools to learn (Meyers & Hitt, 2017).

Principals' actions to improve adult learning have included (a) devising personalized professional development plans for each teacher (Thompson et al., 2011); (b) forming and staffing teacher teams, such as PLCs (DuFour, 2004), so that teachers can learn from one another (Cardno, 2012; Hargreaves, 2009); (c) introducing data use and the need for data-driven decision-making to plan instruction and assessment (Duke, 2015, p. 83); and (d) conducting observations focused solely on instructional practice, not content or curriculum, and then giving teachers immediate, specific feedback (Louis et al., 2010). Having teachers work together on teams, for example, challenges the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 88) and longstanding norms in the

education profession regarding autonomy and privacy (Murphy, 2015), particularly in high schools. Unlike elementary schools, which are usually small enough for principals to develop teachers one-by-one, most high schools are sufficiently large to impede such efforts (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). As a result, it is imperative for principals to "create space for teacher-led, collaborative learning, and invest in supports and incentives that empower great teachers and leaders to stay in the schools where they are needed most" (Doyle & Iyengar, 2013, p. 3).

Some principals of underperforming schools have operationalized Doyle and Iyengar's recommendation by taking a more collaborative approach to school leadership and management, distributing responsibilities among staff members (e.g., Aladjem et al., 2010; Cosner & Jones, 2016). This decision can help address concerns described by scholars in prior sections. To Kutash and colleagues (2010), a collaborative approach involves more staff members in improvement efforts, which can increase the likelihood that those efforts will be implemented and sustained. The distribution of instructional leadership and professional development responsibilities to others, such as department chairs, holds potential to fulfill Meyers and Hitt's (2017) recommendation of enhancing staff member capacity in underperforming schools. Collaborative approaches also present opportunities to cultivate leadership in a larger number of staff members (Meyers & Hitt, 2017), which could increase underperforming high schools' capacity for leadership (Lambert, 2002) and capacity for continuous improvement (Forman et al., 2017).

Little research, however, has specifically investigated distributed leadership structures and practices in underperforming high schools, much less how principals have gone about distributing leadership within those contexts. This lack of attention has

persisted despite continued calls for more research on the topic (Collins, 2016; Markette, 2012; Prestine & Nelson, 2005; Salmonowicz, 2009). SLTs represent one approach to distributing leadership and may be a way forward for principals of underperforming high schools to improve individual student and overall school performance. The next section reviews the literature on SLTs, and the chapter concludes with a synthesis of the two literatures that articulates the gaps in the literature this study aimed to fill.

School Leadership Teams (SLTs)

This section details the literature on SLTs and is organized as a systematic review (Hallinger, 2013). The first sub-section discusses the search strategies and exclusion criteria used to identify sources for analysis. The second sub-section articulates key themes about the functions and functioning of SLTs that emerged from identified sources. The third sub-section provides a methodological critique of identified sources, including strengths, gaps, and recommendations for future research.

Search strategies. To identify relevant sources for review, a variety of search terms were employed in order to account for differences in terminology: school/senior administrative team, school/senior management team, and school/senior leadership team (United Kingdom [U.K.] using "senior" and "management"; U.S. using "school" and "administrative"). These terms were used to search three prominent journals in educational leadership (as noted by Reynolds, VanGronigen, Nash, & Perrone, 2017) and four databases: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, *Journal of Education Administration*, ERIC (via EBSCOhost), Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect. During searches, results yielded four authors whose research agendas specifically use the SLT as the unit of

analysis. Subsequent "citation trees" (Dubois, 1988, p. 181) of relevant works by these authors provided additional sources for consideration.

Sources were then reviewed to determine whether they explicitly focused on SLTs; if not, they were excluded. An SLT was operationalized as a group of school staff members and others, including the school leader (e.g., U.K. head teacher; U.S. principal), that have involvement in discussing and/or making major policy, leadership, and management decisions on behalf of other staff members. Studies of PLCs and teacher leaders were often excluded because those groups of staff members, even if the school leader was a full or *ex officio* member, were rarely involved in discussing and/or making major decisions on behalf of other staff members.

After reviewing 91 sources, the final data corpus consisted of 33 sources from eight countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, the U.K., and the U.S.) published between 1993 and 2015. Table 1 provides summary information about each source, including author(s), year published, research design, study type, setting/context, and sample population. Three key themes about the functions and operations of SLTs emerged: (a) the role of the school leader in creating and leading SLTs, (b) the functions of SLTs in schools, and (c) the dynamics within SLTs. The next sections discuss each key theme.

The role of the school leader in creating and leading SLTs.

Establishing context. Since sources came from eight countries across a 23-year time period, it is necessary to first provide a brief overview of the policy contexts in which studies were conducted to frame the relationship between school leaders and SLTs.

Table 1

Studies of School Leadership Teams Organized by Publication Year

Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Study Type	Setting/Context	Sample Population
Wallace & Hall	1994	Qualitative	Case study	UK secondary schools	SLT members
Hall & Wallace	1995	Qualitative	Case study	UK secondary schools	SLT members
Wallace & Huckman	1996	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	Principals
Leithwood, Steinbach, & Ryan	1997	Qualitative	Case study	Canadian secondary schools	Teachers in schools with SLTs
Cardno	1998	Quantitative	Survey	NZ primary and secondary schools	Principals
Cardno	1998	Qualitative	Case study	NZ secondary schools	SLT members
Evans	1998	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	Teachers from schools with SLTs
Brown, Boyle, & Boyle	1999	Qualitative	Case study	UK secondary schools	Principals and department chairs from schools with SLTs
Wallace & Huckman	1999	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	SLT members
Hughes	1999	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	Principals and assistant principals
Chrispeels, Castillo, & Brown	2000	Qualitative	Case study	US elementary and high schools	SLT members
Wallace	2001	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	SLT members
Chrispeels & Martin	2002	Qualitative	Case study	US middle schools	SLT members
Wallace	2002	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary schools	SLT members
Zappulla	2003	Qualitative	Case study	Australian primary schools (Catholic)	SLT members
Cranston & Ehrich	2005	Quantitative	Instrument development	Australian primary and secondary schools	SLT members
Grubb & Flessa	2006	Qualitative	Case study	US elementary and high schools	SLT members and teachers
Zepeda	2006	Qualitative	Case study	US high schools	SLT members
Dering, Cunningham, & Whitby	2006	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary and secondary schools	SLT members
Austin & Harkins	2008	Qualitative	Action research	US early childhood centers	SLT members
Chapman et al.	2008	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary and secondary schools	SLT members and other internal and external stakeholders
Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, & Daly	2008	Qualitative	Case study	US elementary and middle schools	SLT members and other external stakeholders
Noel, Slate, Brown, & Tejeda-Delgado	2008	Qualitative	Case study	US high schools	SLT members and teachers
van der Mescht & Tyala	2008	Qualitative	Case study	South African secondary schools	SLT members
Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel	2009	Quantitative	Instrument development	Belgium secondary schools	SLT members and teachers
Olsen & Chrispeels	2009	Qualitative	Case study	US middle schools	SLT members
Thomas	2009	Qualitative	Case study	UK secondary schools	SLT members
Hallinger & Heck	2010	Quantitative	Survey	US elementary schools	Teachers from schools with and without SLTs
Kensler, Reames, Murray, & Patrick	2012	Qualitative	Case study	US high schools	SLT members
Markette	2012	Qualitative	Case study	US high schools	SLT members and other internal stakeholders
Bush & Glover	2014	Qualitative	Case study	UK primary, secondary, and special schools	SLT members and other internal and external stakeholders
Conner	2015	Qualitative	Action research	US elementary schools	SLT members and other internal stakeholders
Tubin	2015	Qualitative	Case study	Israeli high schools	SLT members and other internal and external stakeholders

Since they were the most prominent among sources in the data corpus, only the U.K. and

U.S. policy contexts will be discussed in the next sections.

The United Kingdom. In the U.K., two pieces of legislation have greatly

influenced the roles and responsibilities of head teachers (heads): The Education Reform

Act of 1988 (ERA), and The Learning and Skills Act of 2000 (LSA). The ERA permitted

schools to be locally managed, which gave rise to the *site-based management (SBM)*

movement in the U.K. Murphy and Beck (1995) list three common SBM governance

models: administrative control, community control, and professional control. In the first,

the head retained administrative authority. In the second and third, the head joined with

others to form an SLT. Until 1988, SLTs had been confined almost exclusively to

secondary schools, mainly because of lower enrollments in primary schools (Evans,

1998). Wallace (2002) argues, though, that a "quiet revolution" (p. 168) took place

during the 1990s when many U.K. schools adopted corporate-style SBM approaches to

leadership and management, often forming SLTs that acted on behalf of the school's staff

members. SBM approaches shifted the roles and responsibilities of some U.K. heads, as

they were now expected to be, simultaneously, solo leaders, team leaders, and team

players in their schools (Hall & Wallace, 1996; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Ryan, 1997;

Wallace & Huckman, 1996).

The second law—the LSA—permitted the creation of *academy schools* (Ball,

2008), further altering the expectations and jobs of some U.K. heads. Academy schools,

similar to U.S. charter schools, were either operated independently or by a non-profit

academy trust (akin to some U.S. charter management organizations). In their study of

heads at various U.K. schools, Chapman and colleagues (2008) found one academy trust

appointed a head to oversee 11 schools and chair a 12-member supra-leadership team

consisting of herself and the deputy heads of each member school. In this governance

model, the head behaved more like a private-sector chief executive officer than a

traditional primary school head. In this type of arrangement, a single head could end up

being responsible for (a) managing a multimillion-pound budget, (b) supervising

activities across a number of primary and secondary schools, and (c) staying abreast of

the performance of hundreds of teachers and thousands of students. This portrait of a 21st

century academy trust head contrasts sharply with heads of the past. The role has both

expanded and diversified. It has become a job that many scholars and practitioners assert

cannot be done alone, compelling heads to distribute, delegate, or share leadership and

management responsibilities with other staff members (Bush & Glover, 2014; Zappulla,

2003).

The United States. As noted earlier, the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk,* a

report commissioned by the Reagan administration, ushered in the era of school

accountability in the U.S. (Placier, 1993). However, NCLB is frequently considered to be

a more pervasive influence on the operations and performance of U.S. schools and

districts (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). The law required all public elementary and

secondary school students to be proficient in reading and mathematics skills, as assessed

by state standardized tests, by 2014. Despite NCLB offering relatively little guidance for

educators on how to fulfill the mandate, principals often lead their schools' efforts to

meet AYP and satisfy accountability requirements (Sunderman, Orfield, & Kim, 2006).

Similar to the U.K., increasing accountability demands have made the job more

complex and multifaceted (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002). Grubb and Flessa

(2006) suggest NCLB has challenged the applicability and effectiveness of traditional, rational structural models for today's schools. Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008) note the "growing recognition that principals cannot lead alone and that SLTs are essential to the improvement process" (p. 780). And while SLTs as a structure have existed for some time in U.S. schools (Sprague, 1973), especially high schools (Collins, 2016; Siskin, 1997), the study of how principals share (Marks & Printy, 2003), delegate (Wallace, 2001), or distribute (Gronn, 2000) their leadership and management responsibilities with other staff members is still a recent phenomenon in the literature (Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009).

Creating the SLT. As the policy context vignettes demonstrated, today's U.K. heads and U.S. principals (heretofore referred to as "principals") grapple with a range of charges and tasks—and many have turned to SLTs for assistance. The onus to create, staff, develop, and lead an SLT, though, lies solely with the principal (Ehrich & Cranston, 2004; Kensler, Reames, Murray, & Patrick, 2012). Principals should not take these decisions lightly, according to Wallace (2002), especially since accountability policies often hold principals responsible for school performance (van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). One principal in Wallace's 2001 study of elementary school leaders exemplified this tension: "One of the hardest things in my view is for a primary head to let go and to delegate. We are used to having everything under our control and it is very, very hard to delegate" (p. 161). Sharing, delegating, or distributing leadership and management responsibilities alters the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 88) and challenges decades-old norms in the education profession (Murphy, 2015; see also van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008).

Leading the SLT. Research shows principals commonly employ one of two approaches in leading their SLT: (a) *delegating* (Chapman et al., 2008), or (b) *distributing* (Spillane, 2006). The approach they select often depends on the types of tasks they want their SLT to work on, which Thomas (2009) divides into two groups: strategic and operational. Strategic tasks focus on the school's long-term direction (e.g., vision development) while operational tasks center on the day-to-day management of the school (e.g., the "stuff that walks in the door", Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 534). Principals utilizing a delegating approach retain authority over higher-level strategic tasks and have their SLT address lower-level operational tasks. Presumably, not everyone needs to be or should be a leader in a school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Principals in several case studies justified this approach because they questioned whether their SLT members were competent enough to take on additional, higher-level responsibilities (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Ehrich & Cranston, 2004; van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008; Wallace, 2002). Wallace (2002) cautions against using this approach, however, because SLT members may view operational tasks as menial and unfulfilling, which can negatively influence how the SLT perceives its role in the school. Moreover, delegating reinforces the norm that principals are one of the few staff members with the ability to keep sight of and understand "the big picture" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, p. 24; Bush & Glover, 2014; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Murphy, 2015).

Principals utilizing a distributing approach share both strategic and operational tasks in order to create a sense of collective responsibility for all school operations within their SLT. Principals felt this approach increased the overall quality of school decision-making (Brown et al., 1999). For example, one of the most important strategic tasks for

school leaders is crafting a coherent, attainable vision and then securing buy-in

(Leithwood et al., 2004; Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009). Based on reviewed studies, some

principals tended to retain sole authority over developing the vision (e.g., Markette, 2012)

and worked with their SLT to promote the vision while others engaged in dialogue with

their SLT to jointly formulate and then promote the school's long-term direction (e.g.,

Thomas, 2009). Regardless of whether the principal involved the SLT in devising the

vision, SLT members and other school staff members still viewed the principal as "the

keeper of the vision" (Markette, 2012, p. 288; Thomas, 2009). Unlike delegating, though,

distributing principals empowered their SLT members to address a range of issues, take

on a variety of roles, and assume responsibility for both leadership and management tasks

(Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009). The next section elaborates upon these issues, roles, and

responsibilities by discussing the functions of SLTs in schools.

The functions of SLTs in schools. Sources articulated a diverse set of SLT

functions, which have been grouped into three categories: (a) leading, (b) linking, and (c)

developing. The following sections discuss each function category.

Leading. Studies concluded that one of the most important functions of SLTs was

leading improvement efforts in schools (e.g., Chrispeels et al., 2000; Chrispeels et al.,

2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Wallace & Hall, 1994). As discussed previously, though,

the degree to which principals involved SLTs in such efforts depended on the tasks (e.g.,

strategic, operational) that principals were willing to distribute. Regardless of approach,

studies demonstrated how SLTs assisted with and often relieved principals of a range of

duties. Since the average SLT consisted of five to nine members, with elementary schools

occasionally having fewer than five while larger high schools had up to 15 (Bush &

Glover, 2016), principals had access to a sizeable group of people. Both Chapman and

colleagues (2008) and Olsen and Chrispeels (2009) found that when principals shared

their workload with SLT members, their school's abilities to improve increased. With

more people involved in leading and managing the school, principals spent more time on

high-leverage responsibilities, such as instructional leadership and professional

development initiatives.

SLTs helped lead improvement efforts by modeling the benefits of collaborating

with other staff members (Conner, 2015). It was especially important for principals to

model teamwork (Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009) since SLT members took their cues from

the principal, and the rest of the staff members took *their* cues from SLT members

(Markette, 2012). In their study of non-traditional approaches to school leadership, Grubb

and Flessa (2006) asked principals and teachers about the importance of modeling. One

principal remarked, "people see us modeling, working together . . . I think it's just helped

[promote] this spirit of collaboration" (p. 533). Another teacher agreed, saying, "You

know, to see two people interact as peers, as equals, I think is really beneficial for the

staff and for the students" (p. 533). When people observe the modeling of something they

are unaware of, or lack the ability to do, it creates internal dissonance (Boyatzis, 1999). It

challenges people to reflect upon and potentially change their mental models (Chrispeels

et al., 2008; see also Senge, 1990 for a general discussion of organizational members'

mental models). In this vein, SLTs served as exemplars for teachers and other staff

members on how to work with others to improve performance and implement change.

Linking. SLTs also served as a link between school leaders and the staff at-large,

often with the intention of creating a more collaborative culture within schools. As the

first part of this chapter demonstrated, though, accomplishing this goal in a typical school

can be difficult (Murphy, 2015). However, several studies found the creation and

intentional staffing of SLTs to be a high-leverage strategy for enhancing school

performance. Schools used SLTs to build more collaborative cultures, but only when the

teams included a range of formal and informal leaders from across the school (Chrispeels,

Castillo, & Brown, 2000; Chrispeels & Martin, 2002; Chrispeels et al., 2008; Spillane,

2006). An SLT with broader membership puts a small group of staff members with

complementary skills and different perspectives around the same table, which increases

the likelihood of surfacing diverse issues for discussion (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Teachers could relay colleagues' concerns about curriculum alignment, counselors could

raise school climate issues, and administrators could float ideas with a small group before

presenting them to the rest of the staff members. SLT meetings gave members the

opportunity to see the school from other angles. This access to a broader degree of

information helped members, especially teachers, better translate what was happening "at

the top" for those "on the ground" (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

Brown and colleagues (1999) also underscored the value and importance of SLT

members disseminating information to their colleagues. Perhaps most importantly,

knowledge diffusion allowed for the school's vision to be explicitly communicated to a

greater number of people. This increased awareness helped shift staff member mindsets

from a focus on the individual to a focus on the collective (Noel, Slate, Brown, & Tejeda-

Delgado, 2008), and it also reduced the potential gap between what staff members

perceived the vision asked them to do and what they actually did in practice (Tubin,

2015). Teachers, for example, saw their place in "the big picture" and better understood

how their day-to-day practice related and contributed to realizing the vision. It also assuaged staff member feelings of exclusion from school decision-making. In SLTs with broader memberships, more staff members felt "heard," but SLT members needed to ensure staff members perceived that each opinion, not only those of a few, mattered (Evans, 1998). Without SLTs' explicit attention to various opinions, teachers and other staff members may choose to remain isolated (Evans, 1998).

Developing. A third SLT function was developing staff member capacity. Brown and colleagues (1999) noted how SLTs felt responsible for pooling the expertise of various staff members by serving as facilitators of individual and collective staff member learning. As mentioned above, they performed this function by leading improvement efforts along with modeling effective practice. However, leading and modeling only worked when teachers felt ready to engage in the process. A critical sub-function called for SLTs to foster psychologically safe atmospheres (Edmondson, 1999), often through their own modeling, where teachers felt comfortable openly questioning assumptions and taking risks without fear of sanction (Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009). Research shows that to create these environments, SLTs altered structures within the school to create informal leadership roles, especially for teachers (Silins & Mulford, 2004). SLTs also designed professional development experiences undergirded by adult learning principles (Collins, 2016; Marzano et al., 2005) because SLT-driven improvement efforts only worked when teachers and other staff members perceived that they had the individual and collective efficacy to enact change (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005). The extent to which SLTs were able to perform these functions effectively depended on the quality of their internal dynamics as a team.

The dynamics within SLTs. The final theme centers on the internal dynamics of SLTs—their *functioning* as a team. Zappulla (2003) notes how teams are not synonymous with groups. In their various and extensive studies of U.K. primary and secondary SLTs, Wallace and colleagues (1994, 1996, 1999) posit that teams have a *synergy* about them where their collective work is more influential than what individual SLT members could achieve alone. It can be difficult to create this synergy, though, and sources were often full of recommendations on how schools and principals could create the conditions for smooth and effective SLT operations and performance (e.g., Leithwood et al., 1997; Markette, 2012; McKeever, 2003; Thomas, 2009; Wallace, 2002; Wallace & Hall, 1994; Wallace & Huckman, 1996). This section focuses on three issues: (a) selecting SLT membership, (b) establishing the purpose and roles of SLT members, and (c) developing a culture of collaboration among the SLT.

Selecting SLT membership. The methods schools used to select SLT members varied. In some settings, principals selected all members (e.g., Thomas, 2009) while in other settings, faculty members elected SLT members to serve a one- or multi-year term (e.g., Noel et al., 2008). When principals selected SLT members, the decisions on whom to include were often political in nature (Ehrich & Cranston, 2004). Principals frequently had specific notions in mind about who they wanted, why they wanted them, and what roles and responsibilities that person would have. However, principals regularly inherited their SLTs, and as Thomas (2009) found, years might pass before principals were able to staff the team how they wanted. Both Hall and Wallace (1996) and Thomas (2009) found that principals tended to select SLT members for their team-working skills (e.g., personalities and "fit"), arguing that members could pick up the necessary knowledge and

skills as they settled into the team. The SLT's overall composition proved to be a critical factor for effective functioning, and principals took seriously the responsibility of whom to appoint.

Establishing the purpose and roles of SLT members. To be successful, SLTs needed to have a defined purpose and clear roles and responsibilities for each team member, a task that generally fell to the principal (Brown et al., 1999; Hall & Wallace, 1996; Hulpia et al., 2009; Wallace & Huckman, 1996). Often, the SLT's purpose was to realize the school's vision, but the extent to which the team fulfilled that purpose depended on the vision's clarity and the team's ability to operationalize the tasks needing completion (Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009). Zappulla (2003) suggests SLTs devise their *own* vision in order to make the school's vision more tangible for task creation and assignment. Making explicit each member's role and responsibilities enhanced team functioning (Thomas, 2009) and afforded schools the opportunity to take full advantage of the increased organizational processing power SLTs offered (van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008).

Developing a culture of collaboration among SLT members. Despite SLTs being a fairly common structure in schools, Brown and colleagues (1999) note how many staff members, including principals, need to be trained on how to be part of a team. Seven of the 33 sources examined professional development efforts aimed at enhancing SLT functioning (Chrispeels & Martin, 2002; Chrispeels et al., 2000; Chrispeels et al., 2008; Dering, Cunningham, & Whitby, 2006; Markette, 2012; Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Exercises focused on team members getting to know themselves, their teammates, and how their assumptions (i.e., mental models) manifested in their daily

practice and interacted with others' assumptions. One principal in Dering and colleagues' (2006) study of an SLT professional development initiative remarked, "I am fifty-eight and I have never had such an experience of self-awareness. I wasn't aware of the skills I use to influence, I wasn't aware of how I create a climate. It was a revelation to me" (p. 113). Professional development efforts like these strengthened SLT members' self-efficacy, which, in turn, improved their capacity as teammates and change leaders.

However, not all efforts to build "truly participative" teams succeeded (van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008, p. 232). After two years of one professional development initiative in California, certain SLT members in Chrispeels and colleagues' (2008) study still felt unprepared to take on new roles and responsibilities. Transforming the SLT from a group of school staff members into a high-performing team took months—sometimes years—of intense commitment. Often, SLT members needed to reorder their priorities and focus on school-wide issues and goals before focusing on their own issues and goals (Conner, 2015; Markette, 2012).

Critique of the literature on SLTs. This section first provides a brief overview followed by a critique of the 33 sources included in this literature review (see Table 1 for summary information).

Overview. Regarding setting, 25 studies took place in either the U.K. or U.S. (12 and 13, respectively). Much of the U.K. literature with SLTs as the unit of analysis came from three authors (Wallace, Hall, and Huckman) and one research center (The National Center for School Leadership, now the National College for Teaching and Leadership). In the U.S., one author (Chrispeels) and work from the California School Leadership Academy (Chrispeels, McKeever) provided the bulk of the foundational literature with

SLTs as the unit of analysis. Regarding design, the literature was predominantly

qualitative in nature, with 27 sources employing a case study method and 2 using action

research methods. Six studies employed a single-case design (five at the school level; one

at the district level). Four sources used quantitative designs—two studies developed and

tested survey instruments while the remaining two studies used surveys for descriptive or

inferential analysis. Regarding school level sampling, sources covered a range of school

levels: 1 examined an early childhood center, 9 explored elementary schools, 2 focused

on middle schools, 13 took place in high schools, and 8 studied a combination of either

elementary, middle, or high schools. Finally, 26 studies used the SLT and its members as

the unit of analysis.

   Critique. This critique focuses on three issues: (a) the schools selected for study,

(b) the data collection methods used, and (c) the time horizons of the given studies.

Despite the increasing prevalence of accountability policies for schools, few studies

examined underperforming schools, with both Markette (2012) and Tubin (2015)

focusing only on high-performing schools. It was difficult to determine, however, if the

schools in these two studies performed highly because of the specific actions and work of

the principals and SLTs or if the schools were predisposed to high performance because

of the given student populations. Hallinger and Heck (2010) refer to this phenomenon as

reciprocal causation, and when studies fail to specifically discuss the "causal chain," they

risk misinterpreting their findings.

   Many studies relied on semi-structured interviews and survey data to capture

internal and external stakeholders' perceptions of SLTs. Cranston and Ehrich (2005)

noted how the research topic (e.g., asking teachers to rate their SLT on its approachability

and perceived effectiveness) did not incentivize participants to be honest, which may have led to inaccurate results. Moreover, Austin and Harkins (2008) argued that too many studies on the topic used surveys and not enough direct observation. Fifteen of the 29 qualitative studies employed direct observation, but the number, length, and time period of observations differed dramatically. For example, in their study comparing a university-sponsored versus state-sponsored SLT professional development initiative, Kensler and colleagues (2012) observed the university-sponsored SLT a few times and the state-sponsored SLT for several hours. These methodological decisions call into question whether the researchers gathered enough evidence to evaluate which professional development approach better helped SLTs improve their functioning. In a different study of site-based decision-making committees, one of Noel and colleagues' (2008) three research questions asked how SBM influenced school culture, but the authors conducted no observations to triangulate their survey results. Schein (2010) argues that in order to best see organizational culture, researchers need to witness it in person so they can separate the espoused from the enacted. Even then, though, organizational culture would still be "seen" through the lenses researchers choose to use (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Wolcott, 1975).

Hallinger and Heck (2010) raised another issue: nearly all the research on collaborative leadership is cross-sectional in nature. Few studies—either qualitative or quantitative—take a longitudinal approach, which might be more apropos since results often take time to manifest. Hallinger and Heck's study was the only one to use advanced statistical techniques (structural equation modeling) to examine the longitudinal causal

effects of collaborative leadership. These critiques suggest the literature on SLTs has substantial gaps.

Gaps. Many sources highlighted a number of gaps in the literature on SLTs. Collins' 2016 dissertation appears to be one of the most recent sources on the topic, and she highlights two issues: (a) not much research provides "thick descriptions of high school cultures" (p. 57), and (b) few studies address how SLTs "foster practices associated with organizational learning" (p. 63). In U.S. high schools, especially, Tubin (2015) identified the lack of literature exploring the influence of organizational structures on principal and SLT practices. Markette (2012) agreed, noting the "paucity of research regarding high school administrations within the context of teams" (p. 277). Both Bush and Glover (2014) and Thomas (2009) noted the budding literature on distributed leadership in general, but the limited amount of research that specifically focuses on SLTs. Chapman and colleagues (2008) extend this assertion, pointing out how the current literature "provides only a partial account of developments on the ground" (p. 2) and little discussion of *how* principals can build and develop effective SLTs. Finally, Hallinger and Heck (2010) along with Hulpia and colleagues (2009) highlight the dearth of quantitative work, both cross-sectional and longitudinal, on SLTs and distributed leadership generally.

In some of the original work on the topic, Hall and Wallace (1996) argued that most studies of teamwork were "prescriptive and rarely address[ed] the idiosyncratic cultures of schools" (p. 297). To combat this issue, Flyvbjerg (2001), in his book *Making Social Science Matter*, argued that the case study is the most appropriate method to construct understanding of social phenomena—and that the goal of social science

research should be to conduct large numbers of case studies in different settings and then synthesize the findings in order to develop hypotheses and theories. More qualitative research can be done in a number of areas, such as: (a) how school districts support SLT development, (b) how SLTs develop their own capacity to be change leaders, (c) how new principals work with inherited SLTs, and (d) how SLTs operate in different school contexts, such as underperforming schools facing accountability pressures. As the knowledge base grows, working theories can be developed to inform instrument development that researchers can use to respond to the calls for more rigorous quantitative analysis.

SLTs as a Potential Lever for Improving Underperforming High Schools

As noted earlier, principals of today's underperforming high schools have a job that many argue is too big for one person to tackle alone (e.g., Duke, 2015); their schools face myriad challenges and their size, complexity, and student populations can only compound those challenges. In response, an increasing number of scholars recommend principals of underperforming high schools create distributed leadership structures and implement distributed leadership practices (e.g., Cosner & Jones, 2016; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012). However, much of the extant research on the leadership of underperforming schools focuses on the principal as the unit of analysis (Aladjem et al., 2010; Duke & Landahl, 2011; Reitzug & Hewitt, 2015). Few studies of any type (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed) have investigated distributed leadership practices in underperforming high schools and how they might be used in improvement efforts (see Sesky, 2014 for one of the most recent).

The SLT approach is one way to distribute leadership in underperforming high schools. However, most of the substantive research on SLTs has taken place outside the U.S. (e.g., Chapman, 2008; Wallace & Hall, 1994; Wallace & Huckmann, 1999), outside of underperforming high schools (e.g., Collins, 2016), and before the effects of NCLB's implementation started to manifest in U.S. public schools (e.g., Chrispeels et al., 2000; Chrispeels & Martin, 2002; McKeever, 2003). A systematic review of the literature revealed that SLTs have been found to increase schools' abilities to improve (e.g., Chapman, 2008; Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009). Few studies, though, have examined the extent to which SLTs build schools' capacity for leadership. Harris and Lambert (2003) suggest capacity for leadership is an essential factor that can strengthen a school's capacity for continuous improvement (Forman et al., 2017), something underperforming high schools sorely need (Duke, 2015).

Thus, there exists a gap in the literature regarding how SLTs in underperforming high schools might present an opportunity to help build their schools' capacity for leadership and, in turn, their schools' capacity for continuous improvement. Moreover, not much is known—in general—about the composition, structures, functions, and operations of SLTs, particularly in underperforming high schools, or about how staff members perceive their SLTs. To address these gaps, the next chapter describes the research design and methodology used to conduct this study of SLTs in 17 U.S. underperforming high schools.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Study Overview

This study investigated the composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs in underperforming high schools in the United States. Chapter 2 discussed the study's conceptual framework, which integrated the structural, political, human resources, and symbolic perspectives on organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The foregrounding of the structural and political perspectives led to consulting (a) the literature on the challenges of underperforming high schools to shed light on the context in which this study takes place, and (b) the literature on school leadership teams (SLTs) since they are the unit of analysis.

Chapter 2 revealed that few studies have examined how principals of underperforming high schools contend with their increasing workloads by distributing leadership and management responsibilities (e.g., Sesky, 2014). SLTs represent one such approach to distributing, and while scholars note the role and importance of SLTs in improvement efforts (e.g., Cosner & Jones, 2016; Duke, 2015), little empirical evidence supports such claims. Moreover, it remains an open question whether principals of underperforming high schools facing heightened accountability pressures should implement the SLT approach. Thus, there existed gaps in the literature for considering SLTs within the context of underperforming high schools, particularly as a vehicle for building schools' capacity for leadership, which may strengthen schools' capacity for continuous improvement (Lambert, 2002; Stoll, 2009).

This chapter outlines this study's research design and methodology, including its mixed-methods research design and rationale, site selection and participants, data sources, access, data collection and analysis procedures, and validity and trustworthiness of findings. The chapter concludes with a statement addressing researcher bias and ethics.

Restatement of the Research Questions

Given the aforementioned gaps in the literature, this study addressed the following research questions in order to examine SLTs within the context of underperforming high schools:

1. What are the composition and structures of SLTs?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLT composition and structures?

2. What are the functions of SLTs, and how do SLTs organize to perform their functions?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLTs' functions and how SLTs organize to perform their functions?

3. How do staff members define and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

    a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in how staff members define and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

Research Design

Setting the Stage

Creswell (2014) suggests that a study's conceptual framework drives the creation of the research questions, which then drives a study's research design and methodology.

In reality, though, the process is far more iterative (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). An initial interest in SLTs led to reviewing existing theories on organizational structures and groups and teams within organizations. This review enabled the creation of an initial list of research questions, and later readings on SLTs prompted revisions of both the conceptual framework and the list of research questions.

This study's conceptual framework involves the reciprocal influence of organizational structures on the actions and interactions of organizational members. It was therefore necessary to obtain data about both SLTs as organizational structures in underperforming high schools along with how staff members interacted with SLTs.

The first and second research questions called for gathering data about SLTs as organizational structures in underperforming high schools by inquiring about their composition and functions along with how they organized to perform those functions. The third research question called for gathering data about how staff members interacted with SLTs by inquiring about staff members' perceptions of their SLTs. "*Perceived SLT effectiveness*" is used as a summary term for these perceptions.

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed significant gaps in the knowledge base on SLTs, especially within the context of underperforming high schools (Bush & Glover, 2014; Markette, 2012; Tubin, 2015). When there is a dearth of extant literature, Rossman and Rallis (2003) recommend engaging in exploratory research in order to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Such an endeavor often calls for going "into the field" (p. 9) using qualitative and/or quantitative methods to gather data for analysis and interpretation. Qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, can provide researchers with a "rich, 'thick' description" (Merriam, 1998, p.

29) of the phenomenon of interest while quantitative research methods, such as survey administration, can provide researchers with detailed information about a representative population in order to generalize to a larger population (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Rea & Parker, 2005).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) submit that the intentional use of both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study bolsters quality because it leverages the advantages of each set of methods. These mixed-methods designs call for collecting and analyzing both qualitative (i.e., non-numeric) and quantitative (i.e., numeric) data, which Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) assert aids researchers in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Moreover, mixed-methods studies reside in the pragmatist research paradigm, which acknowledges that qualitative and quantitative research methods are compatible—not in contention—with one another (Howe, 1988; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

A Mixed-Methods Design

Given that little literature exists on the SLTs in underperforming high schools, this study employed a two-phase, sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008) to answer the research questions. In a sequential mixed-methods design, data collected and analyzed from one phase informs the data collection and analysis of future phases, which provides researchers with methodological flexibility as a study unfolds (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; see also Rossman & Rallis, 2003 who highlight flexibility as a necessity for studies using qualitative research methods).

A sequential design was particularly appropriate since the purpose of this study was exploratory in nature: develop a better understanding of SLTs in underperforming

high schools. The study's first phase used qualitative research methods to build an understanding of SLTs in underperforming high schools—and data from this phase was used to inform survey development and administration efforts in the study's second phase. Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the study's two-phase design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), and later sections elaborate upon the information in Figure 6.

Rationale for Creating a Survey

A number of studies in educational leadership have used surveys as a data collection method, particularly to understand the attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of staff members in schools and districts (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 2010). A widely-used U.S. national dataset, the Schools and Staffing Survey, collects structural and perceptual data from a nationally representative sample of U.S. schools. However, few surveys exist that permit researchers to collect data about distributed leadership structures in schools. In their studies of SLTs in Australian elementary and secondary schools, Ehrich and Cranston (2004; see also Cranston & Ehrich, 2005) created the TEAM© Development Questionnaire. The purpose of the survey was to engage SLTs in critical reflection about their own learning and development. Questions focused on the expectations that SLT members had of themselves and that non-SLT members had of SLTs. Where these expectations aligned, SLTs reflected upon their strengths, and where these expectations differed, SLTs reflected upon areas for improvement. Few recent studies have used the TEAM© Development Questionnaire, and after contacting the study authors, one replied that he retired and no longer had access to the survey.

| QUAL (February and March 2018) |
| Systematic review of the literature on school leadership teams |

↓

| QUAL (March 2018) |
| Creation of the *SLTi* working skeleton; IRB protocol submission |

↓

| QUAL (April 2018) |
| IRB protocol approval |

↓

| QUAL (May through July 2018) |
| Access efforts to secure participation in Phase 1 (interviews) and/or Phase 2 (*SLTi* administration) |

↓

| QUAL (June through September 2018) |
| Semi-structured interviews with SLT and non-SLT members in underperforming high schools |

↓

| QUAL (October and November 2018) |
| Analysis of semi-structured interview data |

↓

| QUAL (November 2018) |
| Synthesis of systematic literature review, *SLTi* working skeleton, and semi-structured interview data to create the *SLTi* pilot |

↓

| QUAL (November and December 2018) |
| Expert review of the *SLTi* pilot |

↓

| QUAN (December 2018 and January 2019) |
| Administration of the *SLTi* pilot to SLT members in underperforming high schools |

↓

| QUAN (January 2019) |
| Descriptive analysis of *SLTi* pilot results |

↓

| QUAL + QUAN (February 2019) |
| Re-analysis of semi-structured interview data and *SLTi* pilot results |

Figure 6. A flowchart of the two-phase study design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). QUAL = qualitative data; QUAN = quantitative data; QUAL + QUAN = analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Based on their work in Belgian elementary and secondary schools, Hulpia and colleagues (2009) created the Distributed Leadership Inventory (DLI), a 60-item, five-level Likert scale survey assessing the extent to which schools distributed leadership and management responsibilities to staff members. Only a handful of items addressed SLTs, though, as the survey's main focus was gathering perceptual data from staff members about the degree to which they felt valued and cared for by administrators and teacher leaders (e.g., department chairs) along with the degree to which SLTs, principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders were involved in school decision-making domains (e.g., vision creation). Study authors were contacted regarding potential use of some of the DLI's SLT-related items, but multiple communications went unanswered.

Hulpia and colleagues (2009) note the lack of surveys assessing distributed leadership in schools. Rea and Parker (2005) argue how "sample survey research is the most appropriate method . . . if the researcher needs personal, self-reported information that is not available elsewhere" (p. 4). Given that the TEAM© Development Questionnaire and the DLI did not address SLTs specifically, there was a gap in surveys that collected structural and perceptual data on distributed leadership structures and operations. The *School Leadership Team Inventory (SLTi)*, a product of this study, was created, in part, to help fill that gap.

Methodology

Site Identification, Sampling, Access, and Final Sample

Site identification criteria. Data were collected from high schools designated as "underperforming" by state education agencies (SEAs) from various U.S. states. An underperforming high school was defined as a school (a) comprised of at least three grade

levels that ranged from 9 through 12, and (b) that received the lowest or second-lowest

rating based on its state's accountability system for the 2015-16, 2016-17, and/or 2017-18

school years. The Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) accountability system, for

example, uses a five-star scale to rate schools on a set of state-determined criteria, with

five being the highest and one being the lowest. High schools receiving a "one-star" or

"two-star" rating were considered underperforming (KDE, 2018). All states included in

the study used a tiered accountability system, which permitted the identification of high

schools receiving the lowest or second-lowest rating (Wong et al., 2018).

     Site sampling and access. This study employed a stratified purposeful sampling

strategy, which Patton (2002) defines as "samples within samples" where each stratum is

"fairly homogenous" (p. 240; see also Suri, 2011). The purpose of this sampling strategy

was to capture variation while recognizing that "a common core . . . may also emerge in

the analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 240). Since this study included underperforming high

schools from various U.S. states, a sub-sample of sites from each state aligns with

Patton's notion of "samples within samples."

     Variation existed across states (i.e., strata; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2019),

though. For example, one state enrolled select underperforming schools in a one-year

school improvement initiative while another state was in the process of implementing a

new teacher leadership strategy in underperforming schools. These efforts are similar to

other states that have created SLT development resources for district- and school-level

leaders (e.g., Kelley, 2010; Penn Center for Educational Leadership, 2018). A stratified

purposeful sampling strategy has the ability to address between-state variation by

considering a larger, more variable sample that was able to be divided into smaller, more homogenous sub-samples.

Regardless of any desired sampling strategy, access to underperforming high schools for data collection was still dependent on permission from district- and/or school-level officials. To contend with probable access difficulties, Susi (2011) recommends researchers tap into their "invisible college" (p. 66) of fellow researchers and personal contacts to help facilitate conversations with key informants who can grant access to information-rich cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In February 2018, fellow researchers and personal contacts in five states offered their assistance to secure participation from principals of underperforming high schools: (a) two states in the Midwest, (b) two states in the South, and (c) one state in the Middle Atlantic. These contacts provided a focus for access efforts, and in March 2018, lists of eligible high schools in these five states were gathered. These lists were sent back to the "invisible college" (Susi, 2011, p. 66) to further focus access efforts, which yielded a final list of 36 school districts across the five states. After devising this focused access strategy, a protocol was submitted to the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in March 2018 and approved in April 2018. See Appendix A to review the IRB investigator agreement and Appendix B to review the IRB approval letter.

In May and June 2018, each of the 36 districts was contacted to inquire about their process for approving requests to conduct research in their schools. Responses ranged from a three-minute phone conversation with a superintendent to the submission of a research proposal for consideration by a district's research review board. Districts

were asked to grant permission for collecting data during Phase 1 (interviews) and Phase 2 (administration of *SLTi* pilot). In total, requests to conduct research were submitted to all 36 districts, and 21 requests were approved, 5 requests were declined, and 10 requests received no response.

Of the districts that approved requests, 20 permitted participation in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 while one district permitted participation only in Phase 2. All 21 districts that approved requests permitted the direct contacting of principals to solicit participation. Within the 21 districts that approved requests, 38 high schools qualified for inclusion, and all 38 principals received an introductory email informing them about the details of the study along with asking for permission to collect data. Principals that did not respond to the introductory email were sent a follow-up email around 10 days later and a final follow-up email around 10 days after the first follow-up email.

Final sample of sites. In total, 17 principals granted permission for collecting data for the phase(s) that their districts had approved, 1 principal declined to grant permission, and 20 principals did not respond despite multiple contact attempts. The final sample of sites for data collection consisted of 17 underperforming high schools in 15 districts across 4 U.S. states. Fifteen high schools participated in Phase 1, 12 schools participated in Phase 2, and 10 schools participated in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. See Table 2 for a listing of the 17 high schools along with participation status in each phase.

Based on the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) for the 2015-16 school year[1], none of

---

[1] As of this writing, NCES released "preliminary" CCD data for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, but those data remained subject to revision by NCES. CCD data for the 2015-16 school year, the last "official" release, was used instead.

Table 2

Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 Participating High Schools

State	School District	School	Phase 1 Access Granted?	Phase 1 Data Collected?	Phase 2 Access Granted?	Phase 2 Data Collected?
A	1	Ash	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A	2	Aspen	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A	3	Beech	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[d]
A	3	Birch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	4	Cherry	No	N/A[a]	Yes	Yes
C	5	Chestnut	Yes	Yes	N/A[c]	N/A[c]
D	6	Elm	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[d]
D	7	Fir	Yes	N/A[b]	Yes	Yes
D	8	Hawthorn	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[d]
D	9	Hickory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	10	Maple	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	10	Oak	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[d]
D	11	Pine	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	12	Spruce	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	13	Sycamore	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	14	Walnut	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	15	Willow	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Total	16	15	16	12

[a]The school district did not grant permission to collect Phase 1 data.
[b]Scheduling constraints prevented participation in Phase 1.
[c]The principal transferred to a new position between Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection, and successful contact with the new principal could not be established.
[d]The high school granted permission to collect Phase 2 data, but did not respond to multiple contact attempts for *SLTi* distribution.

the 17 high schools were charter schools or had been reconstituted for the 2015-16 school year. According to the CCD's urban locale coding scheme, eight high schools were in urban areas, three schools were in suburban areas, and six schools were in rural areas. Total student enrollment ranged from 140 students to 1,993 students ($M = 1,017$; $SD = 537$) The percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch ranged from 30% to 100% ($M = 57\%$; $SD = 18\%$). The number of full-time instructional staff members (e.g., teachers) ranged from 13 to 113 ($M = 67$; $SD = 31$). The student-teacher

ratio, which was calculated by dividing the total student enrollment by the number of

full-time instructional staff members, ranged from 11 to 20 (M = 15; SD = 2). See Table 3

to review these select characteristics.

Table 3

Select Characteristics of Sampled High Schools

Locale	N	Average Student Enrollment	Average % FRL	Average # of Staff	Average Student-Teacher Ratio
Urban	8	1,323	62%	81	16
Suburban	3	979	52%	72	13
Rural	6	628	53%	45	13
All	17	1,017	57%	67	15

Note. FRL = Free and reduced price lunch; Staff = Full-time instructional staff.
Source. U.S. National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data for 2015-2016.

In reviewing the CCD's seven race/ethnicity groups, student demographics varied

among the 17 high schools. Across the final sample of sites, an average of 6% of students

were American Indian, 2% were Asian, 29% were black, 12% were Hispanic, 0% were

Pacific Islander, 4% were two-or-more races/ethnicities, and 47% were white. See Table

4 to review select student demographics, including the lowest and higher percentages for

each race/ethnicity group.

Data Sources

This study drew upon three data sources: (a) the literatures on underperforming

high schools and SLTs, (b) semi-structured interviews with SLT and non-SLT members

in underperforming high schools, and (c) the *SLTi* pilot. Given this study's two-phase,

sequential design, the next section describes each data source, including participants,

within the context of each phase.

Table 4

Student Demographics of Sampled High Schools

	Average % of Students	Lowest % within Schools	Highest % within Schools
American Indian	6%	0%	99%
Asian	2%	0%	6%
Black	29%	0%	77%
Hispanic	12%	0%	47%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	1%
Two or More Races	4%	1%	8%
White	47%	1%	93%

Source. U.S. National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data for 2015-2016.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the study's two-phase design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The left-hand side lists the various phases of the study, and the right-hand side lists the major data collection and analysis milestones within each phase. The abbreviation "QUAL" indicates qualitative (i.e., non-numeric) data will be collected or analyzed within the milestone; "QUAN" indicates quantitative (i.e., numeric) data will be collected or analyzed within the milestone; and "QUAL + QUAN" indicates that both qualitative and quantitative will be collected or analyzed within the milestone. The next sections describe the study's data collection and analysis procedures by phase.

Phase 1 of 2. Phase 1 consisted of developing the pilot draft of the *SLTi* by conducting a systematic review of the literature along with semi-structured interviews of SLT and non-SLT members in underperforming high schools.

Systematic review of the literature and developing the* SLTi *preliminary version. To gain an etic—or outside—understanding of SLTs (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), a systematic review (Hallinger, 2013) of SLTs from the education literature was first

conducted, which was reported in Chapter 2. Results from the review were used to generate a preliminary list of survey items related to SLT composition (e.g., principals, department chairs), functions (e.g., leading change initiatives, linking organizational sub-units), operations (e.g., meeting frequency, meeting agenda topics), dynamics (e.g., norms, interactions), and perceived effectiveness (e.g., criteria, assessments). The conceptual framework was used to generate an additional list of survey items related to SLT composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceived effectiveness.

The two preliminary lists of survey items from the literature review and the conceptual framework were combined to create a "working skeleton" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45) of the *SLTi*. The *SLTi* working skeleton consisted of four sections totaling 73 items: (a) 5 items on demographic information, (b) 13 items on SLT structural characteristics, (c) 26 items on SLT functions, and (d) 29 items on SLT dynamics and perceived effectiveness. See Appendix C to review the *SLTi* working skeleton.

Several sections included Likert items with five possible response levels: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree (Likert, 1932). Likert items are often utilized to collect attitudinal and perceptual data, which are subjective in nature (Hales, 1986). This study's conceptual framework discussed how organizational members' perceptions of organizational structures may influence the operations of those structures (Mintzberg, 1979; Pfeffer, 1992). Likert items are well suited to elicit participants' attitudes and perceptions about SLT structures, operations, and perceived effectiveness.

Moreover, Rea and Parker (2005) assert that Likert items aid in obtaining information about specific subjects, such as perceived SLT effectiveness. As Chapter 1

noted, perceived SLT effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the SLT's outputs align with the expectations of those outputs. For example, the SLT might decide, as a group, to focus their actions on increasing authentic collaboration between academic departments in a high school. To be considered effective, participants (e.g., SLT and non-SLT members) need to perceive both a need for engaging and that they now engage in more authentic collaboration because of the SLT's actions. This view aligns with Duke's (1986) notion that "leadership" is a perception, and actions do not constitute "leadership" until observers perceive them as such. In other words, actions taken by positional leaders (e.g., principals) are not considered "leadership" until others (e.g., staff members) perceive those actions to be "leadership."

Interviews. While the literature review helped to devise a preliminary list of survey items based on prior studies, Chapter 2 noted the dearth of studies of SLTs in underperforming high schools. When scant literature exists, Rossman and Rallis (2003) call for researchers to go "into the field" (p. 9) to learn about the phenomenon of interest by observing or interviewing key informants. Regarding the latter, Patton (1990) notes that "we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 278). It can be difficult for outsiders to "see" organizational structures and thus gain an understanding of "the way we do things around here" (Schein, 1992, pp. 8-9) without gaining an emic—or inside—perspective (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Interviews "make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world" (Patton, 1990, p. 279).

To gain an emic understanding of SLTs, semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) were conducted with SLT and non-SLT members in high schools that granted permission to collect data and that consented to participate.

Interview participant identification, sampling, and access. The aforementioned Phase 1 introductory email sent to principals requested conducting interviews with up to three staff members: (a) the principal, (b) one SLT member (e.g., assistant principal, department chair), and (c) one non-SLT member. Using prior research as a guide (e.g., Collins, 2016), an SLT in a high school typically consists of the principal, assistant principals, instructional leaders (e.g., department chairs, grade-level leaders), and a support staff member for administrative purposes. As Chapter 2 noted, instructional leadership tends to be dispersed in high schools because of their size and complexity (e.g., Siskin, 1997). Department chairs are often members of SLTs because they are considered to be their department's instructional leader (e.g., Klar, 2012).

Many high schools had multiple "leadership teams," so principals were asked to provide additional information on the composition and functions of the various leadership teams to determine which constituted the SLT as conceptualized by this study. For example, one high school had an administrative team, an instructional leadership team, and a behavioral support team. The administrative team consisted only of school-wide administrators and no teachers or teacher leaders (e.g., department chairs, instructional coaches). The instructional leadership team consisted of school-wide administrators and teacher leaders and was responsible for improving instruction to meet school improvement goals. The behavioral support team, created by the district, was charged with implementing a district-wide behavioral intervention strategy. Members of the

second team—the instructional leadership team—were considered SLT members while all other staff members were considered non-SLT members.

In total, 16 principals of high schools in districts that approved Phase 1 participation granted permission to collect data. Unresolved scheduling constraints prevented one high school from participating in Phase 1, but interviews were conducted in the remaining 15 high schools. Since nearly all interviews were conducted over the summer (June 2018 and July 2018), many staff members were away from their schools. Eight of 15 principals offered suggestions on which SLT and non-SLT members they knew were at school for the summer (e.g., teaching summer school) or available during the summer (e.g., not traveling). In the remaining seven high schools, principals were asked to provide a list of SLT members and then staff directories were reviewed to identify non-SLT members.

Interview participants were selected using a stratified purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) to capture variation among SLT member roles (e.g., assistant principal, department chair) and non-SLT member roles (e.g., social studies teacher, guidance counselor). Potential participants received an introductory email informing them about the details of the study along with asking for permission to collect data. Potential participants that did not respond to the introductory email were sent a follow-up email around 10 days later and a final follow-up email around 10 days after the first follow-up email.

Final sample of interview participants. In total, 31 SLT members and 9 non-SLT members granted permission for collecting data for a total of 40 interview participants across the 15 high schools. None declined to grant permission, and 4 SLT members and 6

non-SLT members did not respond after multiple contact attempts. The final sample of interview participants was composed of 21 women and 19 men and counted 16 principals, 9 assistant principals, 3 department chairs (social studies, special education, world languages), 2 formally-designated teacher leaders (e.g., instructional coach), 1 guidance counselor, and 9 teachers (art, career and technical education, English/language arts, mathematics, science, special education, world languages). Participants' years of experience in their role ranged from 0 (newly-hired principal) to 27 ($M = 5$; $SD = 5$). Table 5 details the 40 interview participants, including their role, SLT member status, years of experience in their role, and gender.

Interview data collection procedures. Semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) were conducted with all 40 participants from June 2018 to September 2018. Thirty-seven interviews occurred in June 2018 and July 2018 while three interviews occurred in August 2018 and September 2018. After granting permission to collect data via email, participants were sent a consent form noting their rights, including that they could withdraw from the study at any time. None of the 40 chose to withdraw. To incentivize responses, participants were given the option to enter into a raffle to win one of several Amazon gift cards. Participant names and email addresses were collected using a separate form (Jacob & Jacob, 2012), and winners were notified in February 2019.

Interviews were conducted using a communication medium and at a time convenient to participants (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). Twenty-four interviews were conducted in-person, 10 interviews were conducted via videoconference (e.g., Zoom), and 6 interviews were conducted via phone. Participants were asked a series of questions

about their SLT's composition, structures, functions, operations, and perceived

effectiveness. See Appendix D to review the Phase 1 interview protocol. Interviews

Table 5

Phase 1 Interview Participant Characteristics

School	Role	SLT Member?	Gender	Years in Current Role[a]	Interview Length[b]
Spruce	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	6	65
Elm	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	5	26
Maple	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	3	38
Walnut	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	1	52
Hickory	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	8	53
Oak	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	5	44
Pine	Assistant Principal	Yes	M	4	65
Aspen	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	10	68
Sycamore	Assistant Principal	Yes	F	4	63
Elm	Dept. Chair – Social Studies	Yes	M	7	40
Willow	Dept. Chair – Special Education	Yes	F	12	59
Oak	Dept. Chair – World Languages	Yes	F	9	29
Spruce	Principal	Yes	M	1	48
Elm	Principal	Yes	M	6	39
Maple	Principal	Yes	M	1	55
Hawthorn	Principal	Yes	M	1	37
Walnut	Principal	Yes	M	5	50
Hickory	Principal	Yes	F	5	70
Hickory	Principal	Yes	M	5	70
Oak	Principal	Yes	M	6	30
Pine	Principal	Yes	M	4	56
Aspen	Principal	Yes	F	3	50
Chestnut	Principal	Yes	M	3	55
Ash	Principal	Yes	M	1	33
Beech	Principal	Yes	M	5	52
Sycamore	Principal	Yes	M	4	41
Willow	Principal	Yes	M	3	41
Birch	Principal	Yes	F	0[c]	49
Aspen	Teacher – World Languages	Yes	F	3	64
Beech	Teacher Leader – Instructional Coach	Yes	F	2	52
Ash	Teacher Leader – Other	Yes	M	5	46
Pine	Guidance Counselor	No	F	1	39
Ash	Teacher – Art	No	F	2	41
Hickory	Teacher – Career/Technical Education	No	F	12	38
Aspen	Teacher – English	No	F	27	52
Beech	Teacher – Math	No	F	7	54
Walnut	Teacher – Other	No	F	2	45
Spruce	Teacher – Science	No	F	7	24
Sycamore	Teacher – Special Education	No	M	5	28
Maple	Teacher – World Languages	No	F	5	39

[a]Years in Current Role was as of June 2018.
[b]Interview length was in minutes.
[c]Principal was hired to start for the 2018-2019 school year.

ranged from 24 minutes to 70 minutes with an average length of 47 minutes. Interviews

were audio recorded and then transcribed to create transcripts for subsequent review and

analysis. These transcripts served as a primary data source for analysis.

Interview data analysis procedures. Interview transcripts were loaded into Nvivo

12 for Mac® and analyzed using an integrated coding scheme (Bradley, Curry, & Devers,

2007), which consisted of both deductive and inductive codes to account for Phase 1's

purpose of gaining etic and emic perspectives. A set of deductive codes was created from

the conceptual framework, the systematic review of the literature on SLTs, and the

research questions. Transcripts were also reviewed using an open coding scheme (Strauss

& Corbin, 1990) consisting of in vivo codes to take into account the emic perspective.

Once all transcripts were analyzed, both deductive and inductive codes were

reviewed for consistency and the researcher engaged in axial coding to revise categories,

eliminate redundancies, and combine relevant sub-codes into larger coding groups. This

data reduction process (Miles & Huberman, 1994) permitted the creation of a final coding

framework, which was used to devise a series of framework matrices to examine which

coding groups and sub-codes were most numerous along with the similarities and

differences within and between high schools. See Appendix G to review the coding

framework matrix. In addition, memos were written during the analysis process (Strauss

& Corbin, 1990). These memos recorded the products of the analyses, such as emerging

themes and potential items for the *SLTi* pilot.

Developing the* SLTi *pilot. The framework matrices and memos from the Phase 1

interview analysis were used to create a list of potential items for inclusion in the *SLTi*

pilot. This list was merged with the *SLTi* working skeleton to create a single document

for review and revision in order to create the *SLTi* pilot. The researcher then engaged in the data reduction process (Miles & Huberman, 1994) by revising items, eliminating redundancies, and combining sub-groups of items into larger groups of items. This initial *SLTi* pilot was then loaded into the Qualtrics survey platform to create the survey structure (e.g., branch logic where an item is displayed only if a certain answer is selected), design (e.g., matrices for Likert items), and flow (e.g., which items came first).

Expert review of the initial SLTi *pilot.* After completing Qualtrics formatting, the initial *SLTi* pilot was sent to two researchers who previously studied SLTs (Cardno, 2012; Wallace, 2002) for their expert review and feedback. Presser and Blair (1994) assert that expert reviews are an essential part of survey pre-testing. Olson (2010) suggests that expert reviewers serve one of two primary functions: (a) "reveal problems with a survey instrument so that they can be remedied prior to going into the field", or (b) help "sort items into groups that are more or less likely to exhibit measurement errors" (p. 296). One expert reviewer offered suggestions on including items related to team seniority while another expert reviewer suggested additional items targeting SLT dynamics, especially the teamworking process.

Understandability and usability of the initial SLTi *pilot.* Three former teachers (one SLT member and two non-SLT members) served as a pilot group to assess the understandability of section introductory language (e.g., "This next section includes items...") and items along with survey flow and completion time. The pilot group offered edits to the introductory language of two sections along with the redesign of two Likert matrices. As a final step, a former consultant trained in the Qualtrics survey platform reviewed the initial *SLTi* pilot and offered suggestions on merging several items related

to SLT functions and perceived SLT effectiveness in order to reduce participant burden and streamline data analysis (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

Revising the initial SLTi *pilot and creating the final* SLTi *pilot.* Expert reviewer and pilot group feedback, along with the initial *SLTi* pilot, were discussed by the researcher and advisor with specific attention to participant burden and alignment with the conceptual framework, literature review, and research questions. Of the original 73 items from the *SLTi* working skeleton, 55 were retained as worded, 9 items were reworded and then retained, and 19 items were removed. Twenty-nine items were then added as a result of the Phase 1 interviews. The final version of the *SLTi* pilot consisted of five sections totaling 84 items: (a) 4 items on participant information, (b) 27 items on SLT characteristics, (c) 22 items on SLT functions and perceptions of an SLT's effectiveness at performing those functions, (d) 15 items on SLT dynamics, and (e) 16 items on perceptions of SLT effectiveness in general. See Appendix E to review the final version of the *SLTi* pilot.

In reviewing the *SLTi* pilot's 84 items by data source, 36 of 84 items were derived from the conceptual framework: (a) 15 items from the structural perspective, (b) 8 items from the political perspective, (c) 8 items from the human resources perspective, and (d) 5 items from the symbolic perspective. Fifteen of 84 items were derived from the literature review: (a) 8 items from the literature on underperforming high schools, and (b) 7 items from the literature on SLTs. Twenty-nine items came from the Phase 1 interviews. In total, 51 items were derived from etic sources (e.g., conceptual framework, literature review) while 29 items were derived from emic sources (e.g., interviews with SLT and non-SLT members). The remaining four items, all on participant information,

were not tied to any data source. See Appendix F to review the data sources for each item on the *SLTi* pilot.

       Phase 2 of 2. Phase 2 consisted of administering the *SLTi* pilot to SLT members in underperforming high schools.

       SLTi *pilot participant identification, sampling, and access.* The aforementioned Phase 2 introductory email sent to principals requested administering the *SLTi* pilot to all SLT members. Similar to Phase 1, many high schools had multiple "leadership teams," so principals were asked to provide additional information on the composition and functions of the various leadership teams to determine which constituted the SLT as conceptualized by this study. In total, 16 principals of high schools in districts that approved Phase 2 participation granted permission to collect data.

       As recommended by Dillman and colleagues (2009), a pre-notice communication was sent to principals in early December 2018 to confirm their school's participation in Phase 2. In total, 16 of 17 principals confirmed participation. The principal in the remaining high school transferred to a new high school between Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection, and successful contact with the new principal could not be established. Principals were then sent a separate email from the Qualtrics survey platform with a confidential URL for them to (a) complete the *SLTi* pilot themselves, and (b) forward to their SLT members for them to complete the *SLTi* pilot. Principals were sent a follow-up email around 10 days later and a second follow-up email around 10 days after the first follow-up email. In early January 2019, principals that did not respond to follow-up emails were sent a final follow-up email (Dillman et al., 2009).

Final sample of* SLTi *pilot participants. In total, 12 of 16 principals forwarded

the confidential URL to their SLTs to complete the *SLTi* pilot. The number of responses

from each high school ranged from 1 to 11 with an average of 6 responses per high

school (*SD* = 3). The total response rate was 43% with 73 of 171 SLT members

completing the *SLTi* pilot (*SD* = 25%), and response rates from each high school ranged

from 5% to 82%. See Table 6 for a listing of response rates by high school.

The final sample of *SLTi* pilot participants consisted of 73 SLT members from 12

high schools in 12 districts across 3 states. As a reminder, participants could complete as

much of the *SLTi* as they desired; there were no required items. Eight of the 73

participants did not complete the entire *SLTi* pilot, particularly the items asking for

participant information (e.g., role, years of experience, gender, race/ethnicity). Regarding

gender, 38 were female, 21 were male, and 6 preferred not to answer (*N* = 65). With

Table 6

Phase 2 SLTi *Pilot Response Rates by High School*

School	# of *SLTi* Responses	SLT Size	Response Rate
Ash	7	11	64%
Aspen	11	15	73%
Birch	9	11	82%
Cherry	7	12	58%
Fir	8	12	67%
Hickory	1	20	5%
Maple	7	16	44%
Pine	9	14	64%
Spruce	2	12	17%
Sycamore	3	15	20%
Walnut	5	21	24%
Willow	4	12	33%
Total	73	171	43%
M	6	14	46%
SD	3.1	3.4	25%

respect to race/ethnicity, 56 were white, 5 were black, and 4 preferred not to answer ($N =$

65). Regarding years of experience in education among *SLTi* pilot participants, 5 had

between 1 to 5 years, 8 had between 6 to 10 years, 12 had 11 to 15 years, 14 had 16 to 20

years, 24 had more than 20 years, and 2 preferred not to answer ($N = 65$). See Table 7 to

review select demographic characteristics among *SLTi* pilot participants.

The roles of *SLTi* pilot participants included: (a) 16 school-wide administrators

(e.g., principal); (b) 16 department chairs (Advanced Placement/dual enrollment,

English/language arts, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies, special

education); (c) 6 formal teacher leaders (e.g., PLC leader, grade-level leader); (d) 12

teachers (English/language arts, gifted education, science, social studies, special

Table 7

Select Demographic Characteristics of Phase 2 SLTi *Pilot Select Participants*

Characteristic	# of *SLTi* Responses[a]	Prevalence %
Gender		
Female	38	52%
Male	21	29%
Prefer not to answer	6	8%
Did not answer	8	11%
Race/ethnicity		
African American/Black	5	7%
Euro-American/White	56	77%
Prefer not to answer	4	5%
Did not answer	8	11%
Years of experience in education[b]		
1 to 5 years	5	7%
6 to 10 years	8	11%
11 to 15 years	12	16%
16 to 20 years	14	19%
More than 20 years	24	33%
Prefer not to answer	2	3%
Did not answer	8	11%

[a]$N = 73$
[b]Years of experience included the 2018-2019 school year.

education, world languages); (e) 1 custodian; (f) 5 guidance counselors; (g) 4 instructional coaches; and (h) 2 library/media specialists. Three participants preferred not to answer ($N = 65$). See Table 8 for a listing of the roles of *SLTi* participants.

SLTi *pilot data collection procedures.* The *SLTi* pilot was administered online via the Qualtrics survey platform from December 2018 to January 2019 with the survey completion window open for 55 days to account for participant schedules and the winter break. Responses were confidential and did not collect participant names. Upon visiting the confidential URL, potential participants (e.g., SLT members) were asked to review a consent form noting their rights, including that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Those who granted consent were able to access the *SLTi* pilot. To incentivize responses, participants were given the option to enter into a raffle to win one of several Amazon gift cards. Participant names and email addresses were collected on a separate form not linked to their *SLTi* responses (Jacob & Jacob, 2012), and winners were notified in February 2019.

To collect as much data as possible, respondents were permitted to answer all items they desired (i.e., they could skip items). On average, it took respondents 11 minutes to complete the *SLTi* pilot. Most responses were collected after the initial email to principals, but small increases in responses occurred after the first, second, and final reminder emails.

SLTi *pilot data analysis procedures.* *SLTi* pilot raw data were downloaded from the Qualtrics survey platform and loaded into StataIC 15®. Each Likert item was coded from 1 to 5 with 1 signaling "Strongly Agree" and 5 signaling "Strongly Disagree."

Table 8

Current Roles of Phase 2 SLTi *Pilot Participants*

Current Role[a]	# of *SLTi* Responses[b]	Prevalence %
School-wide administrator	16	22%
Principal	8	
Assistant principal	8	
Department chair	16	22%
Advanced Placement/dual enrollment	1	
English/language arts	2	
Mathematics	3	
Physical education	2	
Science	3	
Social studies	3	
Special education	2	
Teacher leader	6	8%
PLC leader	2	
Early childhood center director	1	
At-risk student director	1	
Technology director	1	
Grade-level leader	1	
Teacher	12	16%
English/language arts	2	
Gifted education	1	
Science	3	
Social studies	2	
Special education	2	
World languages	2	
Custodian	1	1%
Guidance counselor	5	7%
Instructional coach	4	5%
Library/media specialist	2	3%
Prefer not to answer	3	4%
Did not answer	8	11%

[a]Current role was as of December 2018 or January 2019.
[b]$N = 73$

Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and medians, were calculated

for each item across the entire sample of 73 participants (Tukey, 1977). All results were

then reported in aggregate.

Validity and Trustworthiness of Findings

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) recommend that "validity in mixed research be termed legitimation in order to use a bilingual nomenclature that can be used by both quantitative and qualitative researchers" (p. 60). While there is "no one definition of legitimation" (p. 1264; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2011), particularly for qualitative research, mixed research methodologists often align the term with two components: (a) design quality, which targets a study's methodological rigor; and (b) interpretive rigor, which targets the quality of a study's findings (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) offer five recommendations for addressing the design quality of mixed-methods research studies. First, researchers should provide a rationale for the use of a mixed-methods design (O'Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2008). Second, the mixed-methods sampling and data collection and analysis procedures should be transparent to promote auditing and replicability by others (Bryman, Becker, & Sempik, 2008). Third, the study includes the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark). Fourth, there is a presentation of persuasive and rigorous procedures for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark). Fifth, there is an explicit explanation of the integration of two or more sources of data to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark). Prior sections in this chapter listed a rationale for using a mixed-methods design, explicit sampling and data collection and analysis procedures for both qualitative and quantitative data, and a discussion of how the sequential design was used to collect and integrate

multiple sources of data (e.g., Phase 1 interview findings informed the design of the

Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot).

With respect to interpretive rigor, since this study uses qualitative research

methods, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is

key to evaluating its worth. Mixed research methodologist Johnson (2014) considers

trustworthiness as the degree to which qualitative research findings are defensible—and

researchers can use a number of strategies to increase defensibility. Four of these

strategies are discussed below.

First, the researcher used *triangulation* by collecting and analyzing data from

multiple sources in order to produce a robust understanding of the phenomenon of

interest (Denzin, 1978). The literature reviews provided an etic perspective of SLTs while

the Phase 1 interviews and Phase 2 SLTi pilot results provided an emic perspective of

SLTs. Moreover, both SLT and non-SLT members were interviewed within many of the

same high schools in order to gather multiple perspectives on the phenomenon of interest.

These multiple perspectives were collected to enhance the study's credibility (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Second, the researcher engaged in *peer debriefing* by having expert

reviewers and a pilot group of respondents critique the *SLTi* before it was administered in

Phase 2. Peer debriefing was used to enhance the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Third, the researcher maintained an audit trail by keeping a *methodological log* of

decisions made as the study progresses (Halpern, 1983), which was created to enhance

the study's confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Fourth, and finally, the researcher

maintained a *reflexivity journal* that detailed reflections on the study's progress and how

future methodological decisions, such as sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and reporting findings, might be made (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

Researcher Bias and Ethics

Researcher bias. The decisions that researchers make to conduct, design, and execute their studies are inherently subjective (e.g., Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Merriam (2002) asserts that researchers need to account for this subjectivity by stating and discussing their biases, which typically are based on their prior experiences, values, and beliefs. When collecting qualitative data—especially from observations, interviews, and focus groups—the researcher *is* the research instrument and decides what prompts to put forward and then what to record and report (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Biases of my own that may have influenced this study's design and execution could have derived from my last school setting, a K-12 independent school in which I served as a high school social sciences faculty member for four years and the social sciences department chair for two years. There was a school-wide SLT, which included the principals of the elementary, middle, and high schools along with the business director, admissions director, and head of school. Within the high school, a mini-SLT existed that was composed of the high school principal, five department chairs and head of school. As the social sciences department chair for my final two years at the school, I served on this mini-SLT.

During my four-year tenure at the school, I observed a number of leadership transitions: three heads of school, three high school principals, two middle school principals, and three elementary school principals. Of those, two positions are particularly important in shaping my experiences with and opinions about SLTs: (a) the high school

principal, and (b) the head of school. Our first high school principal distributed leadership, particularly instructional leadership, to department chairs. He was highly supportive of entrepreneurial thinking and encouraged risk-taking among faculty members regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. There was a high degree of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) among the high school faculty members during his tenure.

Two years into my four-year tenure, though, he left the school to take a job in a different state. One year later, the school hired a new head of school with little instructional leadership experience. In the beginning, he rarely addressed faculty members, especially department chairs, about instructional leadership. However, the social sciences department—my department—had pivoted toward a skills-based approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. We switched from using "regular" history textbooks to a more intentional series of books and articles. Most lessons were taught using Socratic seminars and most assessments were open-note and project-based. We strove to foster a sense of egalitarianism among faculty members and students, which stood in contrast to most other departments and, most importantly, our new head of school's prior experiences.

As he settled in and started to learn from some parents about the "nontraditional" social sciences department, the head started asking questions, which I welcomed. I was happy to evangelize our department's recent and continuing reorientation. However, I could never quite convince him to continue letting our department take risks and for the rest of his first year, our relationship remained tenuous. The psychological safety built under the previous high school principal started to erode. The new head of school

observed my classroom once during the year. The less-than-ideal experiences I had with our new head of school encouraged me to resign my position at the end of my fourth year and enroll full time in a doctoral program in educational leadership. In retrospect, I could have done a much better job describing what our department did and why, and I think he could have been more open to its "nontraditional" orientation. As a result, I have had both positive and less-than-positive experiences with SLTs and those who lead them.

My perceived difference between the leadership styles of the high school principal and the head of school prompted my interest in SLTs, particularly in high schools where principals have to contend with considerable degrees of complexity. I enrolled at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education and Human Development to work with Dr. Daniel L. Duke because of his research on improving underperforming schools. In a given school year, millions of children are enrolled in underperforming schools around the U.S., and many of the educational leaders and staff members within those schools are doing their very best with what they have despite facing a wide array of internal and external challenges. I wanted to help make the daily experiences of those educational leaders and staff members in underperforming schools a little less daunting so they could invest more in what matters: providing a nurturing and rigorous educational experience to our next generation. My research agenda has started to coalesce around examining the various levers that may be used to enhance both schools' capacity for leadership and, eventually, their capacity for continuous improvement.

These prior experiences and my values and beliefs influence me as a researcher—and they have an unavoidable influence on the studies I have conducted, this study, and the studies I will conduct in the future. As Merriam (2002) suggests, however, reflecting

on biases and how they might surface in a study—such as topic selection, interview/focus group/survey question creation, data analysis procedures, and what is privileged when writing up the findings—increases the study's trustworthiness. As noted in a prior section, I kept a methodological log, which included a reflexivity journal, to record my thoughts on and reflections about this study as it progressed along with decisions made as a result of those thoughts and reflections. The next sections highlight a few experiences and resulting biases that likely influenced the design and completion of the present study.

My experiences in my last school setting exposed me to what I consider to be both higher- and lower-functioning leadership teams. Regarding the former, the entrepreneurial environment created by the principal that hired me demonstrated a positive influence of educational leadership on challenging and reshaping teachers' mindsets and attitudes. Looking around the table at other teachers—my colleagues— encouraged me to speak up and start to come into my own as a young educator. These feelings led me to view the leadership team as something beneficial to the school, especially with respect to questioning and disrupting the status quo. Regarding the latter, the administrator turnover illustrated the significant influence that positional leaders can have on the functions, operations, dynamics, effectiveness, and overall *esprit de corps* of leadership teams and their members. From my perspective, several of the administrators appointed during my fourth year, in particular, struggled with leading a group of teachers that were in the middle of implementing change efforts aimed at shifting the status quo.

Given the nature of the first experience, I feel predisposed to viewing leadership teams as a positive potential vehicle for introducing teachers to new leadership roles within schools and conceptualizing and leading change efforts. That first experience also

exposed me to the power that a psychologically-safe environment (Edmondson, 1999) can have on prompting teachers to feel comfortable contributing to decision-making and be more involved in leading and managing their schools. Because of the second experience, however, I also hold a healthy skepticism of principals being able to lead the leadership teams they inherit, socialize leadership team members into their roles, develop members' efficacy, and remain committed to sharing leadership and management responsibilities with members. These biases, without doubt, influenced a number of characteristics related to the present study, but most notably sampling decisions, Phase 1 interview questions, a commitment to interviewing both SLT and non-SLT members, Phase 2 *SLTi* items, data analysis, and the selection of points discussed in Chapter 5.

Ethics. Throughout this study, the researcher adhered to the highest standards of professional ethics for conducting research as prescribed by the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Informed consent was used for all Phase 1 interviews and Phase 2 *SLTi* administrations in order to minimize the potential risk and harm for participants. Participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time and were given the option that their data either be destroyed and removed from the study or preserved for inclusion in the study. None chose to withdraw. In addition, all interview and survey data were kept confidential and stored on password-protected storage devices and services. *SLTi* results were reported in aggregate to prevent unique identification. Interview exemplars included in the study were anonymized to prevent unique identification, but the idiosyncrasies of some sites and participants may become known to or discernible by others. Thus, anonymity was not fully guaranteed to participants.

Summary

This study investigated the composition, functions, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs in 17 underperforming high schools in 15 districts across 4 U.S. states. To complete this investigation, the study's iterative conceptual framework development and literature review helped prompt three research questions, which, in turn, led to the creation of a two-phase, sequential mixed-methods design to answer those research questions. Data collection consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research methods: Phase 1 employed semi-structured interviews with SLT and non-SLT members in underperforming high schools while Phase 2 employed administering the *SLTi* pilot to SLT members in underperforming high schools. Data sources included a review of the literatures on SLTs, interviews with current SLT and non-SLT members, and survey data from current SLT members. Data analysis proceeded sequentially to build and administer the *SLTi* pilot. The chapter then closed with a discussion of validity and trustworthiness criteria along with statements on researcher bias and ethics.

CHAPTER 4: REPORT OF FINDINGS

This chapter reports the present study's findings. It is organized as follows. First, findings are reported by research question using data from the Phase 1 interviews and the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot. To preserve as much of the emic "world" (Patton, 1990, p. 279) as possible, Phase 1 interview findings include illustrative quotations from the 40 participants to both structure and enrich the narrative (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Wolcott, 1975). Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot results are reported in aggregate for the 73 participants. At the end of each research question's section, Phase 1 and Phase 2 findings are summarized to note similarities and differences.

Research Question 1: SLT Composition and Structures

The first research question inquired about the composition and structures of SLTs in underperforming high schools. The first section reports findings for this research question from the Phase 1 interviews, and the second section reports results from the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot.

Phase 1 Interview Findings

This section reviews findings about the composition and structures of SLTs based on 40 semi-structured interviews with SLT and non-SLT members working in 15 underperforming high schools. Participants covered five areas: (a) the leadership teams currently in their high schools, (b) the roles represented on their SLTs, (c) SLT size, (d) SLT member selection processes, and (e) SLT member selection criteria. The next sections discuss each of these five areas.

Leadership teams in high schools. Nearly all of the Phase 1 high schools (13 of 15) had multiple leadership teams with varying composition, structures, and functions. Two high schools had only one leadership team while six high schools had two, three high schools had three, and four high schools had four leadership teams. Table 9 lists the number and names of the leadership teams in Phase 1 high schools.

The names of the various leadership teams often differed, with monikers such as the administrative team, building leadership team, faculty advisory committee, instructional leadership team, school improvement team, school leadership team, and senior leadership team. When subsuming some names into larger groups, the two most common leadership teams were: (a) the *school leadership team* (SLT), which was present in all 15 high schools and often consisted of the principal, all assistant principals, and representatives from various departments, offices, and programs; and (b) the *administrative team* (AT), which was present in 13 high schools and often consisted of all school-wide administrators (e.g., principal, assistant principal). Some staff members, especially administrators and department chairs, "wore multiple hats" (Interviewee 15)[2] and served on multiple leadership teams.

In an effort to create coherence and promote transparency, one principal of a high school with four leadership teams devised a set of documents that listed the composition and responsibilities of each leadership team. For example, the AT—which consisted of the principal, all assistant principals, and a number of directors (e.g., student activities)— took responsibility for school safety. On the other hand, the SLT—which consisted of all

---

[2] Phase 1 participants were assigned numbers in order to attribute illustrative quotations and to keep their identities confidential.

Table 9

Leadership Teams and the Size and Roles Present on SLTs in Phase 1 High Schools

School	# of Leadership Teams	Leadership Team Names	SLT Size	Roles Present on SLT	
A[a]	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	9	• 1 principal • 1 athletic director • 1 dean of students	• 1 school counselor • 1 clinical counselor • 4 teachers
B	3	• Administrative team • School leadership team • School improvement team	12	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals	• 8 department chairs • 1 library media specialist
C	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	16	• 1 principal • 3 assistant principals • 8 department chairs • 1 guidance director	• 1 head custodian • 1 office manager • 1 data coordinator
D	1	• School leadership team	11	• 1 principal • 1 assistant principal	• 1 guidance director • 8 department chairs
E	3	• Administrative team • School leadership team • Behavioral support team	11	• 8 teachers • 1 lead teacher	• 1 instructional coach • 1 social and emotional behavior lead teacher
F	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	14	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals • 1 instructional coach	• 1 guidance director • 9 department chairs
G	3	• Administrative team • School leadership team • PLC facilitators team	15	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals	• 9 department representatives • 3 instructional coaches
H	4	• Administrative team • School leadership team • School improvement team • Crisis management team	12	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals • 1 athletic director	• 1 guidance counselor • 7 department chairs

Table 9 (continued)

School	# of Leadership Teams	Leadership Team Names	SLT Size	Roles Present on SLT	School
I	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	11	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals	• 1 activities director • 7 teachers
J	1	• School leadership team	10	• 1 principal • 1 assistant principal	• 1 athletic director • 7 department representatives
K	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	12	• 1 principal • 2 assistant principals	• 1 dean of students • 8 department chairs
L	2	• Administrative team • School leadership team	15	• 1 principal • 3 assistant principals	• 1 athletic director • 10 department chairs
M	4	• Administrative team • School leadership team • Department chair team • Data team	11	• 1 principal • 3 instructional coaches	• 7 teachers • 1 media specialist
N	4	• Administrative team • School leadership team • Behavioral support team • Grade level leader team	20	• 2 principals • 4 assistant principals • 1 guidance director • 1 grade level leader director	• 1 career center director • 1 dean of students • 1 graduation coordinator • 9 department chairs
O	4	• Administrative team • School leadership team • Principal advisory team • School planning team	21	• 1 principal • 3 assistant principals • 1 administrative intern • 1 school improvement coordinator • 1 student activities coordinator	• 1 guidance director • 9 department chairs • 1 math coach • 1 literacy coach • 1 gifted/talented director • 1 technology support staff member
Mean	2.6		13.3		

[a]Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential.

AT members plus all department chairs—took responsibility for instructional leadership. While no other high schools had specific documents that laid out each team's responsibilities, some did include lists of leadership team members in yearly staff member handbooks.

SLTs roles. Participants listed a range of SLT roles in Phase 1 high schools, including principal, assistant principal, administrative intern, dean of students, department chair, department representative, athletic director, student activities director, attendance coordinator, AVID[3] coordinator, data coordinator, graduation coordinator, school improvement coordinator, instructional coach, specialist, teacher, program director, school resource officer, head custodian, office manager, and administrative assistant. Table 9 lists the SLT roles in Phase 1 high schools. The most common roles were principal (14), assistant principal (12), department chair or department representative (11), guidance director (5), athletic director (4), instructional coach (4), teacher (4), and dean of students (3). The most prevalent SLT composition consisted of the principal, any assistant principals, and a representative from each department. Several principals noted the importance of having the guidance director or guidance department chair present on the SLT, especially for issues related to scheduling and student interventions (09;12;15).

Variation abounded, though. While most department chairs were SLT members by virtue of holding their positions, two high schools specifically asked for a department representative *other* than the chair in order to diversify leadership opportunities (17;31). Another high school included permanent representatives on the SLT from the four "core"

---

[3] AVID = Advancement Via Individual Determination and is a college readiness program.

departments (English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) and two "at-large" representatives from other departments that varied by school year (e.g., special education and world languages in one school year, and fine arts and physical education the following school year) (12). Moreover, neither the principal nor any assistant principals served on the SLT; the team was coordinated by a "lead teacher" hired by the principal in conjunction with the school district (11). The principal, however, did sit in on all SLT meetings to serve as an administrative liaison. In three high schools, all instructional coaches or specialists (English/language arts, literacy, and math) served on the SLT, while nine high schools had no instructional coaches or specialists on their SLTs. Later sections expound upon why certain high schools included certain roles on their SLTs.

SLT size. SLTs in Phase 1 high schools ranged in size, with the smallest involving 9 members and the largest involving 21 members. Among all 15 high schools, the average SLT size was 13 members. When participants were asked to comment on their SLT's size, six expressed concern that their SLT was either too large already or about to become too large (e.g., 18). One principal, for example, said that his SLT was "so large, so how do you purposefully carry on meetings and stuff like that?" (05). In a separate interview, an assistant principal in that same high school agreed, noting that "you got like 25 voices, you can't necessarily leave decision making to 25 folks" (07).

One principal shrank the size of her SLT by decreasing the number of teachers from 13 to 7. She remarked, "To me it was too many voices, too many people, trying to be productive" (23). For those teachers that were removed from the SLT but still desired a leadership role within the school, she reassigned them to another leadership team or

committee. As an SLT member from another high school commented, it was "a lot easier to make strides and make progress when you have a focused group that are there discussing that information . . . It's a lot easier to problem solve that way" (03).

On the other hand, three principals expressed a desire to increase the size of their SLTs. In the first case, a principal wanted to add a parent or community member to the SLT, but failed to find a willing volunteer over the past two school years (26). In the second case, a principal aspired to add a non-certified staff member representative (e.g., custodial services, food services) to the SLT (17). In the third case, a principal of a school with a high percentage of special education students felt paraprofessionals were "like a separate entity at times," so he was considering adding a paraprofessional representative to the SLT (01). Principals in one district were not permitted to increase the size of their SLT because of district funding constraints (33). Since SLTs met outside of teachers' contract time, teachers received a stipend and the district allocated only so many funds to SLT member stipends (33).

SLT member selection processes. SLTs in Phase 1 high schools employed one of two primary member selection approaches: (a) *automatic appointment* to the SLT by virtue of being hired or holding a role (e.g., assistant principal, department chair), or (b) *selection-by-appointment* to the SLT by one or more staff members, often the principal and/or AT members. With respect to the first approach, all principals and assistant principals, for example, were hired at the district level and, by virtue of holding their role, received an automatic appointment if their schools included their roles on the SLT. This approach was similar for department chairs in nine high schools, as one principal illustrated by saying, "So if you are . . . head of your department, you are automatically

placed on [the SLT]" (36). Table 10 lists the member selection approach for each Phase 1 high school.

With respect to the second approach, the most prevalent selection-by-appointment process often consisted of three stages: (a) the principal sent an email to all staff members in mid-spring asking for those interested in serving on the SLT to reply with an "email of intent" (34); (b) the principal and/or AT members then reviewed, discussed, and narrowed the list of interested staff members and scheduled interviews with finalists; (c) the principal and/or AT members then made a decision on whom to appoint to the SLT. Despite the prevalence of this second approach in six high schools, the selection-by-appointment process varied. Regarding initial application, for example, two districts required interested staff members to fill out a formal, district-created SLT member application (23;31). In other schools, though, one principal described it as a "pseudo application process" where a one-sentence email counted as a completed application (15). The principal was usually the sole person who gathered and narrowed the list of interested staff members, conducted interviews with finalists, and decided whom to appoint (05).

A few principals broadened participation in the SLT member selection process. One principal met with all department members, as a group, to ask for their input on whom should be selected (02). In another high school, assistant principals met with various department members and then reported findings to the principal (05). Another principal permitted assistant principals to review and interview interested staff members from the departments, offices, or programs those administrators supervised (e.g., an assistant principal supervising the mathematics department would gather and narrow the

Table 10

Select Structural Characteristics of SLTs in Phase 1 High Schools

School	Department Chairs/Representatives Automatic SLT Membership?	Application Required?	Interview Required?	Membership Selection Authority?
A[a]	No	Yes, informal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
B	Yes	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
C	Yes	No	Yes, with assistant principal	Principal appoints
D	Yes	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
E	No	Yes, formal	Yes, with teacher team	Teacher team appoints
F	Yes	Yes, informal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
G	No	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
H	Yes	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
I	No	Yes, formal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
J	No	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
K	Yes	No	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
L	Yes	Yes, informal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
M	No	Yes, formal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
N	Yes	Yes, informal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints
O	Yes	Yes, informal	Yes, with principal	Principal appoints

[a]Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential.

list of interested staff members and conduct interviews with finalists) (34). The assistant principal then made a recommendation to the principal on whom should be selected. In a move to further broaden participation, three principals involved all AT members in the narrowing, interviewing, and selection stages (e.g., 05). Two principals, though, involved only teachers in the narrowing, interviewing, and selection stages (e.g., 13).

Six principals specifically noted difficulties with staffing their SLTs, with all but one securing just enough members to fill available spots (e.g., 01). One principal summed it up as, "Sometimes there's only one. Well, in that case, that person wins" (28). Participants offered a number of theories on why this situation occurred. A first reason stemmed from the additional workload of being an SLT member. Several non-SLT members described their colleagues' reluctance to serve because of the extra time commitment. Most SLT members volunteered their time and effort, and few high schools offered some form of remuneration to SLT members in exchange for their service, such as a stipend or additional planning period (06;40). In fact, some SLTs met during the school day, so department chairs in those high schools, in particular, forfeited one planning period per month.

A second reason focused on teacher self-selection. In one high school, for instance, the principal suggested that staff members meet among themselves to decide who would serve, remarking that "everybody that applied got the position, so it worked out where the staff isn't super competitive and they'd rather not step on each other's toes. So, I think there were . . . some conversations . . . about who would step forward" (11). Still a third reason centered on non-SLT members' perceptions that a spot on the SLT would not open up for some time. One non-SLT member wanted to be her department's

SLT representative, but said her department chair "had been there for a long time" and was unlikely to step down in the next five to seven years (06). Long department chair tenure was highlighted by three other schools with one principal putting it this way: "Typically, they remain department chairs until they leave, die, or retire" (28).

Outside of one high school where the principal reduced the SLT's size, no other school turned away a staff member who expressed interest in serving on the SLT (11). When no staff member from a particular department, office, or program voiced an interest in serving on the SLT, the principal or an assistant principal encouraged certain people to apply. In one high school, for example, no one from the social studies department—including the department chair—expressed a desire to represent their department on the SLT. The principal had to speak to several social studies teachers before one committed to applying (17;19a). In another high school, one assistant principal noted that "there are always those people who have that leadership ability and don't really notice it in themselves, so we tend to try to tap them to try to evoke that" (35).

A handful of participants could not explain how their SLT members were selected. Despite working in her school for five years, one non-SLT member "couldn't tell you" how or why her department chair was selected to serve as chair and thus as her department's SLT member (06). A non-SLT member in another high school agreed, noting she had "no clue" how administrators selected SLT members (22). A department chair from a different high school said she was appointed as a result of her predecessor's "poor performance," but when asked how her fellow department chairs were selected, she replied, "I'm not sure how the others got into their positions" (30). In another case, one

assistant principal did not know the department chair selection process, but also noted that no department chairs had recently stepped down to create the opportunity for a new selection (10).

When SLT members did step down, it was for a multitude of reasons. One principal had her SLT members serve three-year terms, commenting that "after three years, we rotate a third of them out so that we can bring another group in and get some fresh ideas, but maintain some structure without having to reteach everybody what we've been doing" (17). In two other high schools, SLT members had to reapply for their SLT spot every school year (13;39). Automatic reappointment was not guaranteed.

Upon being hired at their new high schools, four principals required their SLT members to reapply for SLT membership. One principal, for example, repurposed her SLT by shifting it from a venue for airing concerns to a team of teachers with "model classrooms" who led their colleagues' professional development and growth (23). As a result, four SLT members chose not to reapply for the SLT positions (23). Two other principals redefined the department chair role in their high schools, changing the focus from management (e.g., creating budgets, buying materials) to instructional leadership (e.g., conducting formative observations of their colleagues) (34;39). In one school, all but two department chairs reapplied for the new role (39). In the other school, five department chairs ended up stepping down, noting to the AT that they preferred a more managerial role as opposed to the new leadership role (34).

While rare, other SLT members outright quit or were removed from the team by the principal. With respect to the former, a supermajority of SLT members in one high school quit the SLT in protest over what they felt was their principal's "incompetence"

(13). Many later reapplied to join the SLT when a new principal was hired. In two other high schools, principals removed department chairs from their roles, which also took those staff members off the SLT. While one principal noted this action was "very uncommon" (20), another principal cited an example of when he relieved a department chair that was "difficult to work with and hostile" (28). When asked for more detail, the principal said the department chair was not doing a "good job" of connecting with newly-hired teachers, which was jeopardizing retention efforts in his hard-to-staff school (28). He summarized his reasoning by saying, "We needed some new energy there" (28).

SLT member selection criteria. Just as the SLT member selection process differed among Phase 1 high schools, so did the selection criteria. Since principals and assistant principals were hired at the district level, this section describes what *selectors within high schools*—principals, AT members (e.g., assistant principals), and teachers—looked for in order to decide whom to select for SLT membership.

A first consideration arose from the approach the high school used to select SLT members: (a) automatic appointment, or (b) selection-by-appointment. In nine high schools, department chairs received an automatic appointment to the SLT by virtue of being hired for or holding the role. In five of these high schools, staff members were selected first for their ability to be a department chair—and second for their ability to be an SLT member. In the remaining four high schools, particularly those with principals that recently repurposed their SLTs, selectors looked for staff members' abilities to be both a department chair *and* an SLT member.

Regardless of what selectors foregrounded (e.g., department chair ability) and backgrounded (e.g., SLT member ability), participant responses yielded five major

criteria that were utilized to determine whom to select: (a) level of experience, (b)

personal qualities, (c) professional competency, (d) willingness, and (e) standing among

colleagues. Some selectors used only one criterion while others employed a combination

of these criteria. During their interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the criteria

they offered, and in doing so, one principal said that he wanted "rock stars" (31) for his

SLT while another non-SLT member said, "They're looking for a lot of things, I guess"

(41). The next section further details the common "things" that selectors examined.

   Level of experience. The first criterion centered on a staff member's level of

experience—both within a particular high school and in general (e.g., 19b). One principal

asserted that staff members with more years of experience were "more embedded in the

climate and culture of the school" and could "provide the type of quality of leadership

that [we] need to make those important decisions" (01). Participants in four other high

schools agreed, saying that staff members with the most seniority became department

chairs and, in turn, SLT members (e.g., 06).

   Other participants, including four administrators, disagreed with using seniority as

the primary selection criterion. One principal noted, "You got some teachers that are

bashful in front of their peers, and I don't need them on SLT because they're the most

senior person" (09). To him, some department chairs or department representatives

preferred to be managers, not leaders. Another SLT member supported this perspective

based on her experience, saying that "veteran teachers" (12) took fewer risks and were

less likely to do something new or different compared to their more inexperienced peers

(33). As a counter, though, one principal suggested that a combination of factors,

including level of experience, influenced potential performance:

It's not always your most seasoned teacher. It's often somebody who's very current in practices and knowledge, which may be somebody only a few years into teaching, or it may be somebody who's 30 years in and they've been three times recertified National Board. (34)

For selectors in 11 high schools, deciding whom to select remained a far more complex endeavor than looking at the number of years of experience, which the next sections detail.

Personal qualities. When looking at staff members' personal characteristics, participants frequently cited two qualities as the most important: (a) *the ability to be a team player*, and (b) *work ethic*.

With respect to the first, one former SLT member asserted that SLT members in his school needed to "present themselves in a way that [shows] they get along [with others]" (36). To a principal in another school, this quality meant SLT members put the school's needs—particularly the students' needs—above their personal needs (13;26). Others deemed this "team player" quality a vital ingredient since SLT members worked with an array of people outside their classrooms: AT members, their fellow SLT members, and those in their department, office, or program (e.g., 26). It was paramount, one principal said, to select SLT members who were capable of building "relationships within those teams because they've got to be able to get along with the rest of the team members" (34). To build successful relationships, two participants noted that SLT members needed to be a "very humbling individual" (36) and a "good role model" (34) for their colleagues.

Given the extra responsibilities associated with being an SLT member, participants wanted SLT members who would be "detail-oriented . . . hard workers" (e.g.,

20). A strong work ethic was essential since many SLT members volunteered their time and few received any form of remuneration for their service. During her interviews with potential SLT members, one principal went so far as to ask if staff members would be "willing to meet off contract time, even not for pay, because, [while] we do see them, it's not enough. You don't get enough hours for the work that needs to be done" (23). Another principal desired similar people—those who he felt would do whatever it took to get the job done, saying, "A leader is more what they do than their title" (20). For one assistant principal, this quality meant taking initiative, which she summarized as, "somebody who's going to step out in front and try to come up [with ideas]. What are some new things that we need to do? What are some challenges? What are some of our strengths?" (35). When asked how many of her staff members could take initiative, she replied, "We tend to have quite a few people who are willing" (35). This perspective contrasted with participants from several other high schools that had difficulty staffing their SLTs.

   Professional competency. In addition to personal qualities, selectors also judged the professional competency of potential SLT members. An assistant principal argued SLT members needed a "balance of people skills and expertise" (40). It was the "good teachers" that joined the SLT, either as a department chair that received automatic membership or a staff member selected by her peers (33). When probed to define a "good teacher," participants offered a host of competencies. One principal said, "they know the students and . . . the particulars of the school" (09). Another principal listed his competencies of a "good teacher" as someone who "knows the content . . . [is] knowledgeable about the content standards . . . knows what's going on from the

curriculum leaders downtown . . . and has taught multiple courses within the content field" (34). All of these competencies, the principal argued, increased a staff member's "validity" to lead colleagues and represent them on the SLT (34). This perspective aligned with a third principal's view that department chairs, and thus SLT members, in his school were "typically higher performing than their department" and "typically represent the best of their department" (20).

Staff members who selectors deemed "higher performing" and "the best" demonstrated a number of other competencies. To one principal, it was the staff members who students and parents had no "issues or complaints about," which he perceived meant the staff member knew how to manage a classroom (31). Others sought SLT members who consistently engaged in their own professional development, such as identifying and implementing new "best practices" (33) and continuing "to be innovative in [their] classrooms" (39). They were also "very reflective" and thought "critically about what's working, what's not working, [and how to be] better" (33). In fact, one principal asserted that "the number one thing is they're just always a step ahead of everybody else when it comes to instruction, they're early adopters, they think outside the box" (31).

Selectors also preferred SLT members who looked outside their own classrooms to their departments and the school as a whole (e.g., 29). At the department level, one principal wanted his SLT members to "instill this idea of transparency and visiting each other's classrooms for observation and feedback and just to glean new ideas from each other" (39). Two other administrators desired their SLT members operate with a "mindset of developing teacher leaders" (35;39) both within and outside their departments. At the school level, one former SLT member said his principal appointed SLT members who

could "see the vision of the school to help direct their department in that way as well" (36). This systems perspective, or "the bigger picture" as one assistant principal put it, was necessary because if SLT members did not "have the bigger picture feel, there's no way [they could] bring along everybody" (35).

   Willingness. Even if staff members had the personal qualities and professional competencies, 11 participants said SLT members needed to demonstrate varying types of "willingness." The most common was a willingness to take on the role of SLT member (and department chair or department representative in those high schools that paired them together) (27). One SLT member said, "You don't want somebody on there who's forced to be on there" (33). Past this base level, a non-SLT member said her high school's selectors looked for people who were willing to make a difference for the "greater good" of the school by "[developing] systems to make everything better" (13). Another principal agreed, requiring his SLT members to have the willingness to "make changes that are good for children [and] good for education" (20). Several principals expected their SLT members to "voice their opinions" (09) during SLT meetings and not be afraid to "challenge a statement the principal makes" (23). Outside of SLT meetings, some principals looked for SLT members they felt would be willing to "stand up in front of their peers and encourage whatever direction [the school is] moving" (23). In some instances, however, staff members did not agree on the school's direction, and one non-SLT member asserted that selectors in his high school wanted SLT members who were willing to "referee between adults" on matters related to vision, instruction, and performance (41).

Standing among colleagues. A final criterion centered on selectors assessing potential SLT members' standing among their colleagues. On deciding whom to appoint, one principal asked himself, "Is the person perceived by their peers to be a leader?" (20). When asked to elaborate, the principal said he looked for staff members who completed tasks on time, did not slack, and garnered respect from others (20). The latter point—respect—came after a long process of building trust, another principal noted (34). Two SLT members specifically argued that respect came only after establishing trust (28;33).

Applications and interviews. Selectors often used applications and/or interviews to assess potential SLT members against the aforementioned criteria. One principal created an application document that listed initiatives that were occurring in the high school and district. He asked applicants to select a few initiatives they would be interested in leading, which required applicants to commit to an area of leadership before being invited for an interview (26).

During interviews, selectors used a variety of questions, such as, "What's your vision? Where do you see [the school] going? What's important? What do we need to fix? What needs [to be] changed? What experience do you have working with other teachers?" (15;39). One principal specifically inquired about applicants' goals—personal goals in their classroom, goals they had for the SLT, and a goal for their membership on the SLT (23). These inquiries, she said, permitted her to identify if and how staff members wanted to "grow and learn as a leader" (23). Another principal used the interview as a way to screen out potential SLT members who had a different vision than his own. One of his questions asked applicants to take a stance on a recent state intervention targeting instructional improvement. He personally supported the state

intervention and incorporated the question to "keep the vision and focus the same instead of bringing on people who think we should go a completely different direction" (31).

Despite the existence of formal applications and seated interviews, one principal argued selection rested on something less tangible and less measurable. He commented:

> To be honest, it's more of an energy. It's more of you getting a feel for the person. Is there a connection there? . . . The [interview] questions are pointed, but basically everyone has the same answer, so it's the feeling you get from interviewing the person. (26)

In this case, while applicants might have included strong written answers in their applications and oral answers during their interviews, the principal relied more on "gut" feelings as opposed to measurable criteria (e.g., a rubric).

Achieving balance on the SLT. Prior sections detailed the selection criteria for individual SLT members, but selectors in several high schools waived some or all of their selection criteria to achieve *balance* on their SLTs. An SLT in one high school included eight "at-large" spots that could be filled by staff members from any department, office, or program (23). Given the number of departments, offices, and programs within the school, not every area could be represented every school year. As a result, selectors deliberately appointed members from different units of the school, especially teachers of elective courses (e.g., fine arts, career and technical education), to promote balance. A participant from another high school with "at-large" SLT members voiced concern that too many English/language arts teachers were on her SLT, which risked the overrepresentation of some departments' concerns (e.g., after-school literacy tutoring) and the underrepresentation of others departments' concerns (e.g., effects of pulling students from elective courses for core course remediation) (33). In what appeared to be a

structural compromise between these two cases, a third high school allocated four SLT spots to the four core departments and three "at-large" SLT spots to the remaining departments, offices, and programs that could rotate from school year to school year (12).

Other selectors wanted to balance the "personalities and philosophies" (33) present on their SLTs. As opposed to the aforementioned principal that screened out potential SLT members who did not support his vision, several participants explicitly expressed their selectors' desire to avoid having the SLT become an "echo chamber" (33). Accomplishing this goal meant appointing staff members with different perspectives or who fulfilled different roles *within* the SLT, such as being the "question asker," "naysayer," or "devil's advocate" (33). One principal asserted that if selectors, especially principals, failed to take into account the diversity of roles and perspectives among the SLT, they risked staffing the SLT only with people who agreed with them. Instead, he continued, "you need to have some voices on there that don't always agree with the direction that the principal's going in" (01).

Phase 2 *SLTi* Results

Turning from Phase 1 interview data to Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot data, the *SLTi* included seven items targeting SLTs' composition and structures. Two procedural reminders before proceeding, though: (a) only SLT members in Phase 2 high schools completed the *SLTi*—no non-SLT members completed the survey; and (b) participants could respond to any and all questions they desired, so the total response number fluctuates by item.

Leadership teams in high schools. Regarding the presence of multiple leadership teams within all 12 Phase 2 high schools, the three most common were: (a) an SLT, (b) an AT, and (c) a Behavioral Intervention Team. Seventy-four percent said their

school had an SLT, 64% noted an AT, and 52% listed some type of behavioral intervention team ($N = 73$). Among other leadership teams, 29% indicated an Instructional Leadership Team while only 26% mentioned a School Improvement Team. Sixteen other leadership team names were included, such as the Collaborative Learning Team, Mentor Teacher Team, PLC Facilitators Team, Small Learning Community Team, and Truancy Intervention Team.

SLT size. Among participants, 92% said their SLT was "just the right size" while four argued their SLT was "too large" and one maintained her SLT was "too small" ($N = 71$). When asked if their SLT's size had changed in the last two school years, 63% said the size had "stayed the same" while 21% listed an increase, 11% listed a decrease, and 4% were unsure ($N = 70$).

Turnover among principals and SLT members. With respect to principal turnover, most SLT members (63%) recalled their high schools having only two to three principals over the past 10 school years ($N = 70$). On the higher end of the turnover scale, though, 13% said their high schools have had five principals in the last decade while 17% listed six or more principals. As for SLT member turnover, 69% of participants noted their SLTs typically had one to two members every school year while 19% asserted their SLTs did not turn over members from school year to school year and 12% said their SLTs saw three or more members every school year.

SLT member years of experience, selection, and compensation. Participants' years of experience on their SLTs ranged from 1 year to 22 years with an average of 5 years ($SD = 4.7$; $N = 71$). Most had between one and five years of experience, but 10 of 71 SLT members (14%) noted this year was their first serving on their SLT. Turning to

SLT member selection, 71% of SLT members were appointed by their current or former principal, 23% were assigned directly by district-level staff, and 4% received an automatic spot on their SLT by virtue of their role. In two special cases, one SLT member listed election by his or her department/office/unit while another SLT member said the whole school elected him or her. Regarding compensation, 61% of SLT members said they received no additional benefits in exchange for their service. On the other hand, 32% received a monetary stipend while two SLT members received an extra planning period and three SLT members were rewarded with both a monetary stipend and an extra planning period ($N = 71$).

Perceptions of SLT structural characteristics. The *SLTi* included an 11-Likert item inventory that asked for SLT member perceptions of their SLTs' structural characteristics. On the whole, most participants expressed agreement with six items ($M \leq$ 2.5; $Mdn \leq 2$; $N = 69$), which are listed below and begin with the highest-rated item:

- Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by all SLT members.

- Our administrators direct the work of our SLT.

- I consider my time on the SLT to be a personal leadership development opportunity.

- SLT members are selected for their leadership abilities.

- Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by our entire school staff.

- Staff members in our school are willing to serve on our SLT.

On the other hand, SLT members, on average, disagreed with only one of the 11 items:

- Our SLT spends more time reacting to external pressures than being proactive in addressing issues.

Among all participants, 17% expressed some sort of disagreement with one or more items, 25% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 58% reported agreeing with one or more items. See Table 11 for a complete listing of results by item, including the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, and median.

Research Question 1 Findings Summary

Number of leadership teams. Phase 1 interviews revealed that 13 of 15 high schools had more than one "leadership team" and 7 high schools had three to four leadership teams. The two most common teams were (a) the school leadership team (SLT), which was present in each Phase 1 high school, and (b) the administrative team (AT). The former was composed staff members from around the high school while the latter was composed solely of school-wide administrators. Table 9 summarized these findings. Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with these findings, concluding that the three most common leadership teams were the (a) SLT, (b) AT, and (c) the Behavioral Intervention Team.

SLT roles. The roles represented on SLTs ranged among the high schools. The most common roles were principal, assistant principal, department chair or department representative, guidance director, athletic director, instructional coach, teacher, and dean of students. The most prevalent SLT composition consisted of the principal, any assistant principals, and a representative from each department (which, in most cases, was the department chair). Table 9 summarized these findings.

SLT size and turnover. Phase 1 interviews found that the size of SLTs varied considerably from 9 members to 21 members with an average of 13 members among

Table 11

SLTi Results – Perceptions of SLT Structural Characteristics

Item	N	M	SD	Median	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by all SLT members	69	2.01	0.76	2	15	42	8	4	0
Our administrators direct the work of our SLT	69	2.01	0.85	2	17	40	7	4	1
I consider my time on the SLT to be a personal leadership development opportunity	69	2.01	0.83	2	18	37	9	5	0
SLT members are selected for their leadership abilities	69	2.28	0.80	2	6	46	10	6	1
Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by our entire school staff	69	2.36	0.82	2	7	38	16	8	0
Staff members in our school are willing to serve on our SLT	69	2.43	0.87	2	7	35	17	10	0
There is a clear division of labor among SLT members with our SLT's workload	69	2.62	0.93	3	7	25	25	11	1
Our SLT's workload is shared evenly across all SLT members	69	2.68	0.99	3	7	26	19	16	1
Our SLT members are the most highly respected staff members in our school	69	2.75	0.85	3	4	23	28	14	0
Staff members in our school are eager to serve on our SLT	69	2.93	0.83	3	1	21	31	14	2
Our SLT spends more time reacting to external pressures than being proactive in addressing issues	69	3.25	0.99	4	3	15	16	32	3
				Total	92	348	186	124	9
				Total	12%	46%	25%	16%	1%

Note. "Strongly Agree" was scored as a "1" while "Strongly Disagree" was scored as a "5." Lower mean and median scores indicate higher agreement. Items are sorted by mean scores beginning with the lowest (i.e., highest agreement).

Phase 1 high schools. Fifteen percent of Phase 1 participants expressed concern that their SLT was too large, while eight percent of Phase 1 participants desired to increase their SLT's size. Table 9 summarized these findings. Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with these findings with 92% of Phase 2 participants saying their SLT was "the right size."

Phase 2 *SLTi* results demonstrated high turnover rates among principals in Phase 2 high schools. Over the last decade, 65% of Phase 2 participants recalled having two or three principals while 33% noted having five or more principals. Nearly 70% said their SLTs saw one to two new members per school year while 20% reported no turnover among their SLTs from school year to school year.

SLT member selection processes. Phase 1 interviews revealed most SLTs in Phase 1 high schools used one of two common SLT member selection approaches: (a) automatic appointment to the SLT by virtue of holding a role, such as being an assistant principal, or (b) selection-by-appointment to the SLT by one or more staff members. In nine of the 15 high schools, department chairs received an automatic appointment to their SLTs. The selection process tended to consist of (a) submitting a formal or informal application to demonstrate a desire to serve on the SLT, and then (b) interviewing with the principal and/or a small group of staff members. In all but one Phase 1 high school, the principal had the sole authority to appoint members to the SLT. Six principals had difficulty staffing their SLTs, often because of the extra time commitment and that few SLT members were compensated for their time. Several Phase 1 participants mentioned they did not know their high school's SLT member selection process while some principals repurposed their SLTs and required all members to reapply. Table 10 summarized these findings.

Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with these findings with 70% stating they were appointed to their SLTs by the current or a former principal. Twenty-three percent were automatically appointed to their SLTs based on the school district hiring them for a role, often as principal or assistant principal. Among Phase 2 participants, SLT members had an average of five years of experience on their SLTs while 14% were first-time SLT members—and 61% received no compensation for serving on their SLTs while nearly 33% received a stipend or an extra planning period.

SLT member selection criteria. Five Phase 1 high schools selected staff members for their abilities to be a department chair, and by virtue of being selected as a department chair, they became SLT members. In four other high schools, staff members were selected for their abilities to be both a department chair and an SLT member. Four high schools selected SLT members strictly based on seniority while the remaining 11 high schools used a variety of criteria, including: (a) level of experience, such as seniority; (b) personal qualities, such as the ability to be a team player; (c) professional competency; (d) willingness to be on the SLT; and (e) standing among colleagues. In some cases, though, selectors abstained from using these criteria and instead selected SLT members based on a desire to "balance" the SLT with members from various parts of the high school (e.g., departments, offices, programs) and with various personalities and philosophies.

Perceptions of SLT structural characteristics. Phase 2 *SLTi* results demonstrated that a majority of SLT members agreed that their SLTs had a clear purpose, staff members were willing to serve, administrators directed the work, SLT membership was a personal leadership development opportunity, and SLT members were selected for

their leadership abilities. A majority of Phase 2 participants neither agreed nor disagreed on whether their SLTs had a clear division of labor, the workload was shared evenly, SLT members were the most highly-respected staff members, and staff members were eager to serve on the SLT. Most Phase 2 participants disagreed with the notion that their SLT's work was driven by reacting to external pressures (e.g., accountability policies) instead of a proactive desire to address internal pressures. Table 11 summarized these results.

Research Question 2: SLT Functions and Organization to Perform Their Functions

The second research question inquired about SLTs' functions and how SLTs organized to perform those functions. The first section reports findings for this research question from the Phase 1 interviews while the second section reports findings from the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot.

Phase 1 Interview Findings

This section reviews findings about SLT functions and how SLTs organized to perform those functions based on interviews from Phase 1. Participants offered insight into three areas about their SLTs: (a) SLT functions, (b) SLT decision-making authority, and (c) SLT meeting characteristics, such as frequency, duration, agendas, and minutes. The next sections discuss these three areas.

SLT functions. To preserve the emic perspective as much as possible, participants were prompted with the open-ended question, "What would you say your SLT does?" As a result, they described a vast number of functions that SLTs performed. The assorted functions were then grouped into 12 categories, which are listed in Table 12 in order of prevalence. The following sections describe the four most prevalent functions,

each of which was mentioned by more than half of the participants in Phase 1 high

schools: (a) serving as a voice of the staff; (b) engaging in specific school improvement

efforts; (c) relaying information; and (d) devising solutions to address concerns, issues,

and/or problems.

Table 12

List of SLT Functions by Prevalence Among 40 Phase 1 Participants

Function Name[a]	# of Participants Mentioning	Prevalence %
serving as a voice of the staff	29	73%
engaging in specific school improvement efforts	28	70%
relaying information between the SLT/AT and non-SLT members/staff at-large	27	68%
raising and devising solutions to address concerns, issues, and/or problems	27	68%
developing and/or leading professional development for staff members	10	25%
leading instruction	8	20%
motivating staff members	8	20%
brainstorming new ideas	6	15%
analyzing data	6	15%
taking a "pulse" of the building	6	15%
hiring staff members	3	8%
onboarding new staff members	1	3%

Note. Function names are sorted by prevalence percentage beginning with the highest.
[a]Function names were derived from in vivo coding of Phase 1 interview transcripts.

Serving as a voice of the staff. Many participants indicated that their SLT was the

"overall voice of the staff" within their high schools (10). In the words of one department

chair and SLT member, "We are their voice, so if there's any comment, concern, or

something that they would like to be addressed, we bring that forward to the group" (03).

An assistant principal in the same high school agreed, noting that administrators

specifically employed the SLT approach because they "really want everyone to have a

voice" (04). Another principal purposely staffed his SLT with people from around the

school, remarking that involving "positions outside of just the teachers means something

as well because they see that all of these other people have an equal voice" (05). One

principal summarized this way:

> They're there as a representative—very similar to what you would see in
> Congress or whatever. You're representing your constituents. . . . They're
> representing not just only their voice, but the voice of the other staff members as
> well. So that's a very important part of that process is that the staff that are on the
> leadership team understand that they're not just representing themselves, but the
> group. (01)

An assistant principal echoed the importance of getting a diverse group of staff

members around the table in order to solicit "the opinions of all of the staff members

before making decisions" (10). One SLT member conveyed gratitude for the opportunity

to serve on the SLT, saying, "It's been nice to be included in that process. I think it

allows for teacher ownership and student ownership and community ownership" (08).

To participants, this notion of representation was important for two reasons. First,

an SLT provided staff members with an opportunity to both voice their opinions,

concerns, issues, or problems—and feel like those comments were received. One

principal summarized it this way:

> I think half the battle is them having buy in, and I think that it was important for
> them to know that they were being heard, even if they may not get exactly what
> they wanted. They knew they had the freedom to express themselves. (24)

Another assistant principal mentioned something similar, saying her SLT offered staff

members a chance to contribute comments about anything. If they failed to do so and

then ended up disagreeing with a decision, "they can't be mad" since they chose not to

take advantage of the opportunity (04).

A second important reason centered on the degree to which all staff members felt comfortable voicing concerns. Numerous participants noted how some of their colleagues were "bashful," "reluctant," "passive," or "hesitant"—and less likely to voice their opinions to administrators, especially their principals. For one principal, this reluctance to voice concerns was particularly true for new teachers. He cited an example of a new teacher that was "unsure about their role as part of the school" and "[didn't] want to rock the boat" by asking questions (08). The new teacher's SLT member became an ally to address questions during his first year. For more senior teachers, one principal said his SLT:

> provides some anonymity to teachers because one of the department chairs can say, "Well, my teachers are saying, what have you." Rather than someone coming in here and telling me, "Well, I don't think this is right or what have you." So, [the SLT] is a safe place, which I think is helpful, too. (15)

Another principal said that some of his staff members refused to voice concerns for fear of being labeled "the one who complains" (20). SLT members, he went on to say, served as a buffer, which increased the authenticity of the comments shared during SLT meetings (20).

Administrators in Phase 1 high schools listed two additional benefits of having SLT members serve as representatives. First, by virtue of its smaller size, SLTs provided a more ideal venue to discuss concerns, issues, or problems. One principal offered the following summary:

> You can't bring [concerns] to the staff as a whole because it's very, very difficult to get things done at a staff meeting or full staff. You just can't get it done. It's better done in small group [and then] bringing those ideas to the staff. "Well, we had discussed this, and we thought that the staff would feel this way." You get a little bit more input and feedback. Then you go back to the table as a school leadership team, you work through those issues, and you bring it back to the staff

because otherwise some of those issues might take hours upon hours to try and work through in a large group setting. It's just impossible. (01)

Another principal put forth a similar perspective, saying, "If it's a decision that we need to make for the school, instead of taking it into a full faculty meeting, I don't want to deal with the outside minutia questions. I just go to the school leadership team" (09). The minutia questions did not bother a third principal—he preferred the small group setting because "sometimes if it's topics that might be sensitive or controversial or the staff may not all like, we feel that it's better to start with that small group. Let us talk that out and kind of get their feeling" (10). In the words of a fourth principal, "You want your leaders to know about things before they come out into the whole mass" (39). Many principals from Phase 1 high schools believed their SLT, as a small group of staff members, was a good representation of their staff at-large.

Administrators also noted a second benefit of SLTs was being a "sounding board" (41;16). Two administrators discussed the importance of this function, remarking that SLT members—not administrators—were "closer" to the work of the school. One principal said:

> If I had a teacher that came to me with an idea that affects more than just them, I'm going to bring it to that meeting and say, "Hey look, I had this. Tell me what you guys [think]" . . . if it's something that's school-wide, no, I definitely bring it to the larger group because they have perspectives that I might not be honed in on. (15)

Perspectives from individual SLT members provided administrators with valuable insight when they tasked the SLT with devising new ideas, discussing current issues, and crafting solutions (e.g., 30). SLTs were asked about recruiting and retaining new teachers (28), replacing zero as the lowest score (08), decreasing tardies (41), banning students

from wearing hats and hoods (07), creating a gymnasium use policy (24), and sharpening

a social-emotional learning goal passed down from the district (40). One principal

routinely presented her SLT with "gap data," saying, "I have to give them the brutal facts

and I start with the [SLT] to see how hard things are going to be [to close the gaps]" (17).

After the district made significant budget reductions, another principal charged his SLT

with reviewing the school's budget to identify items that could be cut along with

suggesting ways the school could make more money (08). Still a third principal wanted to

administer a culturally-responsive teaching practice survey, but his SLT members raised

"enough concern there to pump the brakes on it" (11). When asked what he might have

done differently to get his SLT's approval, he said, "I didn't do a good enough job of

making that case throughout the year" (11).

   Engaging in specific school improvement efforts. The second most prevalent

function consisted of SLTs engaging in school improvement efforts to specifically

address state accountability policies and/or district requirements. This function

manifested in four major activities: (a) developing action plans to respond to external

mandates; (b) identifying goals and developing action plans, but *not* in response to

external mandates; (c) monitoring the implementation of action plans; and (d)

participating in the formal school improvement planning process.

   A reporting note needs mentioning before proceeding, though. While each of

these four activities entailed the developing and/or monitoring of various improvement

"plans," the fourth activity is concerned solely with the single document that is the formal

school improvement plan (SIP). Participants described that while action plans specific to

the first three activities might relate to the SIP, developing and monitoring a formal SIP

was a distinct activity.

Responding to external mandates. All high schools in this study were designated

as underperforming, so it was not surprising that many of their SLTs were charged with

developing action plans to satisfy accountability policies. SLTs received mandates from

the state education agency and/or district's central office (e.g., 21). In a case highlighting

a state mandate, one principal said, "We were told what the big goal is [by the state]"

(33). Initially, her high school needed to demonstrate "five percent growth in reading" on

state standardized tests. After scores slipped and the state altered its accountability

policies, her high school also had to show "growth in a writing assessment that we do"

(33). The SLT, as a result, collaboratively devised an action plan to increase student

achievement in both reading and writing and then divided up the implementation

responsibilities among the team (33). While SLT members checked in with reading and

writing teachers around SLT meeting days, the bulk of the implementation work was

completed by the teaching staff—not SLT members (33).

In one case highlighting a district mandate, an SLT was required to develop an

action plan to meet student discipline goals. The assistant principal mentioned a process

very similar to the aforementioned high school in which SLT members shared their

perspectives and came to a consensus about introducing a new set of policies. An SLT in

a different high school received a list of "achievement goals" from the district. When

asked how her SLT responded, the principal began her answer by saying, "We don't have

a lot of say in that, and it can be frustrating" (23). She had identified a different set of

goals for her school, but planned to redirect SLT resources to address both the district's

goals and her goals.

Identifying goals and developing action plans. Rather than react to external

mandates, some SLTs proactively engaged in identifying goals for the school year and

then developing accompanying action plans to meet those goals. In one high school, the

AT and SLT worked together, but had distinct responsibilities. The SLT, the principal

said, would "meet in the beginning of the year and we'll come up with our goal for the

year—what our big overarching goal is" (15). When prompted with a summary of his

comments, he noted that the SLT came up with "the big goal," the AT then met to

develop a set of action plans, and finally the AT brought those action plans "back to the

group and say, 'Alright, here's what we put together and if there are issues or concerns,

let us know" (15). A different assistant principal reported that her high school used a

similar approach in which the SLT aided the AT in drafting the goals and then offered

feedback on administrators' proposed action plans (35).

In another high school, a newly-hired principal set the expectation that all SLT

members were "responsible for student achievement—not just the language arts

department and the math department" (17). Before the school year started, she gathered

"all of those pieces of data," such as student achievement outcomes, graduation rates, and

school climate survey results, and the SLT analyzed them collectively to identify areas of

need. In a side comment during her explanation, the principal noted that few of her SLT

members had fluency in Microsoft Excel, so she taught them how to create pivot tables to

disaggregate data by grade level and staff member (17). This quick lesson, the principal

said, enabled SLT members to review data more efficiently during the school year.

Monitoring the implementation of action plans. To some participants, it was one thing to have SLTs simply devise goals and draft action plans; it was a separate function to monitor the implementation of those actions plans and assess progress toward meeting goals. Four SLTs were charged with actively monitored the actions plans they and/or the AT devised—and monitoring frequency differed depending on the high school. One SLT had recently implemented a dual SLT meeting structure in which the team gathered in the hallway for 10 minutes every Thursday and then an hour every month. During these "weekly stand-up" meetings, SLT members assessed the current implementation of action plans along with brainstorming a series of "next steps" (11). The aforementioned "big goal" principal reported that, for his SLT, "We'll come back to that [big goal] on a monthly basis. Where are we in the process? What are our needs? Where do we need to put some energy?" (15). Three other SLTs mentioned monthly agendas had a line item calling for progress updates on action plans.

The school improvement planning process. One of the most common activities related to school improvement efforts centered on SLTs participating in the formal school improvement planning process. Sixteen participants reported their SLT members served as either plan authors, contributors, or reviewers.

SLTs in three high schools reported being responsible for creating the entire school improvement plan (SIP) (e.g., 24). When asked about SLT functions, the first thing one SLT member said was, "[our] number one role is the school improvement plan" (12). He cited a story from a prior school year in which the principal at the time—facing impending reassignment to another high school—stepped back from leading the SIP development process in early spring. To meet submission requirements, the SLT took

charge and "totally, officially built the framework" (12) for the following school year. The resulting product was a "living, breathing document" (12) that the SLT continues to review and tweak, even after a principal change.

In a second case, the AT in another high school tasked the SLT with building "the whole school improvement plan" two weeks before the school year started (34). Dividing the large SLT into four small groups, the principal said the process was "facilitated by administrators. We bring the data to the team. They get it in advance to discuss, but we, as a body, determine the objectives and then set all the action steps" (e.g., 34).

The third case was unique among the 15 Phase 1 high schools. When discussing his SLT's functions, one principal brought up the SIP, saying:

> We're still working on a school improvement plan. There really wasn't one when I got here. I found a school improvement plan that's about four years old. I don't really think that it seems to fit what we should develop, so we're starting over from scratch. (24)

Unlike the first two high schools, this principal and his SLT spent the majority of one school year constructing a SIP template to use in future school years.

SLTs in seven high schools contributed to SIP development, but did not craft the plan itself; that responsibility remained in the hands of the principal or AT. SLT members did, however, analyze data, review drafts, and/or ask their non-SLT colleagues for feedback. Similar to the case above, another principal divided his SLT into three small groups—"achievement, behavior, and culture"—to analyze and synthesize data from state and district sources. He then said, "I will pull all the final data to finalize the school improvement plan" (05). Several other SLT members said they were asked to review working drafts (08;20). One principal remarked, "They're a very important thing for me

because that way I don't have to do it all by myself" (09). An SLT member in that same

high school supported the principal's statement: "I feel like the things that are said and

written down in these [SLT] meetings are getting kind of placed into the school

improvement plan" (08).

Three participants, however, registered concerns about staff members' efforts

with respect to the SIP development process. One principal offered the following

assessment of his SLT's involvement in school improvement efforts:

> I think in our model, and just with my staff, they sometimes want to be, "Well, what do you want to do?" I fight that because I really do prefer to empower others. Over the probably the past two years, it was more formal where we drafted it together as a group. But then as far as putting it down and locking things down on paper and whatnot, that ends up happening on the admin side. They [the SLT] don't want to do it. They want to have input and have a voice, but they don't really want to do it. (15)

In addition to this lack of desire, another principal wondered about the extent to which his

SLT members genuinely thought through his SIP draft. When asked to list specific

examples of SLT members' suggestions, he replied, "There were not any noticeable

changes" (39). A non-SLT member described a similar behavior, but from non-SLT

members instead of SLT members. When her SLT member reviewed the SIP during a

department meeting, she remarked:

> No one wants to be a part of it because no one has time to do it, so we're so thrilled when somebody else does something that we don't have to do. We say, "Yep, that looks good," unless something's glaring. (19a)

Despite this ambivalence toward engaging in the school improvement planning process,

she expressed appreciation for her SLT: "They never just say this is how it's going to be

without consulting. They never do that" (19a).

Relaying information. The third most prevalent function of SLTs centered on SLT members relaying information along three streams: (a) from the principal/AT to non-SLT members; (b) from the SLT to non-SLT members; and (c) from non-SLT members to the SLT, which, in turn, reached the principal and/or AT. The next sections describe each of these three streams and how SLT members performed this relaying function.

The *first stream* consisted of (a) the principal and/or AT relaying information to (b) SLT members for them to relay to (c) non-SLT members, departments, offices, and programs. To one principal, the SLT served as a "conduit of information from our administrative team to the teachers" (28). Another principal agreed, noting, "The whole reason why they're there is to get information and share it with their departments" (02). A department chair in the same high school expressed a similar perspective: "[The SLT is] used to disseminate information from the administrative team" (04;30).

Often, the principal/AT used SLT meetings to share information they received from district officials, such as school board actions (09;26). Some principals also issued directives during SLT meetings and expected SLT members to relay those directives to other staff members (02;27). For example, one high school set a goal to increase student mathematics scores on state standardized tests. To ensure students needing mathematics remediation received it, the principal told his SLT, "I want you to share with your people that during [flex time], if a math teacher is requesting a student, that's priority. You need to understand that" (15). In a second example, administrators in two high schools distributed copies of their school improvement plans to SLT members and directed them to share those plans with their colleagues (08;09). In addition to district and principal/AT

directives, one non-SLT member said administrators used the SLT as a vehicle to "push

their vision and ideas . . . in hopes that it spreads out through the rest of the school" (41).

SLT members in this high school were expected to augment administrators' efforts to

motivate staff members to move in the same direction.

The *second stream* consisted of (a) SLT members relaying information about the

SLT to (b) non-SLT members, departments, offices, and programs. This stream is distinct

from the first in that SLT members shared information about what the *SLT* discussed and

decided as opposed to simply serving as a pass-through for principals/ATs. One principal

argued that this stream was fundamental to ensuring "there's no gaps in communication"

within the high school (02).

In five Phase 1 high schools, the primary function of SLT members consisted of

relaying information from the SLT to non-SLT members (and vice versa, which is

discussed in a later section) (e.g., 06). Relaying tended to occur via SLT members sharing

"what happened" in SLT meetings with their non-SLT colleagues (e.g., 28). Some SLT

members reviewed highlights during in-person department, office, or program meetings

while other SLT members composed a summary email for their colleagues to review at a

later date (08). One department chair justified her use of the latter approach by saying:

> For me it's easier to write that all down in an email and send it out. This is what
> was discussed. If we have anything we need to talk about individually, please
> come see me. That way, it's not, "I'm working with one individual who has a lot
> of questions and wasting other people's time and then anything that's discussed."
> I'll update and then send an email out. (08)

Two administrators expressed a shortcoming with SLT members taking their own notes

and then using those notes to frame SLT discussions and decisions to their colleagues:

misinterpretation. One assistant principal put it this way:

> Staff may hear different things depending on how the information is taken back because there's human inflection in whomever is delivering the information. So, if it's important to me, I'm going to deliver it one way, and if it's not, I'm going to deliver it in another way. Or maybe I'm going to spend a little bit more time here and a little bit less time here. And, I think there's no malice or there's no ill intent, but it's just being human, you know what I mean? And so that's why it just really depends because one department may come away from hearing their department chair talk about the meeting with one understanding that the meeting really focused on this, and then another department is like, "Well, we didn't get that." It's in the delivery [by the SLT member]. (04)

Another principal said of her SLT members, "Some of them are natural. They will just sell it, and others are, 'Hey, don't kill the messenger. Go [to her] if you want to complain" (17). The latter response, the principal went on to say, increased the likelihood of non-SLT members "blasting" SLT members. In a unique case among Phase 1 high schools, the principal allocated time during SLT meetings for SLT members to "wordsmith" the messages they took back to their colleagues to mitigate "blasting" and increase consistency (17).

To close the feedback loop and avert gaps in communication, the *third stream* consisted of (a) SLT members relaying information from non-SLT members, departments, offices, and programs to (b) the SLT, which, in turn, reached the principal and/or AT. This third stream was related to SLT members serving as a voice of their departments, offices, programs, or the staff at-large. Scores of participants discussed the importance of SLT members having access to their colleagues' concerns, issues, or problems and then sharing that information with the SLT. Since one or more administrators served on many of the SLTs in nearly all Phase 1 high schools, they also heard the staff member comments that SLT members shared. This arrangement provided non-SLT members with an avenue—albeit an indirect one—of access their high school's

administrators (41). One principal specifically highlighted this third stream, noting that

SLT members were asked to "continuously report what teachers' needs are to the

administrators so that we can try to get the resources, the time, or whatever it is they need

to do their jobs more efficiently" (20).

SLT members were "go-to people" within their departments, offices, or programs

(26). One principal said his staff members understand "that if they want any changes . . .

first they're going to get hashed out in SLT, so that's the person you need to go to and

bring your concern" (01). Many participants asserted it was understood within their high

schools that staff members could communicate their concerns, issues, or problems to SLT

members who would then, in turn, relay those comments to the SLT (e.g., 15). While

SLTs welcomed "the good" during meetings (20), SLT members tended to relay more of

"the bad and the ugly" (20) to their SLT colleagues. A non-SLT member said SLT

members in her high school helped

> communicate department frustrations or issues and bring to a wider scale what's
> going on. It doesn't necessarily mean great things. I mean people would like to
> think that. You know, what's the English department doing that's good? It's not
> that. It's why we're irritated or something, you know? We need more books, or
> we think PLCs are stupid, or stop telling us what to do. Treat us like
> professionals. Stuff like that. (19a)

An assistant principal in a different high school offered a similar perspective: "[SLT

members] will bring up some negative things, some things that we need to address, but

sometimes they need to understand the context for why something exists and then they

can share that back with their [colleagues]" (35). This desire to increase awareness

exemplified a key process within many Phase 1 high schools: (a) SLT members shared

their own concerns and the concerns of their non-SLT colleagues at SLT meetings; (b)

the SLT, which often included administrators, then discussed as a group those concerns along with other issues; (c) the results of those discussions were then shared with non-SLT colleagues by SLT members. To a majority of participants, this process summarized the most important function of SLTs: relaying information between and among the principal/AT, SLT, and non-SLT members.

Devising solutions to address concerns, issues, and/or problems. The fourth most prevalent function was an extension of the preceding one—participants made an explicit distinction between *relaying* concerns, issues, and/or problems and *devising* solutions to address those concerns, issues, and/or problems. As a prior section noted, several SLTs charged their members with simply relaying information to their principal/AT—and then the administrators devised the solutions themselves. In other high schools, though, the SLT, as a group, devised solutions that either they had the authority to approve or they recommended for the principal/AT to approve. A later section addresses this notion of SLT decision-making authority.

SLTs within the 15 Phase 1 high schools tackled a wide array of concerns, issues, and problems that were distinct from specific school improvement efforts tied to state and/or district mandates. The most common matters fell into four groups: (a) scheduling (e.g., 04); (b) student interventions, remediation, and enrichment (e.g., 17); (c) student attendance (e.g., 27); and (d) teacher responsibilities and duties (e.g., 20). Examples were numerous of SLTs contending with challenges such as assessing the fidelity of grading practices among teachers, reducing students' use of cell phones during class time, planning events like prom and graduation, considering underperforming students'

requests to attend field trips, planning meals for parent-teacher conferences, increasing student attendance rates, and updating the student handbook.

One principal referred to this solution-devising function as "problem solving," saying, "We solve issues, [especially those] I may not be mindful of just in my daily walks through the school and observations" (02). Leveraging the collective knowledge of the SLT, another principal noted (01), was essential to ensuring solutions were well-received and actually implemented by SLT and non-SLT members alike.

In sum, SLTs in Phase 1 high schools engaged in a diverse array of functions. The extent to which various SLTs actually performed the aforementioned functions often depended on their decision-making authority, which the next section describes.

SLT decision-making authority. In discussions about SLT functions, many participants described their SLT's decision-making authority. It was rare for any SLT to have the final authority to make decisions in Phase 1 high schools. In fact, as one SLT member put it:

> A lot of times what we're discussing isn't even really something that we have the final say in. I wouldn't say that we really have final say in anything. We all recognize the fact that the admin is the admin and that's where the buck stops. (27)

Despite not having "the final say," SLTs did have varying degrees of decision-making authority—and a key determinant of that authority was the extent to which principals/ATs involved their SLTs into school decision-making. Responses coalesced around two types of SLT decision-making authority: (a) *advisory*, and (b) *shared*. The next two sections detail each type.

Advisory. Only one SLT served in an advisory-only capacity to their principal/AT, meaning they did not actively participate in the consensus building and school decision-making processes. In this case, the principal asked his SLT for advice or feedback on various issues that he and the AT wanted to discuss during their monthly meetings, but concluded, "I mean, basically I tell them what we're going to do" (28). When asked how much he spoke during SLT meetings, the principal replied, "Oh, about 80 percent" (28). Other participants in the same high school offered similar responses, noting that the principal and the AT retained all school decision-making authority. This approach appeared to contrast with the approach used in the other 14 Phase 1 high schools.

Shared. A number of administrators explicitly noted the importance of engaging in shared decision-making with their SLTs. The extent to which administrators shared authority, though, tended to depend on the decision. For some decisions, administrators employed the aforementioned "advisory" approach and did not involve the SLT. One principal summarized it this way: "There are times as an administrator that I have to make a decision whether [the SLT likes] it or not" (09).

For scores of other decisions, though, administrators involved their SLTs in the school decision-making process. "We want them to feel like they do have a voice in what goes on around here," another principal said, "although the major final decision is going to be [me]" (34). An SLT member in a different high school gave a rationale for why she felt administrators needed to retain final decision-making authority: "There are pieces to the puzzle usually that only he knows" (03). She went on to say, however, that her principal was "not just a one man show. He's very, very good at distributing that

leadership" (03). Another principal, in reflecting on this past school year, noted the following about school decision-making within his high school:

> I can't think of a decision that I've had to make that hasn't been talked about among the school leadership team. The issues that I usually have to determine come with the teachers. If we're having a problem with a teacher, that comes straight from me, but other than that, I cannot think of one issue that we didn't talk out collaboratively and come to consensus on. (26)

This principal's desire to collaborate with and gain consensus among the SLT mirrored what occurred in other Phase 1 high schools. In many cases, an administrator or SLT member would present something to the group and then, as one SLT member noted, "concerns are brought up, third ways, fourth ways, fifth ways are brought up, and we see what makes the most sense, who has some leverage to help refine what we're talking about, and then how we present it" (12). Another SLT member in a different high school stated her SLT used a similar, iterative approach: "We're presenting as many ideas as possible solutions. How can we do it? What are the good things about it? What do we need to scrap?" (03).

Eventually, SLTs fleshed out a few ideas or solutions and settled on a recommendation to administrators. At this point, principals often had to make one of three types of decision: (a) "Yep, let's do it. Here's the sign off on that" (12); (b) "Oh, I think you need to go back drawing board" (05); or (c) a simple "No" (09). While rare among participants, one principal offered the following explanation for the latter type of decision:

> As much as I can take all their feedback to build consensus, ultimately, I'm the decision maker, but even if I feel like the best thing to do is to go left, if I have the majority of the school leadership team saying this is the right thing to do, I'm going to try to as much as I can. Unless it's something I really, really can't get behind. I want to try to work in the direction that most of them want to go already

and influence it from that direction and if I can't, I want to try to be able to explain to them that I couldn't give you all what you asked for and this is why, and at least anytime I can't meet their need or I can't see things their way, I always feel like they're owed an explanation for why I decided to do it a different way. (20)

Another assistant principal agreed, asserting the onus of explanation rested with all administrators, especially if they made a decision that ran contrary to the SLT's recommendation (40).

Two administrators specifically shared examples of their SLT members deferring to administrators to make decisions. One principal said, "It's stronger that they default to admin, but there are specific things that I make it clear that [aren't] going to be a top-down decision" (15). Despite hearing "crickets at first" during SLT meetings, his SLT was warming up to the idea of shared decision-making with their high school. An assistant principal in a different high school expressed similar sentiments regarding SLT members becoming more comfortable in their roles:

I still think that the group looks to us for, "What are the solutions?" And we're very conscious of kind of reflecting it back to them and trying to really keep our mouth shut and be quiet and letting them process through a lot while still trying to facilitate and move the conversation forward. Every meeting is a little bit different, but you try to release that [leadership] to them. And we have a few people, and they're probably the people who are in admin programs, who will step up and do a little bit more, but they still look to you as, "You're my administrator. What do you want me to do?" And it's not about what I want you to do. It's what do you think needs to be done, and then let's try to mesh those two together. I think that's something that we constantly work with. (35)

Monthly SLT meetings presented opportunities for SLT members to continue socializing into their roles as decision-makers along with developing their leadership abilities. The next section describes the characteristics of these meetings.

SLT meeting characteristics. All SLTs from Phase 1 high schools used formal meetings as the primary method to perform their functions. Meeting characteristics ran the gamut of possibilities, and the following sections describe the frequency, days, times, duration, and locations of SLT meetings along with their agendas, minutes, and document storage strategies. See Tables 13 and 14 for select listings of the following SLT meeting characteristics in each Phase 1 high school.

Frequency. Regarding the frequency of meetings, a majority of SLTs met monthly while one SLT met on an as needed basis, one SLT met twice during the school year, two SLTs met twice per month, and three SLTs met weekly for shorter, informal meetings and monthly for longer, formal meetings. A few principals noted they might call an "emergency" SLT meeting depending on the circumstances, but only one administrator recalled a specific example in the case of a student death (21). SLTs in two high schools met at least once over the summer to introduce new SLT members to one another and to aid administrators in preparing for the school year (e.g., drafting a school improvement plan). One other high school hosted a "leadership retreat" (39) every August where all administrators and SLT members met for two days of meetings to get to know one another, discuss norms of collaboration, and internalize their responsibilities for the coming school year.

Day of the week. SLTs met on different days of the week, which was intentional in some cases. Phase 1 participants listed all five weekdays as meeting days with most SLTs meeting on Wednesday or Thursday, a few SLTs meeting on Monday and Tuesday, and only one SLT meeting on Friday. In two high schools, meeting on Monday was intentional because all staff professional development took place on Monday

Table 13

Select Structural Characteristics of SLT Meetings in Phase 1 High Schools

School	Meeting Frequency	Meeting Time	Meeting Duration	Meeting Location	Who Can Attend Meetings?
A[a]	As needed	After school	60 minutes	Principal's office	Open to any staff
B	Monthly	After school	60 to 90 minutes	Classroom	Open to any staff
C	Monthly	After school	60 minutes	Classroom	Open to any staff
D	Monthly	After school	30 to 45 minutes	Conference room	Open to any staff
E	Monthly (+short weekly)	Before school	60 minutes	Teacher PLC room	Open to any staff
F	Monthly	After school	60 minutes	Conference room	Closed
G	Twice monthly	Before school	60 minutes	Teacher PLC room	Open to any staff
H	As needed (2x per year)	After school	30 minutes	Library	Open to any staff
I	Monthly (+short weekly)	After school	60 minutes	Teacher PLC room	Closed
J	Twice monthly	After school	60 to 90 minutes	Library	Open to any staff
K	Monthly	After school	30 to 45 minutes	Conference room	Open to any staff
L	Monthly	After school	60 minutes	Conference room	Open to any staff
M	Monthly (+short weekly)	After school	60 minutes	Conference room	Open to any staff
N	Monthly	During school	60 to 90 minutes	Classroom	Open to any staff
O	Monthly	During school	60 to 90 minutes	Conference room	Closed

[a]Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential.

Table 14

Agendas, Minutes, and Document Storage of SLT Meetings in Phase 1 High Schools

School	Meeting Agenda	Meeting Agenda Creator	Meeting Agenda Dissemination Method	Central Meeting Minutes Recorded	Central Meeting Minutes Recorder	Meeting Minutes Dissemination Method	Online Document Storage Method
A[a]	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	No	SLT members individually	Email from principal to all staff with SLT meeting summary	No
B	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	Yes	Office manager	Email from principal to all staff with SLT meeting summary	No
C	Yes	Administrators	Online document	Yes	Assistant principal	Online shared folder for SLT members	Yes, agendas and minutes
D	Yes	Principal	Paper copy from principal	No	SLT members individually	SLT members share own minutes with non-SLT colleagues	No
E	Yes	Instructional coach	Email from principal	Yes	Instructional coach	Email from principal to all SLT members	No
F	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	No	SLT members individually	SLT members share own minutes with non-SLT colleagues	No
G	Yes	Principal	Online document	Yes	Principal	Online document for SLT members	Yes, agendas and minutes
H	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	Yes	Assistant principal	Online shared folder for SLT members	Yes, minutes
I	Yes	Principal	Online document	Yes	Principal	Online shared folder for SLT members; Email from principal to all staff with SLT meeting summary	Yes, agendas and minutes

Table 14 (continued)

School	Meeting Agenda	Meeting Agenda Creator	Meeting Agenda Dissemination Method	Central Meeting Minutes Recorded	Central Meeting Minutes Recorder	Meeting Minutes Dissemination Method	Online Document Storage Method
J	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	Yes	Principal	Email from principal to all SLT members	No
K	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	Yes	Principal	Online shared folder for SLT members	Yes, agendas and minutes
L	Yes	Principal	Paper copy from principal	No	SLT members individually	SLT members share own minutes with non-SLT colleagues	No
M	Yes	Principal and instructional coach	Email from principal	Yes	Instructional coach	Online shared folder for SLT members; Email from instructional coach to all staff with SLT meeting summary	Yes, agendas and minutes
N	Yes	Administrators	Online document	Yes	Principal	Online shared folder for SLT members	Yes, agendas and minutes
O	Yes	Principal	Email from principal	Yes	Principal	Online shared folder for SLT members	Yes, agendas and minutes

[a]Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential.

afternoons, and that particular SLT met after the staff professional development

gathering. The other high school hosted department meetings on Monday afternoons, so

SLT members would meet right after school and then department representatives would

host department meetings after the SLT meeting. Only one principal offered an example

of a day of the week change. She moved her SLT meeting day from Friday to Thursday

because "people were done by [Friday afternoon]" (34), meaning that few staff members

desired to stay after school at the start of the weekend.

Time of day. The times of day that SLTs gathered for formal meetings varied. A

majority of SLTs met after the school day, some directly after the last class meeting or

others, as noted above, after staff professional development. In most high schools where

department chairs received an automatic appointment to their SLTs, the SLT met during

the school day during a common planning period—often either the first period of the day

or the last period of the day. Several principals in these high schools arranged their

master schedules so all department chairs shared the same planning period. Three SLTs

also met before school, which was outside of teachers' contract time. SLT members in

these high schools received an additional stipend for the one hour per month they met as

an SLT.

Duration. The duration of SLT meetings varied considerably from 10 minutes to

two hours. Most participants claimed their SLTs met for "about an hour" (02). One

principal said, "I'm ex-military. I'm KISS. I want to keep it short. If I had a meeting that

was an hour, then we've got an issue" (09). In addition to hour-long monthly meetings,

SLTs in three high schools held "weekly stand-up meetings" lasting 10 minutes (e.g., 31).

Another SLT met, on average, for 80 to 120 minutes depending on the topics at hand. For

SLTs that met before school, meetings started at 7:30 A.M. and concluded before first

period started at 8:30 A.M. Three participants from these high schools, however,

lamented that SLT meetings often started late and ended late, which delayed the start of

first period for SLT members. Master schedules dictated SLT meeting durations in many

other high schools, too. In high schools with a six- or seven-period schedule, SLT

meetings lasted no longer than 50 minutes since some teachers were scheduled for the

following period. In high schools with a block schedule, SLT meetings lasted from 60 to

90 minutes depending on block length (e.g., 80 minutes). For those SLTs that gathered

after school, meetings were "typically an hour" because many SLT members had

additional responsibilities, particularly in smaller, rural high schools (e.g., coaching, club

sponsorships).

Location. The location where SLTs met also varied, from a large table in the

principal's office to a lecture hall. No SLT had a dedicated space within their high

schools, and most SLTs met in a conference room in either the main office or the library.

In two high schools, SLT meetings took place in a room dedicated to staff professional

development, which several participants called a "PLC room" (e.g., 23). These rooms had

whiteboards on the walls that detailed what the SLT was working on, so staff members,

especially non-SLT members, could view it (24). In the three high schools with 10-

minute "weekly stand-up meetings," SLT members stood in a hallway, which was

intentional to promote the "quick check in" purpose of the gathering (23). Four SLTs

rotated their meeting locations between classrooms and conference rooms. Two SLTs

met in science classrooms because they had "lab tables [that could be] set up so they

make a complete square so that we can all see each other" (e.g., 34). SLT members in

two other high schools explicitly mentioned moving tables and chairs around so that "everybody sees each other . . . in a U shape" (06).

Admitting non-SLT members. To get an understanding about the "openness" of SLT meetings, participants in Phase 1 high schools were asked if non-SLT members could attend SLT meetings. Responses ranged across a continuum from "No, they're closed meetings" to "Yes, oh definitely." Regarding the former, one principal, when asked if he would permit non-SLT members to attend SLT meetings, replied, "You know, I've never considered that" (15). Another principal mentioned her SLT meetings were closed, but "[didn't] know that we would tell somebody they couldn't come" (35). In the middle of the continuum, one assistant principal asserted his SLT meetings were "semi-open," meaning a non-SLT member had to make a request to an SLT member "and then the principal signs off on it, or you talked to the principal and he invites you" (12). Most of the 15 Phase 1 high schools permitted non-SLT members to attend SLT meetings, if they desired and/or wanted to—or if they were asked to present to the SLT (e.g., 041).

Several participants recalled few, if any, non-SLT members attending SLT meetings, often due to the additional time commitment. An assistant principal responded, "Not often . . . We haven't had a lot of people jumping in" (07). One principal offered a theory on why this situation occurred in his high school: "Most teachers don't because they don't want to stay back after school unless they have to because teachers have lives, too" (02). A non-SLT member agreed, saying, "Probably not . . . because it's another meeting. I know that's not something I would do. I'm not going to just go sit in a meeting just because" (22). On the other hand, a non-SLT member from a different high school did attend her SLT's meetings: "I liked it because I like to hear what others were

thinking. . . . [I want] to be that person to get the firsthand information. I get to get it firsthand and share it with somebody else" (06).

Agendas. To structure their meetings, all SLTs had agendas. Nearly every SLT used an agenda for every formal meeting while only one SLT "sometimes" used an agenda (05). In all but four Phase 1 high schools, the principal was the sole *meeting agenda creator*. In two high schools, the principal and instructional coaches developed the meeting agenda, while the ATs in two other high schools collectively organized the meeting agenda around "topics that we need to discuss" (10).

When it came to creating *meeting agenda items*, principals employed various approaches. Some principals solicited meeting agenda items from AT and/or SLT members via email and then sent a second email with a final meeting agenda as an attachment (e.g., PDF) (e.g., 39). Several other principals created an online collaborative document (e.g., Google Doc) and then emailed the link to AT and/or SLT members so they could "contribute any items they want to the agenda sequence" (e.g., 36). For one principal, this approach helped "use our time most efficiently" because she could review the document before SLT meetings and "use a different color and parentheses [to ask] a clarifying question or give them a direction to bring more information" (17). Several participants mentioned it was rare for SLT members, especially department chairs, to submit items prior to SLT meetings (e.g., 40). As a result, principals, as chief meeting agenda creators, structured and influence the order of business in many SLTs.

A handful of SLTs used a "pretty standardized" (35) set of agenda items while other SLTs included items that changed from month to month depending on the circumstances (05). One SLT, for example, used the same set of agenda items every

month, which focused entirely on the school improvement plan for that year (35). In several other high schools, principals included a recurring "district news" agenda item to share information they gathered and received from monthly district principal meetings (02).

Two of the most common agenda items centered on (a) SLT members sharing information from their departments, offices, or programs; and (b) SLT members sharing any information that they, personally, wanted to share. With the first, several SLT meeting agendas included an item that asked each SLT member to bring forth any concerns, issues, and/or problems (05). Most principals required SLT members to submit these items in advance while others let things surface during the SLT meeting. With the second, two principals made a point about including a "for the good of the cause" meeting agenda item, which was always last (15;27). This provision offered a space for SLT members to share what might be on their mind, be it a concern, issue, problem, idea, solution, or observation.

Once SLT meeting agendas were completed, Phase 1 high schools relied on one of four common *meeting agenda dissemination methods*. In two high schools, principals handed out paper copies to SLT members at their meetings. Nine principals emailed a document (e.g., PDF) to all SLT members before the meeting, and three of those principals also stored a copy of the meeting agenda in an online collaborative folder (e.g., Google Drive) that all SLT members could access. The remaining SLTs used online collaborative documents for their agendas (e.g., Google Doc), all of which could be edited by SLT members. In two high schools, the SLT used a single online collaborative

document (e.g., OneNote) for the entire school year while two other high schools created

separate online collaborative documents for each SLT meeting.

Minutes. A majority of SLTs also recorded minutes of their meetings, one SLT

"sometimes" recorded minutes, and four SLTs did not record minutes. Regarding the

latter, one principal noted, "I don't keep official minutes. They have notes from there,

and they disseminate among their departments—and they normally do" (10). The

principal of another high school used a similar approach: "There aren't minutes taken.

The expectation is that department chairs take [SLT] information and share with their

departments" (28). In a third high school, the principal said, "We don't. You know, we

absolutely should. That's a weakness" (01). One non-SLT member shed light on a

consequence of her SLT not recording minutes:

> I know from talking with the previous counseling director that it [the SLT not
> recording minutes] was kind of a point of frustration for her. What happens is
> everyone in the meeting ends up taking their own notes and my interpretation of
> what we decided might look different than yours. Whereas, if you have someone
> who's impartial, like an admin, sitting there and taking minutes, then it's pretty
> clear, and you have a record to go back to and say, "No, we talked about this and
> this was the decision, and this was the discussion." So, I think, at least for my
> conversations with her, that was a point of concern. She was like, "Okay, we
> probably need to be a little more formal in this, especially if we're making
> decisions." (14)

In those four high schools with SLTs that did not record minutes, SLT members

took their own minutes (e.g., 09). In the remaining Phase 1 high schools, the *meeting*

minutes recorder varied. In some cases, the main office manager or an administrative

assistant sat in on SLT meetings to record minutes. Instructional coaches recorded

minutes in two other high schools with one of them saying, "I just like to pay attention by

writing things down, so it's just kind of been my role" (33). The principal agreed, noting

how the instructional coach was "really good" at typing quickly (31). In most cases, though, it was the principal or an assistant principal recording minutes. When asked about balancing their attention between the meeting and recording minutes, one principal noted, "It's fine because I don't do a lot of the talking. I'll present the point I want to make, and then I'll let people discuss it and it allows me to take everything in" (26). The principal of another high school offered a second reason: "Whenever I go to any meetings anywhere, I'm always asked to do the note taking. I type really fast" (34). Her assistant principal agreed, but offered more context: "She's going to take notes regardless because that's just her style, but she remembers things better if she's writing" (35).

Meeting minutes dissemination methods varied among Phase 1 high schools, from SLT members sharing their own notes to all staff members having access to an online collaborative folder of documents (e.g., Google Drive). Starting first with the four high schools without a central meeting minutes recorder, three SLTs had individual members share their own notes with their department, office, or program (e.g., 07) while the principal of the fourth high school emailed a "short summary" to all staff members because "you want to keep people informed as to what those conversations were about" (01).

In high schools with a central meeting minutes recorder, principals took different stances on how their SLTs disseminated meeting minutes. A central question on the minds of some principals was, "What's the line between sharing enough information and sharing too much information?" Seven SLTs shared meeting minutes only among themselves; five of these high schools used online collaborative folders to store SLT-related documents while the principals of the other two high schools emailed SLT

members a document (e.g., PDF) containing meeting minutes (e.g., 20). One principal

mentioned that the sole reason "we don't share it is just because people don't want more

stuff in their Google Docs. They really only want information that's pertinent directly to

their work" (34).

On the other hand, some high schools shared either summaries or full versions of

SLT meeting minutes with all staff members. Several principals believed this approach

increased and enhanced communication. In one high school, an instructional coach

developed and emailed a "cute little online newsletter so that [the staff] can know what is

going on" (33). When asked about the format, the principal said a short newsletter "looks

cooler than a bulleted email" (31) while the instructional coach argued full versions of

SLT meeting minutes were "kind of boring" (33) and needed truncating. Similarly, the

principal of another high school emailed all staff members with a "weekly update" (02)

that included SLT meeting highlights among other information, such as upcoming events

and deadlines. He explicitly noted that the SLT tries "to be more mindful of over-

communicating than under-communicating. If you over-communicate and you have

different layers of the communication, it'll stick. [You're] trying to throw as many things

at all and try to get something to stick" (02). Instead of drafting summaries, though, two

high schools shared full versions of SLT meeting minutes with all staff members. One

principal said, "It's shared with the entire faculty. I believe in transparency . . . [and] a lot

of these decisions don't impact me so much as they impact them" (17). An SLT member

from another high school reported, "We have a public digital OneNote where the SLT

has access, but we also sent it out to the staff because we don't want it to be a secret"

(33).

Participants noted mixed results with the efforts to increase communication and transparency. On one hand, some SLT members mentioned non-SLT members discussing SLT meeting minutes. In one of the high schools that published full versions of SLT meeting minutes, the principal cited several examples of non-SLT members reviewing the minutes "to make sure that their concern was shared" (17). An assistant principal from another high school offered a similar response: "When there are minutes that come out where a decision has been made, you tend to hear more. And rightfully so. Teachers feel that kind of hand raise. Oh well wait a minute, I have a question" (04). She and the principal reported fielding more questions from non-SLT members in the days after sharing SLT meeting minutes.

Four participants expressed doubt that their colleagues—despite having access—reviewed SLT meeting minutes. An SLT member offered her assessment about her colleagues: "Whether they take advantage of that is a good question. . . . I would say maybe 60 percent of our faculty is actively engaged in looking at what we do or asking what happened at SLT" (33). A non-SLT member in another high school was less optimistic, saying "I don't know that anybody ever does or if they do, it's a small number. The number gets even smaller for those who can actually find it" (41). Two other principals agreed with one saying that, from his experience, "I do find with a lot of the Google stuff, it may sit there and not ever be looked at" (23). The other principal lamented, "No, not to a great extent. It's pretty limited" (17).

Document storage. Participants from seven high schools asserted that online collaboration tools (e.g., Google Docs) enhanced their SLT's abilities to organize. The uses of these online collaboration tools, however, varied depending on staff member

skills. In one high school, for example, an assistant principal voluntarily took the lead in creating and managing the SLT's online documents. When asked about this approach, the principal called that particular assistant principal a "Google samurai . . . They have Google ninjas, but I tell people she's a samurai. She's a step above" (05). In other cases, the SLT meeting minutes recorder (e.g., principal, office manager) uploaded documents to an online collaborative folder, such as Google Drive, Schoology, or Dropbox (e.g., 13). Rather than email Word documents, several SLTs developed online collaborative documents, such as Google Docs or Schoology pages, which enabled SLT members to observe and edit during SLT meetings along with reviewing after their meetings. One principal discussed a personal advantage of this approach:

> We use a lot of Google Docs. So, if for some reason, I'm out [of the building], I've been known to be on the Docs and reading as [the SLT] is meeting and asking [SLT members] to keep the chat feature open so I can ask questions for clarification about things that they're discussing. (17)

As noted previously, some SLTs restricted access to these online collaborative folders and documents while others granted access to all staff members (e.g., 12). Regarding the latter, one SLT used a single "running document [that] everybody has the link to and they all keep pulling it up" (07). At any point during the school year, non-SLT members could review the document to "watch" what was happening during SLT meetings, if they desired.

One high school cited an additional reason for using an online collaboration tool other than to enhance their SLT's organization: modeling. Their district recently adopted a new online learning management system, and officials selected their high school as a pilot site. The principal asserted that the SLT, "as leaders, needed to be modeling what

we expected in [teachers'] classrooms" (39). As a result, all SLT-related documents and information were uploaded or posted to their "SLT group" to serve as a template for other staff members, especially teachers. Only SLT members had access, though, and when the assistant principal was asked about granting access to non-SLT members so they could actually view the online group folder, she replied, "You're giving me a lot of great ideas" (40). Similarly, another principal said he planned to take his SLT "online" during the coming school year in order "to be more effective" at storing and reporting information (24).

Phase 2 *SLTi* Results

The *SLTi* included a number of items that targeted SLT functions along with how SLTs organized to perform those functions. As mentioned before, only SLT members in Phase 2 high schools completed the *SLTi*—no non-SLT members completed the survey—and participants could respond to any and all questions they desired, so the total response number fluctuates by item.

Perceptions of SLT functions performed. The *SLTi* included a listing of 22 SLT functions based on the study's conceptual framework, literature review, and Phase 1 interviews. Participants were asked to indicate which of the 22 functions their SLTs performed so that a frequency percentage could be calculated across all Phase 2 high schools ($N = 67$). All participants (i.e., a 100% prevalence percentage) indicated that their SLTs addressed the following three functions:

- considering what's best for our school as a whole
- discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff
- disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff

At least 90% of participants indicated that their SLTs addressed the following 11

functions with the most prevalent listed first:

- leading change and improvement initiatives (99%)

- monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions
  (99%)

- soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members (99%)

- providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs
  (99%)

- promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff (98%)

- keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals (97%)

- identifying our school's most pressing issues (97%)

- sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT (94%)

- creating a safe and orderly school climate (93%)

- securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision (91%)

- reviewing and analyzing data (90%)

On the other hand, less than 50% of participants indicated that their SLTs addressed the

following two functions, ending with the least prevalent:

- holding staff members accountable for their performance (43%)

- discussing the performance of individual staff members (33%).

See Table 15 for a summary of frequency percentages by SLT function. Later

sections describe further *SLTi* results for perceptions of SLT effectiveness in general and

for the aforementioned functions.

Table 15

SLTi Results – Prevalence of SLT Functions

Item	*N*	Yes, SLT Function	No, Not SLT Function	Prevalence %
considering what's best for our school as a whole	67	67	0	100%
discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff	67	67	0	100%
disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff	67	67	0	100%
leading change and improvement initiatives	67	66	1	99%
monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions	67	66	1	99%
soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members	67	66	1	99%
providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs	67	66	1	99%
promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff	66	65	1	98%
keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals	67	65	2	97%
identifying our school's most pressing issues	67	65	2	97%
sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT	67	63	4	94%
creating a safe and orderly school climate	67	62	5	93%
securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision	67	61	6	91%
reviewing and analyzing data	67	60	7	90%
creating our school's vision	67	59	8	88%
devising goals and strategies to help realize our school's vision	66	57	9	86%
leading instruction within our school	67	54	13	81%
leading professional development opportunities for our school's staff	67	49	18	73%
ensuring our school's staff engage in continuous professional development	67	48	19	72%
coordinating the work among our school's departments, offices, and/or units	67	47	20	70%
holding staff members accountable for their performance	67	29	38	43%
discussing the performance of individual staff members	67	22	45	33%

Note. Items are sorted by prevalence percentage beginning with the highest.

SLT meeting characteristics. This section details *SLTi* results for SLT meeting characteristics, such as frequency, duration, meeting leaders, admitting non-SLT members, agendas, and minutes.

Frequency and duration. With respect to the frequency of SLT meetings, 43% of participants noted their SLTs met monthly, 29% said their SLTs met bi-weekly, and 17% listed their SLTs as meeting weekly ($N = 71$). In the remaining cases, three SLT members maintained that their SLTs met twice a month, three other SLT members asserted their SLTs met "as needed," and, finally, one SLT member reported his or her SLT met daily. Turning to SLT meeting duration, most participants (77%) stated that meetings lasted, on average, between 31 and 60 minutes ($N = 71$). The second most frequent duration was on the longer side with 14% of SLT members noting a meeting lasting between 61 and 90 minutes. Five participants asserted their SLTs met between 0 to 30 minutes while only one SLT member maintained that his or her SLT, on average, met for more than 90 minutes.

Leader of SLT meetings. The leaders that called SLT meetings to order and then ran them differed slightly. A significant majority of participants (86%) said their principal led SLT meetings ($N = 71$). Among remaining cases, seven SLT members noted a fellow SLT colleague that was *not* the principal led the meetings, two SLT members listed an instructional coach as the SLT meeting leader, and one participant maintained that SLT meeting leadership rotated among SLT members.

Admitting non-SLT members. Most SLT members (58%) were "not sure" if non-SLT members could attend SLT meetings ($N = 69$). Only 19 participants expressed a firm opinion with 16 SLT members (23%) saying that non-SLT members were, in fact,

permitted to attend SLT meetings while 13 other SLT members (19%) listed SLT meetings as closed and, thus, non-SLT members could not attend.

Agendas. Among all participants, 71% said their principals typically created SLT meeting agendas ($N = 71$). In the remaining cases, 8 participants (11%) noted a fellow SLT colleague that was *not* the principal devised the meeting agenda, 8 (11%) other SLT members maintained that meeting agendas were developed among a group of SLT members, three participants reported an instructional coach drafted the agenda, and one SLT member stated his or her SLT meetings had "no formal agenda."

Turning to SLT meeting agenda formats, nearly half of participants (46%) noted their SLTs used an online collaborative document (e.g., Google Doc) that SLT members could edit ($N = 72$). The second most frequent format was different—28% of participants received paper copies. In remaining cases, 21% of SLT members received their meeting agenda as an email attachment, two SLT members maintained their SLTs created online collaborative documents that could *not* be edited, one SLT member said his or her SLT used a "verbal" agenda, and, finally, one SLT member reported "no advanced agenda" for his or her SLT meetings.

Minutes. SLT members were asked who was primarily responsible for recording minutes during SLT meetings. The most common meeting minutes recorder was an SLT member who was *not* the principal (39% of participants) with other recorders, in order of frequency, being the principal (13%), a rotating group of SLT members (13%), the office manager/administrative assistant (6%), and an instructional coach (3%) ($N = 70$). In other cases, 14% of SLT members said there was no meeting minutes recorder, so they took their own minutes, while 13% asserted that no minutes were recorded at all.

The groups of people given access to SLT meeting minutes differed, too. In most cases, the viewing of meeting minutes was restricted to SLT members only (63%) ($N =$ 60). However, 20% of participants stated meeting minutes were shared with all staff members while 15% indicated that district officials had access to meeting minutes. One SLT member reported parents, families, and/or guardians receiving access to meeting minutes.

Perceptions of SLT meetings and dynamics. The *SLTi* included a 15-item Likert inventory that asked for SLT member perceptions of their SLT meetings and the dynamics within those meetings. On the whole, most participants expressed agreement with 12 items ($M \leq 2.5$; $Mdn \leq 2$; $N = 67$), which are listed below and begin with the highest-rated item:

- Our SLT members are comfortable openly disagreeing with one another.

- Our SLT members trust one another.

- Our SLT ultimately defers to our administrators to make final decisions.

- Our SLT has a set of agreed-upon norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings.

- Our current SLT membership brings diverse viewpoints around the same table.

- Our SLT has a culture of collaboration and advances efforts as a team.

- Our principal positively influences our SLT's dynamics.

- Our SLT makes recommendations or decisions based on consensus.

- Our principal acts as a facilitator during SLT meetings.

- Our SLT promotes a culture of collective accountability among SLT members.

- Our SLT offers non-binding recommendations on issues to administrators.

- Our SLT presents an image of unity outside of SLT meetings.

For the remaining three items, most participants neither agreed nor disagreed (*Mdn* = 3); these items are listed below, ending with the lowest-rated item:

- Our principal develops SLT members' leadership abilities.

- Our SLT is strictly advisory to our school's administrators.

- Our SLT has distinct decision-making authority over school-wide issues.

Among all participants, 11% expressed some level of disagreement with one or more items, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 68% reported agreeing with one or more items. See Table 16 for a complete listing of results by item, including the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, and median.

Research Question 2 Findings Summary

SLT functions. Phase 1 participants described a range of functions that their SLTs performed, which were then grouped into 12 categories. The four most prevalent functions, each of which was mentioned by more than 50% of Phase 1 participants, were: (a) serving as a voice of the staff; (b) engaging in specific school improvement efforts; (c) relaying information; and (d) devising solutions to address concerns, issues, and/or problems. Less common functions included: (a) leading instruction, (b) motivating staff members, (c) brainstorming new ideas, (d) analyzing data, and (e) taking a "pulse" of the building. Table 12 summarized the prevalence of Phase 1 participant-described SLT functions.

Regarding the most prevalent function, Phase 1 interviews revealed that SLTs served as a voice of the staff by representing both their colleagues in their departments, offices, or programs—and the staff at-large. This function provided staff members with

Table 16

SLTi *Results – Perceptions of SLT Meeting Dynamics*

Item	N	M	SD	Median	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our SLT members are comfortable openly disagreeing with one another	67	2.06	0.72	2	11	45	7	4	0
Our SLT members trust one another	67	2.10	0.70	2	9	45	11	1	1
Our SLT ultimately defers to our administrators to make final decisions	67	2.15	0.86	2	12	40	9	5	1
Our SLT has a set of agreed-upon norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings	66	2.15	0.95	2	16	32	11	6	1
Our current SLT membership brings diverse viewpoints around the same table	67	2.16	0.88	2	11	43	5	7	1
Our SLT has a culture of collaboration and advances efforts as a team	67	2.18	0.60	2	5	47	13	2	0
Our principal positively influences our SLT's dynamics	67	2.19	0.76	2	8	44	9	6	0
Our SLT makes recommendations or decisions based on consensus	67	2.22	0.76	2	7	43	13	3	1
Our principal acts as a facilitator during SLT meetings	67	2.24	0.94	2	12	37	9	8	1
Our SLT promotes a culture of collective accountability among SLT members	67	2.25	0.79	2	8	40	13	6	0
Our SLT offers non-binding recommendations on issues to administrators	67	2.43	0.82	2	4	39	16	7	1
Our SLT presents an image of unity outside of SLT meetings	67	2.46	0.70	2	4	32	27	4	0
Our principal develops SLT members' leadership abilities	67	2.58	0.82	3	5	27	26	9	0
Our SLT is strictly advisory to our school's administrators	67	2.70	1.03	3	7	26	15	18	1
Our SLT has distinct decision-making authority over school-wide issues	67	2.99	1.07	3	2	25	19	14	7
				Total	121	565	203	100	15
				Total	12%	56%	20%	10%	1%

Note. "Strongly Agree" was scored as a "1" while "Strongly Disagree" was scored as a "5." Lower mean and median scores indicate higher agreement. Items are sorted by mean scores beginning with the lowest (i.e., highest agreement).

an outlet to feel heard and to preserve anonymity, if they wished, by having their SLT member voice concerns on their behalf. Moreover, SLTs, as a smaller group of staff members, were a more ideal venue to discuss concerns, issues, or problems since many high schools had large staffs that made whole-group discussion difficult. SLTs also served as a "sounding board" for administrators and provided non-administrator insight into administrator-proposed questions and/or concerns.

Regarding the second most prevalent function, SLTs engaged in four activities related to specific school improvement efforts: (a) developing action plans to respond to external mandates; (b) identifying goals and developing action plans, but not in response to external mandates; (c) monitoring the implementation of action plans; and (d) participating in the school improvement planning process.

Regarding the third most prevalent function, SLT members relayed information along three streams of communication: (a) from the principal/AT to non-SLT members; (b) from the SLT to non-SLT members; and (c) from non-SLT members to the SLT, which, in turn, reached the principal and/or AT. Some SLTs' sole purpose was to relay information between the principal/AT, SLT, and non-SLT members. Several Phase 1 participants noted this function reduced gaps in communication and helped keep staff members abreast of what was occurring in their high schools.

Regarding the fourth most prevalent function, SLT members devised solutions to address the concerns, issues, and/or problems they relayed. This function, though, was distinct from the aforementioned specific school improvement efforts tied to state and/or district mandates. The most common groups of items discussed were: (a) scheduling; (b)

student interventions, remediation, and enrichment; (c) student attendance; and (d) teacher responsibilities and duties.

Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with the Phase 1 interview findings in most instances. Phase 2 participants were given a list of 22 functions and asked to indicate which functions their SLTs performed. At least 94% of Phase 2 participants asserted their SLTs performed the four prevalent functions and their associated activities. Moreover, both Phase 1 interviews and Phase *SLTi* results demonstrated that few SLTs were responsible for discussing individual staff members' performance or holding staff members accountable for their performance. Phase 1 interview findings contrasted with Phase 2 *SLTi* results in that four other SLT functions also were highly prevalent in Phase 2 high schools: (a) promoting camaraderie, (b) creating a safe and orderly school climate, (c) securing staff member buy-in for the school's vision, and (d) reviewing and analyzing data. Table 15 summarized the prevalence of Phase 2 participant-described SLT functions.

SLT decision-making authority. It was rare for SLTs within Phase 1 high schools to have the final authority to make decisions—and the extent to which they were involved in decision-making depended on their principals/ATs. Phase 1 participants described two types of SLT decision-making authority: (a) advisory to decision-makers, and (b) shared decision-making authority. For the first type, which was present in only one Phase 1 high school, the principal asked the SLT for advice or feedback on issues, but the SLT did not actively participate in the consensus building and decision-making processes. For the second type, which was far more common, the principal/AT collaborated with their SLT to discuss ideas or solutions and then come to a consensus on

a recommendation. Principals then made the final decision to (a) support the SLT's

recommendation, (b) ask the SLT to revise the recommendation, or (c) go against the

SLT's recommendation. Very few of the 16 principals interviewed during Phase 1 had

specific examples of when they made a decision counter to their SLT's recommendation.

Several Phase 1 participants, however, recalled situations when SLT members deferred to

administrators to make decisions.

Phase 2 *SLTi* results offered mixed support for the Phase 1 interview findings on

decision-making. On one hand, most Phase 2 participants agreed that their SLTs (a)

offered non-binding recommendations on issues to their administrators, and, ultimately,

(b) deferred to their administrators to make final decisions. On the other hand, though,

most Phase 2 participants took a neutral stance on whether their SLTs (a) were strictly

advisory to their administrators, and (b) had distinct decision-making authority over

school-wide issues.

SLT meeting characteristics. All Phase 1 high schools used meetings to

organize their SLT's work to perform its functions. SLT meeting characteristics varied

substantially by high school. Eight SLTs met monthly while others met twice monthly,

weekly, or as needed. Eleven SLTs met after school while others met before school or

after school. Eight SLTs had meetings lasting around 60 minutes while others for longer

or shorter periods of time. Most SLTs met in a conference room while others met in

classrooms, the library, a PLC room, and the principal's office. All SLTs used agendas to

structure their meetings, and principals were the most common agenda creators. Nine

SLTs received agendas from their principals via email while four SLTs used online

collaborative tools (e.g., Google Docs) for their agendas. Regarding minutes of SLT

meetings, 11 SLTs recorded central meeting minutes while 4 others did not. SLT meeting minute dissemination methods differed widely, from SLT members sharing their own minutes with non-SLT colleagues to all staff members having access to online collaborative folders of documents containing agendas and minutes. Seven SLTs stored their agendas and minutes in online collaborative folders of documents while seven other SLTs did not. Finally, some SLTs permitted non-SLT members to attend meetings, others required principal approval, and some were closed to non-members. Tables 13 and 14 summarized these findings.

Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with the Phase 1 interview findings in most instances, but also offered additional insight into SLT meetings. Seventy-seven percent of Phase 2 participants noted their SLTs met for 31 to 60 minutes, 71% indicated their principals created SLT meeting agendas, and 63% listed SLT minutes as being accessible only by SLT members. In somewhat of a contrast to Phase 1 interview findings, 43% said their SLTs met monthly while nearly 30% indicated their SLTs met bi-weekly—the latter demonstrated a more frequent SLT meeting schedule than the Phase 1 interviews mentioned. Forty-six percent indicated their SLTs used online collaborative documents for their meeting agendas while 28% had paper copies and 21% received an email attachment. The prevalence of online collaborative documents compared was higher compared to Phase 1 interviews. Thirty-nine Phase 2 participants said an SLT member that was not the principal recorded minutes during SLT meetings, which was a higher percentage than Phase 1 interviews mentioned. Moreover, 13% of SLT members in Phase 2 high schools noted their SLTs had no central meeting minutes recorder *and* that SLT members did not take minutes individually. In a final contrast, 58% said they were unsure

if non-SLT members could attend SLT meetings, which was a marked difference compared to Phase 1 interviews. Finally, 86% of Phase 2 participants listed their principal as the leader of SLT meetings.

SLT meeting dynamics. Phase 2 *SLTi* results provided insight into SLT meeting dynamics. A majority of SLT members expressed agreement that they brought diverse viewpoints around the same table, had an agreed-upon set of norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings, felt comfortable openly disagreeing with one another, trusted one another, cultivated a culture of collaboration among themselves and advanced efforts as a team, promoted collective accountability among themselves, made recommendations or decisions based on consensus, and presented an image of unity outside of SLT meetings. Moreover, most Phase 2 participants agreed that their principals acted as facilitators during SLT meetings and, overall, had a positive influence on their SLT's dynamics. Finally, a majority of Phase 2 participants neither agreed nor disagreed on whether they felt their principal developed SLT members' leadership abilities. Table 16 summarized these results.

Research Question 3: Definitions and Perceptions of SLT Effectiveness

The third research question inquired about how SLT and non-SLT members working in underperforming high schools defined and evaluated their SLT's perceived effectiveness. The first section reports findings for this research question from the Phase 1 interviews while the second section reports findings from the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot.

Phase 1 Interview Findings

This section reviews findings about perceived SLT effectiveness based on

interviews from Phase 1. Participants addressed two areas: (a) how they defined "SLT

effectiveness", and (b) perceptions of their SLT's effectiveness.

Definitions of SLT effectiveness. SLT and non-SLT members cited a variety of

criteria they used to define "SLT effectiveness." Participants reported criteria based on

hard data sources (e.g., student performance on standardized tests) and *soft data sources*

(e.g., SLT members' observations).

Defining SLT effectiveness using hard data. Participants noted six criteria rooted

in hard data, meaning they used numbers, statistics, and rates to define SLT effectiveness.

The most common hard data criterion centered on *student performance on school,*

district, and state assessments, particularly state standardized tests (e.g., 08). One

principal offered the following as his definition of SLT effectiveness:

> I don't mean it to be a cop out, but I think, ultimately, our school is evaluated on
> our students' performance, and if they're going on and being successful post-
> graduation. That's a reflection of what we're getting done in both [the AT and the
> SLT]. (39)

Two principals cited two other hard data criteria that derived from internal, rather

than external, data sources. The principal in one high school considered the *rates and*

trends of the number of students enrolling in upper-level classes as a marker of his SLT's

effectiveness. The greater the number, he said, the better job the SLT must be doing in

increasing the rigor of instruction (28). On a broader level, another principal said he used

ratings on school climate surveys to define his SLT's effectiveness: "If the students are

happy and the faculty are happy, then I believe that those leadership teams are considered

successful" (39). Another SLT member offered a similar perspective, noting that if school climate surveys showed that SLT members were "maintaining that authenticity and that respect, [then] I feel like we're doing a good job [of] representing our colleagues" (33).

In an extended narrative about defining SLT effectiveness, another principal cited three additional hard data criteria she used to consider whether her SLT was effective or ineffective: (a) *student graduation rates*, (b) *student enrollment rates*, and (c) *staff member turnover rates* (34). Regarding her first criterion, the principal offered a detailed justification for using student graduation rates to define SLT effectiveness:

> We have the highest at-risk population. We have the most kids that are socioeconomically disadvantaged. We have the most kids who have socioemotional needs, the largest population of students who, unfortunately, have been incarcerated. We're the only one that has any ELL students. We have the whole ELL population for the district for the high schools. When you have that many at-risk factors and needs, and yet you get the highest [graduation] percentage [in the district], you have to celebrate that. (34)

With respect to her second criterion, the principal noted other high schools in her district faced declining student enrollment rates while her high school—the one with the highest at-risk population, she reiterated, saw increasing student enrollment rates over the past several school years. Eventually, she ran out of space and her high school had to turn away families. While a consistently-increasing desire for students to enroll in her high school "[was a] little harder to quantify than things like standardized tests," the principal argued, "it still speaks volumes" (34). Turning to her third and final criterion, the principal noted that, "Staff do not leave [our school] . . . I personally think that's a huge reflection as well. The only time people leave us is to move out of state for promotions or retire" (34). No other participants from Phase 1 high schools used these three hard data criteria.

Defining SLT effectiveness using soft data. A number of participants listed criteria rooted in soft data, meaning they used observations, perceptions, impressions, and informal data gathering to define SLT effectiveness. Some SLT and non-SLT members used these soft data criteria either in addition to or instead of "hard numbers" (01).

The most common soft data criterion pertained to *relaying*, which participants most often described as the degree to which they felt SLT members were communicating information between the SLT (and thus administrators) and their departments, offices, programs, or the staff at-large (e.g., 07). One SLT member summarized it this way: "[Does] everybody know what's going on?" (27). If so, she considered the SLT to be effective. Most SLT members seemed to base their evaluations on whether their SLT colleagues shared concerns, issues, or problems during SLT meetings.

For five participants, relaying consisted of something more than contributing comments during SLT meetings and then summarizing what happened to their non-SLT colleagues. It was also the accuracy, tone, and/or level of detail of the communication (e.g., 35). With respect to accuracy, one principal said he and his assistant principals informally evaluated "whether the message of what it is that you want said to a department or to the faculty is said the way that you would want to say it" (02). To accomplish this goal, his assistant principals sat in on department, office, or program meetings to observe how SLT members framed SLT discussions and decisions. An assistant principal in another high school also valued accuracy, but mentioned the importance of tone of delivery (35). Administrators judged tone, she said, by reflecting on everyday conversations with staff members. With respect to detail, an assistant principal in a different high school defined SLT effectiveness as the extent to which SLT

members could explain to their non-SLT colleagues *why* certain decisions were made
(07).

A second soft data criterion used to define SLT effectiveness focused on
administrator and/or SLT member *perceptions of SLT meetings* (e.g., 05). For example,
one principal considered his SLT to be effective if SLT members were paying attention
and not being "bean counters [and] watching the clock" during SLT meetings (24). A
second principal judged SLT effectiveness solely by the quality of the data analysis
conversations along with the action plans they developed to address concerns, issues, or
problems raised by the data (05). Still a third principal offered the following as a marker
of SLT effectiveness:

> When I meet with department chairs and their biggest concern is about dress code
> issues, I think we're okay. Or earbuds. If those are the biggest concerns that
> they're going to share with me, then I feel like we're doing a pretty good job. (28)

To him, the SLT was performing effectively if SLT members brought forth relatively
benign concerns, issues, or problems to discuss during SLT meetings.

Two other administrators, though, judged SLT meeting quality using a different
criterion: changes in staff member practice. One principal said her SLT was effective
only if changes in practice that were discussed during SLT meetings actually manifested
within staff member classrooms (23). Another assistant principal in a different school
mentioned nearly the same criterion. She defined SLT effectiveness as the extent to
which SLT members "walk away [from SLT meetings with] an instructional focus or a
strategy or something that they can share with their folks that is *not* managerial" (40). For
these two participants, if SLT meetings did not result in changes within their high
schools, they considered their SLTs ineffective.

Collecting data on SLT effectiveness. When describing their definitions of SLT effectiveness, two principals raised the notion of collecting data on SLT effectiveness in general. One principal solicited regular feedback from SLT members via a Google Form. The purpose, he noted, was to "get their input so we're able to kind of assess where they feel if we were successful or not" (39). None of the other 15 principals interviewed during Phase 1 mentioned something like this principal's approach. During his interview, however, another principal brainstormed how he might be able to collect data to evaluate his SLT's effectiveness in the future:

> I think to measure [the SLT's] effectiveness would be hard. I mean, you could survey or do something like that. I think it would be more informal, but I think the way that you would measure that is more by culture and how has the culture improved since we implemented [the SLT approach]. I would think that if you talk to folks about: Do they feel like they have a voice? Do they feel like they're heard? I think the answers would be yes on that. So, as far as being effective, do they have an opportunity to address their concerns? Do they have an opportunity to have a voice whether it's into the decision-making process, it's in addressing situations, or it's in identifying problems? The answer is definitely yes for those. But, again, is there a formal measurement? No. That'd be something to consider. (15)

Evaluations of perceived SLT effectiveness. SLT and non-SLT members evaluated their SLT's perceived effectiveness along a continuum from "very effective" to "not as effective." The next section describes this continuum and closes with highlights from several participants who felt their SLTs were making progress on becoming more effective.

Continuum of perceived SLT effectiveness. Beginning with the *very effective* end of the SLT perceived effectiveness continuum, eight participants rated their SLTs as either "highly effective," "very much effective," "super effective," or "very effective" and also noted their SLT members were doing "very well" and "great jobs" (e.g., 30). To

substantiate their evaluations, SLT and non-SLT members offered rationales, some of

which were rooted in the aforementioned definitions of SLT effectiveness while others

were not.

Several participants attributed their high evaluations to one or more staff members

in their high schools, especially the principal. One SLT member that said his SLT was

"super effective" offered the following rationale for his evaluation:

> For us to have the success we've had in this high school, I think, has been in part
> because of SLT and the leadership provided by our administration. And I think it
> shows, like I said, with our accreditation status and with the type of students who
> are graduating from the school. (08)

Another SLT member agreed, rating his SLT "quite effective" because of "strong

principal leadership and a strong lead instructional coach" (12). A principal in a different

high school said his district-level supervisor "stated that we have the best leadership

team, that we have the best teachers on it . . . we have no worries about them [and they]

are the epitome of what we want" (31). Echoing his supervisor, the principal went on to

say his SLT was "highly" effective because of the people sitting around the SLT meeting

table. Another principal offered a similar perspective:

> I think there's a lot of failed implementations in schools when it's just solely led
> by the principal and a lot of times you're going to meet resistance because you
> haven't thought through some of the things that the teachers might see from the
> classroom perspective. It's not that principals are disconnected from that. It's that
> you just need to be able to see everybody's perspective before you move forward
> with something. I think the SLT's been very effective [for this]. (01)

Moving to the *effective* spot on the SLT perceived effectiveness continuum, 12

participants rated their SLTs as "effective," "pretty nice," "good," or "fine" (e.g., 10).

Many of these ratings were specific to SLT members' effectiveness at relaying, as

defined in a prior section (e.g., 20). One principal remarked that while his SLT was not

"outstanding or superior," it was effective (24). Two non-SLT members rated their SLTs as effective because they had no specific information to say the teams were ineffective. An English teacher, said, "I think it's fine. I haven't heard any complaints. . . . I'm not sure they're going to win awards on teams" (019a). The second, a science teacher, argued that, "seeing as I have no idea what they do, I'm assuming that they are effective in their position seeing as I have not heard that they were not" (22).

Moving to the *not as effective* end of the SLT perceived effectiveness continuum, only four of 40 Phase 1 participants rated their SLTs as something other than very effective or effective. One principal said his SLT was "effective for the most part," but failed to substantiate his evaluation when prompted for additional detail (02). A non-SLT member asserted his SLT was "just sort of average," mainly because he was unsure of the extent to which his colleagues reviewed what the principal communicated to staff members about the SLT (41). Another principal evaluated his SLT's effectiveness based on student scores on state standardized tests, noting that "we're not hitting it yet" (31). Finally, in the only case among all 40 Phase 1 participants, one assistant principal rated her SLT as below average or not as effective. She volunteered the following assessment and rationale:

> On a scale of one to 10, maybe in the three or four range. . . I think a lot of it is based on what teachers can get out of being a part of something. What is the product they walk away with? How are we modeling what we're asking them to do? For example, in a PLC meeting, our expectation administratively is that they walk away with a product. Well, what product do they walk away with from our SLT meetings as they stand now? Not sure. They walk away with some information to share with their department members, but do they walk away with an instructional focus or a strategy or something that they can share with their folks that is not managerial. No. So that's why. (40)

Despite this current shortcoming, though, the administrator noted her SLT's steady progress toward becoming a team of instructional leaders instead of a group of department managers.

Improving and moving in the right direction. When describing their SLT's perceived effectiveness, four participants specifically mentioned that their SLTs were improving and "moving in the right direction" (31) (e.g., 27). In a high school still recovering from a high rate of principal turnover, one non-SLT member expressed hope about her recently-hired principal: "[She] had to start somewhere. I still believe that it can get better. We're keeping new kids and younger teachers. They're participating more and it's exciting to see that" (19a). An SLT member in another high school argued that her SLT was "on the track to getting more effective" because of her new principal introducing an instructional leadership framework that "we [finally] kind of understand" (33).

In a unique case, one principal said her SLT could be more effective, but progress rested on the extent to which SLT members embraced their role as a decision-maker within the school:

> I would say some of them are natural leaders and some are growing into the role. It takes a lot to convince people that their voice matters. Having been a teacher, as you yourself know, many of us, if we're teachers, we're good at compliance. We follow the curriculum. We follow the rules. We turn paperwork in on time. We get our grades right. We follow. We comply. And getting people to recognize that their role is to push the envelope, their job is to question, their job is to make suggestions so that we're not doing things the same thing indefinitely—that's not a comfortable place for a lot of people who are trained to be really good at compliance. (34)

Outside of this principal, no other Phase 1 participant made any reference to the development of SLT members as decision-makers within their high schools.

Phase 2 *SLTi* Results

The *SLTi* included a number of items that targeted participants' perceptions of their SLTs' effectiveness in general and with the specific functions listed earlier in this chapter. As mentioned before, only SLT members in Phase 2 high schools completed the *SLTi*—no non-SLT members completed the survey—and participants could respond to any and all questions they desired, so the total response number fluctuates by item.

Perceptions of SLT general effectiveness. The *SLTi* included a 16-item Likert inventory that asked for SLT member perceptions of their SLTs' general effectiveness (*N* = 67). On the whole, most participants expressed agreement with 11 items (*M* ≤ 2.5; *Mdn* ≤ 2), which are listed below and begin with the highest-rated item:

- My SLT colleagues are effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities.

- Our SLT does a good job keeping a "pulse" of what is going on within our school.

- Non-SLT members would say our SLT is competent.

- Non-SLT members would say our SLT values their opinions and feedback.

- Our SLT is doing the work that I think it should be doing.

- Our SLT's structure positively influences our SLT's performance.

- Our SLT's performance, on the whole, can be improved.

- Non-SLT members would say our SLT is effective in carrying out its responsibilities.

- Our SLT is effective in creating solutions to issues raised by school staff.

- I participate in professional development to enhance my ability as an SLT member.

- Non-SLT members would say our SLT is a representative voice of our school's staff.

Most participants neither agreed nor disagreed (*Mdn* = 3) with four items, which are listed below and begin with the highest-rated item:

- Our school's performance has improved specifically because of our SLT's work.

- Our SLT, as a group, participates in professional development to enhance its ability as an SLT.

- Our SLT should revise its structure (e.g., membership, schedule).

- Principal turnover in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.

Most participants expressed disagreement (*Mdn* > 3) with only one of the 16 items:

- Turnover among SLT members in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.

Among all participants, 17% expressed some sort of disagreement with one or more items, 21% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 63% reported agreeing with one or more items. See Table 17 for a complete listing of results by item, including the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, and median.

Perceptions of SLT effectiveness in performing specific functions. As noted in a prior section, the *SLTi* included a listing of 22 SLT functions derived from various data sources (e.g., conceptual framework, Phase 1 interviews). Participants were asked to assess their SLT's effectiveness in performing those functions, if it addressed them.

Table 17

SLTi *Results – Perceptions of General SLT Effectiveness*

Item	N	M	SD	Median	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My SLT colleagues are effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities	65	2.00	0.61	2	10	47	6	2	0
Our SLT does a good job keeping a "pulse" of what is going on within our school	65	2.18	0.79	2	6	48	6	3	2
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is competent	65	2.22	0.67	2	6	42	14	3	0
Non-SLT members would say our SLT values their opinions and feedback	65	2.29	0.63	2	3	43	16	3	0
Our SLT is doing the work that I think it should be doing	65	2.32	0.87	2	5	44	8	6	2
Our SLT's structure positively influences our SLT's performance	65	2.32	0.66	2	3	42	16	4	0
Our SLT's performance, on the whole, can be improved	65	2.32	0.85	2	7	38	13	6	1
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is effective in carrying out its responsibilities	65	2.34	0.67	2	3	41	17	4	0
Our SLT is effective in creating solutions to issues raised by school staff	65	2.37	0.93	2	3	49	2	8	3
I participate in professional development to enhance my ability as an SLT member	65	2.38	1.03	2	10	33	12	7	3
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is a representative voice of our school's staff	65	2.46	0.90	2	7	31	18	8	1
Our school's performance has improved specifically because of our SLT's work	65	2.54	0.79	3	6	24	29	6	0
Our SLT, as a group, participates in professional development to enhance its ability as an SLT	65	2.83	1.10	3	3	29	16	10	7
Our SLT should revise its structure (e.g., membership, schedule)	65	3.00	1.10	3	5	20	14	22	4
Principal turnover in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance	65	3.05	1.27	3	8	17	13	18	9
Turnover among SLT members in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance	65	3.29	1.09	4	4	13	14	28	6
				Total	89	561	214	138	38
				Total	9%	54%	21%	13%	4%

Note. "Strongly Agree" was scored as a "1" while "Strongly Disagree" was scored as a "5." Lower mean and median scores indicate higher agreement. Items are sorted by mean scores beginning with the lowest (i.e., highest agreement).

On the whole, most participants rated their SLTs as "effective" in performing all but one of the 22 functions ($M \leq 2.5$; $Mdn \leq 2$; $N = 67$), which are listed below and begin with the highest-rated item:

- discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff

- considering what's best for our school as a whole

- providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs

- disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff

- identifying our school's most pressing issues

- creating a safe and orderly school climate

- sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT

- leading professional development opportunities for our school's staff

- leading change and improvement initiatives

- creating our school's vision

- keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals

- coordinating the work among our school's departments, offices, and/or units

- devising goals and strategies to help realize our school's vision

- ensuring our school's staff engage in continuous professional development

- reviewing and analyzing data

- soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members

- leading instruction within our school

- monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions

- discussing the performance of individual staff members

- promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff

- securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision

For the remaining function, most participants rated their SLTs as "neither effective nor ineffective" (*Mdn* = 3) with holding staff members accountable for their performance.

Among all participants, 6% rated their SLTs as "ineffective" at performing one or more functions, 16% took a neutral stance on their SLTs' effectiveness at performing one or more functions, and 65% rated their SLTs as "effective" at performing one or more functions. Finally, 14% of participants indicated that their SLTs did not perform one or more of the aforementioned functions. See Table 18 for a complete listing of results by item, including the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, and median.

Research Question 3 Findings Summary

Definitions of perceived SLT effectiveness. Phase 1 interviews yielded a variety of criteria that participants used to define "perceived SLT effectiveness." Criteria were grouped into two categories: (a) hard data sources, and (b) soft data sources. Hard data sources, which consisted of numbers, statistics, and rates to define perceived SLT effectiveness, included (a) student performance on school, district, and state assessments, (b) rates and trends of the number of students enrolling in upper-level classes, (c) ratings on school climate surveys, (d) student graduation rates, (e) student enrollment rates, and (f) staff member turnover rates. Soft data sources consisted of SLT members' observations, perceptions, impressions, and informal data gathering to define perceived SLT effectiveness. Phase 1 participants offered the following: (a) the degree to which SLT members communicated information between the SLT and their departments,

Table 18

SLTi *Results – Perceptions of SLT Effectiveness on Performing Functions*

Item	N	M	SD	Median	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not a Function
discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff	67	1.93	0.53	2	11	51	4	1	0	0
considering what's best for our school as a whole	67	2.03	0.70	2	11	47	5	4	0	0
providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs	67	2.06	0.63	2	9	46	9	2	0	1
disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff	67	2.10	0.68	2	7	50	7	2	1	0
identifying our school's most pressing issues	67	2.12	0.84	2	10	44	6	3	2	2
creating a safe and orderly school climate	67	2.15	0.62	2	6	43	11	2	0	5
sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT	67	2.16	0.72	2	6	46	7	3	1	4
leading professional development opportunities for our school's staff	67	2.16	0.59	2	4	34	10	1	0	18
leading change and improvement initiatives	67	2.17	0.76	2	10	39	13	4	0	1
creating our school's vision	67	2.17	0.77	2	7	40	8	3	1	8
keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals	67	2.18	0.73	2	7	44	9	5	0	2
coordinating the work among our school's departments, offices, and/or units	67	2.19	0.50	2	1	37	8	1	0	20
devising goals and strategies to help realize our school's vision	66	2.19	0.67	2	3	44	7	2	1	9

Table 18 (continued)

Item	N	M	SD	Median	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not a Function
ensuring our school's staff engage in continuous professional development	67	2.21	0.71	2	5	31	9	3	0	19
reviewing and analyzing data	67	2.23	0.81	2	8	35	13	3	1	7
soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members	67	2.29	0.82	2	5	45	10	4	2	1
leading instruction within our school	67	2.31	0.58	2	3	31	20	0	0	13
monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions	67	2.42	0.79	2	4	37	19	5	1	1
discussing the performance of individual staff members	67	2.50	0.86	2	1	13	4	4	0	45
promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff	66	2.52	0.81	2	4	32	20	9	0	1
securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision	67	2.54	0.92	2	5	29	18	7	2	6
holding staff members accountable for their performance	67	2.97	0.87	3	0	9	14	4	2	38
				Total	127	827	231	72	14	201
				Total	9%	56%	16%	5%	1%	14%

Note. "Strongly Agree" was scored as a "1" while "Strongly Disagree" was scored as a "5." Lower mean and median scores indicate higher agreement. Items are sorted by mean scores beginning with the lowest (i.e., highest agreement).

offices, programs, or the staff at-large, including the communication's accuracy, tone, and/or level of detail; and (b) perceptions of SLT meetings, such as the quality of data analysis conversations or the types of concerns that SLT members mentioned. Among all Phase 1 high schools, only one principal collected data about his SLT's performance. Another principal expressed a desire to collect SLT effectiveness data, but noted measurement concerns. As a reminder, the *SLTi* did not address definitions of perceived SLT effectiveness.

Evaluations of perceived SLT effectiveness. Phase 1 participants offered a diversity of evaluations of their SLT's perceived effectiveness along a continuum from "very effective" to "not as effective." Twenty percent perceived their SLTs as "very effective," often because of the performance of one or more specific staff members, especially the principal. Thirty-percent perceived their SLT as "effective" with two non-SLT members, in particular, basing their evaluations solely upon the fact that they had not heard rumblings about their SLT being ineffective. Ten percent said their SLTs were "not as effective" for various reasons, such as issues with communication and lower student scores on state standardized tests. Among all 40 Phase 1 participants, only one assistant principal considered her SLT to be "below average" because it still focused on management, not leadership. Several Phase 1 participants noted their SLTs were improving and moving in the right direction. Markers of progress included increasing student enrollment numbers, higher retention rates of young teachers, and greater understanding of instructional frameworks. In a unique case among all Phase 1 high schools, one principal asserted her SLT's improvement depended upon the extent to which her SLT members embraced their role as decision-makers.

While many Phase 2 *SLTi* results aligned with the aforementioned findings, some were skewed in a more positive direction. Regarding their SLT's perceived general effectiveness, a majority of SLT members expressed agreement that their SLT was doing the work they thought it should be doing, the SLT's structure positively influenced their high school's performance, and their SLT colleagues were effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities. Most Phase 2 participants agreed that their SLT's performance, on the whole, could be improved and that they participated in individual professional development to enhance their abilities as an SLT member.

Turning to SLTs' standing within their high schools, a majority of SLT members expressed agreement that their non-SLT colleagues felt their SLT was competent, perceive their SLT to be effective in carrying out its responsibilities, and valued non-SLT members' opinions and feedback. A majority of Phase 2 participants neither agreed nor disagreed on whether they felt that their high school's performance improved specifically because of their SLT's work, that their SLT should revise its structure, that their SLT participated in professional development as a group to enhance its performance, and that principal turnover negatively influenced their SLT's performance. Most Phase 2 participants disagreed with the notion that turnover among SLT members negatively influenced their SLT's performance. Table 17 summarized these results.

Phase 2 *SLTi* results also offered participants' perceptions of SLT effectiveness in performing specific functions. A majority of Phase 2 participants perceived their SLTs to be "highly effective" or "effective" in performing 21 of the 22 functions listed in Table 18. The four functions receiving the highest composite ratings were: (a) discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff; (b) considering what's best for our

school as a whole; (c) providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs; and (d) disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of their school's staff. Most Phase 2 participants neither agreed nor disagreed on whether their SLTs were effective at holding staff members accountable for their performance. Finally, six of the 22 functions had lower frequencies compared to the other 16 functions: (a) discussing the performance of individual staff members; (b) holding staff members accountable for their performance; (c) ensuring their school's staff engage in continuous professional learning; (d) coordinating the work among their school's departments, offices, and/or units; (e) leading professional development opportunities for their school's staff; and (f) leading instruction within their school.

Summary

This chapter reported findings from the Phase 1 interviews ($N = 40$) and results from the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot survey administration ($N = 73$) for each research question. Data were collected from 17 underperforming high schools in 15 districts across 4 U.S. states. Fifteen high schools participated in Phase 1, 12 high schools participated in Phase 2, and 10 high schools participated in both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

The next chapter analyzes and discusses these findings, particularly with respect to the conceptual framework and prior literature. Findings are also used to identify implications for educational leadership practice, preparation, and policy along with recommendations for future research studies that springboard from this study.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of school leadership teams (SLTs) in underperforming high schools in the United States. This chapter analyzes and discusses the findings reported in Chapter 4. It is organized as follows. First, the research questions, research design, and methodology are briefly restated to reorient readers to the present study. The chapter then summarizes areas of convergence and divergence among SLTs followed by discussions about the work of SLTs in underperforming high schools and the influence of principals on SLTs. Next, features of SLTs as enabling structures are described followed by a consideration for coherence building within and among various leadership teams in underperforming high schools. Possible implications of the findings for educational leadership practice, preparation, and policy are then reviewed along with a discussion of the potential value of SLTs in underperforming high schools. The chapter concludes with considerations for administrators, a review of limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Review of the Research Questions, Research Design, and Methodology

This study investigated the following three research questions:

1. What are the composition and structures of SLTs?

   a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLT composition and structures?

2. What are the functions of SLTs, and how do SLTs organize to perform their functions?

a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in SLTs' functions and how SLTs organize to perform their functions?

3. How do staff members define and evaluate the effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

a. To what extent does variation exist among schools in how staff members define and evaluate the effectiveness of the SLT as a whole?

Given the dearth of extant literature on SLTs, particularly in underperforming high schools contending with high-stakes accountability policies, this study employed a two-phase, sequential exploratory mixed methods design to answer the research questions (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). The conceptual framework was developed iteratively based on a review of the literature, including Bolman and Deal's (2003) four perspectives on organizations. Figure 5 offers a visual representation of the conceptual framework, specifically the integration of the four perspectives.

Phase 1 consisted of three major activities: (a) conducting a systematic review of the literature on SLTs (Hallinger, 2013) and coupling the findings with the conceptual framework to create a "working skeleton" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45) of the *School Leadership Team Inventory* (*SLTi*), a survey designed to collect data on the aforementioned research questions; (b) conducting 40 semi-structured interviews with SLT and non-SLT members from 15 underperforming high schools in 13 districts across 3 U.S. states; and (c) coupling the interview findings with the *SLTi* working skeleton to develop the *SLTi* pilot. Phase 2 consisted of administering the *SLTi* pilot to 73 SLT members from 12 underperforming high schools in 12 districts across 3 U.S. states. Findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2 were reported in Chapter 4.

Areas of Convergence and Divergence

Findings from the Phase 1 interviews and the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot survey revealed some commonalities, but they were mostly marked by variation in the composition, structures, functions, organizing features, and perceived effectiveness of SLTs in 17 underperforming high schools. This section describes these areas of convergence and divergence. Subsequent sections address possible reasons why some characteristics were similar while others differed.

Convergence

Findings converged around a set of characteristics and functions that were common to many SLTs in the present study. Membership consisted of a core composition of school-wide administrators (e.g., principal, assistant principal) and department representatives, many of whom also served as department chairs (see Table 9). School-wide administrators were selected at the district level while other SLT members were selected at the school level, often after an interview with the principal (see Table 10). Participants believed their SLTs had clear purposes (see Table 11), and SLTs tended to undertake four functions—serving as a voice of the staff, relaying information among staff members, engaging in specific school improvement efforts, and devising solutions to address issues—and rarely helped hire new staff members or discussed the performance of individual staff members (see Tables 12 and 15 and Appendix G).

All SLTs held formal meetings to perform their functions and used meeting agendas created by the principal, either in whole or in part (see Table 14). Principals also served as facilitators during meetings and were perceived by SLT members to positively influence SLT operations and dynamics (see Table 16). SLTs, on the whole, exhibited

positive team dynamics with members characterizing their SLT colleagues as positive and professional. Participants felt their SLTs engaged in shared decision-making and sought to build consensus around non-binding solutions and recommendations, but ultimately SLT members deferred to their administrators to make final decisions (see Table 16). Administrators, though, offered few examples of times when they made a decision that went against their SLT's solution or recommendation.

Finally, SLT members perceived their SLTs to be quite effective in general and in performing their specific functions (see Tables 17 and 18 and Appendix G). Only one of the 15 Phase 1 high school principals, however, collected data from SLT members about their SLT's performance, and no SLTs collected data from staff members to gauge satisfaction and perceived SLT effectiveness.

Divergence

The SLTs in the 17 underperforming high schools in this study were reported to vary in a number of ways. Beginning with size, several SLTs were small with under 10 members while others involved double that number. Some SLTs included staff members like the school improvement coordinator, student activities director, or head custodian while others were limited to a group of teachers and an instructional coach (see Table 9). Turning to SLT member selection, findings indicated a range of processes and criteria were used to determine who joined the SLT. Several high schools required interested staff members to complete a formal application while other high schools did not ask for any type of application (see Table 10). Those selecting SLT members utilized different criteria to identify and rank candidates. In some cases, it was level of experience or professional competency. In other cases, it was a combination of criteria, such as personal

qualities, willingness to serve, and standing among colleagues (see Appendix G). Despite these criteria, 10% of Phase 1 participants—both SLT and non-SLT members alike—said they did not know how and why their SLT members were selected.

SLTs also differed in their functions (see Tables 12 and 15 and Appendix G). Many participants noted their SLTs performed a range of functions—up to 20 in some cases based on Phase 2 *SLTi* results—while other SLTs were seen to perform a smaller number of functions, only serving as a sounding board for administrators and relaying information among staff members. In addition, while nearly all SLTs were involved in specific school improvement efforts, the extent of their involvement varied. Several SLTs engaged in a number of school improvement activities, such as drafting the school improvement plan (SIP), while other SLTs only worked on small-scale implementation efforts to address a district mandate. Two other SLTs had nothing to do with improvement efforts despite the fact that all high schools in the present study were designated as underperforming during at least one of the last three school years.

SLT formal meeting characteristics also varied considerably (see Tables 13, 14, and 16). While two SLTs met on an "as needed" basis, several other SLTs met monthly and hosted short "weekly stand-up" meetings. Almost one-third of the 17 SLTs did not record minutes of their meetings, and some participants voiced concerns about the lack of a central record, especially when SLT members were charged with taking their own notes and then expected to relay those notes to their non-SLT colleagues. To streamline organization and communication efforts, eight SLTs in Phase 1 high schools used an array of online collaborative tools and folders (e.g., Google Docs, Schoology) while the remaining seven high schools did not take their SLTs online.

A final area of divergence concerned the criteria that SLT and non-SLT members employed to evaluate perceived SLT effectiveness (see Appendix G). Findings showed most participants used soft data sources (e.g., observations of SLT meetings) to evaluate their SLT's effectiveness. Only a handful of participants, mainly administrators, used hard data sources (e.g., student graduation rates). Moreover, few staff members within the same high schools reported employing similar criteria to evaluate their SLTs. In some instances, SLT effectiveness was determined solely by the extent to which SLT members felt they communicated SLT discussions and decisions to non-SLT members. In other instances, SLT members evaluated their SLTs using a combination of hard and soft data sources, including student standardized test scores and school climate survey results.

The Work of SLTs in Underperforming High Schools

In all 17 underperforming high schools, findings suggested that SLTs adhered to Locke and colleagues' (2001) recommendation that collaborative leadership structures, such as SLTs, supplement existing hierarchical leadership structures. Scores of participants in the present study reported that the job of educational leader was not being done solely by the principal in their high schools. This finding aligns with a number of prior studies of SLTs, such as those from Chrispeels and colleagues (2000, 2002, 2008) and Bush and colleagues (2012, 2014, 2016), which also found evidence of an array of staff members working alongside administrators to lead and manage schools. SLTs in this study represented one type of organizational structure that underperforming high schools used to help "[divide their] labor into distinct tasks and then [achieve] coordination among them" (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 2). A number of factors, however, influenced the

labor of SLTs, such as the external environment, the types of tasks they completed, and the functions they performed.

As the conceptual framework noted and literature review suggested, underperforming high schools can be viewed as open systems influenced by their external environment. Findings indicated that federal, state, and/or local accountability policies appeared to create the conditions in which many SLTs operated, but Phase 1 data and Phase 2 data differed on the extent to which accountability policies drove SLTs' work. Among Phase 1 high schools, for example, 12 of 15 SLTs reported engaging in specific school improvement efforts with three SLTs taking full responsibility for creating and implementing SIPs. In fact, those three SLTs, despite differing in size, reported performing a larger number of functions in general compared to SLTs that were not charged with creating and implementing SIPs (see Appendix G). This finding raises a question about whether leading the school improvement planning process perhaps necessitates or incentivizes SLTs to perform other functions during the school year, such as analyzing data, keeping a "pulse" of the building, and motivating staff members.

While many Phase 1 participants noted the sizable impact of external pressures, Phase 2 *SLTi* results offered a more tempered perspective. A majority of Phase 2 participants reported their SLT's work being driven less by reacting to external pressures and more by proactively addressing internal issues (see Table 11). This finding sparked surprise, especially given the number of SLTs in Phase 1 high schools that engaged in specific school improvement efforts. A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that SLT members in Phase 2 high schools considered their primary purpose to be identifying and solving internal issues, while responding to external pressures, such as

district mandates, remained a secondary purpose—or the principal's responsibility. Other

Phase 2 *SLTi* results lent support to this explanation, particularly the high prevalence

rates of certain SLT functions that seemed to be more internal in nature: considering what

was best for the school as a whole, soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT

members, and monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies (see Table 15).

Despite its varied influence, the high-stakes accountability context did seem to

force many SLTs to address the issue of internal integration (Schein, 2004). Many SLTs

appeared to have defined "boundaries" around what they did and did not do, which

Schein suggests helps groups within the same organization align and integrate their work

in order to adapt to and survive within the external environment. In many cases, and as a

later section details, principals often set SLTs' boundaries. Findings demonstrated that

SLTs helped relieve principals from a range of responsibilities, such as collecting

assessment data, developing testing schedules, and devising student intervention plans.

These responsibilities represent areas where principals of underperforming high schools

could benefit from other staff members' assistance.

The tasks related to those responsibilities that SLTs completed, however, varied

by high school. In his study of six U.K. SLTs, Thomas (2009) grouped tasks into two

types: (a) strategic, which focused on schools' long-term direction, and (b) operational,

which focused on the day-to-day management of schools. While some SLTs in the

present study worked on more strategic tasks, the overwhelming bulk of tasks appeared to

be operational in nature. This finding is unsurprising given that many SLTs' predominant

function was relaying information between the administrators, SLT, and staff at-large

(see Tables 12 and 15). Findings offered considerable evidence of the sheer number and

diversity of concerns, issues, and problems that SLT members derived from both themselves and their non-SLT colleagues. In some cases, what SLTs chose to do with the information that their members relayed created opportunities to complete more strategic tasks (e.g., design and pilot a new lesson plan template). In other cases, SLT members simply shared information related to what Grubb and Flessa (2006) referred to as the "stuff that walks in the door" (p. 534), such as student disciplinary concerns and issues with teachers.

An important question arises, though, based on the functions and tasks that SLTs performed and completed: Are SLTs doing what they could (and should) be doing to help underperforming high schools improve? Chapter 2 noted two common "leadership deficits" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012, p. 6) present in underperforming high schools: (a) instructional leadership, and (b) developing staff member capacity. Because of the size and academic diversity of their staffs, Louis and colleagues (2010) argue that high school principals rarely have the abilities and the time to lead instruction in each subject area along with crafting professional development initiatives for each staff member. Chapter 2 also listed "developing" staff members as an essential function of SLTs. With an average of 13 members and a core composition that included department representatives (see Table 9), the typical SLT in the present study offered principals an opportunity to bolster much needed and high-leverage instructional leadership and professional development efforts.

Findings offered limited evidence that SLTs engaged in leading instruction or creating and leading professional development initiatives (see Appendix G). These two functions were among the least prevalent within Phase 1 interview and Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot

data. This finding suggests that many SLTs served more operational and less strategic

purposes, such as relieving principals of operational responsibilities, relaying

information, and devising solutions to more immediate concerns, issues, or problems. On

one hand, this arrangement could be just what principals needed, as Chapman and

colleagues (2008) and Olsen and Chrispeels (2009) found in their studies of SLTs in non-

underperforming schools. In those studies, when SLTs completed operational tasks for

principals, principals had more time to engage in other, more high-leverage work, such as

instructional leadership. The present study's findings, however, provide weak support for

this assertion since only a handful of participants in Phase 1 high schools mentioned

anything about SLT efforts freeing up principals' time in general, much less time for

instructional leadership and professional development.

While findings suggested a general absence of instructional leadership and

professional development functions among SLTs, three Phase 1 high schools reported

engaging in efforts to shift their SLT's purposes from operational to strategic.

Participants in these high schools referred to operational tasks as "management" and

strategic tasks as "leadership." The latter term—leadership—was often equated with

instructional leadership, meaning that SLT members provided support to their colleagues

by observing teachers and helping enhance curriculum.

In a representative example of these three high schools' efforts, one

administrative team (AT) altered the department chair's emphasis from management

(e.g., setting a budget) to instructional leadership. They charged department chairs with

running "model classrooms" that their colleagues could observe and critique. The end

goal called for department chairs to be more actively involved in improving their

colleagues' practice. Since these three SLTs were composed mostly of department chairs, this shift in the department chair's purpose also started shifting the SLT's purpose from management to instructional leadership. While several administrators noted that progress was taking time (e.g., 40), their efforts nevertheless offer insight into how the work of some SLTs in underperforming high schools was changing from operational to strategic.

Despite some SLTs being works-in-progress and the general variance in SLTs' functions and tasks, a large majority of Phase 1 and Phase 2 participants perceived their SLTs to be effective in carrying out their work (see Tables 17 and 18). This overall positivity could be interpreted in different ways. From one perspective, perhaps participants' reports were accurate, and many of the SLTs in the present study were, in fact, effective. But even if they were *perceived* to be effective, those same SLTs might not be effective in actually improving school performance. Curiously, a plurality of Phase 2 participants expressed indifference about whether their school's performance had improved specifically because of their SLT's work (see Table 17). This finding suggests that while SLT members in Phase 2 high schools perceived their SLTs to be effective, the connection between the SLT's work and improved school performance was less concrete. Methodological limitations of this study, however, prevent making any informed assumptions about this assertion. As Chapter 1 noted, SLTs were not observed directly nor were school-level data (e.g., student scores on standardized tests) examined and compared to SLT characteristics. A later section, though, considers this limitation as an opportunity for future research.

From another perspective, perhaps the positive evaluations are a symptom of groupthink, which Janis (1972) defines as a push for consensus that suppresses both the

voicing of dissent and the consideration of alterative perspectives. Findings indicated that members from smaller SLTs in Phase 1 high schools appeared more likely to perceive their SLTs as "very effective" compared to members of larger SLTs who rated their SLTs as "effective" or "not as effective" (see Appendix G). With fewer people around the same table, fewer competing views might have been expressed during meetings of smaller SLTs, which potentially increased the likelihood of groupthink compared to larger SLTs that might have had more diverse voices contributing to SLT discussions.

Higher effectiveness evaluations existed despite many SLT and non-SLT members, from Phase 1 high schools in particular, employing differing criteria to evaluate their SLT's effectiveness (see Appendix G). These findings suggest that, overall, most SLTs lacked consensus on the criteria used to evaluate their SLT's effectiveness, which runs counter to Schein's (2010) assertion that teams need to agree on how they assess themselves in order to integrate internally. Few of the 40 participants from Phase 1 high schools used hard data sources, such as student standardized test scores, to evaluate their SLT's effectiveness. Most relied on soft data sources, such as their perceptions of SLT members' communications to non-SLT members. In fact, findings demonstrated that participants using soft data sources rated their SLTs as being more effective compared to participants using hard data sources or a combination of hard and soft data sources. It is surprising that so few participants considered hard data sources despite working in high schools that were designated as underperforming during at least one of the last three school years. This finding deserves further study, and a later section elaborates upon a recommendation for future research.

A small number of Phase 1 participants and a majority of Phase 2 participants did feel that their SLT's performance could be improved (see Table 17 and Appendix G). For SLT members from Phase 2 high schools, in particular, the median response to this specific *SLTi* item was neutral. This indifference could be for several reasons. On one hand, and given that most Phase 2 participants had five or fewer years of experience on their SLTs, perhaps it signals participants' lack of knowledge about what needed to be done to improve their SLTs. On the other hand, perhaps SLT members had enough experience and identified both positives and negatives about their SLT's performance. Thus, an indifferent response might have signaled a consideration of both sides of the equation. One positive factor that many Phase 1 and Phase 2 participants reported, though, was their current principal. While the SLTs in the present study had their similarities and differences, for many the principal remained at the center of influence.

The Influence of Principals on SLTs in Underperforming High Schools

The findings emphasized principals' significant influence on their SLTs, from determining composition and size to defining functions and responsibilities. In Kowal and Hassel's (2005) words, principals were "critical lynchpin[s]" (p. 17) with respect to their SLTs.

As prior studies found (e.g., Ehrich & Cranston, 2004; Kensler et al., 2012), the onus for determining SLTs' membership, purpose, and scope of work often rested with the principal. Unlike some of the U.K. studies on SLTs (e.g., Hall & Wallace, 1996; Thomas, 2009), many principals in this study reported having the sole authority to determine the composition and purposes of their SLTs. While most inherited their SLTs, several principals required all their SLT members to reapply for membership. Upon being

hired, other principals started to repurpose their SLTs. As a prior example noted, one principal wanted his SLT to focus more on instructional leadership and less on management in order to better fit the high school's current needs. Another principal in a different high school reduced the size of her SLT as part of a larger functional shift away from relaying information and toward instructional leadership. These actions align with Meyers and Hitt's (2017) finding that principals in underperforming high schools, upon taking their positions, revise "unfit organizational structures" (p. 54) in an attempt to cultivate leadership in staff members, hopefully, to build staff member capacity.

Principals in all but one Phase 1 high school retained sole control over SLT membership. As the conceptual framework suggested, an SLT can be considered to constitute a coalition of staff members (March, 1962) who are members of other coalitions within the same high school (e.g., departments, offices, programs). Findings suggested that several principals' decisions on whom to appoint did get political, often to "balance" their SLTs by ensuring different coalitions were represented. This practice appeared to occur more often in Phase 1 high schools that had "at-large" spots on their SLTs and/or did not automatically appoint department chairs to their SLTs. A handful of participants from these high schools discussed the possibility of certain coalitions being overrepresented and underrepresented on their SLTs, such as too many English/language arts teachers and too few non-certified staff members. To address this issue of balance, some principals deliberately appointed staff members from a variety of coalitions even if only one staff member from a particular coalition applied for consideration. These findings align with prior studies of SLTs, especially those by Wallace and Hall (1994)

who also found that U.K. secondary school heads engaged in political decision-making when selecting SLT members in order to achieve a "balanced team" (p. 47).

Rather than select SLT members to seek balance among various coalitions, one Phase 1 high school principal selected SLT members who shared his vision for the school. This action ran counter to other principals that emphasized the intentional selection of a diverse set of voices for SLTs—and to prior studies of SLTs, such as Thomas (2009), that asserted the importance of having multiple and differing perspectives around the same table. This choice can create a fine line for principals to walk. On one hand, underperforming schools need a critical mass of staff members to help jumpstart improvement efforts. In studying Australian SLTs, Ehrich and Cranston (2004) found it essential that SLT members subscribed to the same vision before commencing improvement efforts. On the other hand, SLT members with opposing views might provide principals with a more comprehensive understanding of staff members' opinions. If principals want to have a range of ideas expressed, a larger SLT can increase the likelihood of obtaining that range, but could make it less feasible to reach consensus. A smaller SLT, on the other hand, may increase the likelihood of agreement among members, which, to Janis (1972), may also increase the chance of groupthink.

In addition to SLT composition and size, principals in the present study exercised wide latitude in determining SLTs' work. Nearly all principals set the "boundaries" for what their SLTs did and did not do (e.g., functions, responsibilities, tasks). Phase 2 *SLTi* results indicated that a majority of SLT members perceived their SLTs were doing the work that needed doing, which provided evidence that principals set boundaries that

aligned with SLT members' expectations. To Pfeffer (1981), this finding suggests that alignment existed between principals' goals and SLT members' goals, which likely increased consensus and decreased conflict. Phase 2 *SLTi* results offer support that many SLTs were consensus-driven with 77% of participants reporting their SLTs made recommendations or decisions based on consensus. Bolman and Deal (2003) assert that more consensus and less conflict among teams reduces members' needs to exercise power. While few participants from Phase 1 high schools mentioned power in general and power relations among SLT members, this finding merits further study since SLTs in the present study were not observed directly (e.g., SLT meetings).

After determining their SLTs' scope of work, principals also influenced the degree to which SLTs were involved in school decision-making. While findings showed that some principals retained decision-making authority over select issues (e.g., teacher evaluation), many SLTs engaged in discussions about numerous concerns, issues, and problems in order to reach consensus on a recommendation for their principals to consider. Several principals mentioned that they could not recall making a decision that went against their SLT's recommendation. In rare cases when they did, those same principals made a point of explaining their decision-making rationales to SLT members.

These findings suggested that a majority of principals appeared to employ Lawler's (1986) "participative management approach," defined as leaders sharing organizational decision-making with other staff members, especially those not in formal power positions (i.e., staff members without positional authority). Many principals of Phase 1 high schools believed this kind of approach improved the quality of school decision-making, particularly since administrators had little time to walk the halls and

take a "pulse" of their schools. They also felt sharing decision-making with SLTs helped

reduce status differences between administrators and other staff members, which Pfeffer

(1994) suggested can have a positive influence on staff member engagement and

performance. SLT members corroborated principals' perspectives, specifically the

benefits that administrators—and the school—derived from hearing non-administrator

perspectives on concerns, issues, or problems. This finding aligns with Brown and

colleagues' (1999) prior study, which found similar benefits of shared decision-making

among SLTs in select U.K. secondary schools.

Despite intentions to share decision-making, several Phase 1 administrators noted

difficulties in their attempts to get SLT members to view themselves as decision-makers.

They and other Phase 1 participants cited examples of SLT members' deference to

administrators during SLT meetings. These behaviors, to Meyers and Hitt (2017),

complicated principals' efforts to "cultivate leadership" (p. 47) in staff members,

especially non-administrators. In a representative example described in Chapter 4, one

principal charged SLT members to respectfully "push the envelope" during SLT

meetings, but described progress as slow. Teachers, she continued, are "good at

compliance . . . [and if] their job is [now] to question . . . that's not a comfortable place

for a lot of people who are trained to be really good at compliance." She finished by

saying, "It takes a lot to convince people that their voice matters" (34).

A study by Duke and colleagues (1980) offered a possible explanation why SLT

members had difficulty adapting to new expectations as decision-makers. The researchers

examined the extent to which California teachers were involved in and had influence over

decision-making in their schools. Involvement consisted of teachers having seats at the

table and providing input on decisions while influence was the extent to which teacher

input actually affected school decision-making. Duke and colleagues found that some

teachers preferred not to participate in shared decision-making for a few reasons. Some

felt like they were involved in, but had little influence over, school decision-making,

which discouraged them from maintaining active participation. Others did not seek

involvement or influence in order to avoid threats to their career advancement. Taking

these insights into consideration, two questions arise with respect to the present study:

What incentives do SLT members have to "push the envelope" within their schools,

particularly if they are relegated to the role of advisor instead of decision-maker? Is it

prudent to behave more conservatively during SLT meetings in order to preserve career

advancement opportunities?

In addition to composition, functions, and school decision-making, findings

suggested that principals influenced SLT meetings and dynamics. Data from both Phase 1

and Phase 2 indicated that many principals retained control over agenda creation and

dissemination. In some cases, Phase 2 *SLTi* participants noted their principals either used

a verbal agenda or had no formal agenda for SLT meetings—and that no minutes were

taken during SLT meetings. In other cases, principals chose to collectively organize

meeting agendas with other SLT members, use online collaborative tools during and after

SLT meetings, and disseminate summaries of SLT meetings to the staff at-large. Several

participants reported these efforts to record and share information were intentional in

order to enhance communication (e.g., 33) and increase transparency (e.g., 17).

The practical and symbolic consequences of these findings related to SLT

meetings raise several questions. First, how serious do SLT members take their meetings

if principals use a verbal agenda that members only learn about upon arrival? What signal do principals send to SLT members if no agenda is used during meetings? On a more practical level, how are SLTs' discussions, decisions, and actions recorded without agendas and minutes? Do discussions about school decision-making really matter if they are not recorded in some way? Bolman and Deal (2003) along with McComas and colleagues (2010) argue that meeting characteristics can influence people's perceptions of organizational performance. The more structured and formal the meetings, the more likely people are to perceive their organizations as well-functioning. Principals' choices to use agendas, record minutes, and disseminate information have the potential to promote SLTs' legitimacy and purpose along with signaling to non-SLT members that their SLTs were engaged in *some* kind of work to improve school performance.

SLTs as Enabling Structures in Underperforming High Schools

The conceptual framework suggested that SLTs could be either enabling structures or hindering structures in underperforming high schools. With the former, SLTs were presumed to help staff members do their jobs to improve school performance. With the latter, SLTs were presumed to hamper staff members' efforts to improve school performance. On the whole, findings suggested that the SLTs in the present study were enabling structures that helped, not hindered, staff members. Certain features of SLTs, however, raise questions about the extent to which SLTs were positioned to actually improve school performance.

The Very Existence of SLTs

A first feature of SLTs stemmed from their very existence and composition. As the next sections describe, SLTs were one way to contend with two of Duke and

Jacobson's (2011) challenges for improving underperforming high schools: (a) size, and (b) fragmentation. For some Phase 1 participants, the simple fact that their high schools even had an organizational structure like an SLT was something positive, even in spite of its shortcomings. To them, SLTs symbolized an access point to school decision-making, regardless of their composition, functioning, or influence on school performance. Using Duke and colleagues' (1980) terms of involvement and influence, this finding suggests that perhaps some staff members in Phase 1 high schools appreciated being involved in school decision-making, even if they held little to no influence over those decisions.

With respect to composition, all SLTs in this study included staff members from a variety of units in underperforming high schools. This diversity of membership positioned SLTs to link those units, and it also helped promote more horizontal communication across units (e.g., department to department) and vertical communication between units (e.g., department to administrators). These linking and communication functions were of particular importance in larger high schools where whole departments, because of their physical location, rarely interacted (e.g., 05). Outside of whole-school staff meetings, participants in the present study mentioned that SLT meetings represented one of the few occasions when staff members across departments, offices, and programs gathered around the same table.

SLT members often performed these linking and communication functions by relaying information along three streams: (a) principal/AT to non-SLT members via SLT members; (b) SLT members to non-SLT members; and (c) non-SLT members to SLT members and/or principal/AT. To many Phase 1 participants, relaying was one of the most important SLT functions because it was an avenue to voice concerns to and feel

heard by administrators. They also reported that being in the same room with staff members from other units created opportunities to gain a broader perspective of their high schools. As Ehrich and Cranston (2004) found in their study of Australian SLTs, a wider understanding of their schools had the potential to increase the quality of information relayed to non-SLT members since SLT members could describe more of the "whole." These findings also align with Brown and colleagues' (1999) examination of U.K. SLTs, which also identified the practical and symbolic importance of relaying information within secondary schools.

Building on a prior section, a key question resurfaces: To what extent is relaying information "management," "leadership," or something else altogether? To one Phase 1 assistant principal, relaying information was considered a managerial task. To several other Phase 1 participants, it was what SLT members *did* with the information they relayed that presented opportunities to complete more strategic tasks (e.g., collaboratively develop plans of action in response to problems). Recalling again Duke and colleagues' (1980) notion of involvement versus influence, perhaps information relaying during SLT meetings aligns more with involvement while participating in school decision-making as a result of the relayed information aligns more with influence. Still a third perspective could be that relaying is neither management nor leadership, but something more symbolic in nature. Perhaps some SLT members shared information to feel like they were improving school performance when, in reality, those they shared information with (e.g., administrators) might do little to nothing with that information.

SLT Roles

A second feature of SLTs pertained to composition and SLT roles. Phase 2 *SLTi* results indicated that a majority of SLT members felt staff members in their high schools were willing, but not eager, to serve on their SLTs (see Table 11), and some Phase 1 high schools noted difficulty staffing their SLTs. These findings raise a question about why staff members applied for SLT membership. As Phase 2 *SLTi* results demonstrated, some high schools paid SLT members a stipend because SLT meetings occurred before school, outside teachers' contract time. Other high schools awarded SLT members an extra planning period. These cases were few, and the majority of SLT members received no remuneration in exchange for their SLT service; instead, most Phase 2 participants considered time on their SLTs to be a personal leadership development opportunity.

Given the low prevalence of remuneration, most SLTs appeared to be staffed because of their members' desires for personal and/or professional growth. This situation presented challenges to SLT members, especially teachers. Staff members who joined SLTs received a set of responsibilities that were layered on top of their existing responsibilities. Sizer (2004) would likely argue that any additional responsibilities given to instructional staff exacerbate concerns about high teacher load in high schools. Moreover, some Phase 1 participants, particularly those in rural areas, reported wearing "multiple hats" (07) in their high schools and had additional extracurricular and/or athletic responsibilities. Still another fact was that many SLT members who were teachers also served as department chairs, which added another set of responsibilities.

These findings introduce questions for those selecting SLT members: What should be privileged during the selection process? A staff member being a department

chair? An SLT member? Both a department chair and an SLT member? All SLT members in the present study held multiple roles (e.g., administrator and SLT member; instructional coach and SLT member; teacher, SLT member, and department chair), and each role came with a set of expectations. Principals, for example, had expectations of SLT members and of department chairs. Non-SLT members had expectations of SLT members and of principals. SLT members had their own expectations as well. These multiple and likely varying sets of expectations can introduce additional complexity into high schools if staff members hold different expectations for the same role. A prior section, for instance, reported one principal having one set of expectations for SLT members (e.g., "push the envelope"), but SLT members appeared to hold a different set of expectations (e.g., "Can I and should I push the envelope?"). As a result, the principal had to contend with socializing SLT members into their roles as decision-makers while actually carrying out the SLT's work.

Phase 1 findings described several other SLT repurposing efforts aimed to alter the role of department chair from manager to instructional leader, which was defined as department chairs opening up their classrooms, offering formative feedback to colleagues, and refocusing department meetings toward instruction (e.g., 40). Several principals discussed their desire to increase the overlap between department chair responsibilities and SLT member responsibilities. These changes, however, caused at least 11 department chairs in three Phase 1 high schools to step down from their positions. A curious question arises from this finding: By shifting their SLT's purpose from management to instructional leadership *and* by continuing to couple the department chair role and the SLT member role, were principals limiting the pool from which to

draw future SLT members? While principals' efforts to better align the department chair and SLT member roles were admirable, should the two roles, in fact, be different with one targeting instructional leadership and the other targeting routine administration?

Decoupling the department chair and SLT member roles may present additional leadership and management opportunities for staff members, and, to borrow from Copland's (2001) work, decoupling might reduce the need for "superteachers." Department chairs, for example, might focus more on management responsibilities while SLT members might focus more on leadership responsibilities—or vice versa. Such a practice could start to build a stronger leadership pipeline in underperforming high schools, something that Meyers and Hitt (2017) argue is essential for sustaining improvement efforts. A decoupling arrangement, however, may increase the complexity already present in high schools by creating two roles with different sets of expectations. Administrators, as was the case in some Phase 1 high schools, would need to be intentional in defining the boundaries of both roles to ensure efforts build on, not duplicate or conflict with, one another.

In addition to role redefinition efforts, findings indicated that SLT members were not typical staff members in their high schools. As several Phase 1 participants mentioned, SLT members were the "rock stars" (31), the "good teachers" (33), and those "higher performing [who] . . . represent the best" (20) of their departments, offices, or programs. As Chapter 2 noted, though, underperforming high schools—on average—tend to employ staff members who are less experienced, less prepared, less likely to stay, and of lower quality compared to their colleagues in higher-performing high schools. Given this possible composition of staffs in underperforming high schools, findings from the

present study raise concerns about how in touch many SLT members were about the

challenges facing "average" or "below average" staff members.

Four *SLTi* items asked SLT members to rate their non-SLT colleagues'

perceptions about whether their SLT (a) valued non-SLT members' opinions and

feedback, (b) was competent, (c) was effective in carrying out its responsibilities, and (d)

was a representative voice of the staff at-large. The median response for all four items

was positive, suggesting that SLT members in Phase 2 high schools felt their non-SLT

members, on the whole, held positive opinions of SLTs. The results for the fourth item,

however, suggest a possible contradiction. To what extent can a group of "rock stars" be

a representative voice of the staff at-large in an underperforming high school? If an

SLT's purpose is related to instructional leadership, for example, perhaps it is important

to have both "rock star" and "average" teachers on the SLT in order to gain a more

inclusive understanding about where improvement efforts are succeeding and where

greater focus needs to be given.

SLT Structures and Meeting Characteristics

A third feature of SLTs centered on their structures and meeting characteristics.

Findings indicated that the typical SLT met every month for around 60 minutes—thus,

over a typical school year from August to May, SLTs ended up meeting 10 times for a

total of around 10 contact hours. The master schedule in many high schools often dictated

when and for how long SLTs met along with what time SLT meetings ended. Those

SLTs that met before school, for instance, could only meet until the start of first period

since some SLT members taught first period. Taking into account these structural and

meeting characteristics, is it reasonable to expect SLTs to have that much of an influence on school performance?

Kowal and Hassel (2005) suggest that underperforming schools, just like start-up companies, "thrive on immediate results" (p. 26). A traditional approach to improvement efforts in underperforming schools, however, finds principals drafting a SIP before the school year starts and rarely reviewing that SIP until after the school year ends. A different approach recommended by Duke and colleagues (2013) calls for underperforming schools to monitor improvement efforts throughout the school year in order to make adjustments to better position themselves for success at the end of the school year (see also VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017). The typical meeting frequency and number of contact hours of the SLTs in the present study, though, raise a question about how soon SLTs might be able to respond to concerns, issues, or problems. Delays in responding to pressing concerns, for instance, could render SLTs less effective if staff members end up bypassing SLT members and take their issues straight to administrators.

Several participants admitted that any schedule of meetings was better than SLTs not meeting at all. Some SLTs responded to the powerful influence of master schedules by using online collaborative tools like Google Drive, Google Docs, or Schoology to accelerate responsiveness during and between SLT meetings. Three SLTs started holding 10-minute "weekly stand-up" meetings in addition to their bi-weekly or monthly meetings. These meetings, which the manufacturing literature commonly refers to as "huddle meetings" (Salem, Solomon, Genaidy, & Minkarah, 2006, p. 172), permitted SLTs in the present study to consider two time horizons simultaneously: (a) the short-term, which consisted of discussing issues raised during a given week; and (b) the long-

term, which consisted of identifying issues raised during a given week that needed to be

discussed further during the next bi-weekly or monthly meeting. Participants in three

Phase 1 high schools specifically mentioned that these weekly meetings occurred in the

hallway with SLT members standing in circle, which symbolized the meeting's "check-

in" nature. As these examples illustrate, SLTs can work around master schedules in order

to better organize their work and increase responsiveness to staff member concerns,

issues, or problems.

SLT Member Professional Development

A fourth feature concerned the professional development of SLTs as a whole and

SLT members as individuals. Chapter 2 described the importance of SLT members

developing the capacity of both non-SLT members *and* themselves (e.g., Cranston &

Ehrich, 2005; Olsen & Chrispeels, 2009), but a prior section already discussed many

SLTs' lack of involvement in creating and leading professional development initiatives.

Findings offered scant evidence that SLT members engaged in professional development

experiences to improve their performance as individuals and the performance of their

SLTs as a whole. Phase 2 *SLTi* results suggest that perhaps SLT members felt little need

to engage in whole-group professional development. Based on these somewhat

conflicting findings, a key concern is the extent to which SLT members and SLTs

actually need to participate in individual and/or whole-group professional development.

On one hand, Brown and colleagues (1999) assert that group professional

development experiences can enhance SLTs' functioning as teams—and principals are

often the initiators of such efforts. Through various exercises, SLT members get to know

one another, discuss mindsets and assumptions, and agree on a set of norms for

structuring their work (e.g., Dering et al., 2006; Thomas, 2009). These efforts can strengthen SLT members' self-efficacy, which Chapter 2 noted is something much needed in underperforming schools. Across all Phase 1 participants, though, none mentioned specific principal-initiated efforts to develop SLT members as individuals. To Meyers and Hitt (2017), this finding would be alarming since they argue that a critical responsibility of principals in underperforming high schools is cultivating leadership capacity in staff members. Turning to whole-group professional development, only two Phase 1 participants noted any such type of experience—and both were administrators from the same high school. Since their interviews took place before the school year started, they described their SLT's recent "leadership retreat," which occurred over two days at an off-campus location. SLT members participated in a number of the aforementioned activities (e.g., icebreakers) during the retreat, but administrators said the most important outcome centered on SLT members starting to socialize into their decision-making roles and internalize their SLT-related responsibilities.

Despite these two instances among Phase 1 participants, Phase 2 *SLTi* results suggested that SLT members did not see a need to participate in whole-group professional development. In fact, a majority of Phase 2 participants had high praise for their SLT's team dynamics. On one hand, this finding could mean that SLTs in Phase 2 high schools experienced few "people" issues, but the *SLTi* did not inquire specifically about dysfunctional team behaviors like infighting. On the other hand, perhaps these high opinions stemmed from SLT members not identifying as decision-makers in their high schools. If SLT members believed their primary purpose was to relay information during

SLT meetings, for instance, then they might have perceived little need to improve their abilities to meet with others since their main charge was to share issues.

Still a third reason might have been that individual professional development reduced the need for whole-group professional development. A majority of Phase 2 participants reported engaging in *individual* professional development to enhance their abilities as SLT members, but the *SLTi* did not include an option to offer examples. Speculating on this result, perhaps SLT members' individual professional development experiences enhanced their abilities as an SLT member. If members enhanced their own abilities, then those individual enhancements could compound to enhance collectively their SLT's capacity and negate the need for whole-group professional development.

A Concern for Building Coherence

An essential role of principals of underperforming high schools is to "pull apart the strands of demoralization, low expectations, poor teaching and unengaged students and rebuild a coherent, learning-centered school" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2012, p. 1). Given all the demands facing administrators, teachers, and students in these kinds of schools, creating internal coherence is a necessity. Forman and colleagues (2017) define the term internal coherence as "the collective capability of the adults in a school building or an educational system to connect and align resources to carry out an improvement strategy" (pp. 2-3). The more internal coherence that schools can build, they argue, the more likely it is that schools best utilize their staff members' abilities to implement meaningful improvement efforts.

In all but two of the present study's 17 underperforming high schools, SLTs existed alongside a number of other leadership teams. Findings indicated that six high

schools had two leadership teams, three high schools had three leadership teams, five

high schools had four leadership teams, and one high school had five leadership teams.

As Siskin (1997) and others (e.g., Grubb, 2015) argue, high schools are complex

organizations, and the presence of numerous leadership teams in many of this study's

high schools raises a concern for building coherence. A critical situation for principals to

avoid, for example, was having the scope of work and actions of an SLT mirror the scope

of work and actions of another leadership team (e.g., school improvement team). In this

case, the two leadership teams would engage in parallel, but non-intersecting work. This

arrangement also could create competition among the two leadership teams, which the

conceptual framework suggested can increase the likelihood of misaligning and

misdirecting precious staff member energies and organizational resources.

Only two administrators from one Phase 1 high school specifically discussed

building coherence within and among their four leadership teams. The principal and AT

sat down over the summer to inventory all the functions and responsibilities that needed

attending, and then, as a group, divided them up among the AT, SLT, Behavioral

Intervention Team, and Staff Council[4]. The principal and AT drafted a set of documents

that listed each leadership team's composition, purpose, functions, and responsibilities.

Finally, they distributed those documents to each leadership team member, inserted

summaries into the staff handbook, *and* used them to structure and organize each

leadership team's work throughout the school year. The fact that participants in only one

Phase 1 high school mentioned coherence presents a ripe opportunity for future research

---

[4] The names of the latter two teams have been generalized to keep the school's identity confidential.

to explore the extent to which principals of other underperforming schools consider and address issues of coherence, especially with respect to the use of teams.

<div align="center">

Implications

</div>

Implications for Practice

This study's findings suggest six possible implications for the practice of educational leadership, especially in underperforming high schools. The first implication concerns building coherence in complex organizations like high schools. As the last section noted, nearly every high school in this study had two or more leadership teams, each with its own composition, structures, and functions. Only a few participants discussed how they built coherence among the various leadership teams. Those who did described the need to map existing and desired functions and responsibilities to (a) involve a variety of staff members in realizing improvement efforts, (b) reduce or eliminate duplicative efforts, and (c) prevent conflict between leadership teams. These efforts should be common in more schools, particularly underperforming high schools.

SLTs can help principals cultivate leadership in more staff members, which is a second implication for practice. This study's findings suggested that SLTs involved a number of staff members in leading and managing their schools, thereby helping to build capacity for leadership. Forman and colleagues (2017) assert that capacity for leadership is an essential ingredient in building schools' capacity for continuous improvement, something that Duke (2015) argues is needed in underperforming high schools.

Participants also described SLTs as an organizational structure that continued to exist despite high rates of principal turnover in many of this study's high schools. While SLTs' functions and operations are certainly important and influential, the very existence

of SLTs can be a source of continuity in the frequently turbulent environments that are underperforming high schools. When SLTs are staffed appropriately, clearly purposed, and perform functions that help improve their schools, this continuity presents an opportunity for SLTs to help build organizational resilience, defined as "the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful" (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 3418). Taking into account the findings of prior studies of underperforming schools, organizational resilience can be another critical factor to jumpstart and sustain improvement efforts.

A third implication for practice is that SLTs can help contend with size and fragmentation issues present in many high schools. Based on federal education data, the average U.S. high school employs 75 staff members, which is a sizeable number of people to potentially involve in school decision-making. Furthermore, compared to elementary schools, high schools often include a variety of units that have differing levels of interaction with one another. Findings suggested that SLTs offered their high schools a smaller, more focused forum of staff members to discuss concerns, issues, and problems.

Principals, in particular, can have significant influence over how SLTs operate. This influence offers a fourth implication for practice. Findings showed that principals exercised considerable discretion over (a) how many members were on SLTs; (b) the processes and criteria used to select SLT members; (c) SLTs' purpose, scope of work, and associated functions and responsibilities; (d) the extent to which SLT members were involved in and had influence over school decision-making; and (e) SLT meeting characteristics. Phase 1 and Phase 2 data, on the whole, suggested that SLT and non-SLT

members were pleased with their principals' leadership and facilitation of SLTs. These findings demonstrate that principals can be critical ingredients to the structure, functioning, and success of SLTs in schools. As a consequence, principals can reflect upon their influence over an existing SLT or, if considering implementing an SLT, the type and degree of influence they desire to have over that SLT.

SLTs presented opportunities to decrease communication gaps, enhance the quality of school decision-making, and contribute to specific school improvement efforts in underperforming high schools. These opportunities introduce a fifth implication for practice: SLTs can serve as enabling structures that aid principals in leading and managing schools. While findings were replete with examples of SLTs engaging in the aforementioned activities, surprisingly few SLTs were responsible for instructional leadership and leading professional development initiatives for staff members. Chapter 2 noted the critical need for instructional coherence and instructional leadership in underperforming schools, and SLTs offer an opportunity for more staff members to share these instructional leadership responsibilities, which can advance needed change efforts.

A sixth, and final, implication for practice is the need for SLTs to develop and agree upon a shared definition of SLT effectiveness. On the whole, Phase 1 and Phase 2 data indicated that a large majority of participants felt their SLTs operated well and were effective in performing their functions. However, the criteria used to evaluate SLT effectiveness often differed among SLT and non-SLT members, particularly within the same high school. Some used hard data sources, like student graduation rates, while others used soft data sources, like perceptions of SLT meeting quality. This finding suggests that SLT members, especially administrators, need to have conversations with

SLT and non-SLT members to clarify and agree upon the indicators of SLT effectiveness in order to more readily identify areas of success and areas needing improvement.

Implications for Preparation

Findings identified the presence of multiple leadership teams in many underperforming high schools. If prospective educational leaders desire to work in high schools, they are likely to inherit an existing organizational structure with multiple leadership teams (and other smaller teams, for that matter, such as a staff social committee). The necessity to structure schools in coherent ways cannot be underscored enough, particularly those schools facing high-stakes accountability pressures. As a consequence, prospective high school educational leaders need to understand how to best organize and utilize SLTs. Educational leadership preparation programs (ELPPs) can address this need by offering courses with learning experiences that address (a) planning and implementing improvement efforts using teams, (b) building coherence, and (c) group dynamics. Based on reviews of ELPPs deemed exemplary by the field (VanGronigen, Cunningham, & Young, 2018; Cunningham, VanGronigen, Tucker, & Young, 2019), these learning experiences should aim to enhance both the technical and interpersonal-intrapersonal (i^2) skills of prospective educational leaders.

The dearth of SLTs participating in whole-group professional development initiatives presents another implication for preparation. If ELPPs offered the courses listed above, for example, those courses could be reshaped into shorter, contextually-appropriate in-service professional development experiences for SLTs in nearby schools. This arrangement also may introduce opportunities for ELPPs to explore research-practice partnerships with districts.

Implications for Policy

This study's findings raise two implications for education policy. The first implication for policy pertains to states and districts supporting the creation of more school-based leadership and management opportunities. Findings demonstrated that few SLT members received remuneration for their SLT service, and participants in at least four Phase 1 high schools noted difficulties in staffing their SLTs. In fact, Phase 2 *SLTi* results suggested that most SLT members appeared to serve on their SLTs because they considered it to be a personal leadership development opportunity. To attract a larger SLT member applicant pool, states and districts should appropriate funds to remunerate SLT members or pay for release time for SLT members to engage in SLT work. While the adage "money talks" is applicable here, it is also an easy one to say. Renter and Kober (2012) argue that any recommendation advocating for additional expenses needs to take into account the fact that many states and districts are contending with revenue generation and shortfall issues. While recognizing the difficult battle, state education agency officials and others can lobby legislatures to appropriate funds to pay for stipends for SLT members or for staff members that could provide release time for SLT members.

Another implication for policy concerns whether newly-hired principals should be able to staff their SLTs as they see fit. All principals in the present study indicated having the authority to determine the composition of the various leadership teams in their high schools. Upon being hired, some principals required all SLT members to reapply for their SLT positions, often as part of larger efforts to repurpose their SLTs. District-level officials should discuss with newly-hired principals the extent to which those principals face issues with the leadership teams they inherit. While recognizing that some states

likely have contracts and/or rules that govern the selection of certain roles like department chairs, districts may want to consider implementing a policy that requires all SLT members to resign and reapply for their SLT positions when a new principal is hired in order to give that new principal greater agency to restaff and repurpose their SLTs as they see fit.

Implications for Theory and Methodology

Two final implications from this study apply to theory and methodology. The first focuses on the advantage of integrating multiple organizational perspectives (e.g., structural, human resources) to devise a conceptual framework in order to examine complex organizations like high schools. This approach helped highlight multiple areas of convergence and divergence among SLTs, from their structures to perceptions of effectiveness. Researchers should consider various organizational perspectives when designing a study because it can stimulate additional ideas to explore, which has the potential to enrich the data collection, analysis, and write-up processes. There is a likely cost, however, to including a number of different organizational perspectives. If too many are used in a single study, for example, researchers might lose "resolution," which can decrease the quality of the data collection and analysis processes.

The benefit of using mixed methods designs to study complex organizations like high schools illustrates a second implication for theory and methodology. Phase 1 interview data offered an emic perspective on SLTs in underperforming high schools, which provided detailed insight into the phenomenon of interest and aided in revising the *SLTi* preliminary version to create the *SLTi* pilot. Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot data offered a wider view of the phenomenon of interest from a larger number of people—and permitted

comparisons between the smaller Phase 1 interview sample and the larger Phase 2 *SLTi*

pilot sample. By completing Phase 2 a richer portrait of SLT structural characteristics and

meeting dynamics emerged because the *SLTi* included more than 20 items about the two

topics. Such breadth would have been more difficult to obtain if the present study only

included interviews, which are a more time-intensive data collection method. Researchers

should consider using mixed methods designs when examining complex phenomena

within organizations, as they can enrich the data collection and analysis processes.

The Potential Value of SLTs in Underperforming High Schools

Taking into account all the findings and prior discussion points, this section

considers the potential value of an SLT in an underperforming high school. On the whole,

SLTs present three opportunities. First, SLTs can engage more staff members in the work

of coordinating school improvement, which, according to Lambert (2002), can build

schools' capacity for leadership (p. 4). SLTs increase the number of staff members

involved in the many operational and strategic tasks facing underperforming high

schools, such as creating SIPs and devising strategies to remediate students before the

administration of state standardized tests. By distributing leadership and management

responsibilities to more staff members, institutional knowledge is also distributed among

a larger number of staff members, which can decrease the shock caused by any one staff

member's departure, such as the principal.

Second, SLTs can build much-needed organizational resilience (Vogus &

Sutcliffe, 2007). Since underperforming high schools often face higher levels of

administrator and teacher turnover (Fuller & Young, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011),

SLTs—as standing organizational structures—help schools weather personnel turnover

disruptions and maintain momentum toward meeting improvement goals. To Meyers and Hitt (2017), SLTs represent a way to build a leadership pipeline in underperforming high schools, another benefit that can help mitigate the negative consequences of high staff member turnover.

Third, SLTs can enrich the quality of school decision-making. SLTs bring staff members from various units of high schools around the same table, thereby increasing the potential for surfacing a broad range of concerns, issues, and problems. This diversity of voices also can enhance the solutions that SLTs devise to address those issues. Once decisions are made, SLTs can facilitate communication efforts by promoting consistent messaging of decisions to larger numbers of staff members. The relaying of information by SLT members to non-SLT members can reduce gaps in communication and promote common understanding of school initiatives.

Considerations to Increase the Value of SLTs in Underperforming High Schools

If SLTs are to have a positive influence on improving underperforming high schools, administrators should take into account the possible contributions of SLTs. Based on the present study's findings, 11 considerations for enhancing SLT performance are offered in this section.

1. *Coherence among leadership teams*. Administrators should take inventory of all the leadership and management responsibilities that need to be completed and then decide which leadership team will be assigned which responsibilities—and then ensure all team members and all staff members are aware of which team is responsible for what.

2. *SLT size*. If SLTs have too few members and too many functions and
   responsibilities, then SLT members will likely feel overworked and not invest
   their full energy. If SLTs, however, have too many members—say, upwards of
   25—then it might become difficult to keep the group focused and productive.

3. *SLT composition*. The members of SLTs should reflect two priorities: (a)
   representation of the staff at-large as best as possible, and (b) a balance between
   institutional memory and current instructional practices. Regarding the first
   priority, a lack of reasonable representation of the staff at-large can risk some
   staff members feeling left out, which could negatively influence morale. The
   second priority presents a challenge because senior staff members with longer
   institutional memories might have less of a desire to take on additional SLT
   responsibilities, such as instructional leadership. It is up to administrators to have
   conversations with these senior staff members to discuss how they might
   contribute positively to both the SLT's performance and the school's
   performance. Moreover, administrators need to keep abreast of current
   instructional practices and identify staff members that understand and implement
   those practices in their classrooms. The expertise of these staff members, coupled
   with the institutional memory of senior staff members, can position SLTs for
   greater success to better identify and address issues that may arise in the
   implementation of change and improvement efforts.

4. *SLT member selection processes and criteria*. Ensure staff members know how
   and why SLT members are selected. If staff members have little to no knowledge
   about SLT member selection processes and criteria, they may feel unqualified to

serve and voluntarily recuse themselves from the SLT member selection process. This consequence could represent a missed opportunity for administrators. Increasing knowledge of SLT member selection processes and criteria also might help establish a leadership pipeline in the school. If some staff members aspire to attain formal leadership roles, they might structure their personal and professional development to better position themselves for eventual SLT membership.

5. *SLT member professional development*. Principals should take responsibility for training SLT members on how to participate effectively on SLTs. SLTs should set aside time before the school year begins to meet and get to know one another, surface and discuss assumptions and issues, and devise a set of operational protocols for the upcoming school year. Protocols might include permitting members to openly disagree with one another, promoting a culture of collaboration and collective accountability, and encouraging decision-making by consensus. These norms have the potential to foster trust and unity among SLT members.

6. *SLT purpose and workload*. SLTs should have clear purposes and distribute the workload needed to fulfill those purposes as evenly as possible among SLT members. Extending the first consideration, all SLT members should know the purposes their SLT is supposed to fulfill.

7. *SLT functions*. At minimum, SLTs should serve as a venue for staff member voice in which (a) SLT members share concerns, issues, or problems from non-SLT members; (b) administrators and SLT members discuss those issues; and (c) non-

SLT members are kept apprised of administrator and/or SLT efforts to address those issues.

8. *SLT involvement in school decision-making*. Administrators should involve SLT members in school decision-making and be forthright about when administrators need to make decisions that might go against an SLT's recommendation. This consideration is likely one of the more difficult ones for administrators because it requires a commitment to shifting the norm dividing teaching and administration and the norm of the managerial imperative. Administrators are the staff members with the positional authority to set the parameters for SLT members' engagement in school decision-making. If SLTs are going to be strictly advisory in nature, for instance, that should be made explicit to SLT members at the outset of the school year.

9. *SLT meeting frequency*. SLT meetings should reflect the purposes, functions, and workload of the SLT. If SLTs exist solely to raise issues for and receive updates from administrators, for example, then in-person meetings might be unnecessary and SLT members can use online collaborative tools to communicate with administrators (e.g., Google Forms). Alternatively, if SLTs are actively engaged in improvement efforts, they should meet on a regular basis. Moreover, the aforementioned 10-minute "weekly stand-up" meetings can enhance SLT functioning by creating more opportunities for discussing issues and for continuing to socialize SLT members into their roles as decision-makers.

10. *SLT meeting agendas and minutes*. Meeting agendas should be developed collaboratively with one staff member serving as the lead agenda creator. The

process for including items on SLT meeting agendas should be explicit and

persons responsible should be attached to each agenda item. SLT meeting minutes

should be recorded and summaries should be created to ensure that all SLT

members have a similar understanding of what transpired during meetings. Both

agendas and minutes should be stored in a private online collaborative folder

(e.g., Google Drive) to which only SLT members can access. Summaries of

minutes should be stored in a public online collaborative folder to which all staff

members have access. Principals should inform all staff members about the

availability of summaries in a regular communication (e.g., staff newsletter).

11. *SLT effectiveness criteria*. SLTs should agree on the criteria they will use to

evaluate their effectiveness, and all SLT members should know and be able to

operationalize the criteria.

Limitations

While Chapter 1 listed several limitations of the present study, it is helpful to

discuss them here as well, especially with respect to the preceding sections on possible

implications for practice, preparation, and policy along with the potential value of SLTs

in underperforming high schools.

- Data were collected only from state-designated underperforming high schools, so

  findings are not necessarily generalizable to higher-performing high schools.

- Most data were collected from state-designated underperforming high schools in

  two U.S. states, which limits the generalizability of findings to other U.S. states.

- This study's exploratory purpose and intention to lay a foundation for future work

  on teams in high schools led to methodological decisions that stressed breadth

over depth (e.g., collecting less data from more high schools rather than collecting more data from fewer high schools).

- The sample of underperforming high schools was limited to those willing to participate, which likely skewed findings in a positive direction because schools with ineffective SLTs may have opted not to participate. In addition, time constraints to complete the study limited the number of high schools involved, and both Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection efforts occurred in 12 of the 17 sites. These limitations likely created more alignment between Phase 1 findings and Phase 2 results since some of the same staff members participated in both data collection phases. In addition, staff members interviewed during Phase 1 that also completed the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot were likely primed to respond in certain ways to certain items compared to their colleagues who did not participate in both phases.

- Most of the Phase 1 interviews were conducted over the summer when school was out of session. Many of the Phase 2 *SLTi* pilot responses were collected over the winter break when school was out of session. Without the immediate stresses of the school year on the minds of participants, responses may have been skewed positively. On the whole, relatively few of the 40 Phase 1 participants or the 73 Phase 2 participants expressed displeasure about their SLTs; most spoke rather highly about their current principals and SLTs' functions and perceived effectiveness. As a consequence, findings may not have been as revealing as they could have been if data were collected during the school year, especially in April and/or May when the pressures facing underperforming high schools increase considerably.

- Despite multiple contact attempts, response rates among some Phase 2 high schools were low, which diminished the precision and interpretation of the Phase 2 *SLTi* results.

- Self-report data, perceptual data, and data from Likert items have limitations. These types of data are subject to several types of bias, such as: (a) positivity bias where participants are more likely to share positive information that they think researchers want to hear; (b) perception bias where participants' opinions can be unstable and shift due to current or prior circumstances; and (c) recall bias where participants are asked to discuss experiences that occurred in the past and recollections have varying degrees of accuracy and completeness.

Recommendations for Future Research

The exploratory nature of this study was intended to help establish a foundation upon which to build future studies of teams in high schools. Given the dated literature on SLTs and the lack of studies in underperforming schools, the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of SLTs in underperforming high schools: who is involved, what do they do, how do they do it, and how effective are they. Findings offer a number of avenues for future research, including the following topics:

1. *The potential influence of SLTs on school performance.* The present study, by design, was exploratory, but a logical next step could focus on the extent to which SLT actions explain variation in school performance. Findings from the present study offer high marks on perceived SLT effectiveness, but how much of an influence do SLTs actually have on school working conditions (e.g., climate) and, ultimately, student performance? Prior studies from Hallinger and Heck (2010)

suggest that collaborative leadership structures are a mediating influence on student performance. While they did not examine SLTs, findings from the present study suggest that SLTs could be classified as collaborative leadership structures. Thus, SLTs could be hypothesized to be a mediating influence on student performance. Future studies should examine this hypothesis along with the factors that SLTs more directly influence (e.g., teachers) that, in turn, influence student performance.

2. *The potential predictive nature of the* SLTi. This recommendation is related to the first and focuses on exploring the extent to which SLT characteristics, such as size or number of functions, might be predictive of school-level outcomes (e.g., climate survey results, student performance). Future studies should assess the validity of the *SLTi* along with refining the survey in order to reduce participant burden. Ideally, a subset of *SLTi* items would be administered to both SLT and non-SLT members in the same school to assess the extent to which SLT members' perceptions align with non-SLT members' perceptions.

3. *Different versions of the* SLTi. The *SLTi* pilot included 84 items, which took around 10 minutes to complete. To reduce participant burden, few free response items were included. Future iterations of the *SLTi* may remove some items in order to ask participants to offer short examples that accompany their responses to other items. For example, the item asking about SLT members' deference to administrators to make final decisions could then ask for an example of when SLT members did *not* defer to administrators regarding a particular decision.

4. *The examination of SLTs outside underperforming high schools*. The present

study, by design, collected data from high schools contending with high-stakes

accountability pressures. A logical next step concerns the extent to which SLTs

outside underperforming high schools are similar or different than SLTs in the

present study, especially since they are not facing high-stakes accountability

pressures. A number of SLTs in the present study, for example, engaged in

specific school improvement efforts, such as creating SIPs. Future studies should

target the extent to which SLTs in higher-performing high schools perform the

same functions. Moreover, many of the SLTs in the present study completed more

operational tasks than strategic tasks, often because there appeared to be more

"stuff that walks in the door" (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 534) that needed

responses. Future studies should explore the extent to which SLTs in higher-

performing high schools engaged in operational versus strategic tasks. Perhaps the

lack of high-stakes accountability pressures permits SLTs to engage in more

strategic tasks, such as developing a long-term vision for their schools.

5. *Principals' determination of leadership team functions and responsibilities*.

While some of the present study's findings addressed the issue of how principals

determined the functions and responsibilities assigned to various leadership teams

(e.g., ATs, SLTs), there is much more work to be done related to this topic. Kunz

and Hoy (1976) argue that a "zone of acceptance" exists in schools in which

"teachers willingly left decisions within this zone to administrators" (Duke et al.,

1980, p. 94). Duke and colleagues (1980) cite a prior study by Clear and Seager

(1971), which found that administrators' zones of acceptance were larger than

teachers' zones of acceptance. Future studies should focus on what resides in administrators' and teachers' zones of acceptance in various school contexts, but with respect to leadership teams like ATs and SLTs. In other words, what decisions do teachers permit their leadership teams to make on their behalf, and what is the extent of the alignment between teachers' zones of acceptance and leadership teams' zones of acceptance?

6. *The role of SLT member*. The present study's findings illuminated several administrators' efforts to socialize SLT members into their roles as decision-makers. Future studies should explore how recently-appointed SLT members conceptualize themselves as newly-titled "formal" leaders in their schools. These same SLT members could be followed over several school years to chronicle their socialization into formal leadership roles. A long-term goal of this line of inquiry would be to aid educational leaders in better crafting professional development initiatives that help scaffold the growth and self-efficacy of aspiring leaders in schools (e.g., SLT members).

7. *The extent to which department chair workloads overlap with SLT workloads*. A key finding from the present study was the extent to which SLT members who were teachers were also department chairs, and the alignment between their roles as SLT members and department chairs varied by high school. Given that not much literature examines department chairs in high schools in general (e.g., Klar, 2012), future studies should examine these middle-level leaders who often hold multiple roles in high schools (SLT member and department chair).

8. *The role and influence of school districts.* In some of this study's high schools, districts exercised control over school goals and SLT membership applications, but these findings were not explored specifically and in depth. Moreover, the present study collected data only from school-level staff members. Future studies should target district-level staff members to develop a better understanding of leadership teams from officials outside of schools.

9. *The "leadership constellation" within high schools.* A key finding from the present study was the extent to which high schools had multiple leadership teams. As this study's data collection efforts progressed, the complexity inherent in high schools came into clearer view, especially the number of teams—leadership and non-leadership—that were present along with the number of staff members who served on multiple leadership teams. Future studies should map the topography of the "leadership constellation" present in many high schools, including an inventory of all teams along with their composition and functions. A long-term goal of this line of inquiry would be to help principals and aspiring educational leaders be more mindful of and skilled at organizing the work of multiple leadership teams in their schools.

Conclusion

High schools are complex organizations, and this characteristic has made some of them particularly difficult to improve in today's high-stakes accountability environment. More examples exist of elementary and middle schools rapidly improving, while success stories in high schools are less common. One way forward might be for principals of underperforming high schools to implement a collaborative approach to school leadership

and management, which prior studies conducted outside underperforming contexts suggest can positively influence both schools' abilities to improve and students' abilities to succeed. An SLT is one such collaborative approach and calls for including staff members from a variety of units to aid in leading and managing the school. The dearth of extant literature on SLTs in underperforming high schools along with SLTs' potential influence on improvement efforts provided the impetus for this study.

Findings from the present study suggested that SLTs—despite their areas of convergence and divergence—were perceived to be enabling structures in underperforming high schools. The extent to which SLTs actually improved school performance, however, remains an open question and requires further study. While many participants said SLTs were effective in performing essential functions like serving as a voice of the staff or relaying information between staff members, these functions often saw SLTs completing more operational and less strategic tasks. Few SLTs engaged in leading instruction or creating professional development initiatives, which are areas of high importance in underperforming schools. Principals, though, were reported to have significant influence over the design, purpose, and scope of work of SLTs—and several principals were restaffing and/or repurposing their SLTs in order to better position their high schools to improve individual student and overall school performance.

Consideration of the SLT approach to school leadership and management presents principals with opportunities to rethink how their schools are organized and who within their schools is responsible for what. This study's findings offered three potential benefits of SLTs: (a) they can involve more staff members in improvement efforts, which can build schools' capacity for leadership; (b) they can help build organizational resilience;

and (c) they can enrich the quality of school decision-making. As one former SLT

member put it:

> When I joined the leadership team, no administrators were going to make me do something extraordinary. But now, we have a team and their effort and their commitment and their positivity are so strong that you can't help but to be a part of it, and it's showed me how powerful leadership really is. (41)

Despite these potential benefits, the success of the SLT approach is contingent

upon a number of factors—many of which, as earlier sections discussed, remain unknown

and require further examination. The present study, however, was intended to lay a

foundation for these research efforts in hopes of exploring how leadership teams might be

levers to aid schools in accomplishing their most important goal: preparing students to be

successful, both now and in the future.

REFERENCES

Adler, P. S., & Borys, B. (1996). Two types of bureaucracy: Enabling and coercive. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 41*(1), 61-89.

Aladjem, D. K., Birman, B. F., Orland, M., Harr-Robins, J., Heredia, A., Parrish, T. B., & Ruffini, S. J. (2010). *Achieving dramatic school improvement: An exploratory study.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

Ancess, J. (2003). *Beating the odds: High Schools as communities of commitment.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Anderson, S., Leithwood, K., & Strauss, T. (2010). Leading data use in schools: Organizational conditions and practices at the school and district levels. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 9*(3), 292-327.

Applebaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P., & Kalleberg, A. (2000). *Manufacturing advantage: Why high-performance work systems pay off.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Arches, J. (1991). Social structure, burnout, and job satisfaction. *Social Work, 36*(3), 202-206.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. H. (1996). *Organizational learning II: Theory, method, and practice.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Austin, M. S., & Harkins, D. A. (2008). Shifting spaces and emerging voices: Participation, support, and conflict in one school administrative team. *Early Education and Development, 19*(6), 907-940.

Bales, B. L. (2006). Teacher education policies in the United States: The accountability shift since 1980. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(4), 395-407.

Balfanz, R. (2009). Can the American high school become an avenue of advancement for all? *The Future of Children, 19*(1), 17-36.

Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. (2004). *Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? Where are they located? Who attends them?* (Report 70). Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk at Johns Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., Legters, N., West, T. C., & Weber, L. M. (2007). Are NCLB's measures, incentives, and improvement strategies the right ones for the nation's low-performing high schools?. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(3), 559-593.

Ball, S. J. (2008). The legacy of ERA, privatization and the policy ratchet. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *36*(2), 185-199.

Barnard, C. I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Barr, J., & Saltmarsh, S. (2014). "It all comes down to the leadership": The role of the school principal in fostering parent-school engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 42*(4), 491-505.

Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership: Good, better, best. *Organizational Dynamics, 13*(3), 26-40.

Berliner, D. C. (2006). Our impoverished view of educational research. *Teachers College Record, 108*(6), 949-995.

Berliner, D. C. (2009). *Poverty and potential: Out-of-school factors and school success*. Boulder, CO and Tempe, AZ: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit.

Blau, P. M. (1968). The hierarchy of authority in organizations. *American Journal of Sociology, 73*(4), 453-467.

Blau, P. M., & Scott, W. R. (1962). *Formal organizations: A comparative approach*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Blume, H. (2010, July 7). Fremont High's grand experiment begins. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/07/local/la-me-0707-lausd-fremont-20100707

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1982). *The competent manager! A model for effective performance*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., & Wyckoff, J. (2007). Increasing the effectiveness of teachers in low-performing schools. In H. F. Ladd & E. B. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of research in education finance and policy* (1st ed.) (pp. 612-630). New York, NY: Routledge.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). Explaining the short careers of high-achieving teachers in schools with low-performing students. *The American Economic Review, 95*(2), 166-171.

Boyle, A., Le Floch, K. C., Therriault, S., & Holzman, B. (2009). *State support for school improvement: School-level perceptions of quality*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Brown, M., Boyle, B., & Boyle, T. (1999). Commonalities between perception and practice in models of school decision-making in secondary schools. *School Leadership & Management*, *19*(3), 319-330.

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bryman, A., Becker, S., & Sempik, J. (2008). Quality criteria for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research: A view from social policy. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 11*(4), 261-276.

Burke, C. S., Stagl, K. C., Klein, C., Goodwin, G. F., Salas, E., & Halpin, S. M. (2006). What type of leadership behaviors are functional in teams? A meta-analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly, 17*(3), 288-307.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Burns, T. E., & Stalker, G. M. (1961). *The management of innovation*. London, UK: Tavistock.

Bush, T. (2011). Succession planning in England: New leaders and new forms of leadership. *School Leadership & Management, 31*(3), 181-198.

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2012). Distributed leadership in action: Leading high-performing leadership teams in English schools. *School Leadership & Management, 32*(1), 21-36.

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know?. *School Leadership & Management*, *34*(5), 553-571.

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2016). School leadership and management in South Africa: Findings from a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Educational Management, 30*(2), 211-231.

Camburn, E., Rowan, B., & Taylor, J. E. (2003). Distributed leadership in schools: The case of elementary schools adopting comprehensive school reform models. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 25*(4), 347-373.

Cardno, C. (1998). Teams in New Zealand schools. *Leading and Managing, 4*(1), 47-60.

Cardno, C. (2012). *Managing effective relationships in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Chapman, C., Ainscow, M., Bragg, J., Gunter, H., Hull, J., Mongon, D., ... & West, M. (2008). *Emerging patterns of school leadership*. Nottingham, UK: National College for School Leadership.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative research*. London, UK: SAGE.

Chenoweth, K. (2007). *"It's being done": Academic success in unexpected schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Chenoweth, K. (2009). *"How it's being done": Urgent lessons from unexpected schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Chenoweth, K., & Theokas, C. (2011). *Getting it done: Leading academic success in unexpected schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Chrispeels, J. H., & Martin, K. J. (2002). Four school leadership teams define their roles within organizational and political structures to improve student learning. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 13*(3), 327-365.

Chrispeels, J. H., Burke, P. H., Johnson, P., & Daly, A. J. (2008). Aligning mental models of district and school leadership teams for reform coherence. *Education and Urban Society, 40*(6), 730-750.

Chrispeels, J. H., Castillo, S., & Brown, J. (2000). School leadership teams: A process model of team development. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 11*(1), 20-56.

Cibulka, J. G. (2003). Educational bankruptcy, takeovers, and reconstitution of failing schools. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 102*(1), 249-270.

Clear, D. K., & Seager, R. C. (1971). The legitimacy of administrative influence as perceived by selected groups. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 7*(1), 46-63.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2010). Teacher credentials and student achievement in high school: A cross-subject analysis with student fixed effects. *Journal of Human Resources, 45*(3), 655-681.

Coleman, J. S. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Collins, B. J. (2016). *A high school as a learning organization: The role of the school leadership team in fostering organizational learning* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10041787)

Conner, T. (2015). Relationships and authentic collaboration: Perceptions of a building leadership team. *Leadership and Research in Education*, *2*(1), 12-24.

Copa, G. H., & Pease, V. H. (1992). The comprehensive high school: A historical perspective. In G. H. Copa & V. H. Pease (Eds.), *A new vision for the comprehensive high school: Preparing students for a changing world* (pp. L1-L58). St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota Site for the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at the University of California-Berkeley.

Copland, M. (2001). The myth of the superprincipal. *Phi Delta Kappan, 82*(7), 528-533.

Cosner, S., & Jones, M. F. (2016). Leading school-wide improvement in low-performing schools facing conditions of accountability: Key actions and considerations. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(1), 41-57.

Cowen, J. M., Butler, J. S., Fowles, J., Streams, M. E., & Toma, E. F. (2012). Teacher retention in Appalachian schools: Evidence from Kentucky. *Economics of Education Review, 31*(4), 431-441.

Cox, J. F., Pearce, C. L., & Perry, M. L. (2003). Toward a model of shared leadership and distributed influence in the innovation process: How shared leadership can enhance new product development team dynamics and effectiveness. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership* (pp. 48-76). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Cranston, N., & Ehrich, L. (2005). Enhancing the effectiveness of senior management teams in schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 33*(1), 79-91.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Cuban, L. (1982). Persistent instruction: The high school classroom, 1900-1980. *Phi Delta Kappan, 64*(2), 113-118.

Cuban, L. (1988). *The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Cucchiara, M. B., Rooney, E., & Robertson-Kraft, C. (2015). "I've never seen people work so hard!" Teachers' working conditions in the early stages of school turnaround. *Urban Education, 50*(3), 259-287.

Cunningham, K. M., VanGronigen, B. A., Tucker, P. D., & Young, M. D. (2019). Using powerful learning experiences to prepare school leaders. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 14*(1), 74-97.

Cyert, R. M., & March, J. G. (1959). A behavioral theory of organizational objectives. In M. Haire (Ed.), *Modern organization theory* (pp. 76-90). New York, NY: Wiley.

Daft, R. L. (2001). *Essentials of organization theory and design* (2nd ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western Educational Publishing.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Davis, K. S., & Dupper, D. R. (2004). Student-teacher relationships: An overlooked factor in school dropout. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 9*(1-2), 179-193.

de la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, R. D. (2012). *Turning around low-performing schools in Chicago: Summary report.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.

Dee, T. S. (2012). *School turnarounds: Evidence from the 2009 stimulus*. (Working Paper No. 17990). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/papers/w17990

DeMatthews, D. E. (2014). Principal and teacher collaboration: An exploration of distributed leadership in professional learning communities. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management, 2*(2), 176-206.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical orientation to sociological methods*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Dering, A., Cunningham, S., & Whitby, K. (2006). Developing leadership teams within an EAZ network: What makes for success?. *School Leadership & Management*, *26*(2), 107-123.

DeVellis, R. F. (2003). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Diamond, J. B. & Spillane, J. P. (2016). School leadership and management from a distributed perspective. A 2016 retrospective and prospective. *Management in Education, 30*(4), 147-154.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2000). Developing comparative and international educational leadership and management: A cross-cultural model. *School Leadership & Management, 20*(2), 143-160.

Downton, J. V. (1973). *Rebel leadership: Commitment and charisma in the revolutionary process*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Doyle, B., & Iyengar, N. (2013). *Rethinking high school turnarounds*. Boston, MA: The Bridgespan Group.

Dubois, B. L. (1988). Citation in biomedical journal articles. *English for Specific Purposes, 7*(3), 181-193.

DuFour, R. (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 6-11.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insights for improving schools.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Duke, D. L. (1986). The aesthetics of leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 22*(1), 7-27.

Duke, D. L. (2001). *Creating safe schools for all children*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Duke, D. L. (2004). The turnaround principal: High-stakes leadership. *Principal, 84*(1), 12-23.

Duke, D. L. (2015). *Leadership for low-performing schools*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Duke, D. L. (2016). *The children left behind: America's struggle to improve its lowest performing schools*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Duke, D. L., & Canady, R. L. (1991). *School policy*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Duke, D. L., & Jacobson, M. (2011). Tackling the toughest turnaround—Low-performing high schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(5), 34-38.

Duke, D. L., & Landahl, M. (2011). 'Raising tests scores was the easy part': A case study of the third year of school turnaround. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 39*(3), 91-114.

Duke, D. L., & Salmonowicz, M. (2010). Key decisions of a first-year 'turnaround' principal. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 38*(1), 33-58.

Duke, D. L., Carr, M., & Sterrett, W. (2013). *The school improvement planning handbook: Getting focused for turnaround and transition.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Duke, D. L., Showers, B. K., & Imber, M. (1980). Teachers and shared decision making: The costs and benefits of involvement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 16*(1), 93-106.

Duke, D. L., Tucker, P. D., Salmonowicz, M. J., & Levy, M. K. (2007). How comparable are the perceived challenges facing principals of low-performing schools?. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 35*(1), 3-21.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*(2), 350-383.

Ehrich, L. C., & Cranston, N. (2004). Developing senior management teams in schools: Can micropolitics help?. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *32*(1), 21-31.

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Etzioni, A. (1961) *A comparative analysis of complex organizations*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Evans, L. (1998). The effects of senior management teams on teacher morale and job satisfaction: A case study of Rockville County Primary School. *Educational Management & Administration*, *26*(4), 417-428.

Farrington, C. A. (2014). *Failing at school: Lessons for redesigning urban high schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Fayol, H. (1949). *General and industrial management* (C. Storrs, Trans.). London, UK: Pitman.

Finnigan, K., & Stewart, T. (2010). Leading change under pressure: An examination of principal leadership in low-performing schools. *Journal of School Leadership, 19*(5), 586-618.

Flannery, K. B., Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. M. (2009). School-wide positive behavior support in high school: Early lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*(3), 177-185.

Fleischman, S., & Heppen, J. (2009). Improving low-performing high schools: Searching for evidence of promise. *The Future of Children, 19*(1), 105-133.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Follett, M. P. (1924). *Creative experience*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green, and Company.

Follett, M. P. (1926). The giving of orders. In H. C. Metcalf (Ed.), *Scientific foundations of business administration* (pp. 171-190). Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press for the Williams and Wilkins Company.

Forman, M. L., Stosich, E. L., & Bocala, C. (2017). *The internal coherence framework: Creating the conditions for continuous improvement in schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader* (pp. 48-78). Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited.

Fox, B. D. (2016). *The principal as an effective communicator: Increasing parental and community engagement through the use of digital communication and social media* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10142920)

Frankenberg, E., & Orfield, G. (2012). *The resegregation of suburban schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Freshwater, R. (2012). *A large urban district's implementation of turnaround policy and practice at the high school level* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3512998)

Fullan, M. (2000). The return of large-scale reform. *Journal of Educational Change, 1*(1), 5-27.

Fullan, M. (2006). The future of educational change: System thinkers in action. *Journal of Educational Change, 7*(3), 113-122.

Fuller, E. J., & Schrott, L. (2015). Building and sustaining a quality STEM teacher workforce: Access to instructional leadership and the interruptions of educator

turnover. In G. K. LeTendre & A. W. Wiseman (Eds.), *Promoting and sustaining a quality teacher workforce: International perspectives on education and society* (pp. 333-366). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Fuller, E., J. & Young, M. D. (2009). *Texas high school project leadership initiative issue brief 1: Tenure and retention of newly hired principals in Texas*. Austin, TX: University Council for Educational Administration.

Galindo, C., Stein, K., & Schaffer, E. (2016). A case study of a turnaround high school: An examination of the Maryland state department of education breakthrough center intervention. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 21*(4), 208-229.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Giles, C., & Hargreaves, A. (2006). The sustainability of innovative schools as learning organizations and professional learning communities during standardized reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(1), 124-156.

Giles, C., Johnson, L., Brooks, S., & Jacobson, S. L. (2005). Building bridges, building community: Transformational leadership in a challenging urban context. *Journal of School Leadership, 15*(5), 519-545.

Gregg, R. T. (1969). Preparation of administrators. In R. L. Ebel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational research* (4th ed.) (pp. 993-1004). London, UK: MacMillan.

Grissom, J. A., Loeb, S., & Mitani, H. (2015). Principal time management skills: Explaining patterns in principals' time use, job stress, and perceived effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Administration, 53*(6), 773-793.

Gronn, P. (2000). Distributed properties: A new architecture for leadership. *Educational Management & Administration, 28*(3), 317-338.

Grubb, W. N. (2015). *Leadership challenges in high schools: Multiple pathways to success.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Grubb, W. N., & Flessa, J. J. (2006). "A job too big for one": Multiple principals and other nontraditional approaches to school leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(4), 518-550.

Guarino, C. M., Santibanez, L., & Daley, G. A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(2), 173-208.

Guzzo, R. A., & Dickson, M. W. (1996). Teams in organizations: Recent research on performance and effectiveness. *Annual Review of Psychology, 47*(1), 307-338.

Hales, S. (1986). Rethinking the business of psychology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 16*(1), 57-76.

Hall, V., & Wallace, M. (1996). Let the team take the strain: Lessons from research into senior management teams in secondary schools. *School Organisation*, *16*(3), 297-308.

Hallinger, P. (1992). The evolving role of American principals: From managerial to instructional to transformational leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration, 30*(3), 35-48.

Hallinger, P. (2013). A conceptual framework for systematic reviews of research in educational leadership and management. *Journal of Educational Administration, 51*(2), 126-149.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management*, *30*(2), 95-110.

Halpern, E. S. (1983). *Auditing naturalistic inquiries: The development and application of a model* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 8317108).

Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (1972). On the value of "equality of educational opportunity" as a guide to public policy. In F. Mosteller & D. P. Moynihan (Eds.), *On equality of educational opportunity* (pp. 116-145). New York, NY: Random House.

Hanushek, E. A., & Raymond, M. E. (2005). Does school accountability lead to improved student performance?. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 24*(2), 297-327.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *Journal of Human Resources, 39*(2), 326–354.

Hargreaves, A. (2009). A decade of educational change and a defining moment of opportunity: An introduction. *Journal of Educational Change, 19*(2-3), 89-100.

Hargreaves, A., & Goodson, I. (2006). Educational change over time? The sustainability and nonsustainability of three decades of secondary school change and continuity. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(1), 3-41.

Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed leadership: Developing tomorrow's leaders*. London, UK: Routledge.

Harris, A., & DeFlaminis, J. (2016). Distributed leadership in practice: Evidence, misconceptions and possibilities. *Management in Education, 30*(4), 141-146.

Harris, A., & Lambert, L. (2003). *Building leadership capacity for school improvement*. London, UK: McGraw-Hill Education.

Harvey, J., Holland, H., & Cummins, H. J. (2013). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

Hatch, M. J. (1993). The dynamics of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review, 18*(4), 657-693.

Henry, G., & Thompson, C. (2008). *North Carolina high school resource allocation study final report.* Chapel Hill, NC: The Carolina Institute for Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Herman, R. (2012). Scaling school turnaround. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 17*(1-2), 25-33.

Hewitt, K. K., & Reitzug, U. (2015). Portrait of a turnaround leader in a high needs district. *National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Education Leadership Review, 16*(2), 19-35.

Hill, P. T., & Christensen, J. (2007). Safety and order in charter and traditional public schools. In R. Lake (Ed.), *Hopes, fears, and reality* (pp. 53-64). Seattle, WA: National Charter School Research Project at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Hord, S. M. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational Researcher, 17*(8), 10-16.

Hoy, W. K., & Sweetland, S. R. (2001). Designing better schools: The meaning and measure of enabling school structures. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 37*(3), 296-321.

Hulpia, H., Devos, G., & Rosseel, Y. (2009). Development and validation of scores on the distributed leadership inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 69*(6), 1013-1034.

Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. (1985). A meta-analysis and conceptual critique of research on role ambiguity and role conflict in work settings. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 36*(1), 16-78.

Jacob, R. T., & Jacob, B. (2012). Prenotification, incentives, and survey modality: An experimental test of methods to increase survey response rates of school principals. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 5*(4), 401-418.

Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*. Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin.

Johnson, A. W. (2013). "Turnaround" as shock therapy: Race, neoliberalism, and school reform. *Urban Education, 48*(2), 232-256.

Johnson, R. B. (2014). *Mixed methods research design and analysis with validity: A primer*. Mobile, AL: Department of Professional Studies at the University of South Alabama. Retrieved from https://tinyurl.com/y8kqekkl

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14-26.

Johnson, S. M., Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2012). How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement. *Teachers College Record, 114*(10), 1-39.

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1982). Variants of uncertainty. *Cognition, 11*(2), 143-157.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Keedy, J. L. (1999). Examining teacher instructional leadership within the small group dynamics of collegial groups. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 15*(7), 785-799.

Kelley, C. (2010). *Advancing student learning through distributed instructional leadership: A toolkit for high school leadership teams*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Kensler, L. A., Reames, E., Murray, J., & Patrick, L. (2012). Systems thinking tools for improving evidence-based practice: A cross-case analysis of two high school leadership teams. *The High School Journal*, *95*(2), 32-53.

Kentucky Department of Education [KDE]. (2018). *Kentucky accountability at a glance.* Lexington, KY: Author. Retrieved from https://education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Accountability%20at%20a%20Glance%208-16-17.pdf

Klar, H. W. (2012). Fostering department chair instructional leadership capacity: Laying the groundwork for distributed instructional leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 15*(2), 175-197.

Kowal, J. M., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *School restructuring options under No Child Left Behind: What works when?. Turnarounds with new leaders and staff.* Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

Kunz, D. W., & Hoy, W. K. (1976). Leadership style of principals and the professional zone of acceptance of teachers. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 12*(3), 49-64.

Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., & Tallant, K. (2010). *The school turnaround field guide.* Boston, MA: FSG Social Impact Advisors.

Ladd, H. F. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of their working conditions: How predictive of planned and actual teacher movement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 33*(2), 235-261.

Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 37-40.

Lasswell, H. (1936). *Politics: Who gets what, when, how*. New York and London: McGraw Hill Book Company and Hittlesey House.

Lawler, E. E. (1986). *High-involvement management: Participative strategies for improving organizational performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Le Floch, K. C., O'Day, J., Birman, B., Hurlburt, S., Nayfack, M., Halloran, C., . . . Wei, T. E. (2016). *Case studies of schools receiving school improvement grants: Final report*. (NCEE 2016-4002). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences.

Lee, J. (2002). Racial and ethnic achievement gap trends: Reversing the progress toward equity? *Educational Researcher, 31*(1), 3-12.

Lee, V. E., & Smith, J. B. (1997). High school size: Which works best and for whom?. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 19*(3), 205-227.

Leithwood, K. (1990). The principal's role in teacher development. In B. Joyce (Ed.), *Changing school culture through staff development* (pp. 71-90). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Leithwood, K. (2012). *Ontario leadership framework with a discussion of the leadership foundations.* Ottawa, ON: Institute for Education Leadership, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990). Transformational leadership: How principals can help reform school cultures. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 1*(4), 249-280.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *38*(2), 112-129.

Leithwood, K., & Mascall, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*(4), 529-561.

Leithwood, K., & Montgomery, D. J. (1982). The role of the elementary school principal in program improvement. *Review of Educational Research, 52*(3), 309-339.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). *Successful school leadership: What it is and how it influences pupil learning.* Nottingham, UK: National College for School Leadership.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management, 28*(1), 27-42.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Strauss, T. (2010). *Leading school turnaround: How successful leaders transform low-performing schools.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004*). How leadership influences student learning: Review of research.* New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(5), 671-706.

Leithwood, K., Steinbach, R., & Jantzi, D. (2002). School leadership and teachers' motivation to implement accountability policies. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(1), 94-119.

Leithwood, K., Steinbach, R., & Ryan, S. (1997). Leadership and team learning in secondary schools. *School Leadership & Management*, *17*(3), 303-326.

Levi, D. (2015). *Group dynamics for teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Levine, T. H., & Marcus, A. S. (2007). Closing the achievement gap through teacher collaboration: Facilitating multiple trajectories of teacher learning. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 19*(1), 116-138.

Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (1999). *Teachers: Transforming their world and their work.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Archives of Psychology, 22*, 5-53.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Linn, R. L. (2001). *The design and evaluation of educational assessment and accountability systems. CSE technical report*. Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Locke, E. A., Tirnauer, D., Roberson, Q., Goldman, B., Latham, M. E., & Weldon, E. (2001). The importance of the individual in an age of groupism. In M. Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 501-528). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 80*(3), 44-70.

Lorzeau, G. A. (1977). The role of the principal today. *North Central Association Quarterly, 52*, 335-341.

Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., Anderson, S. E., Michlin, M., & Mascall, B. (2010). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

Lustick, H. (2017). "Restorative justice" or restoring order? Restorative school discipline practices in urban public schools. *Urban Education* (online first).

Lynn, M., Bacon, J. N., Totten, T. L., Bridges III, T. L., & Jennings, M. E. (2010). Examining teachers' beliefs about African American male students in a low-performing high school in an African American school district. *Teachers College Record, 112*(1), 289-330.

MacBeath, J. (2009). Distributed leadership: Paradigms, policy, and paradox. In K. Leithwood, B. Mascall, & T. Strauss (Eds.), *Distributed leadership according to the evidence* (pp. 41-57). London, UK: Routledge.

MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 12*(1), 73-84.

Malen, B., & Rice, J. K. (2004). A framework for assessing the impact of education reforms on school capacity: Insights from studies of high-stakes accountability initiatives. *Educational Policy, 18*(5), 631-660.

Manna, P. (2006). *School's in: Federalism and the national education agenda*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Manzo, K. K. (2005). N.C. judge cites 'academic genocide' in report on high schools. *Education Week, 24*(39), 21.

March, J. G. (1962). The business firm as a political coalition. *The Journal of Politics, 24*(4), 662-678.

Markette, N. J. (2012). Prescriptions for high school administrative teams. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal, 18*(5/6), 277-294.

Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(3), 370-397.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Masumoto, M., & Brown-Welty, S. (2009). Case study of leadership practices and school-community interrelationships in high-performing, high-poverty, rural California high schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 24*(1), 1-18.

Mawhinney, H. B. (1999). Reappraisal: The problems and prospects of studying the micropolitics of leadership in reforming schools. *School Leadership & Management, 19*(2), 159-170.

McComas, K., Besley, J. C., & Black, L. W. (2010). The rituals of public meetings. *Public Administration Review, 70*(1), 122-130.

McCoyd, J. L., & Kerson, T. S. (2006). Conducting intensive interviews using email: A serendipitous comparative opportunity. *Qualitative Social Work, 5*(3), 389-406.

McDonald, J. P. (2004). High school in the 21st century: Managing the core dilemma. In F. Hammack (Ed.), *The comprehensive high school today* (pp. 26-44). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

McKeever, B. (2003). *Nine lessons of successful school leadership teams: Distilling a decade of innovation*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

McKinsey and Company. (2009). *The economic impact of the achievement gap in America's schools*. Boston, MA: Author.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*(2), 171-178.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2001). *Professional communities and the work of high school teaching*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McMurrer, J. (2012a). *Increased learning time under stimulus-funded school improvement grants: High hopes, varied implementation*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy at George Washington University.

McMurrer, J. (2012b). *Schools with federal improvement grants face challenges in replacing principals and teachers*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy at George Washington University.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1978). *The structure of educational organizations: Environments and organizations*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Meyers, C. V., & Hitt, D. H. (2017). School turnaround principals: What does initial research literature suggest they are doing to be successful?. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 22*(1), 38-56.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.

Mintrop, H., & Trujillo, T. (2005). *Corrective action in low-performing schools: Lessons for NCLB implementation from state and district strategies in first generation accountability systems*. Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Mintrop, R. (2016). *Design-based school improvement: A practical guide for education leaders*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The structuring of organizations: A synthesis of the research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Power in and around organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mintzberg, H. (1985). The organization as political arena. *Journal of Management Studies, 22*(2), 133-154.

Mitgang, L. (2012). *The making of the principal: Five lessons in leadership training*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

Murphy, J. (1998). Preparation for the school principalship: The United States' story. *School Leadership & Management, 18*(3), 359-372.

Murphy, J. (2005). *Connecting teacher leadership and school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Murphy, J. (2015). Creating communities of professionalism: Addressing cultural and structural barriers. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *53*(2), 154-176.

Murphy, J., & Beck, L. G. (1995). *School-based management as school reform: Taking stock*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Murphy, J., & Meyers, C. V. (2008). *Turning around failing schools: Leadership lessons from the organizational sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Neild, R., & Balfanz, R. (2006). An extreme degree of difficulty: The educational demographics of urban neighborhood high schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 11*(2), 123-141.

Newlon, J. H. (1934). *Educational administration as social policy*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Newmann, F. M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. S. (2001). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(4), 297-321.

No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002).

Noel, C., Slate, J. R., Brown, M. S., & Tejeda-Delgado, C. (2008). Site-based decision-making: Views from secondary school personnel. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy*, *2*(1), 50-61.

Noguera, P. A. (2002). Beyond size: The challenge of high school reform. *Educational Leadership, 59*(5), 60-63.

O'Cathain, A., Murphy, E., and Nicholl, J. (2008). The quality of mixed methods studies in health services research. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy, 13*(2), 92-98.

Olsen, E. M., & Chrispeels, J. H. (2009). A pathway forward to school change: Leading together and achieving goals. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *8*(4), 380-410.

Olson, J. D. (2013). *Student voices: Implications for school turnaround in urban high schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3573333)

Olson, K. (2010). An examination of questionnaire evaluation by expert reviewers. *Field Methods, 22*(4), 295-318.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Johnson, R. B. (2006). The validity issue in mixed research. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 48-63.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Johnson, R. B., & Collins, K. M. (2011). Assessing legitimation in mixed research: A new framework. *Quality & Quantity, 45*(6), 1253-1271.

Orr, M. T., Byrne-Jiménez, M., McFarlane, P., & Brown, B. (2005). Leading out from low-performing schools: The urban principal experience. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 4*(1), 23-54.

Ouchi, W. G. (2009). *The secret of TSL: The revolutionary discovery that raises school performance.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Pappano, L. (2010). *Inside school turnarounds: Urgent hopes, unfolding stories*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Payne, C. (2008). *So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Peck, C., & Reitzug, U. C. (2014). School turnaround fever: The paradoxes of a historical practice promoted as a new reform. *Urban Education, 49*(1) 8-38.

Penn Center for Educational Leadership. (2018). *Annenberg distributed leadership initiative*. Retrieved from https://pcel.gse.upenn.edu/programs/annenberg

Pentland, A. (2012). The new science of building great teams. *Harvard Business Review, 90*(4), 60-69.

Peterson, K. D. (2001). The roar of complexity. *Journal of Staff Development, 22*(1), 18-21.

Pfeffer, J. (1981). *Power in organizations*. Marshfield, MA: Pitman.

Pfeffer, J. (1992). *Managing with power: Politics and influence in organizations*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Pfeffer, J. (1994). *Competitive advantage through people: Unleashing the power of the work force*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1978). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence approach*. New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers.

Placier, M. L. (1993). The semantics of state policy making: The case of "at risk". *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *15*(4), 380-395.

Plano Clark, V. L., & Creswell, J. W. (2008). *The mixed methods reader*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Presser, S., & Blair, J. (1994). Survey pre-testing: Do different methods produce different results? In P. V. Marsden (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 73-104). London, UK: Blackwell.

Prestine, N. A., & Nelson, B. S. (2005). How can educational leaders support and promote teaching and learning? New conceptions of learning and leading in schools. In W. A. Firestone & C. Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 46-60). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Raelin, J. A. (1985). The basis for the professional's resistance to managerial control. *Human Resource Management, 24*(2), 147-175.

Raubinger, F. M., Rowe, H. G., Piper, D. L., & West, C. K. (1969). *The development of secondary education*. London, UK: Macmillan.

Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (2005). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reardon, S. (2016). School segregation and racial academic achievement gaps. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, 2*(5), 34-57.

Reardon, S. F., Grewal, E. T., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg, E. (2012). Brown fades: The end of court-ordered school desegregation and the resegregation of American public schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 31*(4), 876-904.

Reiser, B. J., Spillane, J. P., Steinmuller, F., Sorsa, D., Carney, K., & Kyza, E. (2000). Investigating the mutual adaptation process in teachers' design of technology-infused curricula. In B. Fishman & S. O'Connor-Divelbiss (Eds.), *Fourth international conference of the learning sciences* (pp. 342-349). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rentner, D. S., & Kober, N. (2012). *After the stimulus money ends: The status of state K-12 education funding and reforms*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy at George Washington University.

Reynolds, A. L., VanGronigen, B. A., Nash, A. M., & Perrone, F. (2017, April). *A systematic mapping of the negative space in educational leadership literature*. Paper presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX, USA.

Reynolds, D., Teddlie, C., Chapman, C., & Stringfield, S. (2016). Effective school processes. In C. Chapman, D. Muijs, D. Reynolds, P. Sammons, & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of educational effectiveness and improvement: Research, policy, and practice* (pp. 77-99). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rodgers, B. L., & Cowles, K. V. (1993). The qualitative research audit trail: A complex collection of documentation. *Research in Nursing & Health, 16*(3), 219-226.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4-36.

Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rousmaniere, K. (2013). *The principal's office: A social history of the American school principal*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Rowan, B., Raudenbush, S. W., & Kang, S. J. (1991). Organizational design in high schools: A multilevel analysis. *American Journal of Education, 99*(2), 238-266.

Salas, E., Dickinson, T. L., Converse, S., & Tannenbaum, S. I. (1992). Toward an understanding of team performance and training. In R. W. Swezey & E. Salas (Eds.), *Teams: Their training and performance* (pp. 3-29). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Salas, E., Goodwin, G. F., & Burke, C. S. (2008). *Team effectiveness in complex organizations: Cross-disciplinary perspectives and approaches*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Salem, O., Solomon, J., Genaidy, A., & Minkarah, I. (2006). Lean construction: From theory to implementation. *Journal of Management in Engineering, 22*(4), 168-175.

Salmonowicz, M. (2009). Meeting the challenge of school turnaround: Lessons from the intersection of research and practice. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(3), 19-24.

Sarason, S. (1990). *The predictable failure of school reform: Can we change course before it's too late?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Saw, G., Schneider, B., Frank, K., Chen, I. C., Keesler, V., & Martineau, J. (2017). The impact of being labeled as a persistently lowest achieving school: Regression discontinuity evidence on consequential school labeling. *American Journal of Education, 123*(4), 585-613.

Saxton, G. (2005). The participatory revolution in nonprofit management. *The Public Manager, 34*(Spring), 34-39.

Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Wiley.

Schmidt-Davis, J., & Bottoms, G. (2012). *Turnaround high school principals: Recruit, prepare and empower leaders of change.* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.

Schoen, L., & Fusarelli, L. D. (2008). Innovation, NCLB, and the fear factor: The challenge of leading 21st-century schools in an era of accountability. *Educational Policy*, *22*(1), 181-203.

Schueler, B. E. (2019). A third way: The politics of school district takeover and turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 55*(1), 116-153.

Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2012). *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Scott, W. R. (1992). *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sebastian, J., & Allensworth, E. (2012). The influence of principal leadership on classroom instruction and student learning: A study of mediated pathways to learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(4), 626-663.

Sebastian, J., Camburn, E. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2018). Portraits of principal practice: Time allocation and school principal work. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(1), 47-84.

Sebastian, J., Huang, H., & Allensworth, E. (2017). Examining integrated leadership systems in high schools: Connecting principal and teacher leadership to organizational processes and student outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 28*(3), 463-488.

Selznick, P. (1948). Foundations of the theory of organization. *American Sociological Review, 13*(1), 25-35.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and science of the learning organization.* New York, NY: Doubleday

Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for parents, educators, and everyone who cares about education.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sesky, J. (2014). *A story of distributed leadership at a turnaround high school: Identifying settings and practices* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. (UMI No. 3635056)

Silins, H., & Mulford, B. (2004). Schools as learning organisations: Effects on teacher leadership and student outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*(3-4), 443-466.

Simon, H. A. (1946). The proverbs of administration. *Public Administration Review, 6*(1), 53-67.

Simon, N. S., & Johnson, S. M. (2015). Teacher turnover in high-poverty schools: What we know and can do. *Teachers College Record, 117*(3), 1-36.

Sipple, J. W., & Brent, B. O. (2007). Challenges and strategies associated with rural school settings. In H. F. Ladd & E. B. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of research in education finance and policy* (1st ed.) (pp. 612-630). New York, NY: Routledge.

Siskin, L. S. (1997). The challenge of leadership in comprehensive high schools: School vision and departmental divisions. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 33*(1_suppl), 604-623.

Sizer, T. R. (2004). *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school.* Boston, MA: Mariner Books.

Smylie, M. A. (1992). Teacher participation in school decision making: Assessing willingness to participate. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 14*(1), 53-67.

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J. P. (2012). *Distributed leadership* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.

Spillane, J. P., & Healey, K. (2010). Conceptualizing school leadership and management from a distributed perspective: An exploration of some study operations and measures. *The Elementary School Journal, 111*(2), 253-281.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher, 30*(3), 23-28.

Spillane, J. P., Parise, L. M., & Sherer, J. Z. (2011). Organizational routines as coupling mechanisms: Policy, school administration, and the technical core. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(3), 586-619.

Sprague, N. F. (1973). Involving the assistant principal on the administrative team. *NASSP Bulletin*, *57*(375), 28-35.

Starratt, R. J. (1993). *The drama of leadership*. London, UK: Falmer.

Stevens, F., Diederiks, J., & Philipsen, H. (1992). Physician satisfaction, professional characteristics and behavior formalization in hospitals. *Social Science & Medicine, 35*(3), 295-303.

Stoll, L. (2009). Capacity building for school improvement or creating capacity for learning? A changing landscape. *Journal of Educational Change, 10*(2-3), 115-127.

Stoll, L., & Louis, K. S. (2007). *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas*. London, UK: McGraw-Hill Education.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Stuit, D. (2012). Turnaround and closure rates in the charter and district sectors. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 17*(1-2), 40-54.

Sunderman, G. L., Orfield, G., & Kim, J. S. (2006). Flawed assumptions: How No Child Left Behind fails principals. *Principal Leadership*, *6*(8), 16-19.

Supovitz, J. A., & Weinbaum, E. H. (Eds.) (2008). *Implementation gap: Understanding reform in high schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal, 11*(2), 63-75.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Taylor, F. W. (1914). *The principles of scientific management*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Teitel, L. (1996). Finding common ground: Teacher leaders and principals. In G. Moller & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership* (pp. 139-154). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Terrell, A. S. (2015). *The role of teacher professional development in turnaround principals' approach to raising student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3720859)

Thielman, J. (2012). School turnaround: Cristo Rey Boston high school case study. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice, 16*(1), 115–147.

Thomas, D. (2009). *Working together is success: How successful headteachers build and develop effective leadership teams.* Nottingham, UK: National College for School Leadership.

Thompson, C. L., Brown, K. M., Townsend, L. W., Henry, G. T., & Fortner, C. K. (2011). *Turning around North Carolina's lowest achieving schools (2006-2010).* Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation—North Carolina.

Thrasher, F. M. (1936). The boys' club and juvenile delinquency. *American Journal of Sociology, 42*(1), 66-80.

Tillman, L. C. (2006), Accountability, high stakes testing and No Child Left Behind. In F. Brown & R. C. Hunter (Eds.), *No Child Left Behind and other federal programs for urban school districts (Advances in educational administration, volume 9)* (pp. 189-200). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Trujillo, T., & Renée, M. (2015). Irrational exuberance for market-based reform: How federal turnaround policies thwart democratic schooling. *Teachers College Record, 117*(6), 1-34.

Tubin, D. (2015). School success as a process of structuration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *51*(4), 640-674.

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science, 211*(4481), 453-458.

Tyack, D. B., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia: A century of school reform.* Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D., & Hansot, E. (1982). *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in America, 1820-1980*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Common core of data: Public elementary/secondary school universe survey.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Author.

U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. A report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education.* Washington, DC: Author.

Valentine, J. W., & Prater, M. (2011). Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: High school principals make a difference. *NASSP Bulletin, 95(*1), 5-30.

van der Mescht, H., & Tyala, Z. (2008). School principals' perceptions of team management: A multiple case-study of secondary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, *28*(2), 221-239.

Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 539-550.

VanGronigen, B. A., & Meyers, C. V. (2019). How state education agencies are administering school turnaround efforts: 15 years after No Child Left Behind. *Educational Policy, 33*(3), 423-452.

VanGronigen, B. A., & Meyers, C. V. (2017). Topics and trends in short-cycle planning: Are principals leading school turnaround efforts identifying the right priorities? *Planning & Changing, 48*(1/2), 26-42.

VanGronigen, B. A., Cunningham, K. M.W., & Young, M. D. (2018). How exemplary educational leadership preparation programs hone the interpersonal-intrapersonal (i^2) skills of future leaders. *Journal of Transformative Leadership and Policy Studies, 7*(2).

Virginia Department of Education [VDOE]. (2018). *School accreditation ratings*. Richmond, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/accreditation_federal_reports/accreditation/index.shtml

Vogus, T. J., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007, October). Organizational resilience: Towards a theory and research agenda. In *Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Systems, Man and Cybernetics* (pp. 3418-3422). Montreal, Canada: IEEE.

von Bertalanffy, L., & Rapoport, A. (1956). General systems. In *Yearbook of the society for the advancement of general system theory* (pp. 1-10). Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield.

Wallace, M. (2001). Sharing leadership of schools through teamwork: A justifiable risk?. *Educational Management & Administration*, *29*(2), 153-167.

Wallace, M. (2002). Modelling distributed leadership and management effectiveness: Primary school senior management teams in England and Wales. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *13*(2), 163-186.

Wallace, M., & Hall, V. (1994). *Inside the SMT: Teamwork in secondary school management*. London, UK: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Wallace, M., & Huckman, L. (1996). Senior management teams in large primary schools: A headteacher's solution to the complexities of post-reform management?. *School Organisation*, *16*(3), 309-323.

Wallace, M., & Huckman, L. (1999). *Senior management teams in primary schools: The quest for synergy*. London, UK: Psychology Press.

Waterman, R. H. (1994). *What America does right: Learning from companies that put people first*. New York, NY: Norton.

Weber, M. (1930). *The protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons, Trans.). London, UK: Allen and Unwin.

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization* (T. Parsons, Trans.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Whitman, D. (2008). *Sweating the small stuff: Inner-city schools and the new paternalism.* Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation & Institute.

Wolcott, H. (1975). Criteria for an ethnographic approach to research in schools. *Human Organization, 34*(2), 111-127.

Wong, V. C., Wing, C., Martin, D., & Krishnamachari, A. (2018). Did states use implementation discretion to reduce the stringency of NCLB? Evidence from a database of state regulations. *Educational Researcher, 47*(1), 9-33.

Woodward, J. (1965). *Industrial organization: Theory and practice*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ylimaki, R. M., Brunderman, L., Bennett, J. V., & Dugan, T. (2014). Developing Arizona turnaround leaders to build high-capacity schools in the midst of accountability pressures and changing demographics. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 13*(1), 28-60.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(3), 255-316.

Zaccaro, S. J., Rittman, A. L., & Marks, M. A. (2001). Team leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 12*(4), 451-483.

Zappulla, P. (2003). Issues in the development of leadership teams. *Management in Education*, *17*(4), 29-34.

Zehr, M. A. (2010). Rural dropout factories often overshadowed. *Education Week, 29*(27), 16-17.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Investigator Agreement

Institutional Review Board
for SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA

A. Investigator Agreement

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE INVESTIGATOR AGREES:

1. That **no participants will be recruited** or data accessed under the protocol **until** the Investigator has received the **final approval or exemption letter** signed by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS) or designee.
2. That **no participants will be recruited** or entered under the protocol **until** all researchers for the project including the Faculty Advisor have completed their **human investigation educational requirement** (CITI training is required every 3 years for UVA researchers).
3. That any **modifications of the protocol or consent form** will not be implemented without prior **written approval** from the IRB-SBS Chair or designee except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the participants.
4. That any **deviation from the protocol and/or consent form** that are serious, unexpected and related to the study or a **death** occurring during the study **will be reported promptly to the SBS Review Board** in writing.
5. That all protocol forms for **continuations of this protocol** will be **completed** and returned **within the time limit stated** on the renewal notification letter.
6. That **all participants will be recruited and consented as stated in the protocol approved or exempted** by the IRB-SBS board. If written consent is required, all participants will be consented by signing a copy of the consent form that has a non-expired IRB approval stamp.
7. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified within **30 days** of a **change in the Principal Investigator** for the study.
8. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified when **the active study is complete**.

Bryan A. VanGronigen   3/19/2018
Principal Investigator (print)   Date
An Examination of the Structures, Operations, and Perceived
Effectiveness of School Leadership Teams in State-Designated
High Schools in Improvement
Protocol Title   **Protocol Number (SBS office only)**

Principal Investigator's Signature

FOR STUDENT AND STAFF PROPOSALS ONLY
BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE FACULTY ADVISOR HAS READ THE PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH AND AGREES:
1. To **assume overall responsibility** for the conduct of this research and investigator.
2. To **work with the investigator**, and with the SBS Review Board, as needed, in **maintaining compliance with this agreement**.
3. That the **Principal Investigator is qualified to perform this study**.

Daniel L. Duke
Faculty Advisor (print)   Date
                                                                     3/19/18
Faculty Advisor's Signature
The SBS Review Board reserves the right to terminate this study at any time if, in its opinion, (1) the risks of further experimentation are prohibitive, or (2) the above agreement is breached.

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In reply, please refer to: Project # 2018-0171-00

April 30, 2018

Bryan VanGronigen
Daniel Duke
Leadership, Foundations & Policy
PO Box 400287

Dear Bryan VanGronigen and Daniel Duke:

The Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences has approved your research project entitled "An Examination of the Structures, Operations, and Perceived Effectiveness of School Leadership Teams in High Schools." You may proceed with this study. Please use the enclosed Consent Forms as the master for copying forms for participants.

This project # 2018-0171-00 has been approved for the period April 25, 2018 to April 24, 2019. If the study continues beyond the approval period, you will need to submit a continuation request to the Review Board. If you make changes in the study, you will need to notify the Board of the changes.

Sincerely,

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Appendix C: *SLTi* Working Skeleton

School Leadership Team Inventory (*SLTi*) Working Skeleton

Part 1 of 4 – Demographic Information

<u>Directions</u>: For each of the following items, select your response from the drop-down menu.

1. Please indicate your gender:
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Transgender
   d. Prefer Not to Answer
   e. Not Listed (please specify) _____

2. Please indicate your ethnic origin:
   a. African American/Black
   b. Asian American/Pacific Islander
   c. Hispanic/Latino(a)
   d. Euro-American/White
   e. Prefer Not to Answer
   f. Not Listed (please specify) _____

3. Please indicate your highest level of education completed:
   a. Bachelors (BA, BS, BSEd)
   b. Masters (MA, MS, MEd, MAT)
   c. Education Specialist (EdS)
   d. Doctorate (EdD, PhD)
   e. Prefer Not to Answer
   f. Not Listed (please specify) _____

4. How many years of experience do you have working in education?
   a. 1-5 years
   b. 6-10 years
   c. 11-15 years
   d. 16-20 years
   e. 20+ years
   f. Prefer Not to Answer

5. What best describes your educational role?
   a. Principal
   b. Assistant principal
   c. Curriculum/instructional coach
   d. Department leader/team leader/subject leader

e. Other administrative staff
f. Guidance counselor
g. Speech-language pathologist
h. Librarian
i. Office staff
j. Teacher – Art
k. Teacher – Business
l. Teacher – English/Language Arts
m. Teacher – Family and Consumer Sciences
n. Teacher – Fine Arts
o. Teacher – Gifted Education
p. Teacher – Industrial Technology
q. Teacher – Math
r. Teacher – Performing Arts
s. Teacher – Physical Education
t. Teacher – Science
u. Teacher – Social Studies
v. Teacher – Special Education
w. Teacher – World Languages
x. Prefer Not to Answer
y. Not Listed (please specify)

Part 2 of 4 – School Leadership Team Structural Characteristics

6. ***PRINCIPAL ONLY*** – List the titles, and the number of years of membership of current members of your SLT (e.g., assistant principal, guidance department chair).
   a. List the titles, and the number of years of membership of SLT members last academic year.
   b. List the titles, and the number of years of membership of SLT members two academic years ago.
   c. List the titles, and the number of years of membership of SLT members three academic years ago.

7. To your knowledge, how many principals has your school had in the past 10 years? (Enter the number of years.)

8. Has the number of members of your SLT changed within the past two academic years?
   a. Yes (if Yes, by how much?)
   b. No

9. The size of our SLT is...
   a. Too large
   b. Just the right size
   c. Too small

10. How many years have you been a member of your SLT? (Enter the number of years.)

11. How were you selected for SLT membership? (Select your response from the drop-down menu.)
    a. Appointment by current principal
    b. Appointment by former principal
    c. Election by SLT
    d. Appointment by SLT
    e. Election by department/office/unit
    f. Appointment by department/office/unit
    g. Election by whole school
    h. Not Listed (please specify)

12. How often does your SLT meet?
    a. Daily
    b. 2 to 3 times per week
    c. Weekly
    d. Bi-weekly
    e. Monthly
    f. As needed
    g. Not Listed (please specify) _____

13. How long is a typical SLT meeting?
    a. 0 to 30 minutes
    b. 31 to 60 minutes
    c. 61 to 90 minutes
    d. More than 90 minutes

14. Who typically leads the SLT meetings?
    a. Principal
    b. SLT member (not the principal)
    c. This rotates among SLT members
    d. Not Listed (please specify) _____

15. Who prepares the agenda for SLT meetings?
    a. Principal
    b. SLT member (not the principal)
    c. Rotates among SLT members
    d. There is no formal agenda
    e. Not Listed (please specify) _____

16. To what extent are you in contact with SLT members outside of formal SLT meetings?
    a. Interact with all SLT members daily

b. Interact with most SLT members daily

c. Interact with few SLT members daily

17. How many new members join your SLT in a typical school year? (Enter the number of new members.)

18. Do new SLT members receive training regarding how to be an SLT member?
    a. Yes (if Yes, briefly describe this training.)
    b. No

Part 3 of 4 – School Leadership Team Characteristics and Functions

<u>Directions</u>: This section consists of two tables. Each table offers a prompt and an accompanying set of statements for your response. Select your response by checking the appropriate box.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
PROMPT: In your role as an SLT member, please respond to the following statements…					
19. Our SLT's workload is shared evenly across all SLT members.					
20. Non-SLT members (e.g., other school staff members) know who is on our SLT.					
21. Our principal makes the final decision about who serves on our SLT.					
22. Our SLT should revise its structure (e.g., membership, schedule).					
23. Our SLT's structure (e.g., membership, schedule) negatively influences our SLT's performance.					
24. There is a clear division of labor among SLT members with our SLT's workload.					
25. I consider my time on the SLT to be a personal leadership development opportunity.					

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
PROMPT: Our SLT takes responsibility for...					
26. engaging in deep root cause analysis to identify our school's most pressing issues.					
27. creating our school's vision and devising goals to help realize that vision.					
28. creating a long-term plan (e.g., three to five years) for our school's growth and development.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29. leading change and improvement initiatives.					
30. considering what's best for our school as a whole.					
31. altering the beliefs, values, and perspectives of all school staff members.					
32. getting our school to buy into change and improvement initiatives.					
33. coordinating the work among our school's departments and units.					
34. creating a safe and orderly school climate.					
35. creating professional development initiatives tailored to school staff members' specific needs.					
36. promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff.					
37. ensuring our school staff members engage in continuous professional learning.					
38. breaking down barriers between our school's departments and units.					
39. empowering non-SLT members to suggest and lead change and improvement initiatives.					
40. providing other perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs.					
41. ensuring all school staff members feel part of the same team.					
42. discussing which school staff members are "on board" with our school's vision and goals.					
43. holding other school members, especially teachers, accountable for their performance.					
44. developing each SLT member's leadership capacity.					

Part 4 of 4 – Perceptions of School Leadership Team Dynamics and Effectiveness

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
PROMPT: In your role as an SLT member, please respond to the following statements…					
45. During SLT meetings, I feel safe expressing views that are contrary to other SLT members' views.					
46. Our SLT has a set of agreed-upon norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings.					
47. I am too busy to fully contribute to and participate as a member of our SLT.					

48. I consider our SLT to be a waste of my time and energy.					
49. I have closer social relationships with SLT members than with other school staff members.					
50. Our current SLT membership brings many viewpoints around the same table.					
51. Our principal acts as a facilitator during SLT meetings.					
52. Our principal positively influences our SLT's dynamics.					
53. I participate in individual professional development initiatives to enhance my ability as an SLT member.					
54. Our principal develops SLT members' leadership abilities.					
55. Our school's performance has improved because of our SLT's work.					
56. Principal turnover in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.					
57. SLT membership turnover has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.					
58. My SLT colleagues are effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities.					
59. Non-SLT members would say that our SLT is a representative voice of school staff members' opinions.					
60. Non-SLT members would say that our SLT is competent.					
61. Non-SLT members would say our SLT is effective in carrying out its responsibilities.					
62. Non-SLT members would say that our SLT values their feedback and opinions.					
63. Our SLT has a culture of collaboration and advances efforts as a team.					
64. Our SLT is not doing enough to improve our school.					
65. Our SLT makes decision by consensus, even if the principal disagrees with the decision.					
66. Our SLT members have confidence in one another.					
67. Our SLT members trust one another.					
68. Our SLT presents an image of unity outside of SLT meetings.					
69. Our SLT promotes a culture of collective accountability among itself.					
70. Our SLT, as a group, participates in group professional development initiatives to enhance our ability as an SLT.					
71. SLT members and non-SLT members would agree on our SLT's purpose within our school.					

72. The actual work our SLT does aligns with the work I expect our SLT should do within our school.					
73. Our SLT's performance, on the whole, can be improved.					

Appendix D: Phase 1 Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Phase 1 Semi-Structured Interviews

<u>**Project Title**</u>: An Examination of the Structures, Functions, and Perceived Effectiveness of School Leadership Teams in High Schools

<u>**Introduction**</u>

Thank you for participating in this interview to provide information about the structure, operations, and effectiveness of your school's leadership team. Before we start, I'd like to provide a little background on my work and answer any questions you might have for me. I am a third-year PhD student in educational administration and supervision at the University of Virginia under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Duke, professor of educational administration and supervision at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education.

I am interested in learning about school leadership teams (SLTs) in high schools, particularly as they relate to school improvement efforts. The goal of this interview is to better understand the composition, structures, functions, operations, and effectiveness of SLTs in high schools.

Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately 35 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about the composition, structure, and functions of your school's leadership team. I will then ask a series of questions about how your school's leadership team goes about performing the functions you mentioned. A final series of questions will ask how you define the effectiveness of your school's leadership team. I will then ask you to assess your school's leadership team effectiveness based off your definition of effectiveness.

You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify me that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation. As a reminder, this interview will be recorded; however, your name will not be recorded. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. Any names of people and/or places will be anonymized. I will not share your individual responses with anyone else except a professional transcription service, which adheres to the highest standards of professional ethics.

Before we can continue, I need to gain your consent to conduct the interview. Please review this form and let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Location: _____   Date: _____/_____/_____

Time Start: _____ AM / PM   Time End: _____ AM / PM

1. Let's get started. In my work on this topic, I've encountered a range of school contexts—urban and rural high schools, combined middle schools and high schools, large and small high schools. Given this variation, I want to start with a key question because it'll determine where we go next...
2. Does your school have a leadership team?
   - If YES, proceed to Protocol 1.
   - If NO, proceed to Protocol 2.

PROTOCOL 1

Composition, Structure, and Functions of SLTs

The **first topic** asks about the membership and structures of your school's leadership team.

1. **What roles are represented on your school's leadership team?**
   a. *Probe: To what extent do you think your colleagues know the roles represented on your school's leadership team?*
2. **How would you describe the structure of your school's leadership team?**
   a. *Probe: How are members selected?*
   b. *Probe: Does SLT membership change from year to year? If so, what are the reasons for changes?*
3. **How would you describe the meeting structure of your school's leadership team?**
   a. *Probe: How often do they meet? Where do they meet? Who can attend their meetings? How are the meetings recorded?*
4. **In your opinion, what do you think your school's leadership team does?**
   a. *Probe: What functions do you think your school's leadership team performs?*
      i. *Probes: Leading initiatives? Linking different people together? Developing the skillsets of faculty members?*
   b. *Probe: To what extent do you think your colleagues know what your school's leadership team does?*
      i. *Probe if there is a difference between individual and colleagues' perspectives: There appears to be a difference between what you think the team does and what you think your colleagues think the team does. Tell me more about that, please.*

c. Probe: Are members of the school community informed about topics discussed and actions taken by the SLT? If so, how is this information shared? Can you provide an example of an action that was shared?

5. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the membership and structures of your school's leadership team?

Operations of SLTs

The **second topic** asks about the operations of your school's leadership team.

6. You noted several functions in the first section of this interview. How does your school's leadership team go about performing those functions?
   a. Probe: You mentioned the team did [INSERT]. How do they go about doing that?
7. How would you describe the relationships among members of your school's leadership team?
   a. Probe: What do you think is your school principal's role within your school's leadership team?
   b. Probe: To what extent do you think they work as a team?
8. How do you think your school's leadership team goes about making decisions?
   a. Probe: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our school's leadership team makes decisions based on consensus.
   b. Probe: To what extent does the team present a united front after making a decision?
9. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the operations of your school's leadership team?

Effectiveness of SLTs

The **third topic** asks about the effectiveness of your school's leadership team.

10. How would you evaluate your school leadership team's effectiveness at performing its functions and/or carrying out its responsibilities?
   *a. Probe: **Are there matters the SLT needs to address that it has not addressed at all?** What about matters that the SLT has not addressed well enough?*
   b. Probe: How do you think your colleagues would evaluate your school leadership team's effectiveness?
   c. Probe if there is a difference between individual and colleagues' definitions (or criteria): There appears to be a difference between what you think the team does and what you think your colleagues think the team does. Tell me more about that, please.

11. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the effectiveness of your school's leadership team?

Demographics and Closing

Just a few quick demographic questions before we finish up.

12. What is your position within the school?
13. How long have you been in your current position?
14. How many years have you been at [CURRENT SCHOOL]?
15. How long have you been a [POSITION]?
16. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell me related to the study's questions that I haven't asked you?

Thank you again for your time. I very much appreciate your thoughtful participation. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at any time.

PROTOCOL 2

1. **Can you tell me more about why your school doesn't have a leadership team?**

2. **In your opinion, do you feel there's a need for an SLT?**
   a. If YES, proceed to Question 3.
   b. If NO, why don't you feel there's a need for an SLT?

3. **What do you see as some of the benefits of having an SLT?**
   a. *Probe: How do you think your faculty members would respond to the creation of an SLT?*

4. **How would you structure the SLT?**
   a. *Probe: What roles might be represented on the team? Why?*
      i. *Probe: How might these roles interact on such a team?*
   b. *Probe: How often would the team meet? Where would they meet?*
   c. *Probe: How would the meetings be recorded?*
   d. *Probe: How would members of the school community be informed about topics discussed and actions taken by the SLT?*

5. **What might the team take responsibility for within the school?**
   a. *Probe: Why these responsibilities?*
   b. *Probe: Who has these responsibilities right now?*

6. **How would you determine whether the SLT was effective at performing its functions and/or carrying out its responsibilities?**

Just a few quick demographic questions before we finish up.

7. **What is your position within the school?**
8. **How long have you been in your current position?**

9. How many years have you been at [CURRENT SCHOOL]?

10. How long have you been a [POSITION]?

11. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell me related to the study's questions that I haven't asked you?

Thank you again for your time. I very much appreciate your thoughtful participation. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Appendix E: *SLTi* Pilot

School Leadership Team Inventory (*SLTi*) Pilot

Q1 The purpose of this survey is to develop a better understanding about leadership teams in high schools: how they are structured, what they do, and how they are perceived by their members. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. Your name will NOT be collected, and results across all participating schools will be reported in aggregate.

The survey should take you around 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point, for any reason, and without any consequence. If you would like to contact the director of this study to discuss this research, please e-mail Bryan A. VanGronigen at bav9wb@virginia.edu. A full copy of the survey consent form can be accessed here.

By clicking below, you acknowledge that your participation is voluntary, you are at least 18 years of age, and you have the right to withdraw at any point, for any reason, and without any consequence.

○ I consent to participate.

Q2 The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding about leadership teams in high schools. Given the variety of schools in the study, different schools might have a number of teams considered to be "leadership teams."

Please check the boxes next to the names of the various leadership teams in your school.

If team names are not listed, please enter them in the open text boxes and then check the corresponding box.

☐ Administrative Team (1)

☐ Building Leadership Team/School Leadership Team (BLT/SLT) (2)

☐ School Improvement Team (3)

☐ Behavioral Intervention Team (e.g., PBIS) (4)

☐ Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) (5)

☐ Other (please enter name) (6)

_____

☐ Other (please enter name) (7)

_____

☐ Other (please enter name) (8)

_____

Q3 While numerous "leadership teams" may exist in your school, such as an administrative team that includes only the principal and assistant principal(s), the remainder of the survey asks questions about a SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT).

This study defines a SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT) as one that focuses on one or more school-wide issues and includes a range of staff members, such as administrators (e.g., principal), department chairs/subject leaders, teacher leaders (e.g., instructional coach), and/or teachers.

For the following questions, please answer with your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM in mind.

Q4 The size of our SLT is...

○ Too large (1)

○ Just the right size (2)

○ Too small (3)

Q5 Including this year, how many years have you been a member of your SLT? (Enter a number.)

_____

Q6 To your knowledge and including your current principal, how many principals has your school had in the past 10 years?

○ 1 (1)

○ 2 (2)

○ 3 (3)

○ 4 (4)

○ 5 (5)

○ 6 or more (6)

Q7 Which of the following best describes your understanding of how the SLT's size (e.g., number of members) has changed within the past TWO school years?

○ Increased significantly (more than 10%) (1)

○ Increased (under 10%) (2)

○ Stayed the same (5)

○ Decreased (under 10%) (6)

○ Decreased significantly (more than 10%) (7)

○ Not Sure (4)

Q8 In a typical school year, how many SLT members turn over? (e.g., SLT member leaves the school, SLT member cycles off SLT)

○ 0 (1)

○ 1 (2)

○ 2 (3)

○ 3 (4)

○ 4 or more (5)

Q9 How were you selected for SLT membership?

○ Hired by district-level staff (often only the principal) (1)

○ Appointed by current principal (2)

○ Appointed by former principal (3)

○ Elected by SLT (4)

○ Appointed by SLT (5)

○ Elected by department/office/unit (6)

○ Appointed by department/office/unit (7)

○ Elected by whole school (8)

○ Not listed (please specify) (9)

_____

Q10 How often does your SLT meet?

○ Daily (1)

○ Weekly (2)

○ Bi-weekly (3)

○ Monthly (4)

○ As needed (5)

○ Not listed (please specify) (6)

_____

Q11 How long is a typical SLT meeting?

○ 0 to 30 minutes (1)

○ 31 to 60 minutes (2)

○ 61 to 90 minutes (3)

○ More than 90 minutes (4)

Q12 Who typically leads SLT meetings?

○ Principal (1)

○ SLT member (not the principal) (2)

○ Rotates among SLT members (3)

○ Not Listed (please specify)   (4)

_____

Q13 Who typically prepares the agenda for SLT meetings?

    ◯ Principal (1)

    ◯ SLT member (not the principal) (2)

    ◯ Rotates among SLT members (3)

    ◯ There is no formal agenda (4)

    ◯ Not Listed (please specify) (5)

_____

Display This Question:
   If Q13 = Principal
   Or Q13 = SLT member (not the principal)
   Or Q13 = Rotates among SLT members

Q14 In what format is a typical SLT meeting agenda? Check all that apply.

    ☐ Paper copy (1)

    ☐ Email attachment (2)

    ☐ Electronic document (e.g., Google Doc) that CAN be edited (3)

    ☐ Electronic document (e.g., Google Doc) that CANNOT be edited (4)

    ☐ Not Listed (please specify) (5)

_____

Q15 Who typically takes minutes of SLT meetings?

    ◯ Principal (1)

    ◯ SLT member (not the principal) (2)

    ◯ Rotates among SLT members (3)

    ◯ SLT members take minutes individually (4)

    ◯ No minutes are taken (6)

    ◯ Not listed (please specify) (5)

_____

Q16 Who has access to SLT meeting minutes? Check all that apply.

☐ SLT members (1)

☐ The entire school staff (e.g., all teachers) (2)

☐ District officials (4)

☐ Parents, families, and/or guardians (5)

☐ Not listed (please specify) (3)

_____

Q17 Can non-SLT members attend SLT meetings without an explicit invitation?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not Sure (3)

Q18 In addition to your salary, are there other compensations or benefits you receive from being an SLT member? Check all that apply.

☐ Extra planning period (1)

☐ Stipend (4)

☐ Other (please enter) (3)

_____

☐ I do not receive other compensations or benefits. (5)

Q19 As a member of your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, please respond to the following prompts related to the CHARACTERISTICS of your school's leadership team.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by all SLT members. (55)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by our entire school staff. (56)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT spends more time reacting to external pressures than being proactive in addressing issues. (57)	○	○	○	○	○
Our administrators direct the work of our SLT. (58)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT's workload is shared evenly across all SLT members. (59)	○	○	○	○	○
There is a clear division of labor among SLT members with our SLT's workload. (60)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT members are the most highly respected staff members in our school. (61)	○	○	○	○	○
I consider my time on the SLT to be a personal leadership development opportunity. (62)	○	○	○	○	○
SLT members are selected for their leadership abilities. (63)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff members in our school are willing to serve on our SLT. (64)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff members in our school are eager to serve on our SLT. (65)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: School Leadership Team Characteristics

Start of Block: School Leadership Team Functions and Their Effectiveness

Q20 As a member of your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, please respond to the following prompts related to the EFFECTIVENESS of your school's leadership team in carrying out the following responsibilities. If your SLT does not carry out a particular responsibility, please select "This is not a responsibility of our SLT" for that row.

	Highly effective (1)	Effective (2)	Neither effective nor ineffective (3)	Ineffective (4)	Highly ineffective (5)	This is not a responsibility of our SLT. (6)
coordinating the work among our school's departments, offices, and/or units. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
considering what's best for our school as a whole. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating a safe and orderly school climate. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating our school's vision. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
devising goals and strategies to help realize our school's vision. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals. (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
identifying our school's most pressing issues. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○
leading change and improvement initiatives. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○

monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions. (12)

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Q21 As a member of your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, please respond to the following prompts related to the EFFECTIVENESS of your school's leadership team in carrying out the following responsibilities. If your SLT does not carry out a particular responsibility, please select "This is not a responsibility of our SLT" for that row.

	Highly effective (1)	Effective (2)	Neither effective nor ineffective (3)	Ineffective (4)	Highly ineffective (5)	This is not a responsibility of our SLT. (6)
leading instruction within our school. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
ensuring our school's staff engage in continuous professional development. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
leading professional development opportunities for our school's staff. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
discussing the performance of individual staff members. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
holding staff members accountable for their performance. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
reviewing and analyzing data. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT. (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○
disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: School Leadership Team Functions and Their Effectiveness

Start of Block: School Leadership Team Dynamics

Q22 As a member of your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, please respond to the following prompts related to the DYNAMICS of your school's leadership team.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Our current SLT membership brings diverse viewpoints around the same table. (112)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT has a set of agreed-upon norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings. (113)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT members are comfortable openly disagreeing with one another. (114)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT members trust one another. (115)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT promotes a culture of collective accountability among SLT members. (116)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT has a culture of collaboration and advances efforts as a team. (117)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT presents an image of unity outside of SLT meetings. (118)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT makes recommendations or decisions based on consensus. (119)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT has distinct decision-making authority over school-wide issues. (120)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT is strictly advisory to our school's administrators. (121)	○	○	○	○	○
Our principal positively influences our SLT's dynamics. (122)	○	○	○	○	○
Our principal develops SLT members' leadership abilities. (123)	○	○	○	○	○
Our principal acts as a facilitator during SLT meetings. (124)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT offers non-binding recommendations on issues to administrators. (125)	○	○	○	○	○

Our SLT ultimately defers to our administrators to make final decisions. (126)

○　　　○　　　○　　　○　　　○

End of Block: School Leadership Team Dynamics

Start of Block: School Leadership Team Effectiveness

Q23 As a member of your SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, please respond to the following prompts related to your perceptions of the EFFECTIVENESS of your school's leadership team.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is competent. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
My SLT colleagues are effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT is doing the work that I think it should be doing. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is effective in carrying out its responsibilities. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Non-SLT members would say our SLT is a representative voice of our school's staff. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Non-SLT members would say our SLT values their opinions and feedback. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Our school's performance has improved specifically because of our SLT's work. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT does a good job keeping a "pulse" of what is going on within our school. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
I participate in professional development to enhance my ability as an SLT member. (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT, as a group, participates in professional development to enhance its ability as an SLT. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT is effective in creating solutions to issues raised by school staff. (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT's structure positively influences our SLT's performance. (12)	○	○	○	○	○

Principal turnover in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance. (13)	○	○	○	○	○
Turnover among SLT members in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance. (14)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT should revise its structure (e.g., membership, schedule). (15)	○	○	○	○	○
Our SLT's performance, on the whole, can be improved. (16)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: School Leadership Team Effectiveness

Start of Block: Participant Information

Q24 Please indicate your gender:

○ Female (1)

○ Male (2)

○ Transgender (3)

○ Prefer Not to Answer (4)

○ Not Listed (please specify) (5)

_____

Q25 Please indicate your race/ethnicity:

○ African American/Black (1)

○ Asian American/Pacific Islander (2)

○ Hispanic/Latino(a) (3)

○ Euro-American/White (4)

○ Prefer Not to Answer (5)

○ Not Listed (please specify)   (6)

_____

Q26 Including this year, how many years of experience do you have working in K-12 schools?

○ 1-5 years (1)

○ 6-10 years (2)

○ 11-15 years (3)

○ 16-20 years (4)

○ 20+ years (5)

○ Prefer Not to Answer (6)

Q27 Which of the following best describes your CURRENT position within your school?

○ School-wide administrator (1)

○ Department chair/subject leader (2)

○ Teacher leader/team leader (3)

○ Curriculum/instructional coach (4)

○ Guidance counselor (5)

○ Speech-language pathologist (6)

○ Library/media specialist (7)

○ Office staff member (8)

○ Teacher (9)

○ Prefer Not to Answer (10)

○ Not Listed (please specify)   (11)

_____

Display This Question:
If Q27 = School-wide administrator

Q28 You selected ${Q27/ChoiceDescription/1} as your position. Which of the following best describes your title?

○ Principal (1)

○ Associate Principal (2)

○ Assistant Principal (3)

○ Activities Director (4)

○ Athletic Director (5)

○ School Improvement Coordinator (6)

○ Attendance Coordinator (7)

○ Not Listed (please specify) (8)

_____

Q29 You selected ${Q27/ChoiceDescription/2} as your position. What subject area do you lead?

○ Business (1)

○ Career and Technical Education (2)

○ English/Language Arts (3)

○ Family and Consumer Sciences (4)

○ Fine and/or Performing Arts (5)

○ Gifted Education (6)

○ Industrial Technology (7)

○ Math (8)

○ Physical Education (9)

○ Science (10)

○ Social Studies/History (11)

○ Special Education (12)

○ World Languages (13)

○ Not Listed (please specify) (14)

_____

Display This Question:
    If Q27 = Teacher leader/team leader

Q30 You selected ${Q27/ChoiceDescription/3} as your position. Which of the following best describes your title?

○ Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leader (1)

○ Grade-level Leader (2)

○ Not Listed (please specify) (3)

_____

Q31 You selected ${Q27/ChoiceDescription/9} as your position. What subject area do you teach?

○ Business (1)

○ Career and Technical Education (2)

○ English/Language Arts (3)

○ Family and Consumer Sciences (4)

○ Fine and/or Performing Arts (5)

○ Gifted Education (6)

○ Industrial Technology (7)

○ Math (8)

○ Physical Education (9)

○ Science (10)

○ Social Studies/History (11)

○ Special Education (12)

○ World Languages (13)

○ Not Listed (please specify) (14)

_____

End of Block: Participant Information

Start of Block: Raffle

Q32 Would you like to enter a raffle to win an Amazon Gift Card?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

End of Block: Raffle

Appendix F: Data Sources for *SLTi* Pilot Items

Abbreviation Key:
    Chars. = Characteristics
    CF = Conceptual framework
    Info. = Information
    LR = Literature review
    SLT = School leadership team
    UHS = Underperforming high schools

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Structural Chars.	The size of our SLT is (too large, just the right size, too small).	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Which of the following best describes your understanding of how the SLT's size (e.g., number of members) has changed within the past TWO school years?	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	How often does your SLT meet?	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	How long is a typical SLT meeting?	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Who typically leads SLT meetings?	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Who typically prepares the agenda for SLT meetings?	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	How were you selected for SLT membership?	Yes	LR		SLTs
Structural Chars.	Including this year, how many years have you been a member of your SLT?	Yes	LR		UHSs
Structural Chars.	To your knowledge and including your current principal, how many principals has your school had in the past 10 years?	Yes	LR		UHSs
Structural Chars.	In a typical school year, how many SLT members turn over?	Yes	LR		UHSs
Structural Chars.	Names of leadership teams	No	Interviews		

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Structural Chars.	In addition to your salary, are there other compensations or benefits you receive from being an SLT member?	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	In what format is a typical SLT meeting agenda?	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Who typically takes minutes of SLT meetings?	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Who has access to SLT meeting minutes?	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Can non-SLT members attend SLT meetings without an explicit invitation?	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	I consider my time on the SLT to be a personal leadership development opportunity.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Structural Chars.	Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by all SLT members.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Our SLT's workload is shared evenly across all SLT members.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	There is a clear division of labor among SLT members with our SLT's workload.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Our SLT has a clear purpose recognized by our entire school staff.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Structural Chars.	Our SLT spends more time reacting to external pressures than being proactive in addressing issues.	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Our administrators direct the work of our SLT.	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Our SLT members are the most highly respected staff members in our school.	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	SLT members are selected for their leadership abilities.	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Staff members in our school are willing to serve on our SLT.	No	Interviews		
Structural Chars.	Staff members in our school are eager to serve on our SLT.	No	Interviews		
Functions	securing buy-in from our school's staff to realize our school's vision.	Yes	CF	Political	
Functions	considering what's best for our school as a whole.	Yes	CF	Political	

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Functions	providing non-administrator perspectives on school concerns, issues, or needs.	Yes	CF	Political	
Functions	coordinating the work among our school's departments, offices, and/or units.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Functions	holding staff members accountable for their performance.	Yes	CF	Political	
Functions	promoting a sense of camaraderie among all staff.	Yes	CF	Symbolic	
Functions	ensuring our school's staff engage in continuous professional development.	Yes	CF	Political	
Functions	creating our school's vision.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Functions	devising goals and strategies to help realize our school's vision.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Functions	leading change and improvement initiatives.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Functions	creating a safe and orderly school climate.	Yes	LR		UHSs
Functions	identifying our school's most pressing issues.	Yes	LR		UHSs
Functions	keeping abreast of our school's progress toward meeting goals.	No	Interviews		
Functions	monitoring the implementation of SLT-created strategies and/or interventions.	No	Interviews		
Functions	leading instruction within our school.	No	Interviews		
Functions	leading professional development opportunities for our school's staff.	No	Interviews		
Functions	discussing issues before sharing with the rest of our school's staff.	No	Interviews		
Functions	discussing the performance of individual staff members.	No	Interviews		
Functions	reviewing and analyzing data.	No	Interviews		
Functions	soliciting opinions and feedback from non-SLT members.	No	Interviews		
Functions	sharing staff member concerns, issues, or needs with the rest of the SLT.	No	Interviews		

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Functions	disseminating information from the SLT to the rest of our school's staff.	No	Interviews		
Dynamics	Our SLT has a set of agreed-upon norms about how to treat one another during SLT meetings.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our SLT members trust one another.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our SLT makes recommendations or decisions based on consensus.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our principal acts as a facilitator during SLT meetings.	Yes	CF	Political	
Dynamics	Our current SLT membership brings diverse viewpoints around the same table.	Yes	CF	Political	
Dynamics	Our SLT promotes a culture of collective accountability among SLT members.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our SLT has a culture of collaboration and advances efforts as a team.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our SLT presents an image of unity outside of SLT meetings.	Yes	CF	Symbolic	
Dynamics	Our principal positively influences our SLT's dynamics.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Dynamics	Our principal develops SLT members' leadership abilities.	Yes	LR		UHSs
Dynamics	Our SLT members are comfortable openly disagreeing with one another.	No	Interviews		
Dynamics	Our SLT has distinct decision-making authority over school-wide issues.	No	Interviews		
Dynamics	Our SLT is strictly advisory to our school's administrators.	No	Interviews		
Dynamics	Our SLT offers non-binding recommendations on issues to administrators.	No	Interviews		
Dynamics	Our SLT ultimately defers to our administrators to make final decisions.	No	Interviews		

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Effectiveness	Non-SLT members would say our SLT values their opinions and feedback.	Yes	CF	Human Resources	
Effectiveness	Our SLT's structure positively influences our SLT's performance.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Effectiveness	Our SLT should revise its structure (e.g., membership, schedule).	Yes	CF	Structural	
Effectiveness	Non-SLT members would say our SLT is competent.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Effectiveness	My SLT colleagues are effective in carrying out their SLT-related responsibilities.	Yes	CF	Symbolic	
Effectiveness	Our SLT is doing the work that I think it should be doing.	Yes	CF	Political	
Effectiveness	Non-SLT members would say our SLT is a representative voice of our school's staff.	Yes	CF	Symbolic	
Effectiveness	Our SLT's performance, on the whole, can be improved.	Yes	CF	Structural	
Effectiveness	Non-SLT members would say our SLT is effective in carrying out its responsibilities.	Yes	CF	Symbolic	
Effectiveness	I participate in professional development to enhance my ability as an SLT member.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Effectiveness	Our SLT, as a group, participates in professional development to enhance its ability as an SLT.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Effectiveness	Our school's performance has improved specifically because of our SLT's work.	Yes	LR		SLTs
Effectiveness	Principal turnover in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.	Yes	LR		UHSs
Effectiveness	Turnover among SLT members in our school has negatively influenced our SLT's performance.	Yes	LR		UHSs
Effectiveness	Our SLT does a good job keeping a "pulse" of what is going on within our school.	No	Interviews		
Effectiveness	Our SLT is effective in creating solutions to issues raised by school staff.	No	Interviews		
Participant Info.	Gender	Yes	N/A		

SLTi Section	*SLTi* Item	Item in Working Skeleton?	Item Data Source	CF Frame	LR Section
Participant Info.	Race/ethnicity	Yes	N/A		
Participant Info.	Years of experience	Yes	N/A		
Participant Info.	Current position (and for teachers, subject areas)	Yes	N/A		

SLTi Working Skeleton to SLTi Pilot Summary Information

SLTi *Working Skeleton Structure and Number of Items*

Section Name	# of Items
Part 1 of 4 – Demographic Information	5
Part 2 of 4 – School Leadership Team Structural Characteristics	13
Part 3 of 4 – School Leadership Team Characteristics and Functions	26
Part 4 of 4 – Perceptions of School Leadership Team Dynamics and Effectiveness	29
Total	73

SLTi *Pilot Structure and Number of Items*

Section Name	# of Items
Part 1 of 5 – School Leadership Team Characteristics	27
Part 2 of 5 – School Leadership Team Functions and Their Effectiveness	22
Part 3 of 5 – School Leadership Team Dynamics	15
Part 4 of 5 – School Leadership Team Effectiveness	16
Part 5 of 5 – Participant Information	4
Total	84

Item Revisions from SLTi *Working Skeleton to* SLTi *Pilot*

Action Type	# of Items
Items Removed	19
Items Retained	55
Items Reworded	9
Items Added	29

Summary of Data Sources for SLTi *Pilot Items*

Data Source	# of Items
Conceptual Framework	36
Structural	15
Human Resources	8
Political	8
Symbolic	5
Literature Review	15
Underperforming High Schools	8
School Leadership Teams (SLTs)	7
Phase 1 Interviews	29
Participant Information Items	4
Total	84

Appendix G: Phase 1 Coding Framework Matrix

This coding framework matrix includes information about each of the Phase 1 SLTs. The following variables are not included in this appendix because they were already reported in Chapter 4 tables: # of Leadership Teams; Leadership Team Names; SLT Size; SLT Roles Present; Department Chairs/Representatives Automatic SLT Membership?; Application Required for Membership?; Interview Required for Membership?; SLT Membership Selection Authority?; Meeting Frequency; Meeting Time; Meeting Duration; Meeting Location; Who Can Attend SLT Meetings?; Meeting Agenda?; Meeting Agenda Creator?; Meeting Agenda Dissemination?; Central Meeting Minutes?; Meeting Minutes Recorder?; Meeting Minutes Dissemination?; and Online Document Storage?

Functions of Phase 1 SLTs

School Identifier	Voice of staff	Specific school improvement	Relaying information	Raising issues and devising solutions	Developing professional learning	Leading instruction	Motivating staff members	Brainstorming new ideas	Analyzing data	Taking a "pulse"	Hiring staff members	Onboarding new staff members	Total number of functions
A	1		1	1					1				4
B	1		1	1			1						4
C	1	1	1	1			1						5
D	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1		1	9
E	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1			8
F	1	1	1	1									4
G	1	1	1	1			1		1				6
H	1	1	1	1								1	5
I	1	1		1		1	1	1					6
J	1	1	1	1	1			1		1			7
K	1	1	1	1				1				1	6
L	1		1	1									3
M		1	1	1	1	1				1			6
N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	10
O	1	1	1	1	1	1							6

Note. Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential.

Size, Membership, and School Improvement Activities of Phase 1 SLTs

School Identifier	Size change?	Member differences?	Dept. rep. other than chair?	SLT member selection criteria	Specific school improvement	Developing action plans to respond to external mandates	Identifying goals and developing action plans	Monitoring implementation	SIP planning process	SIP planning process role
A	Increase by 1 (para-professional staff member)			LE						
B				.a						
C				PQ, PC, W	1				1	SLT analyzes data for principal/AT who then drafts SIP
D				PQ, PC	1				1	SLT provides thoughts for principal/AT who then drafts the SIP
E		Four core departments; two at-large		PC	1			1	1	SLT drafts whole SIP
F				PC	1		1		1	SLT provides thoughts for principal/AT who then drafts the SIP
G	Increase by 1 (non-certified staff member)		Yes	.a	1		1	1	1	SLT provides thoughts for principal/AT who then drafts the SIP
H				PC, PQ, SC	1				1	SLT provides thoughts for principal/AT who then drafts the SIP
I	Decrease from 13 to 7	8 at-large spots		PQ, PC, W	1	1	1			
J				LE	1				1	SLT drafts whole SIP
K	Increase by 1 (parent/community member)			PQ, W (Gut)	1		1		1	SLT provides thoughts for principal/AT who then drafts the SIP

School Identifier	Size change?	Member differences?	Dept. rep. other than chair?	SLT member selection criteria	Specific school improvement	Developing action plans to respond to external mandates	Identifying goals and developing action plans	Monitoring implementation	SIP planning process	SIP planning process role
L				PQ, W, SC						
M		Some at-large spots	Yes	PC, SC	1	1				
N				PQ, PC, W, SC	1		1	1	1	SLT drafts whole SIP
O				PC, W	1		1	1	1	Provide feedback on AT-created draft of the SIP

Note. Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from the tree-naming scheme in order to keep school identities confidential. LE = Level of experience; PQ = Personal qualities; PC = Professional competency; W = Willingness; SC = Standing among colleagues; AT = Administrative team; SIP = School improvement plan; .a = missing data from interview.

Definitions of Perceived Effectiveness of Phase 1 SLTs

School Identifier	Participant 1 Definition	Participant 2 Definition	Participant 3 Definition	Participant 1 Definition Criteria Type	Participant 2 Definition Criteria Type	Participant 3 Definition Criteria Type	Agreement Among Definitions?	Agreement Among Data Source Types?	Overall data source profile
OMITTED	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a
OMITTED	.a	Relaying	Relaying	Soft	Soft	Soft	Yes	Yes	Soft
OMITTED	Perceptions of SLT meetings' productivity; quality of data analysis during SLT meetings	Concerned about the school and showing up to SLT meetings	Relaying	Soft	Soft	Soft	No	Yes	Soft
OMITTED	Relaying	.a	Hasn't heard they're not effective; putting out fires	Soft	.a	Soft	No	Yes	Soft
OMITTED	.a	.a	Hasn't heard they're not effective; keeping younger teachers	.a	.a	Soft, hard	.a	.a	Soft, hard
OMITTED	SLT members are willing to help/work	N/A	N/A	Soft	N/A	N/A	N/A (only one interview)	N/A (only one interview)	Soft
OMITTED	Relaying	N/A	N/A	Soft	N/A	N/A	N/A (only one interview)	N/A (only one interview)	Soft
OMITTED	Relaying	Strong staff members (principal, instructional coach)	Not sure of all they're supposed to do, but better than last year	Soft	Soft	Soft	No	Yes	Soft
OMITTED	Relaying	Relaying	N/A	Soft	Soft	N/A	Yes	Yes	Soft
OMITTED	Changes in instructional practices (no more lectures, etc.)	N/A	N/A	Soft	N/A	N/A	N/A (only one interview)	N/A (only one interview)	Soft
OMITTED	Maintaining a constant focus on school improvement	N/A	N/A	Soft	N/A	N/A	N/A (only one interview)	N/A (only one interview)	Soft
OMITTED	State test results	.a	Degree to which new instructional framework is adopted; keeping respect of colleagues	Hard	.a	Soft	No	No	Soft, hard

School Identifier	Participant 1 Definition	Participant 2 Definition	Participant 3 Definition	Participant 1 Definition Criteria Type	Participant 2 Definition Criteria Type	Participant 3 Definition Criteria Type	Agreement Among Definitions?	Agreement Among Data Source Types?	Overall data source profile
OMITTED	State test results; climate surveys	Instructional practice takeaway from SLT meeting; movement in practice outside SLT meetings	Relaying	Hard	Soft	Soft	No	No	Hard, soft
OMITTED	Graduation rate, new student enrollments, low staff turnover	Relaying	Relaying	Hard	Soft	Soft	No	No	Hard, soft
OMITTED	Relaying; types of concerns brought to SLT meetings; students in upper-level classes; state test results	.a	Relaying	Soft, hard	.a	Soft	Yes (to an extent)	No	Soft, hard

Note. Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from both the letter-naming and the tree-naming schemes in order to keep school identities confidential. Because of the sensitivity of the data, identifiers in this table do not match any other table. ".a" = missing data from interview.

Evaluations of Perceived Effectiveness of Phase 1 SLTs

School Identifier	Participant 1 Evaluation	Participant 2 Evaluation	Participant 3 Evaluation	Agreement Among Evaluations?	Overall Evaluation
OMITTED	Very effective (9 out of 10)	Quite effective	Great job	Yes	Very effective
OMITTED	.a	Effective	Good job	Yes	Effective
OMITTED	Very effective	N/A	N/A	N/A (only one interview)	Very effective
OMITTED	Very effective	Very effective	Effective	No	Very effective
OMITTED	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
OMITTED	Very effective	Effective	N/A	No	Effective, leaning very
OMITTED	Effective for the most part	.a	.a	N/A (only one interview)	Effective for the most part
OMITTED	.a	Pretty effective	Effective	Yes	Effective
OMITTED	Effective	.a	Effective	Yes	Effective
OMITTED	Effective	.a	Highly effective	No	Effective, leaning very
OMITTED	.a	.a	.a	.a	.a
OMITTED	Not as effective	.a	Moving in the right direction	Yes	On the way to becoming more effective
OMITTED	.a	Not as effective (3 or 4 out of 10)	Average	No	Not as effective, but moving in the right direction
OMITTED	Effective	N/A	N/A	N/A	Effective
OMITTED	.a	.a	Effective	?	Effective

Note. Out of an abundance of caution, school names have been re-anonymized from both the letter-naming and the tree-naming schemes in order to keep school identities confidential. Because of the sensitivity of the data, identifiers in this table do not match any other table. ".a" = missing data from interview.