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# Fostering the capacity for distributed leadership: a post-heroic approach to leading school improvement

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Principals are being encouraged to distribute leadership to increase schools' organizational capacities, and enhance student growth and learning. Extant research on distributed leadership practices provides an emerging basis for adopting such approaches. Yet, relatively less attention has been paid to examining the principal's role in fostering the leadership capacities of others to create the capacity for distributed leadership. In this article, we examine the specific practices of six high school principals who fostered the leadership capacities of 18 other leaders in their respective schools. Our findings illustrate the key steps these principals undertook in identifying potential leaders, creating leadership opportunities for them, facilitating their role transitions and providing them with continuous support.

## Introduction

As interest in distributed leadership as an approach to improving school outcomes continues to grow, principals are increasingly being encouraged to distribute leadership responsibilities to other leaders in their buildings. Harris (2012) noted, 'Even though the evidence base about distributed leadership is still emerging, distributed leadership has already been adopted as part of educational reforms in a number of countries including the UK, the USA, Australia, parts of Europe and New Zealand' (p. 9). In the USA, a growing number of principals are being evaluated on their ability to distribute leadership through the incorporation of new leadership standards (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). Similarly, leadership preparation programmes are being assessed on their preparation of aspiring school leaders who are able to distribute leadership responsibilities (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2011).

This growing emphasis on distributing leadership in schools is grounded in the notion of post-heroic leadership (Fletcher, 2004) and is

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seen by some as a mechanism for transforming ‘learning organisations that are able to manage dynamic processes, leverage the learning from diverse perspectives, and accommodate the interests of multiple stakeholders’ (p. 655). Post-heroic forms of leadership emphasize the distributed, interdependent nature of leadership activities, leadership through social interactions and increased organizational learning outcomes (Fletcher).

Indeed, a growing body of research on distributed forms of school leadership emphasizes the affordances associated with broadening and deepening participation in school leadership activities. In the last few years, this research (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) has highlighted the positive influence of leadership on organizational conditions and student achievement when it is exercised by multiple agents. This body of research also includes studies that suggested principals’ distributed leadership practices are a way of enhancing schools’ capacities, especially for organizational change (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Day & Harris, 2002; Hallinger, 2011) and learning (Day, Jacobson, & Johansson, 2011; Mulford & Silins, 2003).

Paradoxically, even in post-heroic approaches to leadership, such as distributed leadership, principals play a central role in distributing leadership to other leaders in their schools (Leithwood et al., 2009; Mascall, Leithwood, Strauss, & Sacks, 2009). Harris (2012) noted that distributing leadership requires re-considering the principal’s role as one of ‘creating the conditions for others to lead’ and ‘orchestrat[ing] the talent and leadership capability of others to move the school forward’ (p. 15).

Yet, this approach to school improvement presupposes that principals know how to distribute leadership, that there are willing and able recipients for new or increased leadership responsibilities, and that this process will occur naturally and in an unproblematic fashion (Torrance, 2014). Furthermore, the characteristics of the structural and cultural conditions that could enhance or restrict the adoption of distributed leadership have received less attention (Harris, 2004, 2012; Spillane & Louis, 2005). Day, Sammons, et al. (2011) reported that ‘much has been written about the nature, forms and desirability of distributed leadership in schools, but there has been much less which addresses how, when and in what contexts it occurs ...’ (p. 209).

In this article, we report the findings of a descriptive study in which we conceptually situated ourselves at the nexus of capacity building (Stoll & Bolam, 2005) and distributed leadership, in the normative (Robinson, 2009) or prescriptive (Mayrowetz, 2008) sense. We do this to examine the principal’s role in fostering leadership capacity as a strategy for improving organizational learning and student outcomes. In particular, we endeavoured to answer the question, *how did the principals in six high schools from two states in the United States intentionally foster the leadership capacities of other leaders to enhance their schools’ capacities for distributed leadership and organizational improvement?*

In conducting this research, we extend the findings from two studies that examined the development of distributed leadership in secondary

schools in the USA (Klar, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Margolis & Huggins, 2012). These studies specifically examined how principals influenced teacher leadership roles using resources provided through grants. In the case of Klar (2012a, 2012b, 2013), the study was conducted in schools that had received a grant from the Wallace Foundation. This grant brought with it various resources and forms of external expertise directed toward supporting principals and department chairs in the process of enhancing distributed instructional leadership (Bredeson & Kelley, 2013). With the aid of external facilitation, conditions in these schools were created in which the principals were able to foster department chairs' instructional leadership capacities. In the case of Margolis and Huggins (2012), teacher leadership was studied both within and between school districts to understand how teacher leaders' roles were developed and defined, and how those organizational actions impacted their abilities to increase teacher capacity and student achievement. Findings from this study indicated that principal leadership affects role definition and teacher leaders' abilities to enact leadership roles. These studies illustrated the need to further understand how high school principals develop the leadership capacities of others in authentic contexts, i.e. those without the additional financial and technical resources provided by grants.

### Literature review

In the following sections, we describe the literature related to principals fostering leadership capacity as part of an organizational capacity building strategy. We begin with a brief description of the distributed leadership perspective we adopted for the purposes of this study. We then discuss the literature related to viewing principals as capacity builders and fostering the capacity for distributed leadership. We conclude with a conceptual framework highlighting the posited relationship between principals' fostering of leadership capacity and increased student growth and learning.

#### *Distributed leadership*

Though the notion of distributed leadership has existed in school leadership literature for decades, recently, it has received increased attention and empirical support amongst scholars and policymakers. Despite the long-standing existence of distributed leadership practices in schools (Gronn, 2002), and the increased scholarly focus (Bolden, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Louis et al., 2010), varying notions of the term distributed leadership currently exist in the literature base. Distributed leadership is commonly viewed as either an analytical framework for understanding how leadership is enacted in schools, as described by Spillane and his colleagues (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004), or as a prescriptive approach to school improvement. Robinson (2009) argued that this distinction is somewhat moot, however, asserting that distributed leadership is both descriptive and prescriptive, or normative. From the descriptive perspective, she suggested it is 'inevitably

distributed across fluid and task-contingent configurations of leaders, followers, and aspects of the situation' (p. 237), while from the normative perspective, 'one can argue that distributed leadership is a desirable form of organisational leadership' (p. 237).

In addition to the varying perspectives of distributed leadership, the various terms that are used to describe it in the normative sense create confusion (Torrance, 2014). Harris et al. (2007) suggested distributed leadership has become a 'convenient way of labeling all forms of shared leadership activity' (p. 338). Other terms commonly used to describe these activities include such descriptors as collaborative, collective, democratic, participative, shared and distributed instructional leadership. For example, Hallinger and Heck (2009) used the terms collaborative, shared and distributed interchangeably to describe 'leadership that is exercised by the principal along with other key staff' (p. 102). Despite the conflation of these terms by some researchers, they are more clearly distinguished by others. MacBeath, Oduro, and Waterhouse (2004) provided a useful typology of these distinctions in their study of distributed leadership in 11 schools in England. Though we are examining distributed leadership in the normative vein in this article, we use the term distributed leadership throughout to avoid conceptual confusion.

Various rationales have been proffered by scholars in support of distributed leadership in the normative sense. Robinson (2009) suggested that distributed leadership can be seen either as a way for school leadership to be more democratic, less managerial and less hierarchical, or as a prescription for school improvement. Similarly, Mayrowetz (2008) noted that from the normative perspective, distributed leadership can be seen as a way to enhance the democratic notion of schooling, increase a school's efficiency and effectiveness, and build human capacity.

Despite the increased interest in distributed leadership, cautions regarding its premature and uncritical adoption abound in the scholarly community, especially given the limited evidence of a relationship between increased distributed leadership and increased student outcomes. Mayrowetz (2008) noted that distributed leadership has not led to school improvement as often as it was presumed to. Robinson (2009) cautioned that the benefits teachers may experience in a distributed framework do not necessarily flow through to students. More recently, Harris (2012) reported that even though distributed leadership is being viewed as a reform initiative in many countries, the evidence base is still 'emerging' and 'there is more work to be done to understand the impact, both positive and negative, of distributed leadership across different schools and school contexts' (p. 9).

Other scholars have noted the conspicuous lack of attention given to issues related to distributed leadership, such as power and influence, the impact of school context, and the inclusion or omission of various stakeholders in leadership activities (Bolden, 2011; Lumby, 2013; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Torrance, 2014). In her study of distributed leadership in three Scottish primary schools, Torrance reported that distributed leadership was more complex and difficult to realize than it is usually described. Torrance reported that distributed leadership was 'context specific, socially constructed, negotiated, hierarchical and to a large

extent, “in the gift of the head teacher” (p. 356), findings which cast some doubt on the notion that distributed leadership is synonymous with developing more democratic institutions. Torrance’s research challenged the assumptions that all teachers are willing and able to lead, that the principal’s endorsement constitutes leadership legitimacy, and that distributed leadership is unproblematic and occurs naturally.

Cognizant of these concerns, our research is centred on better understanding the potential affordances and pitfalls of fostering distributed leadership when it is employed as an approach to building individual and organizational capacity, a view similar to MacBeath et al.’s (2004) perspective of distributed leadership as strategic. Thus, for the purposes of this study, we viewed distributed leadership as a *purposeful approach to increasing school effectiveness through the involvement of other formal and informal school leaders in leadership activities*.

### *Principals as capacity builders*

Despite the cautions described above, principals in many countries, including the USA, are being encouraged to distribute leadership to others in their schools as a means of increasing their schools capacities for improving educational outcomes for students. At the policy level, this can be seen in the standards by which principals are both prepared and evaluated (CCSSO, 2008; NPBEA, 2011), and the focus on educational reforms in many countries around the world (Harris, 2012).

The idea that principals can serve as builders of individual and organizational capacity has received much support in the scholarly field (Harris, 2003; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Lambert, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; O’Day, Goertz, & Floden, 1995; Stoll, Bolam, & Collarbone, 2002). For example, Stoll et al. (2002) argued that principals must serve as capacity builders to respond to the complex and evolving demands in education. Harris (2003) viewed the principal’s role as one of developing the capital within the school and creating the conditions necessary to support it.

Following an extensive review of the literature, Leithwood and his colleagues (2008; Louis et al., 2010) described developing people as one of four core leadership practices of successful educational leaders. Louis et al. (2010) reported that providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modelling appropriate values and practices are key activities related to developing people. They noted,

The primary aim of these practices is capacity building, understood to include not only the knowledge and skills staff members need to accomplish organisational goals but also the disposition staff members need to persist in applying those knowledge and skills. (p. 68)

In a slightly more expansive view of capacity, Stoll and Bolam (2005) described it as the, ‘motivation, skill, resources, resilience and conditions’ (p. 52) required to engage in sustained and continuous learning. Stoll and Bolam posited that building capacity in schools involves creating supportive environments, providing learning opportunities and ensuring all of the various activities are interconnected.

Notwithstanding the capacity-building strategies described by Louis et al. (2010), and Stoll and Bolam (2005) above, it is important to note that how these strategies are enacted will depend in part on the context in which they are employed. Leithwood et al. (2008) reported that successful school leaders are 'sensitive to' their school contexts, and 'apply contextually sensitive combinations' (p. 31) of leadership practices. Thus, in this study, we viewed the principals' fostering of leadership capacities as those actions that increased the motivations, knowledge, skills and dispositions of others to assume leadership roles in their schools. Furthermore, like Stoll and Bolam, we presupposed this would most likely occur through the creation of conditions and learning opportunities that allowed for this development.

Given this research basis, it would seem reasonable to engage other formal and informal leaders in school reform efforts. However, the current study is premised on the notion that one cannot assume such leaders are willing or able to assume greater leadership roles. Nor, we suggest, should it be assumed that all principals are willing or able to distribute leadership. Rather, we concur with Leithwood et al. (2004) and Stoll and Bolam (2005) who advocate for a thoughtful and purposeful approach to developing leadership for school improvement.

#### *Fostering the capacity for distributed leadership*

In addition to the work of Klar (2012a, 2012b, 2013) and Margolis and Huggins (2012) cited previously, other researchers have examined the role principals can play in fostering the capacities of other leaders. Research emerging from England (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2005; Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008) suggested that leadership distribution is a developmental process. Based on their study of distributed leadership in 11 English schools, MacBeath et al. (2004) and MacBeath (2005) described a three-phase model of leadership development. They suggested that principals first observe a school's structures, culture and history to identify people who have the requisite capacities to address existing needs, delegate responsibility to them and monitor their progress until the assigned tasks are completed. In the second stage, principals identify potential leaders and support them as they take on incrementally more complex activities. In the third stage, principals provide ongoing support from a distance as the emerging leaders become more established in their roles.

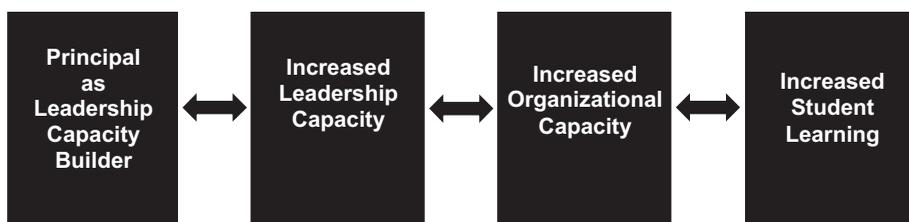
Day, Sammons and their colleagues (2011; Penlington et al., 2008) conducted a mixed-methods study of 10 elementary and 10 secondary effective and improving schools in England as part of the School Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Research (IMPACT) Project. They found that principals in all 20 schools, who were in the later stages of their careers, intentionally worked to share their roles and responsibilities with formal leaders in the early and middle phases of their tenures at their schools. Day, Sammons, et al. (2011) also reported that during the principals' initial tenures at their schools they worked to 'build trust and confidence between themselves and a range of staff before moving toward a broader

distribution of leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in the middle and later phases of their leadership' (p. 235). As a result of this research, Day, Sammons, et al. noted, 'trust is essential for the progressive and effective distribution of leadership' (p. 235). Consistent with research described earlier, they also proposed that the distribution of leadership occurs in a pattern influenced by the principal's determination of the school context, the readiness of others to lead, and his or her own capacity.

Scholars have also identified the important role of school structure and culture in supporting distributed leadership. Following a multi-year study of schools that had received a grant to promote distributed leadership, Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, and Louis (2009) noted that organizational structures and culture can work to advance or impede the distribution of leadership. In addition, they re-affirmed that the principal can play a key role in distributing leadership through practices such as ensuring a process for identifying and selecting leaders, and confronting organizational norms which serve as barriers to teachers being willing to take on leadership responsibilities.

### *A conceptual framework*

Despite the body of research advocating the role of the principal as leadership and organizational capacity builder, there remains limited research focused on how principals actually develop the capabilities of other leaders to engage in models of distributed leadership (Spillane & Louis, 2005; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). As can be seen in Figure 1, the conceptual framework of the current study is drawn from extant literature that highlights the principal's role in fostering individual leaders' capacities as a way to broaden and deepen leadership within schools (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2005; Day, 2007; Dimmock, 2012; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Jacobson, & Ylimaki, 2011; Louis et al., 2010). Increased levels of leadership capacity have in turn been shown to increase organizational capacity, allowing schools to better respond to the needs of students (Camburn et al., 2003; Day & Harris, 2002; Dimmock, 2012; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Importantly, as indicated by the bidirectional arrows in the figure, we view the components of the framework as reciprocally influencing and being influenced by other components



**Figure 1. Principal as leadership capacity builder framework**

Note: A conceptual framework for understanding the principal's role in increasing leadership capacity to realize increased student learning.

(Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Watson & Scribner, 2007). Though our framework associates increased leadership and organizational capacity with increased student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), we did not focus on the effects of distributing school-level leadership in terms of increased student achievement in this study. Instead, our efforts were focused on better understanding how the principals developed the leadership capacities of emerging leaders within their schools.

### *Summary*

Given the research basis described above, it would seem reasonable for principals to heed the call to enhance their school's capacities to support student growth and learning by distributing leadership to formal and informal leaders. However, one cannot assume such leaders are willing or able to assume greater leadership roles. Nor, we suggest, should it be assumed that all principals are willing or able to distribute leadership, or that doing so would be a panacea for meeting the challenges faced by their schools. Rather, we concur with Leithwood et al. (2004) and Stoll and Bolam (2005) who advocate for a thoughtful and purposeful approach to developing leadership for school improvement. Leithwood et al. noted, for instance, that distributing leadership might require 'intentional intervention on the part of those in formal leadership roles' (p. 279).

In this article, we draw upon and extend the body of research centred on distributed leadership and capacity building to answer the question, *how did the principals in six high schools from two states in the USA intentionally foster the leadership capacities of other leaders to enhance their schools' capacities for distributed leadership and organizational improvement?* In answering this question, the findings of this study add to the emerging though nascent research base on the principal's role in fostering the capacities of formal and informal leaders in authentic school contexts.

### **Research design and methods**

Data for this study consisted of artefacts and semi-structured interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) collected through a multi-site, qualitative design. Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) whereby two teams of researchers in two different states in the USA, one on the east coast and one on the west coast, engaged their professional networks of current and former district-level leaders and clinical faculty members to obtain recommendations of practising high school principals who were known to foster the leadership capacities of formal and informal leaders, referred to in this study as leaders. The nominations proffered by the search teams' respective networks were then subjected to a screening process that involved consultation with the principals' direct supervisors or other individuals to confirm that each principal was indeed focused on

fostering the leadership capacities of formal and informal leaders in their schools. This particular selection process, known as snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 2002), was intended to identify principals engaged in the fostering of leadership capacity in naturalistic settings. The sample was not intended to be representative of any particular population of principals. Though students at each of the six schools were performing above their state averages on standardized tests, student achievement was not a factor in the selection of the principals. An overview of each school's demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1. A list of the six principals, the schools they were principals of, the number of years they had spent in education, the number of years they had spent in administration and their tenure at their respective school are provided in Table 2. Each principal had been in administration for at least 10 years (average 14.7), and had been at their current school for at least four years (average 7.2).

Each research team began interviewing three high school principals and three leaders with whom each principal was intentionally building leadership capacity (24 participants in total) during the summer and fall of 2012. The principal interviews centred on how each principal perceived their leadership capacity-building skills and how they perceived specific actions they were taking to foster the leadership capacities of others. The leader interviews were concerned with how each leader perceived the leadership capacity-building skills of their principal, and the actions they believed their principals took to increase their leadership capacities.

**Table 1. School student enrolment and race/ethnicity**

	KHS	HHS	GCHS	GHS	LHS	THS
Students	1500	1650	1550	1850	1350	1800
White (%)	92	64	65	79	83	79
Black (%)	6	34	22	3	2	1
Latino/a (%)	2	1	10	8	8	6
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	–	1	3	9	5	12
American Indian/Alaskan Native (%)	–	–	–	1	–	–
Two or more races (%)	–	–	–	–	2	–

**Table 2. Principal participants**

Participant	School*	Yrs. in ed.	Yrs. in admin.	Yrs. in current role	Current role**
William Moore	KHS	22	15	<1	Asst. Sup.
Nancy Jones	HHS	32	22	4	HS Prin.
Mason King	GCHS	25	13	8	HS Prin.
Bridget Tolson	GHS	21	12	6	HS Prin.
Bronson Hall	LHS	19	15	9	HS Prin.
Jake Mariner	THS	19	11	5	HS Prin.

\*School where leadership was distributed, but not necessarily current school.

\*\*Role at time of study, but not necessarily role when leadership distribution occurred.

Principals and leaders were also asked about the structural or cultural characteristics within their schools that facilitated this process. Throughout the interviews, participants were asked to provide evidence to substantiate their responses to the questions. A selection of the interview questions most germane to the research question being addressed in this paper can be found in Appendix A.

For analysis, we descriptively coded (Saldaña, 2009) transcriptions from each 60 to 90-min interview and artefacts obtained at each site over three cycles both by hand and with computer software. Members of both research teams independently and collectively coded the data collected within each state to increase consistency in the development of the themes that emerged. Throughout the project, formal and informal data analysis occurred using reflective memos after each interview and continuous discussions between the two research teams. Several themes were eventually identified from these discussions and the first two cycles of coding. In the third cycle, selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to identify data related to the emerging themes and the study's research question.

### *Study limitations*

Despite our attempts to ensure the credibility and robustness of this study's findings through the participant selection, data collection and data analysis processes described above, we acknowledge that our study design contains some limitations. Firstly, our data were limited to that collected from documents, and through interviews with a nominated sample of principals and their nominated sample of leaders. We acknowledge that the credibility of this data could be inherently limited due to this selection process, our biases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and the potential limitations of researchers as instruments in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). It is also possible that the data we collected were limited by the inability or unwillingness of the participants to share relevant information in the semi-structured interviews.

We attempted to address these concerns by using standardized interview protocols, which included predetermined probing questions, and by conducting interviews in teams to ensure consistency within and between interviews. Additionally, the study participants were asked parallel sets of questions to allow for the triangulation of data (Creswell, 2003). The themes that emerged from the data were primarily drawn from the participants' interview transcripts, and were continuously scrutinized by members of the two research teams during the multiple rounds of coding. Preliminary findings were sent to the principals for confirmation of their accuracy through a process commonly referred to as member checking (Creswell).

Finally, we acknowledge that these findings are not generalizable in the statistical sense. We do, however, contend that they may be applicable to principals and leaders of high schools with similar demographic and academic characteristics.

## Findings

Each principal in our study used various ways to foster the leadership capacities of other leaders. However, across the data, actions the principals took to increase leadership capacity in their schools generally emerged into four phases: identifying potential leaders, creating leadership opportunities, facilitating role transition and providing continuous support. While principals often identified potential leaders before giving them leadership opportunities, and facilitated role transition before providing continuous support, once identified, leaders did not necessarily move from one phase to the next in a linear fashion. For instance, leaders may have had a leadership opportunity created for them while simultaneously receiving continuous support in another role. Thus, these phases should be merely seen as a heuristic for demarcating the various phases through which the principals in this study engaged in fostering the capacity for distributed leadership.

### *Motivations for fostering leadership capacity*

Prior to reporting the findings by the major strategies described above, it is important to note that there was variation in principals' motivations for developing leadership capacities in others. Though these motivations varied within and between principals, the principals described three primary rationales for developing others' leadership capacities: meeting the needs of the individual leaders, meeting the needs of the school and succession planning.

Principal Mason King at Gantt Circle High School (GCHS) was one of several principals who saw the development of leadership capacity as an essential part of a teacher's career development. He stated that developing leadership capacity early in a teacher's career was important:

Especially when you've hired young teachers ... you need to cultivate their skills in terms of teaching ... then once you develop that to a certain level, you're going to them and saying, 'Listen, you know, you've become a great teacher ... now, we need to be able to share that information with new folks coming in'. So now, you let them be a mentor to a new teacher who's coming in.

For Principal King, new teachers needed time to become confident in their abilities as teachers. As they became more experienced teachers, they were asked to provide leadership to others. In contrast, some principals attended to fostering the leadership capacity of a teacher because that individual was part of an administrative certification programme at a university, and a leadership internship was required to complete the programme. Teachers in these instances formally sought the assistance of their principals as site supervisors for completing their internships.

At other times, principals considered increasing the leadership capacities of others when leadership roles within the school had to be filled. These instances occurred through school districts formalizing new leadership positions or attrition, when people who were department chairs or

programme coordinators stepped down or received promotions. When these instances occurred, new leaders in each school were identified. Lily Coogan, the P.E. department chair at Timberland High School (THS), explained how this occurred with her, ‘when that opportunity came where they finally developed [the department head position] and said, “Hey, you know what? We do need a department head position.”’ Previously, Lily’s department had been encapsulated under the school’s Athletic Director’s duties. However, as athletic programmes had grown at THS, a need arose for a separate physical education department to be created. Thus, when the department head position became available, Lily was invited to fill it.

The third primary motivation for the principals to foster leadership capacity in others was to ensure there were candidates available to fill future administrative vacancies. Principal Moore explained that this degree of succession planning was necessary as, ‘It was just a matter of time before one of my assistant principals became a principal and I would need somebody to fill their place’.

### *Identifying potential leaders*

The identification process occurred when principals interacted with potential leaders in their schools. For some principals, intentionally engaging teachers in conversations to better understand their perspectives provided a means for identifying potential leaders. Principal Nancy Jones at Haymont High School (HHS) explained that she identified potential leaders amongst her teachers by

getting to know them and creating opportunities to sit and talk with them—and I do a whole lot of it at my lunch table. We have three lunches. I have different groups of teachers down there, and they think I’m just sitting and chatting with them.

While Principal Jones perceived that the teachers viewed her interactions with them during lunch as simple ‘chatting’, she saw them as opportunities to better understand each teacher’s character and commitment in an effort to identify individuals who might have leadership potential. For Principal Jones, verbal interaction provided a method by which she identified leadership potential in others. Yet, for other principals in our study, observational methods were the primary method of identifying potential leaders. Rachel Carter, one of the leaders at GCHS, noticed Principal King’s observational skills in identifying potential leaders:

I think he just saw how we handled ourselves and our kids and what level we teach at. And, do we follow the rules, and are we consistent? And, how we handled other adults. And, I think he just kind of watches and learns. He’s a good observer. And, he sees things you never think he sees.

Principal King’s observational skills with his teachers were not only recognized as being at a high level, but were exceptionally detailed, which Carter believed was one way he was able to identify potential leaders.

As these examples show, these were principals who purposefully employed strategies to identify potential leaders. However, leaders were more frequently identified, because they showed interest in gaining leadership roles. Principal Bronson Hall at Lakewood High School (LHS) explained, ‘... so when I see an interest in people, that’s who I—I cling to them. So if I see any interest in leadership, I go to where they are. That’s kind of how I pick them.’ Unlike some of the other principals in the study, Principal Hall did not regularly have teachers who were engaged in internships through an administrative certification programme. Therefore, he identified leaders in his school when interest was shown. However, several of the leaders from other schools intended to be in administrative positions at some point in their careers, so they pursued leadership opportunities. Anthony Taylor, who was in an administrative certification programme when he was identified as a leader at Kuranda High School (KHS), admitted:

I was probably annoying because I was constantly asking [school administrators] if ... I could do anything during my planning period to—from sitting in on meetings to observing how they deal with discipline to observing other teachers teach ... I wanted the responsibility.

Due to his interest in obtaining an administrative position, Taylor asked to be involved in experiences where he could increase his leadership knowledge and skills to become prepared for an administrative role at some point in the future. Thus, he was ‘constantly asking’ for opportunities to have those experiences. Although Taylor may have perceived his behaviour as ‘annoying,’ Principal Moore saw providing opportunities to leaders like Anthony as ‘a learning experience for everyone’ and wanted to give teachers ‘the opportunity to make some decisions’. As can be seen, while some principals engaged in methods to identify the leadership potential in teachers at their schools, some teachers requested that they be given opportunities to participate in leadership activities themselves. These activities often included both management duties like dealing with discipline as well as leadership behaviours such as observing other teachers and engaging in instructional discussions with them.

### *Creating leadership opportunities*

Once potential leaders were identified, principals created leadership opportunities that provided learning experiences for the leaders. One way this occurred was by making structural changes that generated the time and space for leaders to engage in leadership activities. Principal Jones gave Brad Evans, an academic coach, an additional non-teaching position and assigned him to classes that had fewer students. Like Evans, many leaders in our study had responsibilities that required their daily schedules to be modified in order for them to be involved in leadership activities. Yet, all the leaders we interviewed were engaged in leadership opportunities that extended beyond their daily teaching schedules. For Taylor, these leadership opportunities were varied and multifaceted:

I really was given some good opportunities to supervise different events after school, whether it was athletic events or things like dances, or during Spirit Week. We do different fundraisers, and I was able to coordinate a lot of that—those activities. I was able to coordinate a grant for our math department that Principal Moore just handed to me, let me write it, and turn it in. And, we were able to use an online math curriculum for some of our at-risk students. Principal Moore really gave me a lot of opportunities to just be in charge of stuff, even when I was in the role of teacher, and I just ran with it.

As Taylor explained, he had the opportunity to supervise, coordinate and create various projects in the school, which provided the responsibility he desired even before he had formally obtained a leadership role. While Taylor appreciated exposure to various leadership opportunities, other leaders had to be coaxed beyond the supervision and coordination of activities to creating new activities or norms within existing activities. Jake Mariner, principal at THS, discussed how he had to persuade Lily Coogan:

I said [to Lily Coogan], ‘Honestly, you have to improve this P.E. department.’—I didn’t say it that bluntly, but, ‘We’ve got to improve P.E. People are asking for waivers and all kinds of stuff’. She said, ‘I know. It’s killing us’. And, I said, ‘Okay, let’s talk about waivers then. But, what you have to do is, you’re going to have to improve your program so people don’t want to leave it, too’.

When Coogan became the P.E. department chair, she was interested in increasing P.E. class enrolments. Many students, however, were waiving the P.E. requirement because P.E. was not seen as an important aspect of their personal academic goals. Coogan wanted Principal Mariner to disallow students to waive their P.E. requirement. However, Mariner wanted Coogan to realize that she needed to change the P.E. programme so fewer students would ask for waivers. Principal Mariner wanted Coogan to see the situation not through a management lens, which was his responsibility, but through a leadership lens and as an opportunity to improve the P.E. classes, which would help minimize the number of waivers students sought. Through his management lens, students could simply waive the requirement, and he could decrease the size of the P.E. faculty in accordance with the waivers, especially since P.E. was not tied to standardized tests. Lily saw the situation differently, and after her conversation with Principal Mariner, she implemented a new programme, tying health and fitness goals to students’ grades. Ultimately, she increased her leadership skills, coming into her own as a department chair by seeing substantial changes in the health of students due to the implementation of the new programme. Principal Mariner, like all the principals in our study, created opportunities for leaders to increase their repertoire of leadership skills to move beyond their current capacities. Teacher Rob Acker at THS explained:

[Principal Mariner would say,] ‘Nice job. You really are doing a great job. I know you don’t like to do that, but it’s good for you to go out on a limb and do that’ ... [so he] finds those spots where we need to grow professionally and tr[ies] to push us on that.

While this process was not always comfortable, as in Acker’s case, leadership opportunities were created to develop the capacities of leaders beyond their perceived leadership capabilities.

### *Facilitating role transition*

For the principals in our study, fostering leadership capacity in others was not simply about creating leadership opportunities and assuming that the new leaders would naturally be successful. Instead, all six principals facilitated role transition for each of the leaders after they created leadership opportunities. Principals viewed the transition into leadership roles as both complex and challenging. Some principals decided that the emotional aspects of leadership had to be addressed before developing leadership capacity in others. Principal Jones explained how she tried to limit some of the negative emotional aspects for the new leaders:

The first thing I try to do is take away some of the fear. Because any time you start something new, you're going to have this learning curve, and you're going to make some mistakes. And so, I always share with them some of the mistakes I made when I first started.

Principal Jones understood that leadership had to be learned and that learning meant that mistakes would occur. She wanted the leaders she developed to understand that mistakes were a part of their leadership development. Beyond having conversations about what each leader needed to learn, the principals facilitated leaders' role transitions by modelling leadership behaviours. Principal Mariner discussed his beliefs and the process of modelling:

I will tell you modeling is important. And then sometimes, we have debriefs afterward. And so, I will ... lead ... a conversation, one-on-one conversation, since I have witnesses when I discipline people. So, I'm delivering a written reprimand or a verbal reprimand ... to a teacher. And then, [the leader] is there as a witness. And then, of course, we'll debrief afterwards.

In order to facilitate the leadership developmental process, Principal Mariner would model the leadership behaviour that was expected. He would then have a conversation with the leaders after they were able to view his leadership action. As Principal Jones explained earlier, many of the leaders were fearful of their new leadership responsibilities because they were unsure how to enact them. Principal Mariner, as well as the other principals in the study, provided modelling so the new leaders could see how to enact leadership. Afterwards, conversations would occur in order to help the leaders process what they saw. These conversations also facilitated alternative possibilities for handling situations as all of the principals in our study recognized that the new leaders would often enact leadership practices differently than they did. While conversations were crucial both prior to leaders assuming leadership responsibilities and after viewing their principals engaged in leadership actions, all the principals saw having conversations with their leaders about mistakes as part of the facilitation process. For Jill Smith, graduation coach at HHS, the principal and the entire administrative team would engage in this facilitation process with her.

They sit down with me sometimes when I make mistakes and say, 'Okay, well that wasn't the best way to respond to this', or 'Maybe next time it happens, try it this way'. So, they're very good if they feel like you have a teachable moment. Then, let's have a teachable moment.

As Smith explained, and as other leaders conveyed, the ‘teachable moments’ created by mistakes were facilitated through explaining why certain actions were not the best ways to enact leadership, and how the leader could consider acting in similar situations in the future. When corrections in leader’s actions were not necessary, frequent ‘check ins’ occurred between the principals and the leaders. Principal Jones occasionally engaged in this activity in a subtle manner:

I don’t [believe] he would recognize that yesterday when I was asking him [some questions] that I was monitoring how [being a leader] was going with him and what his feelings were at the time ... It doesn’t have to be formal. In other words ... that five minutes I spent with him yesterday as he was passing through these doors to go put some things in mailboxes gave me all the information that I needed to know.

Similar to Principal Jones, all of the principals in the study perceived having conversations with the leaders, whether for five minutes or for an hour, to be important. However, several of the principals noted that they used their observational skills to more fully understand what was occurring with their leaders. Lily Coogan commented on how Principal Mariner did this:

He really ... got in there and knew what we did ... it validated what I do, I guess. And, I think that being complimentary—not overly of course, but again, validating, ‘Wow. This is really good,’ fed me professionally to go, ‘Okay, I’m going in the right direction.’ So then, I almost want to work harder.

Principal Mariner visually monitored and provided feedback about what Coogan did in her new leadership role, which helped her feel validated, empowered and motivated to engage in more leadership actions. Principal Mariner had empowered Lily by agreeing to let her implement a new programme to increase student involvement in P.E., and then observed Lily and other teachers enacting the P.E. program, which validated Lily’s work and motivated her to work even harder. Thus, principals facilitated leadership role transition in leaders using verbal encouragement, monitoring activities, observing behaviour, discussing their prior leadership experiences, and providing corrective and validating feedback. Principal Bridget Tolson at Goldenridge High School (GHS) summarized:

I think it’s about stair stepping the experiences ... being in a position where ... you’ve got a network of support for people to help you ask questions and think about things ... You’re constantly assessing and reflecting as you go through it, so you can take that learning to the next bigger thing.

Like Principal Tolson, the other principals also commented on leadership role facilitation being an incremental learning process for the leaders and that it was the principal’s responsibility to ensure that leaders were learning with each experience before moving forward to new experiences or responsibilities.

*Providing continuous support*

All of the leaders in the study eventually got to the point in their leadership roles where they were no longer on a steep 'learning curve.' Once this occurred in the facilitation process, the principals were continuously supportive of the leaders' work, even when they felt confident in the leader's capabilities. Occasionally, this continuous support involved having an 'open door' for conversations to occur when the leaders had to make decisions that were not clear for them. Freshman Academy Director at HHS, Diane Lewis, explained how she experienced this with Principal Jones:

I'm a Type A personality ... I want people to know that when they give me something to do that I'm going to do it and do it well. So, I walk that line of not wanting to appear [like] I don't know what I'm doing. But, she's always fostered the open door. [Principal Jones will] say, 'I'll tell you if I think you should do it, and I'll tell you if I think I should do it' ... sometimes it's nice when she says, 'I got this one'.

For Lewis, the 'open door' Principal Jones provided allowed her to discuss certain actions she considered taking and receive feedback on those actions. In some instances, Principal Jones decided it was better for Lewis to take action, while at other times Lewis was advised to let other administrators handle a situation. To Lewis, this conveyed that Principal Jones 'had [her] back, so to speak, every single time'. For all of the leaders, though, while the principals were willing to take the lead in situations, the leaders had substantial latitude to enact leadership without involving the principals. Brad Evans at HHS commented about how this occurred for him:

[The school administrators] give you a lot of leeway in what you do. I mean, Principal Jones will give you a role to fulfill and give you duties to fulfill. And then, she lets you do it. She doesn't get her fingers into your business. She trusts that you're doing a good job at it. And so, I think she gives you a lot of confidence to run with something. And, you feel like if you have a question about, 'Why do we do it this way? Can we change this? Wouldn't this be a better idea?' There's never a concern that it's just going to be shot down without her thinking about it ... so, you're supported in the fact that you're trusted in what you're doing. And then, you are just kind of let free to do it without it being micromanaged.

As Evans mentioned, trust was built between the principals and leaders once the leadership role transition occurred. After trust was established, the leaders and principals were able to question each other about different processes in the school and mutually consider changes. This created an interdependent leadership effort amongst the principals and the leaders in the study. Rob Acker commented about the current state of his relationship with Principal Mariner and the other school administrators at the time of the study:

And lately, it's become more of a joint effort, so that we all have a say in the direction [the school's] heading. And when we talk about our PLCs, 'What should their goal be for the year?' We all sit down and jointly plan those things.

As Acker conveyed, eventually, the principal and leader became co-learners and co-leaders of each other's learning when leadership opportunities arose. This kind of reciprocal interdependency (Lambert, 2003) allowed each leader to continuously grow and develop as well as feel supported in their various leadership roles.

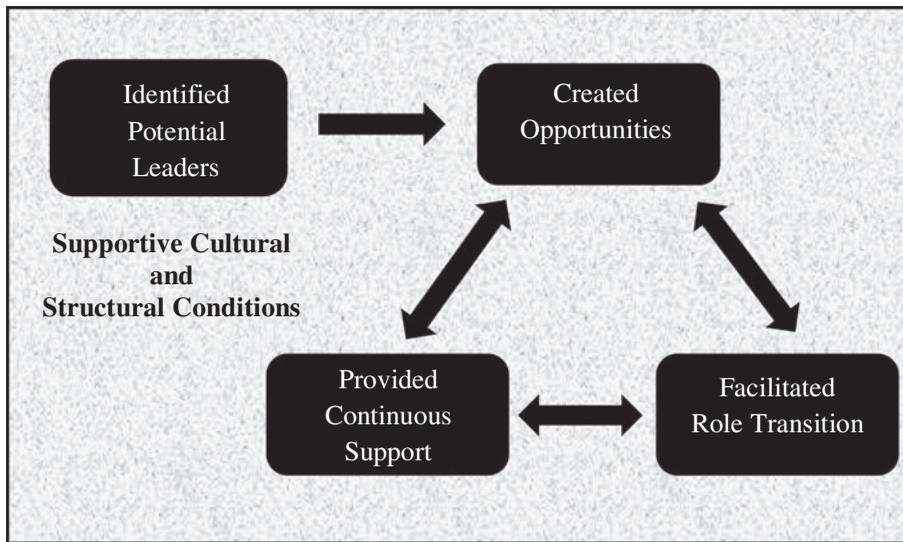
## Discussion

We begin this discussion of our findings by re-iterating that the six principals in our study were purposefully selected based upon their reputations for actively fostering leadership capacity in their schools. While the findings are not generalizable in a statistical sense, they do provide useful insight for practitioners and researchers interested in further examining this approach to school leadership and reform. In addition to answering a call for more research regarding this aspect of distributed leadership (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; Harris, 2004; Spillane & Louis, 2005), these findings provide a descriptive look at how leadership was intentionally developed in natural contexts. This authenticity provides an important opportunity to examine how principals foster leadership in contexts free of the affordances and constraints associated with funded initiatives described in research reported by other scholars (e.g. Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; Klar, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Murphy et al., 2009).

The findings suggest that these six principals made a concerted effort to foster leadership capacity through activities that were consistent with other studies (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2005; Murphy, 2005; Murphy et al., 2009). In particular, our findings illustrated the specific way these high school principals identified potential leaders, created opportunities for them to develop leadership skills, facilitated their transitions into their new roles and provided continuous support through a cyclical process. Though we do not suggest that principals enacted these strategies as omnipotent and omniscient agents of change, we predicated this study on the premise that the school principal holds a critical role as a personnel and organizational capacity builder (Camburn et al., 2003; Crow et al., 2005; Day & Harris, 2002; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2011; Mulford & Silins, 2003; O'Day et al., 1995).

Despite evidence indicating that the principals were able to foster leadership capacity in their schools, our findings also illustrate that the process did not emerge as a natural, unproblematic or context-free phenomenon (Torrance, 2014). Rather, the principals had to thoughtfully and intentionally intervene (Leithwood et al., 2004) to assist the leaders' complex transitions into their new roles.

Through our analysis of the data collected in this study, we came to see the principals' capacity-building strategies occurring in four, inter-related strategies. For explanatory purposes, we found it useful to describe each set of activities separately, despite the interplay between them. We have used bidirectional arrows in Figure 2 represent the reciprocal nature (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Watson & Scribner, 2007) of the activities.



**Figure 2. Principals' capacity-building actions**

Note: Four strategies principals used to foster the leadership capacities of formal and informal leaders.

Furthermore, as exhibited in Figure 2, we came to see the progression of activities occurring in a cyclical rather than a linear process embedded in supportive structural and cultural conditions.

### *Identifying potential leaders*

All six principals described in detail the various processes and circumstances by which they identified potential leaders in their schools. In some cases, this involved teachers requesting opportunities to be involved in leadership activities. In other cases, leaders who were seeking administrative certification asked the principals to serve as their mentors. The more revealing circumstances, however, were those in which the principals intentionally observed or interacted with teachers with the intention of developing relationships with them, and determining both their level of interest in and readiness for assuming some leadership responsibilities. These purposeful actions are consistent with the findings of other scholars (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2005; Murphy, 2005; Myung et al., 2011), who described identifying potential leaders as an initial stage in the leadership development process. Slater (2008) reported 'in order to develop human potential, the leader needs to know people well, look for strengths in individuals and build upon them' (p. 55). Myung et al. (2011) noted that school leaders often 'identify and encourage teachers whom they think should become school leaders' (p. 700), especially in the absence of systematic succession plans. Myung et al. suggested this endorsing, or 'tapping', as it is commonly referred, is a form of sponsorship through which principals identify and intentionally support the development of particular individuals.

The results of the current study, coupled with other research, indicate that principals were able to draw upon their knowledge of their teachers and the demands of the principalship to identify future formal leaders. However, as noted by (Myung et al., 2011), relying solely on principals' sponsoring of potential leaders could intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate unequal access to leadership opportunities and career development. As a result, it may be necessary for principals to receive training in selecting potential leaders based on ability rather than personal biases, and for districts to implement structured leadership development programmes for aspiring leaders.

### *Creating leadership opportunities*

Once potential leaders were identified, the principals used their understanding of their schools' needs and current stages of development (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2005) to match the leaders with the roles that best suited their capabilities. The principals also made changes to the leaders' working conditions, and created new structures and learning opportunities for leaders to observe on-going leadership activities in their schools. This finding is consistent with the findings of Murphy et al. (2009), who suggested altering structures within the school is a key factor in advancing distributed leadership.

It should be noted, however, that these opportunities were created for leaders who were at times hesitant to step outside of their current roles. Additionally, these findings implicitly suggest that principals are sufficiently familiar with the leaders and the specific tasks at hand to know how and when to present opportunities and to tailor the working conditions and structures to allow leaders to develop in a systematic fashion. This may not always be a reasonable assumption given the size and complexity of most high schools in the United States. Given this complexity, it may also be unreasonable to assume that leadership opportunities arise in a fashion that allows principals to consciously match leaders and opportunities for the purpose of developing their leadership capacities.

### *Facilitating role transition*

Once leaders began to assume leadership responsibilities, the principals' roles became centred on facilitating the leaders' transitions into their new roles. As with Principal Jones, this meant 'taking the fear away,' and addressing the social and emotional aspects of leaving the classroom or another position to take on a new position. She and other principals eased this transition by sharing their own stories and lessons learned over their careers, providing teachers the opportunity to return to the classroom if they were unhappy in a leadership position, allowing the leaders to make mistakes, providing feedback, modelling, and allowing leaders to observe or take an active role in authentic leadership activities at their schools. This easing of the role transition was an important part of creating a supportive culture, especially as the leaders described experiencing tension

between themselves and former colleagues when they left the classroom and moved into leadership roles (Lortie, 1975; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These finding highlights the political complexities (Lumby, 2013) involved in fostering leadership capacity. It especially highlights the need for principals to recognize the challenges teachers face as they navigate issues of power and authority, and re-negotiate relationships with teachers, administrators, students and parents.

Another aspect of this stage described by both principals and leaders was that the principals provided the leaders with incrementally more complex activities and levels of responsibility, an approach referred to as 'stairstepping the experiences' by Principal Tolson. This resembled the scaffolding of classroom learning activities and reflects the second stage of MacBeath's (2005) developmental process as well as Merriam and Bierema's (2014) notion of readiness to learn. This finding suggests principals need to be familiar with the requirements of the task, the individual leader, the leadership development process and adult learning theories. While the six principals described in this study, demonstrated a tacit understanding of these areas of expertise, it cannot be assumed that all principals would have similar or sufficient levels of familiarity with these aspects of fostering leadership capacity.

As noted in other studies, distributing leadership is predicated upon and enhanced by the existence of strong, trusting relationships (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2005; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2007). The development of leadership capacity in the six high schools in this study was also greatly enhanced by relational trust (Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001) between the principals and the leaders in whom they were trying to develop leadership capacity. Over time, the principals grew to believe that the leaders could be trusted, and thus entrusted them with greater responsibility. The leaders sensed this increased level of trust and appeared encouraged by it. As they became more confident they became more willing to step into the new role and trust that their principals would support them through the transition. This finding is consistent with Dimmock (2012), Louis, Mayrowetz, Smiley, and Murphy (2009) and Day, Sammons, et al. (2011), who argued that distributed leadership and trust develop in tandem.

### *Providing continuous support*

As the leaders became more comfortable and competent in their new roles, the principals provided them increasingly more leeway in exercising their roles, while still providing on-going support as required. This reflects the third stage of MacBeath's (2005) process of distributing leadership, and is closely connected to both the level of trust the principal had in the ability of the leader and the trust the leader had in the principal. The level of trust the leaders believed principals had in them was clearly key to their ongoing development and feelings of efficacy, and is a key component of the leadership development process also noted by other scholars (Day, Sammons, et al., 2011; Dimmock, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

As described above, facilitating role transition and providing continuous support played a key role in the fostering of leadership capacity. However, it should be noted that this perspective positions the principal as a gatekeeper, potentially limiting access to leadership positions to those teachers and emerging leaders who have established positive, trusting relationships with the principal. It is understandable that principals would want to limit leadership activities to those leaders they trust to perform the job well, especially given principals' accountability for school activities (Dimmock, 2012). Nevertheless, principals may need to learn how to monitor their interactions with others to ensure their leadership development practices are inclusive of people with whom they may have differing views and have not yet developed trusting relations.

### **Conclusions and implications**

The evolving demands on principals in US high schools for increasing organizational capacity to meet federal, state and local accountability policies underscore the need for leadership to be distributed. Paradoxically, distributed leadership, from a normative perspective, can be enhanced by principals taking an active role in fostering the capacities of others to assume leadership responsibilities. The principals in our study intentionally fostered the capacities of others by identifying potential leaders, creating leadership opportunities, facilitating the role transition, and providing continuous support through a cyclical process.

Rather than portray these principals as all-knowing, post-heroic heroes (Fletcher, 2004), our findings illustrate the principals' nuanced, contextualized and complex approaches to fostering leadership. The varied approaches were facilitated by large degrees of interdependence and high levels of social interaction and trust. Principals used their understandings of the demands of school leadership and their knowledge of staff members in their schools to identify those who showed a readiness to learn and a readiness to lead, as well as those staff members who they believed could succeed with 'stair-stepped' learning experiences and support. Furthermore, they enacted these strategies in ways that were commensurate with their school contexts. In addition to the principals' successes fostering the capacities of other leaders in their schools, our findings illustrated the complexities and potential for conflict as principals foster leadership capacity to broaden and deepen leadership capacity in their schools as a way to increase organizational capacity and student learning.

### **Implications for further research**

In addition to this study's practical implications, these findings provide a foundation for developing further studies focused on the relationship between distributed leadership practices, leadership development and organizational capacity building for enhancing school improvement efforts in high schools. Two aspects of fostering the capacity for distributed leadership that are particularly important to better understand are what

knowledge, skills and dispositions principals may need to foster leadership capacity as a way to enhance schools' capacities to support student growth and learning, and how they can best be prepared to do so. These are critical issues to investigate given the increased accountability demands, new standards requiring principals to demonstrate they are able to develop the leadership capacity of others (CCSSO, 2008), and standards requiring leadership preparation programs to demonstrate that they have prepared aspiring leaders to do so (NPBEA, 2011). This is particularly important as the fostering of leadership capacity traditionally has not been a component of administrator preparation programmes, meaning that it may be necessary for school districts to find ways to support principals in acquiring the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to foster the capacities of other school leaders.

Another dynamic that requires further study is the role of a principal's tenure in his or her ability and inclination to develop other leaders. The principals in this study, like those in Day, Sammons, et al.'s (2011) study, were experienced administrators (average 14.7 years), who enjoyed relatively lengthy tenures (average 7.2 years) in their respective schools at the time this study was conducted. This variable also raises the question of how, if at all, principals in the early stages of their careers foster the leadership capacities of other leaders. Thus, large-scale research is required to both determine how prevalent fostering leadership capacity by principals is in schools and whether this fostering varies by principals' career stages and lengths of tenure.

Future research is also required to better understand how principals might avoid unintentionally perpetuating unequal access to leadership opportunities and career development by 'tapping' some potential leaders while overlooking others. Moreover, it is necessary to examine the fostering of leadership capacity from the perspective of emerging leaders to better understand how and with what assistance they are able to navigate issues of power and authority, and re-negotiate relationships with others.

Lastly, our study centred on better understanding how these six principals fostered the capacity for distributing leadership in their schools by focusing their efforts on developing the leadership capacities of emerging leaders within their schools. While the findings add to the growing body of scholarship on principals' efforts to foster other leaders' capacities to engage in distributed leadership as a strategy for school improvement, more longitudinal research is required to examine the long-term impact of this approach on school capacity and student learning.

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## Appendix A. Sampling of interview questions

Questions asked during the principal interviews included:

- Who are some of the key leaders in your school other than yourself?
- What do you want these leaders to accomplish in their roles as leaders?
- What impact have these leaders had on your school as a result of fulfilling their roles? (Examples of impact?)
- What knowledge, skills and dispositions do these leaders need to have to be successful in their roles?
- What has your role been in supporting their development as leaders?
- What has made it easier/more challenging for them to be successful in their leadership roles?

Questions asked during these leader interviews included:

- What are you supposed to accomplish your current leadership role?
- How successful do you feel you've been in this role? (Examples of impact?)
- What knowledge, skills and dispositions do you need to be successful in this role?
- In what ways has your principal supported your development as a leader?
- What do you think has made it easier/more challenging to be successful in this role?