TEACHER LEADERSHIP
IN AN EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVE:
ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher leadership in literacy from the perspective of the literacy leaders in the Hampton School District Early Literacy Initiative (ELI). The Hampton School District ELI is a grassroots movement aimed at improving literacy instruction in the district. The literacy leaders in this study are classroom teachers who serve as literacy mentors in the district, or school coordinators within their respective schools.

Two literacy mentors and thirty-seven school coordinators responded to a questionnaire and six of these literacy leaders participated in one-on-one interviews. The results revealed that they had perceptions of leadership that ranged from a more traditional, managerial view of leadership to a transformational, constructivist view of leadership. However, while not all the literacy leaders in the study considered themselves to hold a leadership position, most leaders perceived their role within the ELI to be a transformational, constructivist one. Most participants did not take on the role for the leadership experience. The study found that the participants believed an interest in literacy and good organizational, interpersonal and communication skills were characteristics that helped them function effectively in their role. Literacy mentors also stated that being a classroom teacher was helpful. Challenges the participants identified included lack or resources, such as time, and money for release time and
the need for more professional development. Participants experienced benefits such as increased opportunities for learning and collaboration with their colleagues. The study also concludes that literacy leaders experience fewer challenges as they work toward school improvement and the change process when teachers set the goals and work together in their implementation.
Dedication

To my late grandparents – you are missed.

To all my students, past and present, thank you for helping make my job so easy to love.
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In pursuing this degree I experienced the joy of wondering, questioning and discovering. I owe a huge thank you to my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Chapman for her encouragement, time, and support. I learned so much from our conversations. Thank you also to Dr. Samson Nashon for his time and feedback, as well as to Dr. Jim Anderson for his interest, and for planting the idea of graduate studies in my mind many years ago.

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To the teacher leaders who participated in this study, thank you for your time at such a busy part of the year. Thank you also for the leadership you provide.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Literacy instruction has become increasingly challenging as our classrooms have become more diverse. Literacy requirements have risen, and the knowledge of literacy development and learning theories have been updated (IRA & NAEYC, 1998). Furthermore, no one teaching method or approach is likely to be effective for all children and their individual differences. Teachers need knowledge of what researchers, and others, such as their colleagues, have discovered about how to help students become successful readers and writers.

In my experience, opportunities to work with more experienced and knowledgeable teachers who have offered to share their knowledge and experiences with me have been my most valuable resource as I have strived to improve my instructional practice, implement changes in my classroom and increase my knowledge in a specific curricular area or develop my knowledge of pedagogy.

Identification of the Problem

Teachers working with other teachers to improve instruction is one form of teacher leadership. Patricia Wasley (1992) defines teacher leadership as “influencing and engaging colleagues toward improved practice” (p. 21). Some of the teachers who have helped me have held formal and informal leadership positions, such as curriculum coordinator, department head, and membership on curriculum
committees. These roles are recognized as providing assistance, support and in-service to teachers. Others have not held any title or formal role other than that of colleague and classroom teacher. However, these teachers have helped me by sharing ideas and information, collaborating in successfully implemented and coordinated school wide initiatives and goals, opening up their classrooms to me, and in general, providing much needed support. According to Pellicer and Anderson (1995) both these groups of teachers are serving as teacher leaders, whether or not their leadership has been formally recognized by others.

Teacher leadership has been recognized by teachers, school-based administrators, and district leaders as being a valuable form of support to help in the process of change. As teachers, schools, and districts strive to improve, teacher leaders are supporting their teacher colleagues in specific areas of the curriculum. One such example of this is in the Hampton School District, where the teacher leaders play an important role in the Early Literacy Initiative. The specific role of teacher leadership in the area of literacy has not been widely explored. If we are to learn more about the role of literacy leadership it is important to examine how the literacy leaders themselves perceive their role.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in the following ways. The participants of this study are teacher leaders who continue to maintain their own classroom, at least on a part time basis, and teachers who fulfill
leadership responsibilities in addition to teaching full time in the classroom. Unlike this study, many of the other studies I reviewed involved teacher leaders who had left their classroom to assume leadership duties. Furthermore, this study is significant because the participants are leaders of colleagues who are at various levels in their career, not just beginning or pre-service teachers. Also, the teacher leaders work with teachers in their own schools or districts. The leaders in this study are very familiar with the situations within which the teachers work.

Another feature of this study that makes it significant is that the teacher leaders in this study are helping teachers improve their practice in literacy, a specific subject area, rather than improving pedagogy in general. Additionally, unlike other curriculum-specific teacher leaders, the teacher leaders in this study are not mandated by their district to train teachers in a specific literacy program or curriculum. Instead, their goal is to help the teachers in their district develop knowledge and improve their instructional practices to help improve the literacy of their students. The teachers decide what areas they wish to work on, and decide what areas of their instruction they wish to change. The literacy leaders work with the teachers to facilitate and support this process.

Lastly, the context in which these teacher leaders work makes this study unique. The teacher leaders are part of a literacy initiative in their district that was started by teacher leaders. The idea for the literacy
initiative came from two district teachers concerned with the literacy achievement of the students in the district.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore teacher leadership in the context of an early literacy initiative in an urban school district in British Columbia. *Teacher Leadership* is a widely used term, one that comes with many different meanings and is situated within a variety of contexts. In this study the concept of teacher leadership will be explored and examined through the perspective of the literacy mentors and school coordinators (literacy leaders) working in the Hampton School District (a pseudonym). This case study explores how teachers serving as literacy mentors and school coordinators define literacy leadership, how they view their role, what they see as the strengths and qualities needed to serve in these leadership roles, the issues and challenges they face, and how they are supported in their leadership roles.

Recently there has been considerable growth in the phenomenon of teacher leadership in the field of education, and research carried out on teacher leadership in schools. Significant research has been done on teachers leading in administrative and decision making capacities, and in mentoring roles with student and beginning teachers. However, there is less research on teacher leadership with colleagues, which recognizes teachers as lifelong learners, and even less on teacher leadership in the area of literacy – which I refer to as literacy leadership.
It is hoped that the results from this study will begin to fill this gap in the research and provide valuable insight into teacher leadership in literacy among both experienced and beginning teachers, for those considering leadership positions, and those practicing as teacher leaders. It is also hoped that the information from this study will help those working with literacy leaders to deepen their understanding of the challenges literacy leaders face, and help provide better support for them both as learners and leaders, as they strive to be effective literacy leaders.

**Research Questions**

In order to gain an understanding of the literacy leaders in the Hampton School District’s Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) and gain insight into their roles and experiences the following research questions guided this study:

1. What does it mean to be a literacy leader?
2. What characteristics do literacy leaders need to function effectively in their role?
3. What are the challenges and issues they face as literacy leaders?
4. What are the needs they see as being unique to their role as literacy leaders that differ from those of classroom teachers and administrators?
5. How do literacy leaders see these needs being met?
Role of the Researcher

My interest in teacher leadership in literacy has evolved from my experience as a teacher leader (Department Head) at a school that adopted the goal of improving the literacy instruction of its primary students. It is important to point out that I do not work in an Early Literacy Project school nor am I a teacher in the Hampton School District. This allows me to conduct the research from the viewpoint of an outsider.

Theoretical Framework

During my career, the opportunities I have had to collaborate with other teachers and to reflect and discuss what happens in our classrooms have proven invaluable to my learning and development as a teacher. This form of professional development is valuable in that it allows me to use my experiences, situations and knowledge as important roots in my learning. It allows me to learn from others what is important to the needs of my own professional practice. My interest in this study stems from these experiences, along with my belief in the need for teachers to be lifelong learners. As stated by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999):

Successful learning for teachers requires a continuum of coordinated efforts that range from pre-service education to early teaching to opportunities for lifelong development as professionals. Creating such opportunities, built out of the knowledge base from
the science of learning, represents a major challenge, but it is not an impossible task (p. 193).

Opportunities to reflect on my teaching practices with others, and to continually build on my practices by working with other teachers have helped me continually learn as a teacher. This study is based on the belief that, just as students learn best when they are given opportunities to work with other students to make sense of new information, adults also need opportunities to continue to learn in socially constructivist ways.

**Social Constructivism**

My examination of teacher leaders working with other teachers to improve instruction in literacy is based on a belief in a theory of professional development that has its basis in Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Research has found the type of professional development activities valued as most effective in improving teaching are team planning periods, mentoring by another teacher, and regular collaboration with others (Strickland, Snow, Griffin, Burns, & McNamara, 2002). These activities rely on interaction with others to facilitate learning. Social constructivism, as defined by Phillips and Soltis (1998), is exactly this: “the social construction of knowledge” (p. 54). Vygotsky stressed that much of what we learn, we learn from others. According to Vogt and Shearer (2003) “in this model rather than having ‘knowledge’ dripped in by ‘experts’, teachers and administrators
collaborate with each other, with researchers, and with their own students to make sense of teaching and learning within their particular contexts” (p. 225). In this learning process Vygotsky stresses the importance of learning from and with others. The learner is not passively receiving guidance and instruction from others; instead, he or she is actively interpreting and contributing to the learning interactions (Stein & D’Amico, 2002). Schools become what Jerome Bruner (1996) termed “communities of learners” in which a culture of learning through collaboration with each other is practiced and valued.

Conventional and Constructivist Leadership

Leadership that reflects the social constructivist view of learning is what Linda Lambert (2000) has termed “constructivist leadership.” As Lambert explains: “this notion of leadership recognizes that leadership is about reciprocal, purposeful learning that allows participants in a community to construct meaning and knowledge together” (p. 3). O’Hair and Reitzug (1997) describe conventional leadership, on the other hand, as those leadership roles that are grounded in notions of influence. “Conventional leadership directly or indirectly imposes one person’s or group’s will upon the others” (p. 65). They view the leaders’ responsibility as influencing others to pursue what has been identified by the leaders as “best practice,” and directing the group toward achieving an identified goal or set of goals.
Teacher leadership in the Hampton School District ELI reflects features of both conventional and constructivist leadership theories. In conventional conceptions of teacher leadership, it is implicit that leadership comes from “master” teachers who have expertise or a recognized knowledge in curriculum or pedagogy. These teachers have been assigned or have chosen to take on a recognized (either formal or informal) leadership role. However, the guiding principles and purpose of ELI leadership is more reflective of a constructivist notion of leadership.

O'Hair and Reitzug (1997) continue to note that “unlike conventional leadership which is generally grounded in formal or informally designated roles, constructivist leadership is grounded in leadership acts” (p.66). Constructivist leadership acts are those that engage people in examining their beliefs and cause them to reflect on and question their practices. Constructivist leadership is based on the belief that adults learn just like children do – through reflection and the construction of knowledge, and can come from anyone anywhere in the school community. In the constructivist conception of teacher leadership, the leadership is based on “acts” rather than roles. Leadership is demonstrated by teachers as they collaborate, share in decision making, discuss practice with colleagues, and contribute as professionals to the daily life of their school community. Foster and St. Hilaire (2003) point out that a constructive view of leadership recognizes all teachers as having a leadership “role” in the school.
Zone of Proximal Development

Central to social constructivist theory is the notion that teachers, too, have zones of proximal development that figure prominently in their learning. Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development as the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Teachers learn to teach and develop as teachers through experience and collaboration with more competent peers. Literacy leaders serve as the "more competent peers." Optimal learning situations involve and value contributions and discoveries by learners, as well as the assistance of a "more competent" collaborator. According to Gallimore and Tharp (1990), "Instruction in such collaborative efforts is contingent on the apprentice's own activities and is related to what he or she is currently trying to do" (p. 200). The support and interactions between the literacy leader and teacher is determined by the teacher's goals and needs. The literacy leader "leads from behind, nudging, encouraging, facilitating, modeling and supporting" (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). Literacy leaders work collaboratively with the "apprentice" teacher, taking into account the apprentice's knowledge, skills, strengths, and expectations. Together they find ways to facilitate change in meaningful and non-threatening ways. It is important to note, however, that learning from others who are
more competent does not imply duplicating the practice of others, nor
does it imply a deficit model of assistance. The literacy leader and
teacher work together to create a deeper understanding of ways to help
students develop their literacy knowledge and skills. Literacy leaders
help teachers with high needs and teachers who are following a normal
learning curve in developing as teachers. Literacy leaders work with
teachers on "deepening a particular aspect of their practice or
introducing significant extensions to what is considered to be already
high quality practice" (Stein & D'Amico, 2002, p. 1332)

*Situated Learning*

"A classroom teacher's preparation should be viewed along a
continuum – a lifelong journey of professional development that does not
end with a teaching degree or state certification" (Strickland et al., 2002,
p. 14). Practicing teachers must continue to view themselves as learners
as they go about their daily practices in the school. Teachers need to
remain responsible for their learning as they receive support from the
literacy leader, to reflect and look critically at their practices and make
changes. "In the situated learning approach, knowledge and skills are
learned in the contexts that reflect how knowledge is obtained and
applied in everyday situations" (Stein, 1998 p. 2). The learning occurs in
completing tasks in authentic situations (Lave, as cited in Eick, Ware, &
Williams, 2003). The experiences of the learner become the subject for
discussion, reflection and analysis. Stein (1998) explains:
By placing content within the daily transactions of life, the instructor, in dialogue with learners, negotiates the meaning of content, frames it in terms of the issues and concerns within the learners, provides opportunities for learners to cooperate in investigating problem situations, and makes content applicable to the ways in which learners will approach the environment. Application rather than retention becomes the mark of a successful instructional encounter. (p. 2)

As teachers work together, they will discover differences they have in perspectives and areas of expertise. In the situated learning approach these differences are used to learn and the learning takes place in doing authentic everyday tasks of the teaching community (Stein & D'Amico, 2002).

_The Importance of Literacy as a Focus for Improvement_

There has been a growing awareness of the need for developing proficient skills in the area of literacy within the profession and among the public. Many districts have chosen to focus on improving literacy achievement among their students and thus, literacy achievement is a goal on many school improvement plans. This goal is a timely one considering the recent statistics. _The Vancouver Sun_ (2003) reports that, “according to the International Literacy Survey, 48 percent of Canadians fail to meet the minimum literacy level for successful participation in society” (p. C8). As educators, we must recognize the role we can play
in improving this situation as we teach our students daily in our classrooms.

Changes in society have also brought about demands for higher levels of literacy and we have become increasingly aware of the complexity of literacy and instruction (Gambrell & Massoni, 1999). Productive functioning in our society requires higher levels of literacy than in the past, and these higher levels of literacy will be required of a larger percentage of the population (Braunger & Lewis, 1998). Consequently, what it means to be literate has been redefined. Simply being able to decode and answer low-level literal questions about a piece of text is no longer sufficient. Readers must be critical, independent and strategic as they construct meaning from text. They must draw upon text to build conceptual understanding, effectively communicate ideas orally and in writing, as well as possess an intrinsic desire to read and write (Gambrell & Massoni, 1999). Presenting a further challenge is the increasing numbers of children entering school who are likely to experience difficulty learning to read and write (Braunger & Lewis, 1998).

Overview of the Study

This study of teacher leadership in literacy as experienced by literacy leaders in the Hampton District ELI is divided into five parts. The research problem and theoretical framework of the study are described in chapter one. Chapter two contains a review of the literature on teacher leadership. Chapter three describes the context of the study,
presents the background of the Hampton District ELI and describes the research method. The results and findings of the questionnaire and interviews are presented and discussed in chapter four. Lastly, the conclusion of the study, implications for practice, and suggestions for further research are presented in chapter five.

Conventions Used

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study, I have used pseudonyms for the school district and also for the teachers who were interviewed. The responses to statements and questions in the questionnaire (which were anonymous) are shown in bulleted form. Excerpts from the transcripts of the teacher leader interviews are shown in italics. I use the full pseudonym when referring to specific statements made by an individual teacher leader. In discussing themes that arose from the interviews that were apparent across several teacher leaders, I use the initials for the pseudonyms (in parentheses). Furthermore, when citing documents from the school district, I refer only to District Document rather than the specific name, and have not included the documents in the reference list in order to provide anonymity.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

As Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) assert, “there is a massive renewal of interest in educational leadership” (p. xi). As demands on traditional school administrators increase, and increased pressure for school reform is exerted, researchers agree that educational leadership must access and utilize the leadership capabilities of teachers (Crowther et al., 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Little, 1998; Livingston, 1992; Pellicer & Anderson, 1995).

In this chapter, I review the research on improving literacy instruction, and the limited examples of literacy leadership in the literature. Although there have been a few studies in the area of literacy leadership (e.g., Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Vogt & Shearer, 2003) we will need to do more research in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Since there has been little research conducted in the area of literacy leadership, it is important to look also into the broader area of teacher leadership to inform this study of literacy leaders. Lastly, I propose a definition of literacy leadership that will inform my study based on the literature reviewed.

Literature on Improving Literacy Instruction

In recent years, there has been much debate on how best to teach young students to read and write. Debates over the most effective way to provide instruction in literacy have been termed “the reading wars”
(Flippo, 1999). Despite the fact that the pendulum continues to swing as "experts" claim the effectiveness of phonics versus whole language, and programs claim to be the magic potion or silver bullet to ensure that all children develop the literacy skills needed in today's society, the makeup of public schools does not support a "one-size-fits-all" program. Rather, teachers must be able to provide instruction that addresses the diversity of our students' experiences and needs (Braunger & Lewis, 1998).

Our students today represent a diverse range of background experiences, needs and strengths. Furthermore, the processes of learning to read and write are very complex. As Gambrell and Massoni (1999) assert, "while simple solutions are appealing by their very nature, applying simple solutions to complex enterprises, such as teaching children to become literate in the fullest sense, cannot result in best practice" (p. 12).

In the United States, literacy "best practice" is hotly discussed, debated, and mandated from many directions, and as Stewart (2002) suggests, "the impact of this debate is immediate and far-reaching" (p. 2). In Canada, we too are feeling the effects of these debates. Along with statistics that indicate more than twenty percent of adults are functionally illiterate (Statistics Canada, 1996, as cited in Trehearne, 2002), increased numbers of students who are experiencing difficulty learning to read and write, and the recent call for accountability,
educators in Canada are also searching to identify best practices in literacy instruction.

The research on best practice in literacy instruction is unequivocally clear. As far back as the 1960s, first grade studies have shown that no one approach is best. Bond and Dykstra point out, “although at that time reading researchers were instructed to look for the ‘best’ methods, what they actually found was that no one method could be identified as best” (as cited in Flippo, 1999, p40). Instead, best practices must be designed to fit each student’s needs, not a simple one-size-fits-all approach (Gambrell & Massoni, 1999). “Customizing” instruction is not an easy or simple task. It requires competent teachers who understand the development of literacy and who know the individual strengths and needs of their students. As Chapman (2000) states, “there is no single approach or set of materials that meets all literacy curriculum goals or the needs of all children. There are no proven programs, despite many claims. The best ‘literacy program’ is a thoughtful, knowledgeable teacher” (p. 26).

Stewart (2002) states that many studies support the notion that the teacher is the most important element in the effectiveness of literacy instruction. According to Pearson, effective teachers “need to understand language, literacy and learning well enough to adapt teaching and learning environments, materials, and methods to particular situations,
groups, and individuals (as cited in Brauner & Lewis, 1998, p. 4).

According to Pearson (2003):

> We desperately want teachers who can apply their craft with great flexibility.... We want teachers who use their deep knowledge of subject matter along with knowledge of children’s histories, routines, and dispositions to create just the right curricular mix for each and all – and we want them to use their inquiry skills to alter those approaches when the evidence that passes before their eyes says they are not working. Professional knowledge, deep and broad, is the only basis for flexibility of this sort. (p. 15)

Reading experts are telling classroom teachers to be professional decision makers, and to use their knowledge about reading and literacy to provide meaningful, purposeful, and rewarding literacy experiences for each child (Flippo, 1999).

**Literature on Literacy Leadership**

Teachers are recognized as powerful agents of change who are calling for and implementing valuable school improvements. More and more teachers are taking more active roles in working to improve education for students in and beyond their classroom walls. While much has been written on teacher leadership and the role it plays in educational improvement and school change, there has been little written about teacher leadership among colleagues with a focus on literacy. In
this section I discuss what I was able to find in the literature on teacher leadership in literacy, which I will refer to as 'literacy leadership.'

Studies of literacy leaders in the existing literature reflect two different theories of teacher leadership: conventional leadership and constructivist leadership, as defined in chapter one. Datnow and Castellano (2001) discuss the teacher leaders in the *Success for All* reform model (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). In this model, the teacher leaders are formal leaders who work full time as "reform facilitators." These reform facilitators work to ensure district teachers are complying with the externally-developed school reform model. According to Datnow and Castellano (2001), the teacher leaders are in an evaluative role and the teachers they are leading are in a compliance role. The focus of the literacy leaders in the Datnow and Castellano study (2001) was more on compliance than learning, and there was little mention of collaboration.

In contrast, the few other studies of literacy leadership relevant to the current study focused on the leadership role that reading specialists in a school play in creating and maintaining effective literacy programs in their schools (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). The literacy leaders in this example were informal leaders who, by the nature of their teaching assignment, were literacy leaders in their schools or districts. In addition to their primary responsibility of helping students with reading problems, they also worked alongside classroom teachers, strived to
improve the quality of classroom instruction, and in some cases, helped in developing curriculum and making curricular decisions. This example was closest to the literacy leaders in my study. Unlike the reform facilitators, these literacy leaders were not seen as evaluators; rather, they were seen as peer partners, mentors, cognitive coaches, models, and guides. They used their position to assist others in becoming capable, confident, and expert teachers of reading (Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

Teacher Leadership Defined

Although this study focuses on literacy leadership, given the limited amount of research into this phenomenon, as well as the fact that it is a more specific and focused form of teacher leadership, the literature on teacher leadership in general is informative to this study and important to review. In this section, I examine how teacher leadership is conceptualized in the literature, and briefly discuss two models of teacher leadership. In order to gain insight into teacher leadership, I also explore what the literature reveals about the characteristics of teacher leadership, the benefits, the issues and challenges faced, and the supports available for teacher leaders. The chapter will end with a proposed definition of literacy leadership.

The Move from a Traditional View of Leadership

Traditionally, leadership roles in education were seen to be that of principal, vice-principal and department head. Teaching has not been a
profession which values or encourages leadership within its ranks (Troen & Boles, 1994).

Teaching is challenging, and as Conley and Muncey explain, “the enormous task of meeting the school's challenges requires that teachers assume roles and responsibilities that were previously reserved for principal” (as cited in Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 2). One of the main roles of teacher leaders is guiding and helping other teachers improve their instruction. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) believe “the principal cannot be the only instructional leader in the building” (p. 2). More importantly, Pellicer and Anderson (1995) believe, teachers are unquestionably the best source of instructional leadership available to schools.

Although many conceptualizations of teacher leadership have arisen from a recognized need for shared or distributive leadership, it is important to distinguish teacher leadership from leadership practiced by principals and school administrators. Most of the researchers involved in exploring the concept of teacher leadership agree that it is distinctly different from administrative or managerial concepts of leadership. Various studies indicate that effective leadership involves a move away from top-down, hierarchical modes of functioning, and a move toward leadership that involves shared decision-making, teamwork, and community building (King, 2002; Wynne, 2001).
Formal and Informal Leadership Roles

Although this study into the role of teacher leadership in literacy focuses on how it is experienced by the literacy leaders in the Hampton School District's Early Literacy Initiative, it is important to look at what we already know about teacher leadership and what previous research has discovered. Although the subjects of this study have formal leadership roles that are recognized officially by others, it is also important to recognize the "unofficial," informal leadership roles that are taken on in all schools by classroom teachers without formal recognition or reward (Barth, 1988; Fullan, 1994; Pellicer & Anderson, 1995). An extensive review of the literature has revealed numerous definitions and conceptualizations of teacher leadership. Whether formal or informal, the literature recognizes the need for teachers to take on leadership roles in the school.

Modern Teacher Leadership

Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) put forth a definition of teacher leadership that does not "focus on developing an alternative track to administration." Instead, the authors believe "teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement" (p. 28). The leadership teachers perform involves more than helping in the day-to-day management of the school. Day (2000)
distinguishes leadership from management. “Leadership is essentially building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture, and interpersonal relationships; whereas management is coordinating, supporting and monitoring organizational activities” (p. 57).

The Institute for Educational Leadership points out that teacher leadership is becoming increasingly present, and that it can contribute to improving school health and performance (as cited in Richardson, 2001). Teacher leaders:

engage in collaborative work on a shared school vision, and many practice shared decision making with colleagues, parents and administrators . . . they acknowledge accountability for student results, and expand their circle of influence to all students and all teachers in our school – they are leaders of teaching and learning. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 4).

Teacher leadership is a unique and distinctive form of leadership. Crowther et al. (2002) believe that “teachers are particularly well placed to assume leadership in a world where knowledge generation will be fundamental to community and global sustainability” (p. 31). LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) define teacher leadership as: a) modeling positive attitudes and enthusiasm; b) devoting time to doing whatever it takes to make the school work better; c) enhancing student learning through working with other teachers on improving pedagogy; and d) being recognized, appreciated, respected and/or valued for such efforts (p. 33).
How Others in the School Community Define Teacher Leadership

In a study conducted by Stone, Horejs and Lomas (1997), elementary teachers defined teacher leaders “in terms of a wide range of support activities, assisting others in their professional work, sharing in decision making, and mentoring and collaborating with colleagues for school improvement” (p. 55). Stone et al. found that teachers at all levels defined teacher leaders as “those who are a catalyst to other teachers’ learning and those involved in decision-making and collaboration” (p.55). Smylie and Denny (1990) found that teacher leaders defined their roles in terms of helping and supporting fellow teachers within their buildings. The teacher leaders used phrases such as “facilitator,” “helper,” “catalyst for improvement,” “generator of new ideas,” and “source of knowledge and emotional support” to describe how they defined their leadership roles. Wasley’s (1991) case studies of teacher leaders revealed that when asked, teacher leaders and administrators described teacher leaders as “people who had the ability to share information and to influence others in matters related to curriculum and instruction. Leaders had the ability to go beyond the classroom, to be current in research, and to be teaching advocates” (p. 146). Wasley concluded that teacher leadership implies having the ability to move forward toward a better system, rather than simply supporting the existing system.
Models of Teacher Leadership

A concise definition of teacher leadership is difficult to find. It is just as hard to ascertain what makes leaders successful. As Day (2000) suggests, “evidence of what makes successful leaders remains elusive” (p. 56). There are a variety of approaches to leadership which help us frame an examination of teacher leaders. A review of the literature on teacher leadership highlights several models of leadership. Two models frequently referred to in the literature are the transformational and transactional models of leadership.

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership which emphasizes a truly collaborative relationship between leaders and those being led. “It is characterized by leaders concerned about gaining overall cooperation and energetic participation from organization members, rather than getting specific tasks performed” (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992, p. 32). Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) define it as “the ability to empower others” (p. 24). Transformational leaders try to establish common meaning systems and goals, facilitate and support employees, and they see themselves as responsible for redefining goals, rather than implementing existing programs (Cunningham & Cardeiro, 2000; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992). Transformational leaders see change as necessary and dynamic. The work of leaders is achieved through the transformation of goals and aspirations of the organization’s members. According to Leithwood, transformational school leaders strive to help
staff create and maintain a collaborative, school culture, foster teacher
development, and help teachers solve problems together more effectively
(as cited in Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000).

Transactional leadership, on the other hand is a more authority-
based style of leadership. Transactional leadership is based on an
exchange of services for various kinds of rewards that the leader
controls. It involves incentives for work and for the completion of tasks.
Transactional leaders define needs, assign clear tasks, and reward
compliant behaviour. Transactional leadership is based on the followers’
needs to have problems solved and a belief that the leader can solve
them (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000).

*Characteristics and Attributes Common to Teacher Leaders*

Many studies of teacher leaders have sought to elucidate the
common attitudes, personal strengths, skills, and knowledge these
teachers possess. Research has identified many characteristics of
effective teacher leaders. In some studies (e.g., Carter & Powell, 1992;
Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Stone, et al.,
1997; Yarger & Lee, 1994) teacher leaders were asked to identify the
characteristics they possess that they feel are important in carrying out
their leadership roles effectively. In other studies (e.g., Childs-Bowen et
al., 2000; Day, 2000; Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000; Wilson, 1993)
the teacher leaders described were identified as such by their colleagues,
and their colleagues were asked what it was that makes them effective
leaders. In both groups of studies, there are qualities identified that are believed to help teacher leaders do their job effectively: the ability to interpret and explain research, to demonstrate and explain best practices, and the ability to support and work well with other teachers. The studies also identified that teacher leaders must have an excellent understanding and knowledge of their subject matter, excellent interpersonal skills, an understanding of their school and district policies and goals, and a willingness to take risks and to continue their learning.

Strong interpersonal skills and an ability to work well with other adults are identified as an important characteristic of teacher leaders. Strong interpersonal skills, which foster effective communication and collaboration with others, are common to teacher leaders studied (Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Wilson, 1993; Yarger & Lee, 1994). These strong interpersonal skills help build a sense of trust and confidence in the teacher leader. They also help teacher leaders develop a supportive relationship with the teachers they are working with, build their confidence, and develop a willingness to take chances. These strong interpersonal skills are valuable when it comes to working collaboratively with colleagues on instructional improvement.

Knowledge and expertise in the subject area is another valuable characteristic identified. Teacher leaders are seen as being good at what they do – teaching. If literacy leaders are to work with others to help improve literacy instruction, they need a level of expertise and knowledge
in the theory and practice of literacy instruction. They also need to demonstrate a commitment to these practices in their classrooms. Many teachers influence and inspire others by modeling excellent teaching practices (Wilson, 1993). In addition, knowledge of research in their area, ability to answer questions about theory and practice, and to direct teachers to other resources where they can find answers, were found to be important. As Feiler, et al. (2000) state, “teacher leaders need an extensive repertoire of skills to be effective and be perceived by their colleagues to have knowledge in their area” (p. 67).

Teacher leaders also possess knowledge of another kind. They not only have knowledge of teaching practices and their subject area, teacher leaders also know the contexts, policies and system in which they work (Yarger & Lee, 1994). They need to have a working knowledge of the school and district and its policies and goals. They must have an understanding of the individuals they are working with, their needs and strengths, in order to help them effectively. If teacher leaders are to be effective in their efforts toward change, they must be aware of the goals and the shared vision they are working towards.

To maintain and continue to build trust, teacher leaders demonstrate a willingness to increase their knowledge so that they can continue to grow professionally and provide the most up-to-date information to their colleagues. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) point out that “successful teacher leaders we know are consummate learners who
pay attention to their development and model continuous learning” (p. 8).

Also helpful is a risk oriented, yet persuasive, supportive, and collaborative personality. As Wilson (1993) explains, teacher leaders "busily pursue novel opportunities, but continue to be nurturing and cooperative people . . . these leaders both ‘challenge the process’ and enable others to act” (p. 25). Teachers must be willing to challenge the status quo, press their colleagues to change, to acquire new skills, and to experiment with new teaching methods (Feiler et al., 2000).

**Benefits of Teacher Leadership**

The literature has clearly indicated that there is a need for teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools, districts, and communities. Many teachers possess leadership qualities and “if actualized, could transform not only schools but also communities” (Crowther et al, 2002, p. xvii). More specifically, studies of teacher leadership have found that there are, in fact, numerous benefits to recognizing and encouraging the leadership teachers can provide. Whether teacher leaders have been officially appointed or volunteered, most teacher leaders seem to have taken on this role because they desire the challenge of leadership without leaving teaching or opting for administration or supervisory positions (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994). The “road to administration or path out of the classroom” is no longer one of the commonly cited benefits of teacher leadership.
A review of the literature has found that benefits most often cited or desired by teacher leaders fall into three categories: 1) encouraging professional growth and empowerment, 2) fostering collaborative relations with colleagues, and 3) improving curriculum and instruction.

Encouragement of Professional Growth and Empowerment

One of the most commonly cited reasons for providing opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles is to help foster a sense of empowerment and professionalism among the teaching ranks. Inherent in the nature of teacher leadership is the opportunity for teachers to share in the making of decisions about practice in order to improve student achievement and foster school improvement. Stone et al. (1997), assert that the strongest benefit of teacher leadership is professional growth and the way in which it allows teachers to assume greater responsibility in their professional work lives. Teacher leadership gives teachers a voice in decisions that will help improve schools and enables them to "actualize their professional worth in concrete, fundamental ways, such as sharing expertise, working collegially, and designing roles which promote professionalism" (p. 51). Consequently, when teachers are given the responsibility to make educational decisions in an information-rich environment, they will work harder and smarter on behalf of their students (Glickman, as cited in Stone et al., 1997, p.52). Boles and Troen emphasize that teachers have more interest in
being professionally adept than in moving into administrative positions (as cited in LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997).

**Fostering Collaborative Relations with Colleagues**

Along with the sense of shared responsibility that is fostered with teacher leadership, comes increased collaboration among teachers and school staffs. O'Hair and Reitzug (1997) claim one of the benefits of teacher leadership is the development of a caring community culture in schools. According to Stone et al. (1997), teacher leadership improves working relationships, and increases collaboration among staff members. Teacher leadership breaks down teacher isolation and opens up classroom doors by encouraging discussion and collaborative problem solving:

Teacher leaders demonstrate new teaching techniques and curriculum in their classrooms or in classrooms of other teachers. They also take over classrooms to enable other teachers to visit colleagues’ classrooms, collaboratively plan with other teachers, and generally develop helpful relationships. (Carter & Powell, 1992, p. 10)

More importantly, as LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) point out, “collaboration encourages best practices to be exchanged” (p. 33).

**Improvement of Curriculum and Instruction**

Not only does teacher leadership encourage teachers’ voices and knowledge in the decision-making that is meant to drive school
improvement, it also fills a need that is not being well met by traditional leadership models. As pointed out by Carter and Powell (1992), the traditional teacher leadership positions (quasi-administrative roles) have generally not benefited other teachers. These quasi-administrators spend most of their time in meetings, working with administrators, and working on managerial issues, leaving little time to work with other teachers on instruction and curriculum related issues. In the last decade, teacher leadership has become recognized as a valuable source of instructional leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). In many situations, the main role of teacher leaders is to serve as instructional leaders among their staff. The teachers who choose to take on these leadership roles state these benefits to their colleagues and school communities as the reasons they became teacher leaders.

It is important to discuss here the benefits teacher leaders experience themselves, and the reasons why teacher leaders assume leadership roles. Whether teacher leaders have been officially appointed or volunteered, most teacher leaders in recent studies have done so because they desire the challenge of leadership without leaving teaching or opting for administration or supervisory positions (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994). The “road to administration or path out of the classroom” is no longer one of the commonly cited reasons given by teachers who pursue or accept leadership roles. Stone, et al. (1997) conducted case studies of eighteen elementary, middle and secondary
school teacher leaders. The researchers categorized their findings into three categories: intrinsic reasons, personal reasons, and professional reasons. According to Stone et al., teacher leaders, "assumed leadership roles because of the intrinsic satisfaction they received from filling a perceived need, such as assisting colleagues and engaging in an area of personal interest" (p. 56). Carter and Powell (1992) state that intrinsic rewards seem to be the strongest motivating factors. Among these rewards are the opportunities to accept new challenges and to work with adults while maintaining connections to students. Teaching students was still their primary interest. According to the same study, further intrinsic rewards come from peers who appreciate the support that teacher leaders provide.

The personal benefits include accomplishment of meaningful work, increasing knowledge and expertise, having expanded influence, and an increased understanding of how schools work (Stone et al., 1997). LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) found that a need for lifelong learning and the opportunities to engage in continuous inquiry into practice are also benefits of pursuing leadership roles.

Stone et al. (1997) also discuss the professional benefits that teacher leaders cite as reasons for taking on leadership positions. Teacher leaders like the feeling that they are helping improve the teaching profession. They also get satisfaction from motivating other teachers' learning and improving their practice. Working with other
teachers and establishing positive and supportive relationships with their colleagues is another motivating factor for teacher leaders. Most importantly, Wasley (1991) points out, many teachers accept leadership roles because they believe strongly in what they are trying to accomplish, and wish to affect students more broadly (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). In fact, Wasley cites a study of 85 teachers conducted by McLaughlin and Yee in 1988, who found that "teachers look for ways to grow professionally rather than ways to ascend a hierarchical ladder; success to them means increasing effectiveness with students, not another rung up that ladder" (Wasley, 1991, p. 19). "It seems clear that teachers do not see leadership as others traditionally have (as a 'higher' place in the organizational hierarchy). Their sense of professionalism keeps their leadership tied to directly to what affects their students" (Fay, 1992, p. 59).

*Challenges and Issues Faced By Teacher Leaders*

Many teacher leaders do not plan on becoming "leaders," and find themselves in leadership roles almost by accident. Teacher preparation programs do little to prepare teachers for transformational leadership roles and thus, teacher leaders often feel unprepared, and at times, ill suited as leaders, despite having the qualities which characterize teacher leaders (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997). "Even the best of teachers are not prepared for their teacher leadership roles" (Sherrill, 1999, p. 57). Recent case studies (e.g., Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994; Sandholtz &
Finan, 1998; Sherrill, 1993; Snyder, 1994) have reported high levels of frustration from teachers piloting new leadership roles. The reported frustrations of these teachers and their lack of self-efficacy indicate that teacher leadership roles called for in reform efforts need to have greater definition, and teachers need to have more purposeful preparation (as cited in Sherrill, 1999, p. 57).

However, although many studies have cited a lack of leadership training as a barrier to teacher leadership, LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) did not find this to be the case. They found that lack of training was “not identified as a problem for the well trained participants of the study. Thus, these study participants showed that training is an issue that can be overcome” (p. 45).

For many teachers, the very qualities they possess as teacher leaders and the reasons for taking on leadership roles lands them in a precarious position with their teacher colleagues, posing a challenge to the very goals they are trying to accomplish. As Wilson (1993) points out, “the very capabilities that distinguish teacher leaders from others – risk taking, collaboration, and role modeling – produce tensions between them and their colleagues” (p. 26). While the literature identifies qualities believed to help teacher leaders do their job effectively, it is also clear that they face many challenges.

Little (1988) points out, “teachers invited to lead may well fail to do so” (p. 84). Due to the many challenges they face, some teacher leaders
end up leading the same way they teach – alone. Or, as Little continues, teacher leaders worry so much about being threatening that they end up being ineffective as leaders instead. Furthermore, many teacher leaders do not readily identify what they do as leading. This is especially true for teacher leaders who maintain their positions in classrooms. According to Barth (1988) and Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), many teachers do not see themselves as leaders simply because they view teaching and leading as mutually exclusive. Teaching is what teachers do and leading is what principals do. If teachers do not see themselves as leaders, it is very difficult for colleagues to respond to them as leaders (Wilson, 1993).

Researchers have found that many teacher leaders find that the challenge in effective leadership lies in preventing the emergence of a “we-they” attitude. Studies of teachers conducted by Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers and Smylie and Dennie report “teacher leaders (who still taught part time) were reluctant to challenge the norms that characterize the professional lives for fear of separating themselves from their colleagues (as cited in Datnow & Castellano, 2001, p. 223). Some found that the nature of being placed apart or differentiated from their colleagues by the title of “mentor” or “teacher leader” affected their working relationships, and they experienced a distancing between themselves and the teachers with whom they were meant to work (Troen & Boles, 1994). As Walters and Guthro assert, “teachers taking on
leadership roles are often held suspect by colleagues" (as cited in Livingston, 1992, p. 144). Teacher leaders feel a tension between wanting to be recognized as leaders and given the responsibility that comes with the role, but they also don't want to be different from other teachers (Smylie & Denny, 1990). In Wasley’s study (1991), all three teacher leaders felt at times lonely and isolated as a result of their positions.

Little “found that lack of clarity and ambivalence on the part of teachers in “mentor” roles tended to produce a lower rate of direct teacher-to-teacher involvement” (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 244). For many teacher leaders, their role is an ambiguous one, and a lack of a clear role definition creates a barrier to effective teacher leadership (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994; Little, 1988). For teacher leaders who have a clear picture of their function, their position is not as precarious. For example, when they see their role clearly as a facilitator to help other teachers make sense of new ideas or policies, and not as the one saying “this is what you have to do,” it is less threatening to their relationships with their colleagues or administrators.

Another challenge to teacher leaders is the fact that they often do not have an institutionalized position of power to rely on or formally outlined roles. The lack of an institutionalized position of power adds to the ambiguity of their position, and they must rely on their ability to establish themselves as credible and continuous leaders who can be
relied upon to pass on relevant information about best practices (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Even if teachers do have a formal leadership position, the authority of the position alone does not guarantee success. In Carter and Powell's study (1992) of teacher leaders, they report one teacher saying that she had not used the designated teacher leader at her previous school. “I didn’t ever go to the [teacher leader] because I didn’t really feel she could really help me” (p. 11). Teachers must have confidence in their teacher leaders.

The lack of time is an issue that is cited repeatedly in the literature on teacher leadership, and one that poses a real challenge to many teacher leaders. There are many demands on a teacher leaders’ time—planning, collaborating, maintaining their own and others’ professional development, and meeting with other teachers, as well as administrative demands, such as decision making, ordering resources and problem solving. The teacher leaders in Smylie and Denny’s study (1990) report that the greatest tension involved the allocation of time between their classrooms and leadership responsibilities (p. 247). Teacher leaders want to be effective in their work with students and with their colleagues but there is a paradox. O’Connor and Boles found, “as much as they want to be involved in meaningful staff development, they are reluctant to be away from their students” (as cited in Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 109).
Supports for Teacher Leaders

Ironically, the many factors that are challenges for some teacher leaders are also seen as supports for teachers in leadership positions. For example, as Wasley (1991) points out:

teacher leaders were given time to work with their colleagues – a tremendous support – but also agreed that the time allocated was inadequate . . . . The teacher leaders loved the opportunity to collaborate with others, and yet felt lonely as their roles separated them from their colleagues. (p. 137)

The literature on teacher leaders is full of these paradoxes, which underscore the complex nature of teacher leadership.

Some of the issues identified previously as challenges to leadership can also, for some teacher leaders and in some situations, be sources of support for teachers in leadership positions. Teacher leaders who teach part time in the classroom and lead part time identify the flexibility with time as a support (Wasley, 1991). As Wasley explains, maintaining one foot in the classroom also adds to the credibility they have with the teachers they are trying to lead and work with. It is also very empowering to teachers when they can see the teacher leader as one of themselves. This role also allows for more effective support for teachers. Wasley explains how modeling in other teachers' classrooms is not as effective because the teacher has difficulty changing from teacher to learner in her own classroom. If the teacher seeking the support is able
to observe the teacher leader in a classroom other than her own, the learning is likely to be more effective.

Teacher leaders in the literature also identify ongoing professional development for the teacher leaders as a support. As discussed earlier, transformational leadership skills are not taught in teacher education programs, and many of the teacher leaders often find themselves in leadership positions quite by accident. In order to be effective as leaders, these teachers often need opportunities for training in leadership skills (Carter & Powell, 1992; Wasley, 1991; Wetig, 2002; Zinn, 1997).

When teacher leader roles are not made clear to the teacher leaders and those they are to support, there is more opportunity for ambiguity and challenges to the leadership. This is especially true for leadership that is based on the transactional model. Conversely, teacher leaders identify clear role descriptions as a support for teacher leadership. Carter and Powell (1992) found that when expectations for teacher leaders are clearly laid out, all those involved know what can be expected from the teacher leaders and relationships are clearer and thus, more effective. In transformational models of leadership, these expectations are often formed collaboratively and are agreed upon by the teachers and teacher leaders.

Zinn (1997) conducted a study of teacher leaders and identified numerous intrapersonal characteristics that are supportive factors in a teacher leader’s role. These teacher leaders held strong personal
convictions and values, enjoyed challenges and change, and relished involvement in issues with potentially broad impact. They were self-motivated, confident, and dedicated teachers committed to helping make schools better places for students and teachers. Teacher leaders in Zinn's study were also learners and risk takers who enjoyed new challenges. Lastly, the fact that they wanted involvement with issues with potential for broad impact was a supportive factor in fulfilling their leadership role. Once again, these same personal characteristics can also be factors that contribute to the challenges that teacher leaders face, especially in their relationships with their colleagues. However, in Zinn's study these challenges were also identified as supports.

Although relations with administrators and colleagues often pose a challenge to teacher leaders, the support they received from colleagues and administrators has been identified by teacher leaders as a strong supportive factor in teacher leadership roles. Specifically, the opportunity for collaboration with colleagues, the support of a strong network of colleagues, and the experience of community are factors identified by teacher leaders as supports (Stone, et al., 1997; Wasley, 1991). The support of administration was also identified by teacher leaders as helpful to fulfilling their role. As Zinn (1997) explains, "administrators provide verbal encouragement, and often demonstrate support by removing other barriers to the teacher's leadership" (p. 61). The principal support discussed in Carter and Powell (1992) comes when
principals value what the teacher leaders do, cover classes, promote collaboration, and encourage teacher leaders to spend time in classrooms.

_Literacy Leadership Defined_

There are various conceptions of teacher leadership in the literature. However, few researchers have explored leadership in literacy. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain a concise, yet inclusive, definition of literacy leadership from the literature. Using my experiences of leadership in literacy, and the conceptualizations of teacher leadership, I have constructed a definition of literacy leadership for the purpose of this study. Simply, literacy leadership can be defined as teacher leadership that focuses on improving the literacy education teachers provide for students as they teach children to be effective readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. The focus on improvement of literacy instruction implies that the leader must be more than a manager of a literacy program. The literacy leader must have specific knowledge and skills in addition to the qualities and attributes found to be common to teacher leaders in order to be effective. Not only must the literacy leader have a sound understanding of how children develop, effective teaching methods and classroom management, the literacy leader must also have a good understanding of children’s literacy development, knowledge of theory and practice in literacy instruction, and an interest in and passion for literacy. The literacy leader should have a broad knowledge of resources
and support available to teachers striving to improve their literacy instruction, and be seen by colleagues as an effective literacy teacher. Since the literacy leader works closely with other teachers, supporting and mentoring them, an understanding of adult learning and the ability to help facilitate the learning and development of his or her colleagues is valuable. The literacy leader must also have a good understanding of the school community and culture in order to work toward shared goals and values.

Summary of Research

Research clearly states that teachers can no longer rely on finding the perfect program or “magic bullet” to help successfully teach their students to read and write. Teachers need to be knowledgeable and reflective in their instruction, and to be continually learning to improve their practice in order to meet their students’ needs. The research on teacher leadership has found that the most effective way to help teachers improve their knowledge, engage in change, and build capacity is to work with, and learn from, other teachers. Teacher leadership is complex and comes with many challenges; however, there are also many benefits for both teachers and teacher leaders. This situation is similar for literacy leaders. Teachers who fulfill the role of literacy leaders will help develop thoughtful and knowledgeable teachers, and more importantly, students who are successful readers and writers.
CHAPTER 3

Research Method

The purpose of this research project is to explore what it means to be a literacy leader from the perspective of the literacy mentors (LM) and school coordinators (SC) of the Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) schools in the Hampton School District.

Context of the Study

“It is very difficult to understand teacher leadership without also understanding the contexts in which it functions” (Smylie, 1995, p. 6). The context of this study is an early literacy initiative in a school district in an urban centre in British Columbia. The district has 90 elementary schools with a multicultural student population. The students in the district come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and have diverse learning needs.

The Hampton School District Early Literacy Initiative

An important aspect of the context in which the literacy leaders in this study work is the Hampton School District Early Literacy Initiative (ELI). The Early Literacy Initiative is a grassroots movement developed in 1988 out of a growing interest in literacy among district teachers. It invites teachers to ask these questions:

- How can we ensure success for all learners?
• How can we become more knowledgeable as teachers to better meet the needs of children?

(District webpage, 2003, p. 1)

The goal of the initiative is to "have all children leaving grade three as fluent, functional readers, writers, listeners, and speakers; and to improve early literacy through a comprehensive program of assessment, instruction, professional development and home/school partnership" (District document, 2001, p. 1). A limited number of schools expressing an interest in being part of the Early Literacy Initiative were the focus in first few years of the project. Each year more schools were added as participants in the district initiative. The initiative became a District Direction in the fall of 1998.

Each school involved in the ELI, collaboratively among its staff, develops a literacy plan to suit the needs of its students. These schools make a two year commitment to collecting base line data during each reporting period through the collection of writing samples and running record/observation survey analysis for reading. In the third year, ELI schools are encouraged to be mentors for upcoming first year schools. It is also intended that, during this third year, ELI schools continue adapting, refining, and using the literacy strategies learned from the first two years.

In a district report published in May 2001, the feedback regarding the initiative was reported to be very positive. Benefits reported include
professional growth for teachers and increased opportunities for collaboration among staff. Teachers also report increased confidence with risk taking and greater knowledge of students' literacy levels and how to improve them. Lastly, benefits to students have been experienced and “more students are meeting expectations and are using a wider range of strategies when learning” (District document, 2001, p. 6).

Participants

Another benefit for the Hampton school district is in building the leadership capacity at the school level (District document, 2001, p. 10). The leadership is provided by both literacy mentors and school coordinators. These teacher leaders “help achieve the district’s goal of improving literacy instruction and literacy achievement of its students” (p. 2). These teacher leaders maintain their roles as classroom teachers as well as taking on additional responsibilities, such as mentoring and assisting other teachers, providing information, and modeling new strategies and techniques in an effort toward improved educational practice in the area of literacy. They also have a vital role in the direction and implementation of the project (District document, 2002). The description of their role fits the definition of teacher leaders provided in much of the literature on the subject. They “lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 5) and according to Feiler, et
al., (2000), these teacher leaders also “serve as in-house experts who provide information, modeling and assistance to other teachers” (p. 66).

Each school involved in the initiative develops a literacy plan to suit the needs of its students. To help facilitate this process, Early Literacy Teams at the school level are formed, consisting of the administrator and one school coordinator or team of coordinators (project leader[s]/contact). Specifically, the role of the school coordinator is to facilitate the development of a “professional learning community” that meets regularly for conversation and reflection on the topic of literacy improvement. School coordinators also have considerable responsibility for the administration of the project, ordering, and organizing resources, and assisting colleagues in the change process. The Early Literacy Teams meet to discuss student progress and to monitor the project.

The Early Literacy Teams also meet with district staff and their literacy mentor. Literacy mentors are provided by the district as an additional support to the literacy initiatives. Literacy mentors spend sixty percent of their time as classroom teachers and forty percent of their time as part of a team with the primary consultant and other area and district staff. This team supports the ELI schools in meeting their literacy goals and helps to refine the district initiative and its implementation. Literacy mentors provide in-service and demonstration lessons to teachers in the project schools, open their classrooms for visits, refer teachers to resources and other sources of information, meet
with the Early Literacy Teams, and, in general, provide support to teachers participating in the district and school based initiatives (District document, 2002).

Both the literacy mentors and school coordinators in the initiative serve as literacy leaders. The school coordinators serve a leadership role within their school, facilitating intra-school collaboration and support. The literacy mentors serve a leadership role among a number of schools and staffs, and work with school coordinators and classroom teachers in their assigned ELI schools. The literacy mentors help facilitate collaboration and support between district staff, schools and school staffs.

**Sampling**

I used a purposive sampling procedure to select the cases to inform my study. Purposeful sampling is, according to Patton, "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (as cited in Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 378). All the literacy mentors and school coordinators were asked to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire. For the interview phase of the study, I used a system of stratified purposive sampling which includes several cases at defined points of variation with respect to the phenomenon being studied. This allows the researcher to develop insights into the characteristics of each type, as well as insights into the variations that exist across types (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Twelve literacy leaders volunteered to participate in
the interview phase of the study. This was indicated by their response to item #36 on the questionnaire which asked: "Would you consider participating in a one on one interview (approximately one hour in length) to be arranged at a time and location convenient to you?" Of the twelve that volunteered to be interviewed, two had experience as literacy mentors and ten are currently functioning in the role of school coordinator. Three had less than one year in the role, one had one to two years in the role, and eight had been in the role more than two years. Ten of the twelve who volunteered to be interviewed had education beyond their undergraduate degree (B.Ed or B.A). Three had a Masters in Education (M.Ed.) degree, three were currently working on their M.Ed., and four of the twelve had a Post-Baccalaureate diploma. Their teaching experience ranged from four years (n=1) to twenty five years (n=3). Five of the teachers indicated they had been teaching six to ten years, three had been teaching 16-20 years; and three, 21-25 years. Of the twelve, seven had previous leadership experience.

I immediately chose the two literacy mentors who volunteered for the interview and contacted them. After close examination of the questionnaires I chose four school coordinators to interview. I chose one school coordinator with more than two years of experience in that role, one with between one and two years experience, and two with less than one year (they share the position within their school). I also considered
the nature of their responses, looking for interesting perspectives and insights. In all, six participants were chosen to be interviewed.

Research Design

The research design that I used is a case study approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. The use of both methods is recommended when doing case study research (Yin as cited in Gall et al., 2003, p. 223).

Case studies are an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit. They are particularistic in that they focus on a specific situation or phenomenon; they are descriptive, and they are heuristic – that is they offer insight into the phenomenon under study. (Merriam, 1988, p. 20)

In this case the phenomenon is literacy leadership in the Hampton School Board's Early Literacy initiative. The results of the study do not necessarily tell us about literacy leadership in general, but instead tell us what is true for the literacy leaders in the case that I am studying.

Procedures and Data Collection

Prior to beginning my study, I attended two meetings of the Literacy Leadership Collaborative, to be introduced to the literacy mentors and school coordinators and to gain some understanding of the ELI and the roles of the literacy leaders. These two meetings were during the 2002-2003 school year and the literacy mentors and school
coordinators were made aware of my planned study. Data collection and analysis took place during the 2003-2004 school year. Recruitment letters (see Appendix A) were mailed to all the literacy mentors and school coordinators in late September 2003, requesting the literacy mentors and school coordinators to complete a forthcoming questionnaire of 37 items. Thirty nine questionnaires were returned.

The Questionnaire

In October, a cover letter and questionnaire (see Appendix B) was mailed to all the literacy mentors and school coordinators in the district. The questionnaire consisted of five questions pertaining to teaching background and experience and reasons for becoming a literacy mentor or school coordinator. Eighteen structured (Likert scale) items and nine unstructured, open-ended items were included to obtain the participants' perspectives on their role as literacy leaders in the Hampton School District's ELI. The items were chosen based on findings from the literature and the researchers' experiences as a literacy leader. The last and separate page of the questionnaire asked each participant if he/she would be willing to participate in the second phase of the research, consisting of a one-on-one interview approximately 30-60 minutes in length.

The Interview

After initial analysis of the questionnaires, six of the twelve participants who were willing to be interviewed were contacted in late
October and early November to set up one-on-one interviews. The interviews were conducted during November, 2003 and were semi-structured in nature. “In the semi-structured interview, certain information is desired from all the respondents. These interviews are guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). The guiding questions (see Appendix C) were based on the collective data from the questionnaires, but not connected to the interviewee’s specific questionnaire information. The interviews, conducted at the participants’ schools, were used to attain clarification, elaboration, and greater insight into the information gained from phase one of the study. The interview provided an opportunity for the participants to discuss their role and perspectives in further detail, and to raise new ideas or issues not yet touched upon. As Stake (1995) comments, “Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64).

Data Analysis

Responses from the questionnaires were analyzed to determine themes and patterns. Response rates were tracked, and percentages for the structured items were calculated (Gay & Airasian, 1992). Responses for the structured items in the questionnaire were sorted and presented
in tabular form. The data were analyzed for themes and for frequency of responses.

The responses for unstructured items (see Appendix D) were analyzed for themes and then responses were categorized thematically. Responses were also analyzed, and then checked against the objectives and research questions guiding this study to see if any inferences could be made. Lastly, the data from the questionnaires were analyzed for existing themes and patterns to be explored further in the interview phase of the study.

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed and post-interview notes were taken. The transcripts were coded and analyzed for themes and patterns (Erickson, 1986). Although I used my original research questions as my focus, the themes and patterns were "preliminary and tentative in the beginning of the data analysis ... as flexible working tools, not rigid schemes" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 483). However, as Palys (1997) points out, this qualitative form of analysis was one that began "with a well-defined question that is used to focus analysis of sample material defined by the research question as relevant" (p. 239).

Summary

The research study took place in a large urban school district in British Columbia. The participants were teachers who have taken on a leadership role in their district’s Early Literacy Initiative. The purpose of
this study was to examine what it means to be a literacy leader within the context of this district's Early Literacy Initiative. In phase one of the study, the literacy leaders in the district were invited to complete a questionnaire so I could gain insight into their perspectives of their role as leaders. Participants were also asked to volunteer for a one-on-one interview. Six literacy leaders were interviewed for phase two of the study. Interview questions were aimed at clarifying, and elaborating on data from the questionnaires, as well as allowing for new ideas or issues not yet touched upon. Responses from the questionnaire were tallied and open-ended responses were compiled and organized thematically. The interviews were audio taped and notes were taken. Finally, a report was written detailing the findings and discussing the results.
CHAPTER 4

Findings and Discussion

In this chapter I present and discuss the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) had a combination of unstructured, open-ended questions, and structured statements to which the participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed. In order to gain insight into the literacy leaders’ roles and perspectives, the questionnaire contained 18 structured (Likert scale) questions. Respondents were asked to choose the phrase: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neither agree nor disagree (N), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD), that best described their feelings toward the statement. Respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions about their role and experiences as a school coordinator or literacy mentor. The two components of the questionnaire were analyzed separately and then analyzed in combination to glean insight into literacy leadership in the Hampton School District Early Literacy Initiative.

As I analyzed the questionnaires, I noted points that I wished to probe further during interviewing to obtain more detail and information that I felt was still lacking. I also used the interview to validate and confirm some of the findings from the questionnaire phase of the data collection. Although I had a list of the interview questions (see Appendix C), I allowed myself flexibility to use the questions as a guideline only. I
was not compelled to ask all the questions, nor did I restrict myself to the order or wording of the questions. In some instances, I asked questions based on a previous answer given during the interview that was not necessarily directly related to information in the questionnaire.

Teacher Background and Experience

Thirty-nine teachers completed and returned the questionnaire. The return rate from the school coordinators was much greater than that of the literacy mentors.

TABLE 1

Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>30+</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Mentors</th>
<th>N= 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Coordinators</th>
<th>n= 37</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
questionnaire. One of the school coordinators had been a literacy mentor previously and was one of the original teachers to take the idea of the Early Literacy Initiative to the board. As seen in Table 1, the range of the respondents’ teaching experience was varied, with four literacy leaders who had been teaching less than five years, and four who had been teaching more than 25 years.

TABLE 2

*Years in Current Leadership Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;1 years</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
<th>&gt;2 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Coordinators</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half the teachers that responded have taught between six and fifteen years (n=19). Table 2 shows the length of time in years that the literacy leaders have been in their role of either literacy mentor or school coordinator. Slightly more than half of the literacy leaders who responded had more than two years experience in their position (n=22/39).
Table 3 summarizes the educational background of the respondents. Nineteen of the respondents indicated that they had post-secondary education following their initial degree (B.A. or B.Ed). Many had or were currently taking course work in the area of literacy. Four of the respondents were currently working on graduate studies or post-baccalaureate education. Many literacy leaders actively sought out opportunities to continue their learning.

More than half of the literacy leaders who responded to the questionnaire had previous experience in leadership roles either at the school or district level. Eighteen of the 39 respondents reported having past experience in a leadership role, as shown in detail in Table 4.
TABLE 4

*Experience in Other Leadership Roles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional development chair</th>
<th>Union representative</th>
<th>School Committee</th>
<th>District Committee</th>
<th>Workshop Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Mentors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Coordinators</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= 37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous leadership experience included committee work at the school and district level, chairing of committees, and serving as the school professional development representative or union representative. Other less common leadership roles were facilitating workshops and supervising student teachers.

I interviewed six out of twelve literacy leaders who had volunteered to be interviewed. One was, at the time, a literacy mentor in the project. Another was currently a school coordinator but had been a literacy mentor previously (she was able to give me both the perspective of a literacy mentor and school coordinator), and the remaining four were school coordinators.
TABLE 5

*Interviewee Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Teaching Experience (in years)</th>
<th>Literacy Leader Experience (in years)</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Previous Leadership Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna (D)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol (C)</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara (B)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (L)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Currently in M.Ed</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon (S)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Currently in M.Ed</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria (G)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, three interviewees had more than two years’ experience as literacy leaders, two were in their first year as literacy leaders, and one had one to two years experience. All the literacy leaders interviewed had or were, at the time, pursuing either a post-baccalaureate diploma or masters degree in the education field. In addition, all the literacy leaders interviewed were experienced classroom teachers: three had 7-10 years teaching experience and three had taught 20-25 years. All but one interviewee had previous leadership experience, such as chairing committees, or serving as professional development or
union representatives of their school, and two had leadership experience on district committees.

**Motivation for Becoming a Literacy Leader**

The questionnaire asked respondents to describe the process they went through to become a literacy mentor or school coordinator. Both literacy mentors reported that they had applied to the school district and were interviewed for the role. The role of school coordinator is a volunteer one and most of the school coordinators in the study were either elected by primary staff or they volunteered for the position and were endorsed by the staff. The process in appointing a school coordinator was reported to be a collaborative one by most in the study. In four cases, teachers volunteered to take over the position when no one else on their staff was willing, and in three cases school coordinators reported being asked or approached by the principal to take on the role.

Teacher leaders were asked to rank in importance the reasons that motivated them the most when they were considering the position of literacy mentor or school coordinator in the Hampton ELI. Table 6 shows the motivations for assuming the literacy leadership position and how they were ranked. Opportunity to gain or expand leadership experience was not a strong motivation for becoming a school coordinator of literacy mentor.
TABLE 6

Motivation for Becoming a Literacy Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked As:</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to work as a leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to mentor other teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to expand leadership experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to work with other teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use and share knowledge of literacy instruction with others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take on a new challenge outside of the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn more about literacy instruction</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses indicated that teachers were primarily attracted by the literacy components of the role. Of the seven statements from which to choose, the most frequently chosen was to “learn more about literacy instruction” (1st choice n=16, 2nd choice n=12). The second highest ranked statements were only chosen by half as many respondents as their first or second choice. They were: “Use and share knowledge of literacy instruction with others” (1st choice n=7 and 2nd choice n=7) and
"opportunity to work with other teachers." Motivation for the literacy leaders in the study can be described as both transformational and constructivist in nature.

The opportunities to work as a leader and to expand leadership experience were not highly ranked by respondents. Only one respondent ranked the opportunity to work as a leader as a first choice, and two respondents ranked opportunity to expand leadership experience as their first choice.

Participants' Perceptions of their Role

Table 7 includes the three Likert items that elicited the respondents' perceptions of their role. The participants were asked whether they felt the LMs and SCs play an important role in achieving the goals and aims of the Early Literacy Initiative in Hampton schools. Thirty-seven of 39 either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Most teachers felt that their position as a literacy leader allowed them to influence teachers in a positive way. Thirty respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Only eight indicated they neither agree nor disagree and none chose disagree or strongly disagree.

The third corresponding Likert item was the statement, "I am an instructional leader in my school and/or district." Two of 39 respondents strongly agreed with this statement and 16 indicated they agreed. Fourteen respondents indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and seven disagreed.
TABLE 7

Participants' Perceptions of Their Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item:</th>
<th>N=39</th>
<th>Likert Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 LMs and SCs play an important role in achieving the goals and aims of the Early Literacy project in schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14 I am able to influence other teachers in a positive way.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15 I am an instructional leader in my school and/or district.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, most respondents did consider themselves to be leaders. Participants were asked in an open-ended question whether they felt they hold a leadership position and were asked to indicate why or why not. Of the 39 teachers that responded, 24 responded that they did feel they were leaders. When asked why, many participants listed activities or responsibilities. The reasons given reflect both a managerial perception of their role, such as, "because I conduct monthly literacy meetings with staff members" and "I have the opportunity to organize meaningful professional development opportunities within my school for my colleagues," to ones that reflect more of a constructivist, learning-community perception of a leader. Constructivist perceptions were indicated by responses such as:
• I am responsible for conducting regular meetings, gathering and reporting information to others, and helping support my colleagues.

• Yes, because I lead by example. People come to ask me about our resources and how to use them. I am consulted about assessment and teaching practices.

Eight responded that they did not feel they were leaders in their school. Many of the reasons they stated to show they were not leaders are characteristic of constructivist, transformational leadership. Some of the reasons they stated were as follows:

• No, I work with teachers in my school.

• I see myself more as a facilitator.

• No. A coordinator relays information to the school staff and provides assistance to teachers, if needed. I don’t consider that to be a leadership role.

Five respondents indicated that they were “sort of,” “not really,” or “somewhat” of a leader. Some of the explanations were:

• Not really. I feel I’m more of a guide or helper. Someone who is willing to “walk beside” the members of our primary staff as we learn about literacy together rather than someone who is “leading the way.” I’m still learning too!

• Sort of. Our school is extremely small and everyone holds some sort of leadership position- so I’m just as equal. I do,
however, have a little more knowledge on the topic of literacy than the other staff.

These reasons given are interesting in that they are characteristics that exemplify the roles members of learning communities play and the type of leadership that is exhibited by teachers in learning communities.

For some, the fact that they did not have to apply for the job, but instead were asked by their colleagues to take it on or handed the position because no one else wanted it, made them consider the role not a leadership one, for example: Not really – I was asked to take on the position without really wanting it.

Interviewees were also asked if they felt they were leaders and only one school coordinator interviewed stated she did not believe she was a leader: “Not really no . . . I don’t see myself that way so I see this as big challenge for me, something new” (L). The other interviewees did perceive themselves as leaders. One SC responded “Absolutely” (S). Another SC commented that she “is a reluctant one” (G). She explains “I don’t take to leadership particularly easily but I find myself sometimes in situations where I need to be a leader.” One literacy mentor was hesitant to label herself a leader. “Its really funny I don’t really think of myself in that way. I just think that I have this amazing opportunity to go out and work with people and I am willing to go out and do workshops and things like that and I think that you know my number one thing is that I am an enrolling teacher and I am the same [as other teachers]” (C).
Interviewees were asked to describe their vision of a leader. There was a general aversion to a hierarchical definition of leadership. The perceptions the interviewees held of their leadership role was fitting with the transformational and constructivist forms of leadership typical in collaborative learning communities. One characteristic of a leader that arose in two of the interviews was that a leader walks beside, not in front of, those they are working with (G, D). A leader is “someone . . . who can sense the direction people want to go and move them that way without appearing to pull people so kind of beside rather than in front” (G). Carol further elaborates:

I don’t like the idea of leadership that you are seen as somebody above them. I don’t like that. I mean they are just my equals, my professional equals and so but you know I do have ways I can support them. I mean that’s a leader but I don’t like the steps of power that sometimes leadership or a leader can be.

Another characteristic cited in many of the interviewees’ vision of a leader was ability to communicate clearly (G, S, L, B). Gloria described her vision of a leader as “someone who can communicate clearly.” Another interviewee commented, “my role [as a leader] is to present information in an unbiased manner” (S). One interviewee saw her role as a leader as “a facilitator . . . helping them and trying to support them, determining their needs and figuring out how you are going to get that support for them” (L).
Characteristics Needed to Fulfill Role Effectively

Both the questionnaire respondents and interviewees were asked about the characteristics they possess that help them in their role as literacy mentors or school coordinators. The Likert items contained statements asking them about interpersonal skills, relationships, ability to communicate with and influence others, and familiarity and knowledge about literacy instruction, as summarized in Table 8 (shown on the following page).

Most agreed that strong interpersonal skills are valuable to their role as LM or SC (SA=12, A=22, out of 38 respondents) and most believed they possessed strong interpersonal skills (SA=5, A=27 out of 38 respondents). Twenty-nine of 39 respondents agreed or strongly agreed they had good working relationships with other teachers at their school. Twenty-nine of 39 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am good at communicating what I know.” Most teachers agreed that they were able to influence other teachers in a positive way (SA=1, A=29). When asked whether they were unfamiliar with current research on literacy instruction, 37 of 39 respondents disagreed (n=22) or strongly disagreed (n=15). Twenty-seven of 39 agreed or strongly agreed they had an excellent understanding of best practice in literacy instruction.
### TABLE 8

*Characteristics Needed to Fulfill Role Effectively*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=39</th>
<th>Likert Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire Item:</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 The knowledge and strengths that LMs and SCs possess are used effectively in their roles.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11 I possess strong interpersonal skills.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12 Strong interpersonal skills are valuable to my role as LM or SC.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13 Strong leadership skills are necessary to do my job as LM or SC effectively.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16 I have an excellent understanding of best practice in literacy instruction.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17 I am not a risk taker in my job.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18 I am unfamiliar with the current research on literacy instruction.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19 I am good at communicating what I know.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21 I have good working relationships with teachers at my school.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data on personal strengths reflects a sense of modesty on the part of the literacy leaders in the study. When asked about positive characteristics they possess, teacher leaders were more likely to respond “agree” rather than “strongly agree.” This finding also reflects the fact that most literacy leaders in the project did not take on the position because they felt they were especially knowledgeable or skilled literacy teachers or leaders, but rather, wanted to learn more about literacy instruction in a collaborative manner.

When asked to respond to an open-ended question about the qualities they possess that help them fulfill their position as a LM or SC, organizational ability came up repeatedly. Interpersonal skills, good communication skills, and ability to listen were also frequently mentioned. Another quality many listed as helpful is their passion for or love of literacy, their knowledge about early literacy, and their ability or willingness to learn, for example:

- *I have good organizational skills, good interpersonal skills, and am open to new ideas.*

- *Organizational skills, desire to learn and support best practice in literacy and desire to help other teachers.*

One respondent listed “strong leadership qualities.”

Many of these characteristics were also considered helpful by the literacy leaders interviewed. Organization skills (L, S, B); passion, interest and enthusiasm (S, D, G, L); knowledge about literacy (G, D, B,
C, S, L); and interpersonal skills, such as ability to work with people and communication (D, G, B, C) were mentioned in the interviews.

The interviews brought to light two characteristics or qualities that were not mentioned by the questionnaire respondents. Two of the interviewees (B, C) felt that flexibility was a quality that is helpful to teachers in a leadership position. The two literacy mentors interviewed also felt maintaining their position as classroom teachers benefited them in their role and helped them to be effective literacy leaders.

**Support/Resources Participants Receive to Help Them Fulfill Their Role Effectively**

Participants were asked to rate their opinion to the Likert statement, "LMs and SCs are given adequate resources to fulfill their role." As shown in Table 9, two respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 17 agreed, six neither agreed nor disagreed, 12 disagreed and one strongly disagreed. Responses to the open-ended question, "What resources (i.e., time, materials, personnel support, in-service opportunities, professional development) are provided to help you to fulfill your role effectively?" included release time, money for resources, coordinator meetings, professional development, and support from mentors.
TABLE 9

*Support/Resources Participants Receive to Help Them Fulfill Their Role Effectively*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item:</th>
<th>N=39</th>
<th>Likert Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 LMs and SCs are given adequate resources to fulfill their role.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 LMs are able to do an effective job both in the classroom as a classroom teacher and in their project schools as a mentor.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20 LMs contribute to effective in-service and professional development in the district.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literacy leaders interviewed all agreed that the district provides “*quite a bit of support*” (D). Teacher-on-call days, professional resources, meetings for literacy mentors and school coordinators, and support from administration and colleagues were mentioned. The school coordinators interviewed said the support from their literacy mentors was also very helpful. Interviewees valued the meetings for school coordinators at which they learned new literacy strategies and had opportunity to network with the literacy mentors and coordinators from other schools.
They valued opportunities for collaboration with other literacy leaders as well as opportunities to learn from their peers. As Gloria states:

_The mentor meetings are very, very helpful to us. They’re about three of four times a year.... They always do some very quick work on strategies. They introduce different strategies ... and those are useful to my teaching and also they provide ideas to give to other people that are easily successful and address some part of the literacy process._

These data show that literacy leaders generally feel supported in their leadership roles. However, in addition to the constant need for more time and money, literacy leaders would like to see even more opportunities for learning, and support from other literacy leaders.

**Challenges and Issues Participants Face in their Role**

The literature on teacher leaders cites that there are many challenges that teacher leaders face. The questionnaire and interview data both supported this perspective. Not surprisingly, lack of time was cited often as a challenge to their role. Examples of such responses included:

- *Time in a day! Too many lunch hour meetings.*
- *At my school we have unreasonable numbers of lunch time meetings: primary team, SAC, small last minute meetings from various committees, staff meetings called by the principal,*
union meetings, early literacy meetings end up being one of many. "Oh no, not another meeting" people say.

In the interviews, the issue of time was also frequently mentioned. As Gloria said, "I still find I don't have enough time to do all those tasks that need to be done and I always feel there is something I should be doing that I haven't done yet." Both Barbara and Gloria also felt that this issue contributed to colleagues' attitudes toward the Early Literacy Initiative. Barbara found it challenging when she discovered some of her colleagues were not as committed to or enthusiastic about the project as she was. Many of Barbara's colleagues were interested in the project but "were reluctant to give up terribly much of their time," and "they weren't really willing to spend a lot of time on professional development." Gloria found that it's a challenge to present the data to her colleagues in a way that makes sense and moves them somewhere. She adds that "it is a fine balance because people are busy and they have lots of things they want to do and because we have a willing staff we don't want to push their willingness."

It is also important to note at this time, the low response to the questionnaires from the literacy mentors in the initiative. This low response (n=2/11) may reflect the time pressures LMs feel in fulfilling their role.
TABLE 10

*Challenges and Issues Participants Face In Their Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#9 LMs are able to do an effective job both in the classroom as a classroom teacher and in their project schools as a mentor.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21 I have good working relationships with other teachers at my school.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22 I have a clear understanding of my role as teacher mentor or school coordinator.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23 My job as a teacher mentor does not get in the way of my relationships with administration, teachers and colleagues at my school.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing both a classroom and a leadership position was often cited in the literature as a challenge faced by many teacher leaders. However, as seen in Table 10, twenty-three respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “LMs are able to do an effective job both in the classroom as classroom teachers and in their project schools as mentors.” One respondent to the questionnaire mentioned this challenge in response to an open-ended question. “It’s hard to go to all those meetings and also be responsible for 21 grade twos. I should be
However, two literacy mentors interviewed also felt that lack of time was always a challenge in their dual position as both a classroom teacher and literacy mentor. Carol commented, "there is that whole thing of feeling like you're doing two jobs two hundred percent of the time."

However, the interviewees also denied that it has adversely affected their jobs as classroom teachers. In fact, all agreed that as classroom teachers, they have benefited from acting as literacy leaders.

The literature also mentioned resistance from colleagues and the negative treatment teacher leaders received because of their leadership role as a challenge experienced by many teacher leaders. However, 37 respondents agreed to the statement "I have good working relationships with other teachers at my school," and only one respondent experienced problems with this as a school coordinator: "I was challenged by the negativity and degree of threat that some teachers exhibited with the project. The whole issue of change and how to effectively lead your own colleagues through it – this is an immense task!" Thirty-two respondents agreed that their leadership role does not get in the way of their relationships with their colleagues.

Another respondent commented, "how much personal time do mentors and coordinators give to their roles? How many added hours are needed for the required paperwork for the project?" Is release time enough – does it feel like leadership or hoop jumping drudgery?" It is also interesting to point out here that although many school coordinators
appreciated and valued the support they received from their literacy mentors, they also perceived the role of literacy mentor and the corresponding challenges and issues to be great. Only seven school coordinators in the study indicated they would consider becoming literacy mentors in the future \((n=7)\). When asked during the interviews where the future literacy mentors will come from, participants had little to say. Many felt that this represented the appreciation the SCs had for the LM's expertise and knowledge and the amount of time and commitment they demonstrate toward their position. The literacy mentors also agreed that this was an issue to be looked at for sustainability of the initiative.

An issue unique to the literacy mentors that came up during the interviews as the challenge of meeting their own learning and professional development needs. Although both literacy mentors interviewed felt they learned a lot from working with other teachers they also felt "the local pro-d, the district day, doesn't tend to meet our needs now" \(C\).

**Benefits Gained**

Two main benefits to being a literacy leader in the Early Literacy Initiative were mentioned in the interviews. Interviewees felt that acting in these roles provided them with opportunities to improve their teaching through collaboration and community, and gave them opportunities to develop their leadership skills. This finding is characteristic of
constructivist leadership, in which the literacy leaders are constructing knowledge together with other teachers that will improve the teaching of both the leaders and the teachers. Both the leaders and teachers are learners. Barbara commented that she felt being a school coordinator helps her be a "very powerful teacher." Gloria felt it has helped her become more reflective about her literacy practices. Although the two new school coordinators have limited experience in the role, they both look forward to the role having a positive impact on their classroom teaching practices. They felt that these benefits would come from the networking and sharing with other school coordinators and literacy mentors in the project (S, L, C, B, D). Barbara commented that one of her greatest motivations to continue in the role was "the learning first of all. It's been a great benefit to me and I think it's a great example of how we can learn from each other." As a literacy mentor working with many teachers in different schools, Carol benefited from the conversations about literacy she was able to have with other teachers.

Literacy leaders also agreed that the role has afforded them opportunities to learn about being effective leaders. "I learned more about humanity, change, and I'm much more humble about change and leadership. I just thought charisma would take you anywhere – if you just got in there enthusiastically. Well it doesn't always work" (B). More specifically, interviewees mentioned they have learned about public speaking, working closely and effectively with administration and
parents, communicating clearly and effectively with their colleagues, and how to effectively work with adult learners.

Although the role of literacy leader is a challenging one, the opportunities to learn and work with other teachers, and the diversity being a literacy leader adds to their classroom teaching responsibilities were reasons motivating the interviewees to continue in their role.

Resources Literacy Leaders Feel Would be Helpful to Them

As mentioned earlier, participants were asked their opinion to the likert statement “LMs and SCs are given adequate resources to fulfill their role.” Although only six more respondents agreed to the statement than disagreed. As seen in Table 11, two respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 17 agreed, six neither agreed nor disagreed, 12 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed.

TABLE 11

*Resources Participants Feel Would Be Helpful To Them*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKERT STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 LMs and SCs are given adequate resources to fulfill their role.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 24 I am unable to grow professionally in my role as teacher or school coordinator.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked in an open-ended question what additional resources not presently available would help them fulfill their role more effectively, eight participants returned their questionnaires with no response and four indicated that there were no additional resources needed to help them fulfill their roles as literacy leaders:

- *Can’t think of any.*
- *Since we are a 5th year school, I feel fine about where we are.*
- *Seems sufficient at the moment, we’ll have to see as the year progresses.*

Not surprisingly, release time and money for release time were mentioned most often in both the questionnaire responses and the interviews. Some respondents mentioned resources such as books and professional materials, as well as time specifically for professional development would be helpful. Other less frequently mentioned resources were “a sharing network across the district” and “some way to continue and monitor progress as we go into year 4.” Interestingly, both leadership training and the sharing network are ideas that also require more time.

*“More leadership training (more than one session)”* was mentioned by one questionnaire respondent when asked what additional resources would be helpful. The literacy leaders interviewed did not mention that professional development or support for the leadership side of the role when discussing resources or support needed. However, when asked
most agreed that this would be helpful to fulfilling their role. One school coordinator believed that providing more leadership training may give more school coordinators the confidence they need to consider becoming literacy mentors in the future. All literacy leaders interviewed felt that some leadership training would be helpful to them.

*Literacy Leadership in the Hampton ELI: Perceived Models*

In this study, I have considered both the school coordinators and literacy mentors as literacy leaders, and have not looked at them differently for the purpose of the discussion. However, the roles of literacy mentor and school coordinator, while having many similarities, are distinct and are considered so within the ELI. Not only is it important to explore how the participants perceive literacy leadership in the ELI, it is also important to examine how the two types of roles, literacy mentors and school coordinators, in the initiative perceive each others’ roles and the relationship between the two. The data suggest that the literacy mentors and school coordinators hold different perceptions of the relation between their roles and thus have different perceptions of their own roles as literacy leaders.

Conventional or transactional leadership is based on a hierarchical relationship between the leaders and his/her followers. The flow of information and new knowledge is often top down and unidirectional. Constructivist or transformational leadership, on the other hand, is not based on a formal hierarchical structure, and the construction of new
ideas is based on an interdependent relationship between the "leader" and those "being led." Although the leadership exercised by the ELI's literacy mentors and school coordinators in this study fit within a constructivist and transformational conception of leadership, the data from the questionnaires and interviews suggest there is a hierarchical nature to the structure of leadership in the ELI. It is not an imposed organizational hierarchy, but is instead a perceived one.

The school coordinators have a hierarchical view of the relationship between themselves and the literacy mentors. There is a perception that the mentors with whom they work are further along in leadership ability and in their literacy and pedagogical knowledge. However, it is unlike a traditional hierarchy (see Figure 1) in which the leader is on the top of the hierarchy and the dissemination of information and knowledge is top down and controlled by the leader.
Figure 1: Traditional Leadership Hierarchy. In the traditional leadership hierarchy the leader is at the top and the teachers with whom he/she works is under the leader. Information, support and knowledge flows in one direction only – from the top down.
The perception the school coordinators hold of the relationship between their role and that of the literacy mentors is still hierarchical (see Figure 2). However, the school coordinators recognize and value the collaboration they engage in with the literacy mentors as they work together to support staff. The school coordinators do not see themselves as puppets relaying information or strategies as the literacy mentors see fit. School Coordinators recognize that the flow of information goes both ways and that it is not controlled by the literacy mentors. SCs see the relationship as interdependent, but they seem to view the literacy mentor as "farther along." The school coordinators in the study recognize the literacy mentors' knowledge, skill and ability as teachers and leaders that they bring to the role. "Our wonderful mentors are so great at what they do" (S). The school coordinators did not indicate that they perceive themselves to be equal to the literacy mentors. Instead the SCs hold the literacy mentors in high regard and admire them for the skill with which they do their job, both as mentors and as classroom teachers. Their reluctance SCs have towards assuming the role of literacy mentor in the future illustrates the school coordinators' view that the responsibilities and workload of the literacy mentors are great. When asked if she would be willing to become a literacy mentor one school coordinator replied, "[the extra things] would make my head spin off . . . and I feel that the mentors are so great and they're just so amazing" (S).
Figure 2: The School Coordinator's Perspective: A Perceived Hierarchy.

The school coordinators perceive a hierarchical element in the relationship with the literacy mentors.
The literacy mentors in the study do not hold the same perception as the literacy coordinators. Literacy mentors articulated a view that they are equal with the teachers with whom they work and instead just have a wonderful opportunity to visit schools, etc. "They [the teachers] are just my equals, my professional equals but I do have ways I can support them" (C). They acknowledge that they are learning just as much from working with the teachers as the teachers are learning from working with them. When asked if she felt she was learning just as much from the teachers she supports, she said "Yea. I feel that it is a privilege and a huge form of professional development" (C). Figure 3 (on the following page) shows how the literacy mentors in the study perceive their relationship with the school coordinators. Unlike the school coordinators' perception, the literacy mentors do not see themselves as being "above" the school coordinators in the ELI.

Summary

The literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI had a range of teaching experience (less than five to more than 25 years), four have been teaching less than five years and four have been teaching more than 25 years. Most of the literacy leaders who responded to the questionnaire have been in their leadership position for more than two years. Twelve of the questionnaire respondents expressed a willingness to be interviewed. I chose six from that group, three who had been teaching for less than ten years, and three who had been teaching for more than 20 years. The
Figure 3: The Literacy Mentors’ Perception. The literacy mentors do not perceive there to be hierarchy of leadership within the relationship between the literacy mentors and the school coordinators.
interviewees represented new to experienced literacy leaders.

The literacy leaders in the study value their learning, as 15 indicated they have pursued additional education after receiving their education degree or certification, and five indicated they are currently in graduate programs. Most became literacy leaders in order to learn more about literacy. Few respondents took on the role for leadership experience. Most literacy leaders felt they are leaders in their school and/or district and are able to influence other teachers in a positive way.

The results indicated that the literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI hold various perceptions and definitions of literacy leadership, ranging from a managerial, traditional view of leadership to a transformational, constructivist view of leadership. However, all were fulfilling their role in a modern, constructivist manner. All the literacy leaders interviewed had a constructivist and transformational view of leadership in which collaboration and shared learning are valued. Most literacy leaders in the study valued qualities such as communication, and interpersonal and organizational skills as beneficial to their role. The literacy leaders in the study also recognized that an interest in, or passion for, literacy was important to their role. Benefits the literacy leaders experience include improving their teaching, collaborating with colleagues, and opportunities to develop their leadership skills. In the Hampton ELI the literacy leaders perceive the role of learner to be an important aspect of their role as a leader. They do not just see themselves as helping others
learn. In this study, both the leaders and teachers view themselves as learners. Although literacy leaders in the study appreciated resources and support, such as release time, professional development, and support from other coordinators and literacy mentors, some literacy leaders did not feel they were given adequate resources. Time, money and professional development (in the areas of literacy and leadership) were resources mentioned most often as additional resources needed. Not surprisingly, lack of time was listed frequently as a challenge literacy leaders face in their role, as well as the challenge of helping their colleagues through the change process.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

This study of the teacher leaders in the Hampton school district early literacy project highlights the role social constructivism plays in teacher leadership in literacy. It is evident upon analysis of the results that in addition to using social constructivism to frame this research, social constructivism also appeared as a central theme throughout literacy leaders’ responses in the questionnaires and interviews. The findings of this study of literacy leadership support much of the literature on teacher leadership, underscore the value literacy leaders place on leadership that is supportive and collaborative, and fosters learning in socially constructivist ways. The data also reveal insights into teacher leadership that was unexpected. In addition to providing an exploration of literacy leadership from the perspective of the literacy leaders in the Hampton District, this study also highlights valuable information about school improvement, the change process, and teacher learning.

Perspective of Literacy Leadership: Conclusions

Most of the literacy leaders in the study perceive their leadership in a way that parallels constructivist and transformational leadership as conceptualized in the literature. When asked why they believe they hold a leadership position, many responded with the responsibilities they fulfill within their school and used phrases such as “facilitator,” “provide
support," "source of knowledge," terms characteristic of collaborative, constructivist learning communities. These were terms also used in discussions of teacher leadership in the literature. Although most literacy leaders responded that they saw themselves as leaders in their district or school, some did not, which was also very telling. The reasons they gave as to why they did not view themselves as leaders showed they held a more traditional view of leadership, a view that sees leaders as fulfilling a managerial role. They did not believe they were leaders because the roles they performed involved supporting, facilitating, and helping other teachers, roles which, interestingly, are consistent with constructivist teacher leadership and the definition of literacy leadership I have proposed and have used in making sense of the data.

The qualities and characteristics the teacher leaders believe help them in their position are also similar to those listed in the literature on teacher leadership. The literacy leaders in the study believed strong interpersonal and communication skills were assets to their role. Many also mentioned they thought being well organized was helpful in the role of a literacy leader.

Although many agreed they are leaders in their school or district, the school coordinators and literacy mentors in the project did not take on the position to be a leader or to gain leadership experience. The literacy leaders in the project exhibit a strong interest in literacy and a passion for learning. Knowledge of literacy was not a quality or attribute
mentioned often. Many (n=21/39) have completed or are currently working on either graduate studies or a diploma program after their initial teacher training. These literacy leaders do not see their position as a route towards school administration. Instead, their interest in the project reflects the original goals of the early literacy project – to improve the literacy instruction in their district.

Although a few school coordinators took on the position because no one else volunteered or they were given the position without really wanting it, some were instrumental in their school is becoming an early literacy project school or volunteered because they believed in the project. Others were asked by their administrators or colleagues to take on the role.

The literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI recognize the need for strong literacy instruction and value the role teachers have in reaching that goal. They are not seeking a "magic bullet" to improve student literacy achievement; instead they are working toward "building capacity" in teachers. They know not to rely on programmatic solutions alone (Cooter, 2003). Although it is clear that the literacy leaders see themselves in a managerial position – maintaining the bookroom, relaying information, organizing assessments and data, and holding meetings - they also recognize the role they play in helping their colleagues learn about literacy. Many mentioned they support and
mentor colleagues, share knowledge and ideas, promote discussion, and help their colleagues access resources, support, and information.

The data suggest that the teacher leaders in the Hampton ELI have a view of literacy leadership that reflects a social constructivist perspective in which they see themselves as valuable members of a learning community. The literacy leaders value the opportunities to discuss and collaborate with their colleagues as important to teacher learning. They see interpersonal and communication skills as important to fulfilling their role, and also see the opportunities to work with other teachers as important to their own learning. Although these literacy leaders did not necessarily feel that being “experts” in teaching literacy was especially important to fulfilling their role, they did feel that having a passion, interest, and willingness to learn was important for a literacy leader.

**Perspective of Literacy Leadership: Implications**

It is important for teachers to have a transformational, constructivist understanding of leadership, and to appreciate the potential for positive results for our students when teachers take on leadership roles. Researchers, administrators, and teacher leaders must communicate to teachers the contributions they can make when they take on important roles outside their classrooms without giving up teaching responsibilities. Although it is important for teachers to be aware of the challenges teacher leaders face, it is also important for them
to be aware of the benefits and opportunities for learning that comes with teacher leadership and membership in a learning community. It should be made clear that expertise or excellence in teaching is not the only necessary criterion. Other qualities such as an interest and desire to learn are just as important. Teachers need to have opportunities to realize that many of them are already serving as leaders in their schools and districts, and are contributing to their profession in meaningful and important ways.

**Challenges and Issues: Conclusions**

Although many teacher leaders in the literature found that being both a classroom teacher and a leader was a challenge, this was not found to be problematic for most literacy leaders in this study. Instead, both of the literacy mentors interviewed believe this to be a benefit that clearly helps them in their leadership position. Being a classroom teacher adds to their credibility and helps them to be more effective supporters and mentors to teachers they are working with. It allows for situated learning experiences and contributes to both the school coordinators’ and literacy mentors’ continued learning as classroom teachers. For the school coordinators, the wearing of two hats was not believed to be a major problem either. However, the literacy leaders in this study felt that time and money was an issue they face regularly in their role.
The new school coordinators felt that their added responsibilities were very manageable so far, and they did not feel overwhelmed by the fact that they were now acting as leaders as well as classroom teachers. The more experienced school coordinators expressed concerns that they were always being challenged by the feeling that they could or should be doing more as literacy leaders to support others. Both of the literacy mentors reported spending personal time, in the evenings and on the weekends, preparing for their different responsibilities and commitments. They also reported the extra time away from their classrooms presented them with challenges.

Many literacy leaders in the project reported being satisfied with the support they receive. However, many felt that money for more release time and resources would be helpful. Nevertheless, there was a general agreement that the issue of insufficient money was one that is common in the education profession.

The lack of school coordinators who indicated they would consider becoming literacy mentors in the future appears to be an issue that will need to be addressed. School coordinators repeatedly listed their literacy mentor as a valuable support and resource to them. However, few indicated a desire to take on that role in the future.

**Challenges and Issues: Implications**

The data on the challenges and issues faced by the literacy leaders in the ELI suggest that recognizing the responsibilities these leadership
roles entail, and the time needed to fulfill these responsibilities, are important when considering how to support literacy leaders. Although time and money are constant issues in school improvement and ways to support our students, it is important that schools and districts be creative in providing teachers time to lead. Providing and valuing time for teacher collaboration and observing colleagues teaching were important to literacy leaders. The literacy leaders value the role of social constructivism in their learning and they value schools as communities of learners.

The issue of time may be one of the reasons why there were few school coordinators in the study who wish to become literacy mentors in the future. This may indicate a need for the district to look closely at the needs of the literacy mentors to help determine the future of the program and its sustainability. Another reason may be the respect the school coordinators have for the literacy mentors and the appreciation for the work they do. To encourage more teachers to take on the role of literacy mentor, the district may need to look at ways to encourage confidence and leadership capacity among the school coordinators.

The data also show that allowing literacy leaders to meet teacher needs—rather than district mandates—was important to the success of literacy leaders. Schools and districts must recognize the value of constructivist leadership in teacher learning and allow teachers the opportunity to determine their learning needs.
School Improvement and the Change Process: Conclusions

Although the focus of this study was not school improvement and facilitating change, there is much to be learned from the literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI. The literature on teacher leadership frequently cited a distancing in the working relationships between teacher leaders and the teacher colleagues with whom they work with (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992; Smylie & Dennie, 1990; Troen & Boles, 1994). This was a frequently reported challenge cited in the literature on the ways in which teacher leaders fulfill their leadership role and how successful they were in creating an environment promoting change. With most participants in this study, such was not the case. Most literacy leaders reported that participating in the ELI was a positive experience for themselves and their staffs. This could be attributed to the beliefs and goals behind the ELI.

The ELI began as a grass roots movement that was originated by two classroom teachers in the district. The idea for the initiative was not imposed upon teachers from the district. However, the ELI was supported strongly at the district level. Erickson (1995) believes these factors contribute to the effectiveness of school improvements. "Full-blown improvements in school literacy programs happen when teachers start in the classroom and work 'up,' while others at the top or district and system level work 'down' to protect and support classroom changes"
(p. 11). This is also true at the school level. The decision to be an ELI school must be a commitment that is made collaboratively by the staff. It is not a decision to be made solely by the administration or by one or two staff members and imposed on others. The literacy leaders interviewed felt that this contributes to the level of commitment staffs demonstrate toward the project. Not only is the decision to participate in the project a collaborative one, but so is the process to decide who will be the school coordinator. The school coordinator’s role was transformational from the start – the decision belonged to the group, not the leader. In many cases, school coordinators reported that they were chosen or endorsed by staff members to take on the school coordinator role. Teachers must have confidence in their literacy leader if he/she is to be effective and credible as a support and resource.

Another factor that contributes to the effectiveness of a reform is the confidence and commitment teachers have toward the changes being implemented, and how well teachers believe the changes are pertinent to their situations. Not only must improving students’ reading, writing, and learning be the ultimate focus, the change process must also be teacher-centred (Erickson, 1995). The teacher-centredness of the ELI is illustrated clearly in the words of one school coordinator interviewed for the study in explaining the process her school engaged in when deciding to apply to become a project school.
We (as a staff) don't see just one right way of working for the children. We are very child centred so we don't believe in specific programs so it took us awhile to join” [Then we were told] we can make it fit our school ... its tailored to meet community needs and school needs and the teachers are the driving force [behind] it so that made us think that this will work for us. (L)

The fact that many of the literacy leaders participating in the study do not report challenges as cited in the literature could also be explained by the collaborative role the Hampton literacy leaders play. One of the main roles of the literacy mentors and school coordinators is to provide support to teachers and help facilitate a “professional learning community” in which collaboration, discussion, and reflection around literacy takes place. The literacy leaders in the ELI see themselves as facilitators and supporters, helping others make sense of new ideas and information, encouraging discussion, and working and learning together. Because they do not see their role as telling others “this is what you must do,” they are less threatening to their colleagues. This is also shown to be a factor of successful change. According to Lieberman and Miller (1984) “A review of the research on school improvement shows that the most successful change was built on a foundation of collaboration and cooperation, involving provisions for people to do things together, talking together, and sharing concerns” (as cited in Erickson, 1995, p. 39).
School Improvement and the Change Process: Implications

For educational change to be successful, it must start from the bottom up and have student learning as the ultimate goal. Teachers must believe that the change is important to them and will have positive effects for their students. The decisions must be made collaboratively for school change to be successful, and opportunities for collaboration should be provided throughout the change process. Leaders must engage in transformational, rather than transactional leadership for the change process to be effective. Literacy leaders who are helping to implement the change process must be guided by teachers and have the confidence of those they are leading. It is also important for leaders to be seen as leaders by their colleagues.

Leaders as Learners: Conclusions

It is important to note the importance collaboration plays in the ELI for both the literacy leaders and the teachers they work with. The data suggests strongly that the teacher leaders in the Hampton ELI are not traditional leaders, in that they do not take on the role of literacy leader in order to move up the career ladder into administration and out of the classroom. Nor do they report this possibility as being a benefit to being a literacy leader. One of the most often cited motivators for, and benefits to, being a teacher leader is the opportunity for learning about literacy and the opportunity to work, share, and network with other teachers. Not only do the ELI literacy leaders feel this is important for
the teachers they work with, but they also see this as valuable to their own learning. The literacy leaders in the ELI believe in the value of learning from others and welcome the opportunity to participate in learning communities in order to improve their teaching.

Many of the literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI are *accidental leaders*. Their assumption of the leadership role was not purposeful in that it was not a planned career move, nor was it necessarily a professional goal in their career. As stated before, their role is not seen as a step up the career ladder for most of the literacy leaders in the ELI. The literature suggests that these *accidental leaders* often find themselves feeling unprepared for their new role, with little or no training in leadership (Sherrill, 1999, p. 57). However, while some of the literacy leaders in this study did agree that some leadership training would be helpful to them in their role, it was not seen as an important need and was not raised as an issue unless asked about a need for more leadership training. When asked, the literacy leaders interviewed agreed that while they are learning about leadership and about themselves as leaders, and extra support in this area would be beneficial. They valued more the in-service and professional development they were receiving in the area of literacy. This could be attributed to two reasons. Firstly, this finding could reflect that not all the literacy leaders felt they held a leadership role. Many teachers may still hold a more traditional view of leadership, and for them, leadership may be seen as top down
administration. They may hold the belief that leadership is not something teachers engage in. Secondly, many who indicated they did not see themselves as leaders reported they engaged in leadership activities such as facilitating collaborative learning among teachers, sharing information, and supporting other teachers, activities defined in the literature as characteristic of modern teacher leaders. These teachers may see leaders as those making decisions for others, who tell others how something is to be done.

The literacy leaders perceived themselves to be learners. This highlights how collaborating with others can benefit both the leader and the teacher the leader is working with. From a social constructivist perspective, both the literacy leader and the teacher he/she works with construct new understandings, and thus are co-learners. This differs from a more traditional perspective, which posits that the person being mentored is the learner, and the leader is the teacher. Clearly, as these literacy leaders state, they are learners as well as leaders. Teacher leadership, and the collaboration teacher leaders encourage and facilitate, provide valuable learning opportunities for all involved, including the teacher leaders. All of those involved in the ELI are teachers and learners at the same time.

School coordinators believed that the learning opportunities that came with their role of school coordinator were valuable to them both as classroom teachers, and to a lesser extent for many, as leaders. This
was not the case for the literacy mentors interviewed. While both literacy mentors felt that their position afforded them valuable professional development opportunities as they see other schools and classrooms and work with different teachers, both indicated a need for more professional development opportunities to meet the needs of the literacy mentors better.

*Leaders as Learners: Implications*

The findings strongly suggest a need to provide teachers the opportunity to contribute to their profession in meaningful ways and to continue learning. Literacy leaders took on the role to contribute to their learning, the learning of their colleagues, and to help improve the learning for students. Teachers need opportunities to contribute to their schools, districts, and profession beyond their classroom and to continue learning.

The findings also demonstrate the value in literacy leadership as it provides opportunity for all involved to learn and improve teaching practices, including the leaders. Not only does teacher leadership allow for opportunities for the teachers the leaders work with to become better teachers, it also allows for opportunities for the leaders to become better teachers as they lead.

Literacy leaders need to have an understanding of leadership and a clear understanding of their role as a leader. They should have opportunities to continue improving their knowledge of best practices in
literacy instruction as well as have opportunities to develop as leaders through leadership training and in-service in order to increase their effectiveness.

*Teachers as Learners: Conclusions*

Just as the study of literacy leaders in the Hampton ELI leads to implications for the learning of literacy leaders, the study also suggests implications for teacher learning and development. However, since this study did not look into the perception of teachers involved in the ELI, the basis for these conclusions are limited to the perceptions of the literacy leaders participating in the study.

The idea of teachers helping teachers has been found to be more effective in teacher learning than coaching or training by outside trainers (Sparks, as cited in Erickson, 1995). Furthermore, networks in which teachers can engage in conversations and reflection around teaching practices like those that are encouraged in the ELI schools are more powerful than formal policies (Erickson, 1995). Booth and Roswell (2002) also believe that it is necessary for teachers to be able to learn from other colleagues with similar status, such as other classroom teachers, to develop their expertise. This is reflected in the literacy leaders’ role within the ELI and is also supported by school coordinators’ comments. Many school coordinators mentioned the value of being able to work with and learn from the literacy mentors in the project. This collaboration could also be a reason why the literacy leaders in the
Hampton ELI have experienced very little resistance from the teachers in the project. The lack of resistance experienced by the literacy leaders participating in the project demonstrates that teachers welcome this form of professional development and opportunity to learn as teachers. With education cutbacks and fewer resources available to teachers to further their learning, authentic and meaningful professional development opportunities are valued. Lieberman suggests:

What everyone appears to want for students – a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others – is for some reason being denied to teachers when they are learners.” (as cited in Vogt & Shearer, 2003, p. 225)

Not only are the literacy leaders in the ELI providing meaningful and rich opportunities for teachers to learn, they are also learning while they are leading. Each member of a learning community is both a learner and a teacher (Chapman, 1997). The literacy mentors and school coordinators report the wonderful opportunity to learn from others that the roles in leadership provide them with. We need to continue to provide these authentic and meaningful learning opportunities for our teachers.

*Teachers as Learners: Implications*

Teachers welcome the opportunity to improve their practice in ways that are meaningful to them. They value opportunities for situated
learning that takes place in classrooms, and the collaboration with their colleagues in the learning communities within their schools and district, not just from experts at teacher conferences. Schools and districts must recognize the need for teachers to be continual learners and provide them with opportunities to learn from their colleagues in social and collaborative ways. We must also recognize the power in allowing teachers to determine their learning goals and value the role that their background experiences and prior knowledge play in what and how they learn. Teachers value constructivist learning for their students, and we must value it for our teachers as well.

_The Researcher as Learner_

My research questions were developed through my passion for literacy and an interest in learning about other teacher leaders' experiences. It was never my intent or goal to be a teacher leader, but my passion for literacy and a belief in the importance of collaborating with other teachers led me to look for ways teachers could work together to improve the literacy instruction we provide for our students.

As a researcher, I have learned many things. I have learned the importance of empowering teachers and "awakening the sleeping giant" of teacher leadership. I have learned that we do not need to look far for "experts" in our field. The schools and districts in which we work can be rich learning communities, full of opportunities to learn and develop our practice. The learning that comes from discussion, collaboration, and
working together with our colleagues is powerful and inspiring. Teachers must also see themselves as contributors to that learning and take the time, not only for our own learning, but for the learning of our colleagues.

I have also learned that the principles of learning that we apply when working with children must also be applied when working with adults. Just as children need hands-on, authentic and meaningful activities to help them learn, so do adults. Just as children learn by doing and collaborating with others, so do adults. The most valuable (and convenient!) learning is that happens as we go about our teaching day. Teachers also work to create a safe place for students to make mistakes and take risks, so that learning can happen. As we work with teachers, we must also keep in mind that teachers need to feel safe and supported to try new things and make mistakes in order to learn.

The literacy leaders found that the learning they experienced as a leader was difficult to separate from the learning they experienced as a classroom teacher. Their teaching practice was enhanced by their experiences as a leader. In the same way, I find that what I have learned as a researcher will help me as I continue to strive to improve both as a classroom teacher and literacy leader in my school.

Limitations

This study looked at teacher leadership in literacy within the context of the Hampton School District Early Literacy Initiative. It is a
case study and therefore is particularistic and has limited
generalizability. The results reflect only the perspective of the literacy
leaders in the Hampton District who participated in the study. It is
difficult to attribute the opinions and perspectives of the literacy leaders
who responded to the questionnaire and participated in the interview to
the literacy leaders in the initiative who chose not to. It must also be
acknowledged that the small number of literacy mentors who responded
to the questionnaire has an impact on the findings, especially in relation
to the model of leadership based on the literacy mentor's perception of
their relationship with the school coordinators.

Although strategies, such as using structured and unstructured
questions on the questionnaire and recording the interviews, were in
place to limit the effects of researcher biases as much as possible, bias
can never be eliminated completely from qualitative research. As the
researcher I had personal biases stemming from my experiences as a
teacher leader, from working with other teacher leaders, and from
exploring the topic of teacher leadership in the literature. As Gay and
Airasian (2003) point out, “each researcher brings to a setting a highly
individual background, set of experiences, preferences, [and] attitudes”
(p. 213). These influenced the questions I chose to ask on the
questionnaire and in the interviews, the way I have interpreted the data,
and the information I chose to focus on. Although I chose to conduct
semi-structured interviews, in which I allowed myself to explore issues
that were raised outside of the guiding questions to gain depth of understanding and insight, this does mean that results of the research could have been affected by my biases.

\textit{Recommendations for Future Research}

There are many areas in which future research could be conducted around this study of literacy leaders. First, it would be beneficial to explore the perceptions of the teachers in the ELI schools. Research into their perceptions of the leadership provided by the literacy mentors and school coordinators would be a valuable extension to this study. Do teachers feel this is valuable professional development? Do they see this as district money well spent? Has literacy leadership made a difference to their teaching and their students' learning? It is important to gain an understanding of the perceptions of the teachers that literacy leaders are working with.

Second, an examination of the relationship between school administrators and the teacher leaders would be an interesting extension. It would be valuable to gain school administrators' perceptions of the role and values of literacy leadership. Do the administrators see literacy leadership to be valuable? Do their perceptions of a need for teacher leaders parallel that in the literature? How do they see teacher leadership contributing to their school culture and the creation of learning communities within schools? It is important
to gain insight into administrators' understanding of teacher leadership because it involves school administrators sharing leadership with others.

Third, further research could be conducted into the effectiveness of the early literacy initiative. How has this initiative affected student learning? What do teachers perceive to be the components of the initiative they feel the changes could be attributed to? Given the struggles and challenges to meet the literacy needs of their students that schools and districts across the province are encountering, this would be important information as districts look for ways to better prepare teachers to best meet those needs.

This study, while important and valuable in its contributions to the small body of research on teacher leadership in literacy, is just the beginning. If we are to understand the potential and power of teacher leadership in literacy there is much more work that needs to be done. I hope that teachers and school leaders at all levels realize the value of their leadership in contributing to school change and improvement and the continual learning that teachers need to do to be effective in our classrooms.
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* All references to District documents have been eliminated to protect district confidentiality
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear Literacy Mentor or School Coordinator,

I am writing this letter to inform you of a study I will be conducting with Dr. Marilyn Chapman of the Dept. of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia and to ask you for your support.

The purpose of this study is to explore teacher leadership in the context of the Early Literacy Initiative. This study seeks to obtain literacy mentors' and school coordinators' perspectives of their roles as leaders, and invites these teacher leaders to share their insights into the ways in which teacher leadership has evolved in the context of the Early Literacy Initiative. This study is being used for research for a graduate thesis. I am seeking teachers who have in the past, or are currently serving as literacy mentors and school coordinators in Early Literacy schools who are willing to complete a questionnaire consisting of 37 items. I hope to distribute the questionnaire in October. I also plan to conduct follow-up interviews (30-60 minutes long) with interested literacy mentors and school coordinators.

I hope that you will look for the package in your school mail in the coming weeks and take some time out of your busy schedules to complete the questionnaire. Your interest and support is appreciated.

The identity of the participants will be kept strictly confidential. The participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study, and all documents (including computer discs) will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. If you have any questions or desire further information...
Appendix B: Cover Letter and Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Language & Literacy Education
University of British Columbia
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4
CANADA

Phone: (604) 822-5788
FAX: (604) 822-3154
Courier Address:
2039 Lower Mall Road
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4

Dear Literacy Mentor or School Coordinator,

My name is Debra Hara and I am a graduate student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. I am also an early primary teacher in the Coquitlam School District.

As part of the requirements for my Master of Arts in Language and Literacy Education I am conducting a study of teacher leadership in the context of the ******** Literacy Initiative. I am interested in obtaining Literacy Mentors' and School Coordinators' perspectives of their roles as leaders, discovering the qualities they believe are important to their roles, and exploring the issues and challenges they face as they carry out their roles. The study will also explore what the literacy mentors and school coordinators perceive they need as support in order to be effective in their roles. To succeed in this task it is vital for me to obtain your views on the leadership you provide as a Literacy Mentor or School Coordinator. I ask that you take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire.

Be assured that your responses to the questionnaire are confidential. No personal information will be included in the write up of the questionnaire results. I am also interested in conducting one-on-one interviews as a follow up to the questionnaire. You will be contacted only if you agree to be interviewed further, as indicated on question # 37 on the last page of the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire in the self addressed stamped envelope provided, by Monday, October 27.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are not required to answer any question you find objectionable. If the questionnaire is
Literacy Leadership in the Early Literacy Project: Roles and Perspectives

Questionnaire

1. What is your position in the Early Literacy Project?
   - Literacy Mentor or School Coordinator

2. How long have you held this position?
   - less than 1 year
   - 1-2 years
   - more than 2 years

3. What level of education have you attained?
   - B.A. in
   - B.Ed
   - M.Ed in
   - M.A in
   - other, please specify

4. How long have you been a teacher?

5. Please rank in order of importance the characteristics that interested you when considering the position of literacy mentor or school coordinator, 1 being most important.
   - opportunity to work as a leader
   - opportunity to mentor other teachers
   - opportunity to expand leadership experience
   - opportunity to work with other teachers
   - use and share knowledge of literacy instruction with others
   - take on a new challenge outside the classroom
   - learn more about literacy instruction
   - other, please specify
For the following statements please place a check mark \( \checkmark \) over the word or phrase that best characterizes your response.

6. Literacy mentors and school coordinators play an important role in achieving the goals and aims of the Early Literacy project in ******** schools.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

7. Literacy mentors and School coordinators are given adequate resources to do fulfill their role.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

8. Literacy mentors and school coordinators are used effectively in the ***** School District.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

9. Literacy mentors are able to do an effective job both in the classroom as a classroom teacher and in their project schools as a mentor.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

10. The knowledge and strengths that literacy mentors and school coordinators possess are used effectively in their roles.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

11. I possess strong interpersonal skills.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
12. Strong interpersonal skills are valuable to my role as literacy mentor or school coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Strong leadership skills are necessary to do my job as literacy mentor or school coordinator effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. I am able to influence other teachers in a positive way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. I am an instructional leader in my school and/or district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. I have an excellent understanding of best practice in literacy instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17. I am not a risk taker in my job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18. I am unfamiliar with the current research on literacy instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
19. I am good at communicating what I know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

20. Literacy mentors contribute to effective in-service and professional development in the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. I have good working relationships with other teachers at my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. I have a clear understanding of my role as teacher mentor or school coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. My job as a teacher mentor does not get in the way of my relationships with administration, teachers and colleagues at my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. I am unable to grow professionally in my role as a teacher mentor or school coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Please respond to the following questions.

25. Do you consider yourself as holding a leadership position in your school or district? Why or why not?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

26. What qualities do you possess that help you fulfill your position as literacy mentor or school coordinator?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

27. Please describe the process you went through to become a literacy mentor or school coordinator.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
28. What personal and/or professional benefits have you gained from being a literacy mentor or school coordinator?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

29. What are the top three activities you perform as a literacy mentor or school coordinator?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

30. What resources (ie., time, materials, personnel support, in-service opportunities, professional development) are provided to help you fulfill your role effectively?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
31. What additional resources, that are presently not available to you, do you feel would help you fulfill your role more effectively?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

32. Before taking on the position of Literacy Mentor, were you a School Coordinator in the past?
   □ Yes  □ No  □ N/A

33. If you are currently a school coordinator, would you consider becoming a literacy mentor?
   □ Yes  □ No  □ N/A

34. Have you held any other leadership positions in your school or district in the past? If yes, please specify.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

35. Additional information you feel would be important to this study.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

36. Would you consider participating in a one on one interview (approximately one hour in length) to be arranged at a time and location convenient to you?
   □ Yes  □ No
37. If you agree to participate in a one on one interview, please complete the following information.

Name
Position
School
School phone
Home phone
E-mail address

Thank you for participating in this project.
Appendix C: Interview Questions:

- Describe your role as literacy mentor/school coordinator.
- Describe the activities, jobs you perform in your role.
- What do you like best?
- Describe your vision of a leader.
- Do you feel you serve a leadership function in your school/district?
- Why or why not?
- How do you find time to fulfill your leadership responsibilities?
- How does having this position change your job as a classroom teacher?
- Do you feel you have learned more in this role than you would have as a classroom teacher alone?
- Is there any specialized knowledge you have that benefits you in your role?
- How do you feel other teachers respond to you/the position of literacy mentor/school coordinator?
- What would you describe as the challenges in this role?
- How do you overcome them?
- Who do you talk with about your challenges as a leader?
- In my own experience as a leader I found it frustrating and challenging when other teachers were unwilling to buy into our school goals? Have you experienced this and if so can you tell me more about it.
- What do you see as the benefits/motivation to continue in this position?
- Has holding this position affected your relationship with other classroom teachers? With the principal? If so, how?
- Is there anything you would like to improve on in your role?
- Is there anything you feel would help you perform your role more effectively?
- In your own pro-d what has been most helpful for you in your role as a literacy leader?
- Many of the questionnaires mentioned assessment and data management as a major responsibility. Could you tell me more about that?
- What would you want future/new literacy mentors or school coordinators know?
- Is there anything else you would like to add or any questions you would like to ask me?
Appendix D: The Open Ended Responses from the Questionnaire

25. Do you consider yourself as holding a leadership position in your school or district? Why or why not?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

- Yes, as a literacy mentor we are there to support teachers and schools in their literacy journey.
- Yes, people look to me for guidance in all aspects of their literacy programs.

Responses from School Coordinators:

- No, I feel our primary staff are very well informed about literacy and do not require me as a leader to ensure that this program continues.
- Yes, because I helped get our Literacy Project started both in the district and at my own school.
- Yes, in my school I schedule meetings, report new information and initiate discussions on literacy related topics.
- Yes, but also a facilitator.
- Yes, because someone has to be willing to do the extra work, make the extra effort to ensure that our school strives to do the very best job of teaching students to read.
- No. I work with teachers in my school.
- Yes, I am familiar with current early literacy practices, and am often asked by other teachers for information regarding this information. Also, I am often consulted about individual students and their progress. I have been involved in ordering the books in our book room, and am sometimes consulted about appropriate books for guided reading.
- In a moderate way – we as a primary staff have decided to share the role as literacy coordinator, this we see each other as equals and it is now my turn to coordinate the meetings, etc.
Yes, I have worked in the same school for several years and have led several committees, etc. I “mentor” new teachers to our school, gave a workshop at the district level.

No, not a role of leadership – a partnership of learning together. I believe in “modeling” – all teaching is what others take from me that is less than what I am learning. Working and learning together – sharing what we learn. When individuals believe they are leaders – then they have lost the most effective elements of leadership.

No, not really. We are all “leaders” in education, for our students. All teachers provide leadership – my role is to guide this.

Yes, in that my colleagues sought me out for help/support/suggestions. Most were interested in examining their practice but this took a long time (3 years). Administration and PAC often approached me for info or advice or to help with their workshops.

In my school teachers did vote to undertake this project partly because I was leading and they could count on my leadership.

Yes, when I arrived at my school four years ago I was appalled at the lack of resources and level of instruction. Now, all teachers are doing guiding reading, their own running records and are conversant with appropriate reading and writing strategies. We have leveled books and guided reading sets for every classroom, leveled book for Home Reading and literacy files on every student.

In some ways yes but I look at myself more as a facilitator.

Our school is very collegial and consensus based, and we each seem to be leaders at different times and in different situations. I saw myself as more a leader when I was a Resource Teacher. Now that I’m back in the classroom I find that I’m learning (or re-learning) from others.

I am one of the two coordinators at our school and I feel that the leadership role is a shared position at our school. We have many experienced and knowledgeable teachers and I fell that we are in this literacy journey together.

As a school literacy coordinator, I participate in a great deal of pro-d, read about best practice and share what I’ve learned.
• I have never thought about it until taking on this position. I have not felt I was holding a leadership position in my school. Now I see myself more as a facilitator.

• Yes. As a school coordinator I have the opportunity to organize meaningful professional development opportunities within my school for my colleagues.

• I consider myself as holding a leadership position in my school because I have been there a long time, have tried to stay up to date with research and current practice.

• Yes, as coordinator for the ELP I hold meetings etc., share information and meet with administration regarding progress of primary department.

• No, a coordinator relays information to the school staff and provides assistance to teachers, if needed. I don’t consider that to be a leadership role.

• Yes, because I lead by example. People come to ask me about our resources and how to use them. I am consulted about assessment and teaching practices.

• Yes, because I am responsible for conducting regular meeting, gathering and reporting information to others, and helping support my colleagues.

• Not really – I was asked to take on the position without really wanting it.

• Yes, coordinating teacher discussed initiatives.

• Yes, I have begun to give writing workshops in the district and for my co-workers (K to 7).

• I think I hold some leadership as a literacy coordinator.

• Not really. I feel I’m more of a guide or helper. Someone who is willing to “walk beside” the members of our primary staff as we learn about literacy together rather than someone who is “leading the way”. I’m still learning too!
• I agree because I conduct monthly literacy meetings with staff members.

• Sort of. Our school is extremely small and everyone holds some sort of leadership position – so I'm just as equal. I do, however, have a little more knowledge on the topic of literacy than the other staff.

• Yes, in my school. I like to take initiative to do things and usually am the leader/instigator.

• Somewhat in my school – still growing as it is my third year at the school.

• Not in the district because I haven't been enthusiastic about literacy project claims and methods and probably was left behind.

• Yes, because I am interested in new things, I can speak well at meetings, I can find the common threads that people are talking about and put them together with direction, I am respected because I don't say negative things about other people, I diffuse problems.

• Yes, in my school, other teachers seem to see me as a literacy leader.

26. What qualities do you possess that help you fulfill your position as literacy mentor or school coordinator?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

• Good listener, patient, understand need to start where they are and move on, not letting others agendas get in the way enthusiastic, love to learn

• Articulate, hard working, experienced, patient, humorous, knowledgeable

Responses from School Coordinators:

• I took my post baccalaureate degree in Early Literacy through SFU so I feel I am aware of the literacy program.

• Organized, confident, knowledgeable, open to observers, willing to share.
• I am flexible, organized, a good listener, willing to try new things and enjoy interacting with colleagues.

• Knowledgeable – strong leadership qualities.

• I'm easy going, and able to make friends with most of my colleagues.

• Experience.

• Current knowledge about early literacy. Facility with running records and other assessments.
  Considerable experience as a Primary teacher
  Training and experience in Reading Recovery
  Willingness and interest in helping other teachers expand their repertoire of teaching practices regarding literacy.
  Enjoyment of and interest in how children learn to read and write

• Organization
  Communication
  Strong interest in literacy
  Enjoy working as a team

• Passion and enthusiasm for the work that I do! And communication skills, organizational skills.

• Organizational/openness/willing to take a risk and question why things haven’t “worked” and why they have. Always questioning and reflecting on my practice

• A love of literacy!
  Enthusiasm
  Desire to improve my practice and to examine my skills (a model for Others)
  Sense of humour
  HARD WORK!

• Organization skills. Desire to learn and support best practice in literacy. Desire to help teachers.

• My recent diploma in early literacy gave me the knowledge and enthusiasm to implement changes to the literacy learning in my school.
• A strong interest in literacy. A background as a teacher-librarian I see the value of a combined effort. Keeping the interest of the staff interested. Promoting and maintaining changes.

• Curiosity – I want to learn new techniques and methods. Conviction – in the importance of excellent reading instruction, (all aspects of it). Responsibility- I'll follow through on expectations, tasks. Fairness—each of us at the school is taking on a share of the needed jobs beyond teaching. (union work, book leveling, head teacher, etc. etc.)

• This is my second opportunity to be a coordinator and the experiences have been similar. I have to be a thoughtful listener, gentle guider, quick problem solver, and I do a lot of sharing of my successes and failures.

• Enthusiasm, knowledge of best practice, experience, interpersonal skills.

• Education background being halfway through the M.Ed program with a focus on Early literacy. Always searching for ways to improve my literacy program.

• I have good organizational skills, good interpersonal skills, and am open to new ideas.

• I work hard and am quite easy to get along with. I am considered organized as well.

• Organized, usually level-headed, enthusiastic.

• I communicate well with all staff members.

• Good interpersonal skills. Curiosity about new literacy practices. Knowledge of the limitations and capabilities of the average classroom teacher.

• I think I have good organizational and interpersonal skills. I respect everyone's level of comfort concerning the project.

• Organized.

• Flexibility, desire to give children best education I can.
• Enthusiasm, passion, willingness to share with other teachers, desire for more knowledge

• I'm enthusiastic and progressive thinking.

• Passion and interest in reading and writing. Good communication and relationship with the primary staff and area mentors. Organizational skills

• I have 16 years experience in teaching grades K-3. I enjoy new challenges that help support teachers' instruction in literacy.

• Keen interest in literacy and desire to better our instruction so the students may benefit.

• Personable, caring, committed, passionate about teaching.

• Awareness of district. Strong passion for literacy and higher level thinking. Strong ability to pre plan and present a case for a particular approach. Good understanding of curriculum in its broadest sense.

• I am interested in making it work in my own practice, so I can lead by example.

• Flexible, organized, can multi-task.

27. Please describe the process you went through to become a literacy mentor or school coordinator.

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

• I applied and was interviewed. I got the job and, without guidelines or training, was sent out to build the project.

• I applied for the job as mentor and got it and went on from there.

Responses from School Coordinators:

• Our previous coordinator at the school left so I volunteered to take over.
• To become a coordinator I volunteered to participate in the project and as time passed I became more interested in taking a more active role so I took the position as a coordinator.

• No answer
• Applied for job

• I really wanted the school to be involved, so I talked to each primary teacher, separately and convinced them it was a good program. I then volunteer to take on the job of coordinator.

• Filled out the application with three other teachers.

• I volunteered with two coordinators. Primary staff met and endorsed us.

• Offered my services, which were accepted by the literacy group.

• The previous coordinator was moving (to Australia!) and I was asked to fill in. I have always had a lot of interest in literacy. I went to the coordinators' meetings (still go!) at the ********.

• Application of school – the process required one person to bring it to staff.

• I was eager to engage in conversation with other schools.

• Volunteered with another teacher on staff.

• Enthusiastic start ------ discouragement as I realized others were threatened by change and/or an attack on their previous teaching style -------------- slowly adapting to celebrating small changes. Learning how to organize a vast amount of materials! Learning how to better organize my time. Learning not to impose my structures.

• I volunteered.

• Through discussion with colleagues about changes in literacy eg. guided reading, Marie Clay's assessment techniques, phonological awareness and interactive writing I was elected to the position of coordinator after our selection in the literacy project.
• I first heard of the project and proposed it to our administrator and staff.

• A coordinator was chosen.

• Our previous coordinator went on leave for a year and I volunteered to take on the role.

• I was a coordinator at another school and when the Early Lit. Project first got started in the district. I was very interested and excited to bring the project to the school. When I transferred schools, this current school I am at also had the opportunity to get involved in the project. Again, I was very excited about the opportunity.

• I wanted to learn more about literacy instruction and with some reading and pro-d, realized that great things were happening in our district that needed to be shared.

• Interest in project. Discussion with staff. Expressed an interest in being coordinator.

• My teaching partner and I put our names forward and were the only ones to do so!

• I volunteered.

• I simply decided I would do it and everyone on staff supported my decision.

• I volunteered.

• I volunteered to share the position when we entered the project.

• I approached the staff about what the project entails and each of our responsibilities. Once they agreed I wrote an application which was approved by the school board.

• I was asked to take on the position without really wanting it.

• Brought the idea of becoming part of literacy project to staff. Staff said yes, voted on who would write letter to board asking to take part, and who would coordinate.
• Our school applied for the literacy project and I was involved in the application process. I was encouraged by the principal to get involved.

• I was approached by other staff.
• I took courses relating to early literacy. I was interested in improving the quality of the reading and writing skills of my students. I encouraged others on staff to join the early literacy project because they too had the same interest. I volunteered to be the coordinator because I believed in the project's goals.

• I applied for the school literacy project and attended meetings after school. Workshops on Literacy Instruction.

• I volunteered. No one else did.

• Administrator asked me – I was unsure and rose to the challenge of something new.

• Approached by administration.

• Expressed interest at meeting of primary teachers.

• Last year the coordinator had me buddy up with her so that we went to all the workshops together. This year I'm on my own. (slow transition)

• Previous mentor went on leave, no one else volunteered.

28. What personal and/or professional benefits have you gained from being a literacy mentor or school coordinator?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

• Increased confidence, increased knowledge of literacy, increases awareness of the big picture, increased understanding of how to meet teachers' needs.

• Get to see a bigger picture, professional conversations are amazing, have to make sure my class reflects what I say.

Responses from School Coordinators:

• I have learned to be more reflective and patient (some of the time). I have enjoyed working with a variety of teachers in schools and
help(ing) them get started. I have enjoyed ongoing professional discussions with other colleagues.

- I have enjoyed going to meetings and learning what other schools are doing within our district.

- I have made more contacts with other teachers at literacy project schools, shared resources and was notified of the current and innovative projects occurring in the district.

- Opportunity to give workshops

- Stronger friendships with people on staff and Administration. A sense of accomplishment in moving the school forward.

- Opportunity to work with other teachers

- Opportunity to attend coordinators’ meetings, which always include professional development

- Recognition of my knowledge and interest in early literacy, by other staff members. Opportunity to develop skills of explanation and encouragement. Opportunity to develop organizational skills.

- Enjoy organizing and running the meetings.

- I have gained a lot of knowledge and inspiration from other teachers.

- Professional contact with peers beyond isolated school situation.

- Exposure to professional knowledge.
  Opportunity to share ideas with peers.

- ***** and mentors have been amazing! What a resource they are to us.

- I think I am more tolerant of slow change. After three years I can see how colleagues have shifted their practice despite the attempts by several “dragons” to sabotage our efforts. Workshops, professional reading, and discussions/class visits with other coordinators and mentors have really enriched my own practice. I’m more comfortable leading discussions.

- Have only been one for a few months.
• Prior to my role as coordinator I had not held a position of leadership. Personal benefits include confidence and the opportunity to network with other coordinators and mentors. Professional benefits are the exposure to fantastic professional development workshops and outstanding experts in reading and writing.

• A stronger interest in literacy.

• An awareness and interest in literature and research about literacy. The interest or rather motivation to work on my M.Ed.

• I have release time to attend co-coordinators’ meetings, and I find it valuable to connect with teachers from other schools. (We discuss the literacy activities, but also other concerns) I’ve been exposed to new books, (both for kids, and for professional development) Also have been inspired to attend after school workshops.

• Being a school coordinator allows me to share with others at the district meetings and at my school. My literacy program is stronger and more balanced now than it was before the Literacy project began in our district.

• Establishing a network with other professionals.

• Being supported by mentors and other coordinators. Access to recommended reading when it first comes out. Free samples from publishers.

• We are just starting out it is too soon to tell.

• Benefits include participation in the Early Literacy Summer Institute, opportunities to discuss classroom practice with other teachers in the district, meaningful professional development through our mentors and access to valuable resources.

• Personal and professional benefits have been: meeting colleagues, earning new strategies, reawakening a sense of excitement and adventure in teaching.

• Professional – meeting with teachers from other schools and discussing their practices. Personal – made me think about teaching in general and led me to the decision to do my M.ED.
• Meeting other teachers and sharing strategies and ideas are beneficial.

• I am up to date on current literacy practices. I am able to influence resource purchases. I am constantly assessing and revising my classroom teaching practices.

• An understanding of the people I work with and how we can grow professionally. Excellent professional development. Most importantly I've seen the benefits of the project with the children.

• Met others involved in the project.

• Leadership skills, communication skills, literacy knowledge.

• My knowledge of my own practices has grown and I have had opportunities to give workshops as a result which has helped focus my teaching practices.

• I learned about new strategies and ideas to teach reading and writing.

• I have had the opportunity to attend many workshops relating to reading and writing. I feel I am a much better teacher in terms of assessing and addressing my students' needs in the areas of reading and writing. Personally I've had the opportunity to network with others who are interested in improving the quality of reading and writing in their students and schools and I've made some great contacts and connections.

• I have gained knowledge and insight in literacy instruction from other literacy mentors and coordinators through sharing and collaboration. I have developed and obtained new resources for my own teaching.

• I'm not sure. I've only been in the position for two months.

• New information and networking.

• Increased understanding of staff views
  Increased awareness of staff views
  Increased influence over what books are bought

• None really, just a continuation of improving my leadership skills.

• Opportunities to improve my leadership and problem solving skills.
29. What are the top three activities you perform as a literacy mentor or school coordinator?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

- Provide support to teachers and model lessons.
  Set up a demonstration classroom.
  Provide pro-d.

- Consulting, demonstrating, workshopping.

Responses from School Coordinators:

- Meetings – discuss information I learned at meetings. Resources – developing our resources – areas that we need to develop. Keep the literacy ideas we have developed as a staff current with our school wide goal of Social responsibility. (How to incorporate)

- Organize the literacy events for primary and many for whole school. Preview and purchase new materials. Organize the literacy resources.

- Reporting information to staff members.
  Preparing and compiling test results three times a year.
  Sharing ideas/ materials with co-workers.

- Organizing bookroom.
  Chairing meeting, mentoring teachers.

- Attend Coordinators meetings at the board.
  Arrange monthly meeting with the primary teacher.
  Arrange workshops, EOC’s for teachers visiting other classes, and get information and training for new teachers.

- Sharing initiative material with staff.
  Prepare DRA testing materials.
  Compile and submit assessment results.

- Receive and communicate information.
  Coordinate activities and materials, eg. assessment, books.
  Attend coordinators’ meetings.
• Run meetings.
  Share information.
  Organize materials and funds.

• Hold monthly literacy meetings for my staff.
  Find/share new tools and materials.
  Help colleagues individually when needed.

• Planning, scheduling/agendas for meetings/pulling together ideas from staff
  Passing on information from the coordinators' meetings.
  Providing opportunities for ideas exchange – celebrating success.

• Communication between district and school facilitate
  organize and coordinate information

• Hold regular literacy lunch meetings – to inform everyone of project initiatives
  Share ideas/info/frustrations!
  Celebrate and encourage.

• Provide opportunities for colleagues to visit each others’ classes and to organize coverage so grade groups can work with our mentor.
  Promote casual discussion in our staffroom on professional ideas.
  Try to keep the book room in shape! And encourage its use!

• Organization, put together guided reading library, training teachers to use DRA

• Attend literacy project coordinator meetings.

• Organize and chair literacy meetings in our school.
  Collect and tabulate assessment data from all primary teachers.
  Mentor new staff members.

• Purchasing and maintaining leveled collection (I also leveled and began the collection).
  Meetings – to share and talk about literacy – making teachers aware of current research/literature/resources in literacy.
  Began and maintain school wide home reading program.
• Attend meetings and report back.
  Co-ordinate the necessary paperwork (DRA testing etc.) and submit it.
  Share literacy info (from workshops, from literacy articles, etc.).
  Guide, coordinate the spending of the literacy funds.

• Attend Early lit. Project meetings at the board. Hold meetings at my school. Help facilitate best practice and also purchase resources for the book room.

• Get information.
  Share information.
  Help teachers to access support and help create an environment that values literacy in the form of best practice.

• Attend meetings.
  Attend workshops.
  Relay information to staff.

• Updating staff on requirements/pro-d opportunities.
  Coordinating materials/assessments for the mentors.
  Communicating with mentors.

• Conveying information.
  Contact person for new initiatives.
  Mentor new teachers.

• Chair ELP meeting.
  Relay ELP information from the *******.
  Collect data from all teachers to submit to ******* and administration.

• Relay information to staff.
  Collect literacy/writing data.
  Maintaining an orderly bookroom.

• Deciding on resource purchase.
  Distributing assessment information and project information to staff.
  Holding literacy meetings.

• Regular meetings and discussions with the staff.
  Collecting and reporting data.
  Working with our literacy mentor.

• Call meetings, organize resources, compile data.
• Organizing arranging meetings for teachers.
  Arranging workshops with literacy mentors.
  Ordering materials and inventories.
  Looking at new initiatives.

• Attend and conduct meetings.
  Purchase resources and maintain bookroom, collect data.

• Share ideas with other teachers, support them in their classroom.

• Keep the primary staff informed about new information to do with literacy.
  Keep data recorded (ie. Reading scores).
  Remind staff or responsibilities.

• Answer questions relating to the project and give out information at a monthly meeting.
  Organize the materials in the book room and order books etc.
  Share knowledge and ideas regarding reading and writing.

• Meetings with literacy mentors.
  Sharing new information with staff.
  Conducting regular assessments on student progress in class and as a whole school assessment.

• Coordinate meetings.

• Organizing- meetings.
  Three step writes.
  Keeping things organized.

• Collecting DRA scores.
  Organizing bookroom and leveling books.
  Proposing/suggesting new foci.

• Paperwork. Lots.
  Chairing early literacy meetings.
  Going to workshops.

• Chair meeting.
  Circulate information/schedule, organize literacy events.
  Talk/problem solve with teachers.
30. What resources (ie., time, materials, personnel support, in-service opportunities, professional development) are provided to help you fulfill your role effectively?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

- I have three days release from my classroom, $1000 budget, I share a desk with four other mentors, the project is coordinated by *****, secretarial help is minimal, some access to Pro-d.

- Two pro-d days a year for project schools $1000 to spend as necessary. 
  Pro-d for ourselves is basically up to us. 
  Team of mentors to work with. 
  One day a week to mentor.

Responses from School Coordinators:

- I have attended a few meeting at the School Board to discuss what other schools are doing and to find out what the districts wishes each school to do regarding assessment.

- Nothing is provided as a literacy coordinator.

- The project provided many of the initial materials required. The school principal has given us release time to visit other schools, attend workshops and work on school related needs. The school has also purchased many resources for us to use.

- T.O.C. release time and money from [the district] and PAC.

- All early literacy schools are given 10 days for EOC’s the first year and five EOC days the second and third years. Our administrator has very generously supported our efforts with funds to purchase level books for all teachers to share. Our mentors have given excellent workshops at our school every year.

- First few years – release time.

- Access to new materials.

- Excellent support from mentors.
Well organized and useful coordinators’ meetings, with professional development/materials/information.

- ***** coordinators’ meetings.

- The district gives funding to each school to cover teachers-on-call costs when I go to Board meetings and for resources. In-service opportunities provided by mentors, school board.

- 5 days – support 1/month in-service, meetings, resources, workshops (pro-d)

- Admin. Support for school initiatives
  Early literacy project funds have helped with release time and book purchases.
  School coordinator meetings are an important opportunity to learn and brainstorm ideas and problems.
  Summer institute and district professional development.

- materials provided from [the district].
  money provided from [the district].
  days of in-service provided by [the district].

- As a third year school we receive TOC time so I can attend the coordinators meeting. In the first two years we received TOC release time to visit other schools and we also received some funds for resources. We were also provided with PD days specific to literacy schools and reading and writing strategies.

- As a year four school there are no resources available.
  There is an initiative program that no one on our staff decided to do. Hopefully there will be a meeting for year 4 coordinator.

- There is some release time available although it includes release time for teachers to meet with mentors. I hope I can use some of the release time for literacy project paperwork, data collecting, and recording – because that seems a bit onerous. Much in-service available for teaching literacy, not for coordinators’ role.
  Money available for materials to support literacy.

- Early literacy Project meetings – at these meetings I learn about the strengths and difficulties other schools (coordinators) face.
  Supervision Aide Release time is available.
  Workshops available after school.
• Professional development – leadership roles.
  Best practice in reading and writing instruction.
  Money for resources and Employees on call.
  Time to organize and give support to teachers by modeling teaching.

• Release time.
  Money for new resources.
  Two great mentors.
  ***** workshops.

• Time with mentors and with other school coordinators.
  In-service – summer institute.
  Resources – articles DRA kits.
  Training in running records.
  Opportunities to visit other classrooms.

• Time is given if there are funds available.

• This year none so far. We have been a project school since ’99. We will probably be having 1 meeting (pm). Everything is done on my own time. We have also applied for, and received a grant for a proposal to start a before/after school reading group.

• Third year schools have no financial support! PAC at our school has donated money to support us!

• One of our secretaries will photocopy DRA papers for us.
  We have several meetings a year with the early literacy mentors at the school board.
  We are using two professional days this year for literacy in-service workshops.

• In the first two years of being in the project we received some money and time for meetings, seeing other classes, pro-d etc. Now that we’re in our third year we have two or three pro-d days and no additional money or time.

• In-service, materials –not nearly enough in way of BOOKS

• Coordinators meetings.
  TOC time to inventory.
  Access to literacy mentors and other coordinators.
• Some release time, excellent professional development in the district, money to purchase resources, literacy mentor support, support from administration

• Funds are provided to enrich resource room. Mentor is available for questions/ideas, etc.

• Regular bi-monthly coordinators meetings. Pro-d opportunities. Opportunity to talk with area mentor.

• Time is given to me outside the classroom to attend workshops. Time to organize books and resources in the school. Literacy mentors volunteering their time and energy to help teachers with resources and instruction.

• Release time to do my duties

• 50% off Momentum (DRA) books
  in-service workshops
  mentors
  release time
  money

• Year 4 and 5 coordinators meeting at district level

• None. At least, nor more than any other early literacy teacher in my school.

• Time ---- only coordinators' meeting. Materials --- provided by project or purchased by me. Support --- administrative advice;

31. What additional resources, that are presently not available to you, do you feel would help you fulfill your role more effectively?

Responses from Literacy Mentors:

• Secretarial help, my own office and desk space, my own computer, time for Pro-D, retreat to discuss issues.

• Be able to provide adequate resources = books, release time, early intervention to schools I am supporting.
Responses from School Coordinators:

- None

- A small budget, half day EOC four times a year to help organize resources and materials.

- We would like to purchase some more non-fiction books that could be used for guided reading.

- No answer.

- More time to train new teachers.

- No answer.

- No answer.

- Release time to organize materials and information.

- No answer.

- Time in a day! Too many noon-lunch hr. meetings. One period a week to do the paper work/set up agendas/phone mentors/checking materials. Time on an ongoing basis – regularly.

- A continuation of the above. Is there some way to continue and monitor progress as we go into year 4.

- More time in the day or some time set aside to keep organize

- We continue to need resources – we are a poor though not inner city, east side school. Additional release time for teachers to continue professional development would be beneficial.

- Time – time for teachers to meet and discuss their practices and ideas Professional reading materials easily available Money to purchase books that can be sent home and more for leveled collection

- Basically time is the needed resource! All the data collection, not to mention the testing the teachers have to do, requires hours. Also a checklist that clarifies the expectations of the coordinator for those new to the job.
• No answer.

• More leadership training (more than one session).

• Seems sufficient at the moment. We’ll have to see as the year progresses.

• Can’t think of any

• More time for professional development

• Since we are a 5th year school, I feel fine about where we are.

• Financial support for resources! More books!

• Time provided at the school level to organize and maintain resources

• TIME, TIME, and more TIME. Time to visit other classrooms, to talk professionally with the staff, to look at resources etc. Money for resources would also be nice.

• More books

• No answer

• We need to get a sharing network across the district – perhaps online (some attempt has been made although I don’t know how successful it was), money to contribute to support teachers ie. Resources, release time

• No answer

• Time is released for one day a month to get things done at the school level.

• Continuous new information on assessments and resources available to teachers to add to their professional library

• More money! For resources (ie. Student books) and professional development

• More release time
• Two days per year TOC time to organize, think and buy materials for literacy project

• One day per term where an EOC covers my class so I can do paperwork (3 days in total)

• More release time for coordinator

34. Have you held any other leadership positions in your school or district in the past? If yes, please specify.

Responses from Literacy Mentors:
• Pro-d chair
• Faculty Associate at SFU

Responses from School Coordinators:
• No
• Yes, kindergarten consultant and workshop facilitator.
• Within the school I have been on several committees – Professional Development, Learning Resources, Primary Sports Day.
• No answer
• No
• No
• Staff meeting chair, staff rep, co-chair of literacy committee for accreditation
• SAC chair
• Yes, senior teacher at school, pro-d chair, president of ***** (French Immersion teacher association) for several years.
• No
• Pro-d chair, sponsor teacher – UBC /UVIC students
• Union rep for our school
• Chair of several committees in past (social and multicultural)

• Leader of Resource team
• Guide support workers and organize schedules
• Have been acting principal two times

• No

• Chair of several committees

• No answer

• No

• No

• No

• No

• No

• ****** Primary Teachers’ Association President
  Pro-D chair

• School – pro-d co-chair

• No

• No

• No

• No

• ****** union

• Social Responsibility comm.

• No

• No answer

• Pro-d chair

• On a writing team for accreditation goals
  Math resources committee chair

• Yes, I have worked in various committees to help set up and organize
  lesson aids such as Book Strategies, theme units and technology.
• No

• Not in this school

• Staff rep for [union]

• SAC chair

• Social committee chair
  School vista pilot project 4 years ago
  At the district level – silhouette trainer

• No

35. **Additional information you feel would be important to this study.**

• I was challenged by the negativity and degree of threat that some teachers exhibited with the project. The whole issue of CHANGE and how to effectively lead your own colleagues through it – this is an immense task! Just as children need time to “wander around in the known, and talk with their peers and question, question, question” – so do we as inquiring adults need lots of opportunities to talk about our insecurities. This has been an important learning for me in this EARLY LIT PROJECT.

• I feel the early literacy project is the best incentive for ***** schools to reach new standards in reading and writing. Through the pro-d offered in the project, teachers are able to continually “raise the bar” of students’ performance in literacy skills. Our students’ scores in reading and writing have shown continual improvement since becoming a project school.

• Possibly of interest: how much personal time do mentors and coordinators give to their roles? How many added hours are needed for the required paperwork for the project”. Is release time enough – does it feel like leadership or hoop-jumping drudgery?

• More inclusion of administrators is essential to the success of this program. Administrators should be given a list of recommended reading and understand that commitment by a school includes them as well.
• The Literacy Mentors do an excellent job with what they have. Much of what we do is on our own time- we’d love to have that time during class.

• This project has helped me to grow professionally in the four years I’ve been involved more then my previous six years of teaching.

• I did not choose to be the coordinator at my school because I was interested in leadership rather I chose to do this because I wanted to continue to learn more and continue to better my skills and knowledge as a teacher of reading and writing. I wanted to improve my students’ progress. The leadership “stuff” and the paperwork that goes with it is part of the job I guess.

• At my school, we have unreasonable numbers of lunch time meetings: primary team, SAC, small last minute meetings from various committees, staff meetings called by principal, meeting meetings, Early Literacy meetings end up being one of many. “Oh no, not another meeting” people say. It’s hard to go to all those meetings and also be responsible for 21 grade twos. I should be teaching!