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CHAPTER 1

Literacy Leadership in a Culture of Collaboration

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Guiding Questions

- Why is leadership so essential in schools, and how is it defined and described in this chapter?
- What are the issues faced by literacy leaders in their school improvement efforts (PreK–12)?
- How does the framework for leadership described in this chapter align with the *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (International Literacy Association [ILA], 2018b)?
- In what ways does literacy leadership serve as a key to school improvement?
- What implications does effective literacy leadership in schools have for literacy leaders?

During the past several decades, much has been written about the need for changes in how schools (PreK–12) function; phrases such as *school reform, school restructuring, school improvement,* and *school transformation* are used to describe such initiatives. The demand for such change comes from the recognition that too few schools provide a high-quality education for all the students they serve. There is a need to develop more schools that provide a first-class education for all students, an education that prepares students to be informed citizens who can successfully compete in the globalized, highly technological world in which they live. Many

researchers identify school leadership as a critical feature of school success. Much emphasis has been given to the importance of school principals, who in their role as leaders are agents of change and major contributors to school success, especially as measured by student achievement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). At the same time, as highlighted in this book, others too can serve as leaders in the school (e.g., classroom teachers, reading/literacy specialists, literacy coaches, special educators) to improve educational programs for students.

In the case example that follows, I describe the dilemma faced by Brenda, a reading/literacy specialist in an urban school whose position changed from working with students experiencing reading difficulties to one of supporting teachers in their efforts to improve literacy instruction and student learning.

CASE EXAMPLE

THINK ABOUT THIS

1. What major challenges do you think Brenda will face as she changes her role and responsibilities?
2. What skill sets does Brenda need to be successful in her new role?

Brenda had served as the reading specialist (K–5) in an urban elementary school for 6 years. She worked both in the classroom and in a pullout setting with students who had been identified as needing additional reading support. It had taken Brenda several years to develop a program that, in her view, was effective. Teachers were comfortable with her being in the classroom, and they had established a routine in which Brenda worked with specific students during the time that other students were working independently in centers or with the classroom teacher. Brenda felt as though she knew the students and teachers; moreover, she felt that her students were making steady progress. However, district administrators, concerned about the lack of overall student progress, had applied for and received funding from a state grant that had several stipulations. First, the district had to agree that it would rethink its approach to reading instruction. There would be more emphasis on writing and more focus on disciplinary literacy, especially in grades 3–5. Second, each school would employ a literacy coach to work with teachers to improve overall classroom instruction. Given Brenda's experience and her excellent rapport with teachers, she was asked to assume this role. After her meeting with the principal and the assistant superintendent (who told Brenda that they saw great promise in this new initiative, especially with her involvement), Brenda begin to think

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about what this change in role meant. She sighed: What would the teachers who were her colleagues think about this? What did she think about this? What did it mean for her current students? How would she begin? And did she have the knowledge, leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills to effectively handle these new responsibilities?

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Many reading/literacy specialists, teachers, principals, or other specialized personnel have faced similar dilemmas as expectations change for how they work to promote student learning. Teachers are expected to work with grade-level or subject-area teams, to discuss their teaching with peers, or to participate as members of professional learning communities to address curricular or instructional challenges. Such expectations are the norm for literacy leaders because literacy cuts across all subject lines and provides a foundation for student learning.

In this chapter, I describe the notion of leadership as advocated in the chapters of this book and provide a summary of the research and literature that undergirds that description. I then focus on literacy leadership, describing some specific aspects of literacy instruction that require the attention of school leaders. I also discuss the *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (ILA, 2018b) and the ways in which the standards provide a foundation for the content in this book. From there, I focus on the major theme of this chapter, outlining the research on the ways that literacy leadership serves as a key to school improvement. Finally, I highlight the practical implications of the findings from research and literature about effective literacy leadership.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

As I reflected on my experiences as a teacher and reading specialist, I realized that I was fortunate to work in a district that believed teachers should be involved in setting goals for the various curricular areas and in making decisions about curriculum and instruction. I served as chair of the Elementary Reading Committee and with representatives from each grade level, developed a proposal for an elementary reading curriculum that was submitted to administration for their review. At the same time, other teacher colleagues were doing the same in the areas of math, social studies, and science. The chairs of these committees also met with principals of the four elementary schools and the assistant superintendent to discuss the relationships between what each team was proposing and the more general goals for the school. In other words, we were leaders in our schools, working in what today might be called a "professional learning community." Although I didn't realize it at the time, those experiences were crucial in helping me learn how to work collegially while also building my understanding of

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what an effective reading program is, how it relates to the other academic subjects, and the need for helping teachers integrate all they know and do into meaningful learning experiences for students. Fast forward! We now have strong evidence that those schools in which leadership among professional personnel is encouraged and promoted, in which teachers collectively have a voice in what and how they teach, is an important ingredient in increasing student learning (Bryk et al., 2010; DuFour, 2016; Leana & Pil, 2017; Little, 2003; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Marzano, 2003).

So, on to the question of leadership. Offering a definition of leadership is not easy because of the many ways that leadership is defined within different educational contexts. Some view leadership as a function of *position* (e.g., superintendent, principal); individuals find themselves in positions of power that give them the authority to be leaders. Others describe leadership in terms of *traits*: leaders are flexible, fair, and passionate about what they do; in other words, "leaders are born, not made." Some describe a *style* of leadership (democratic, laissez-faire, authoritative). However, leadership in this book is all of these and more. The research community, including contributing authors of this book, acknowledge that there are many leaders in schools, both formal and informal, who lead by *influence,* that is, they encourage, nudge, and persuade colleagues in ways that effect change in practices and policies.

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The specific definition of leadership in this book is similar to that proposed by Kaser, Mundry, Stiles, and Loucks-Horsley (2002): "an individual's ability to work with others to accomplish some agreed-upon end" (p. 2); to do this effectively, leaders must create positive environments in which their members thrive (Murphy & Louis, 2018). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) describe four key categories of leadership activities or functions: (1) setting goals or directions for the school; (2) developing people, that is, providing professional learning experiences that help individuals grow as professionals; (3) redesigning the organization, that is, changing the school structure so that it better facilitates the work of teachers and promotes student learning; and (4) managing the instructional program, that is, using data to monitor student and school progress, establishing routines and procedures that facilitate efforts to achieve school goals, and selecting approaches that meet the specific needs of students.

Leadership, as described throughout this book, refers to more than traits, style, or position; rather, it describes a set of actions. Teachers serve as leaders: They mentor colleagues; facilitate the work of tutors, volunteers, or student teachers; identify student needs and possible instructional strategies for addressing those needs; work with parents; and so on. Reading/literacy specialists or literacy coaches, although they have a position of leadership, generally don't have the positional authority to require teachers to make changes; rather, they serve as leaders by providing insights

and resources, and influencing others to consider ideas for change (Bean, 2010a; Bean, Dagen, Ippolito, & Kern, 2018; Bean et al., 2015; Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). They also lead because of the specific knowledge or expertise that they share with teachers, often working closely with the principal as they consider ideas for improving literacy instruction. Other professionals, such as special educators, psychologists, guidance counselors, and speech and language teachers, given their areas of expertise, provide important information about how to address various challenges (e.g., what are some additional ways of promoting positive behavior in students?) And principals, in addition to their role as designated leader, facilitate the leadership capacity of others by creating conditions that support leadership behavior. Indeed, principals serve as important drivers of leadership by designing structures that provide opportunities for collaboration and collective decision making (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015).

As Lambert (1998) describes it, "leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (p. 5). Such a definition highlights the importance of building capacity in schools and recognizes the value of multiple leaders in schools, some with positional authority and others without. In schools with such a leadership model, there is the recognition that adults as well as students are learners. Moreover, leadership will not look the same across individuals or schools: some leaders will work with other teachers to improve instruction (i.e., coaching); others will chair committees or serve on task forces; all will lead in their daily work with others by raising questions, identifying possible solutions to problems, suggesting alternatives, and so on.

The concept of leadership reflected in this book is based in a perspective of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005, 2015; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). In such a perspective, *leadership* does not refer to the actions of an individual, but what various individuals know and do together—in other words, their interactions with each other. A distributed perspective defines leadership as a "system of practice comprised of a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situation" (Spillane, 2005, p. 150). As such, one must understand not only the actions of various individuals but also the interactions among them. For example, in one school, the principal, with little literacy background, might rely greatly on the expertise of the literacy coach in making decisions about instructional approaches, grouping, and scheduling. In another school, the principal, with a master's degree in reading, might work more collaboratively with the literacy coach or reading/literacy specialist, taking on much more responsibility for decision making about instructional approaches, and so on. In both cases, leadership is shared, but the way in which that leadership is distributed is different. In other words, the issue is not that leadership is distributed, but rather *how* it is distributed. This perspective of

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distributed leadership emphasizes "reciprocal interdependency" (Spillane, 2005, p. 146): that is, one in which leaders, whether formal or informal, are influenced by and influence each other. *Leadership* then "is not simply a function of an individual leader's ability, skill, charisma, and cognition" (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 27).

In a landmark book about leadership in business organizations, *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001), in which companies were identified as moving from "good to great," leadership was noted as an important contributing factor. Unexpectedly, however, these leaders, rather than being charismatic and autocratic, were humble, determined, and modest. They recognized they needed the support and wisdom of those around them. Their leadership emphasized building the leadership capacity of all employees in the organization. Collins's findings have implications for school leaders as they support the notion of *distributed leadership* as a means of improving the organization, teacher practices, and ultimately, the desired outcome: student learning.

Stoelinga (2008) presents examples of three schools to illustrate the relationships among principals, more formal teacher leaders such as literacy coaches or coordinators, and teachers who serve as informal leaders in the school. The findings illustrate the impact of the informal relationships in an organization on the ways in which a formal teacher leader (i.e., the literacy coordinator) enacted his or her role. For example, in one school, where teachers valued autonomy, there were several strong, informal teacher leaders who were resistant to the literacy coordinator in the role of mentor or coach. This literacy coordinator, with only 4 years of teaching experience, had little influence on instructional practices in classrooms. In another school, the literacy coordinator had a well-defined and focused role for mentoring teachers; teachers identified this coordinator, the principal, and the bilingual coordinator as important resources about literacy. In the third school, the literacy coach, the principal, and a sixth-grade teacher were all seen as key resources. However, the literacy coordinator's role was to tie together the many different programs in the school, and this professional spent little time mentoring individuals. These three cases illustrate the different ways in which informal networks can influence the work of colleagues in schools. Stoelinga concludes that informal teacher leaders in schools can have a powerful influence on school improvement or reform in a positive or negative way. Moreover, her work provides a clear illustration about the complexity of leadership and its influence on school change or reform. In discussing or studying leadership, attention must be given to the impact of factors such as school organization or culture, and the experiences, beliefs, and values of school personnel.

Effective school leadership is both forceful and enabling (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2008). Leaders are forceful in that they take stands, set high expectations, stay focused on the goals, and make the tough calls. At the same time, leadership that is enabling empowers people by delegating authority

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and responsibility, providing support, seeking input, and showing appreciation for the work that has been accomplished. The key is knowing when one form of leadership rather than another might be more beneficial to the growth of the organization.

LITERACY LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL

Although much of the previous discussion addresses leadership in general, this book focuses on *literacy* leadership. Given that literacy—or one's ability to read, write, think, and communicate—is a critical key to future success, all school personnel need to understand how they can support students' literacy learning. In fact, in many schools, the ultimate test of school effectiveness, agree or disagree, is often the school's ability to improve students' performance on one or more standardized test of reading. There are many different topics and issues facing literacy educators in today's schools. For example, respondents to the "What's Hot in Literacy 2018 Report" (ILA, 2018c) survey highlighted as hot or important, topics such as early literacy, community involvement, and differentiation. Three other topics that are of importance in schools today include the emphases on high-level digital literacies, diversity, and equity. All of these topics are addressed in more depth in other chapters in this book. Literacy leaders, to be effective, need to have a vast amount of knowledge and understanding of what is important about literacy, to set into motion actions that improve literacy instruction. Below I highlight some key points about three of these essential topics.

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High-Level, Rigorous Expectations for Students

Most states have developed a set of standards regarding students' ability to read, write, and think creatively and critically, and future-ready expectations that students will be capable of succeeding in their workplace and as educated citizens. Many of these state standards are adaptations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). What is significant is that these recent state standards address literacy not only in the English language arts, but also in the social and natural sciences. In other words, teachers in the academic disciplines have responsibility for providing students with supported experiences and opportunities to read, write, talk, and think deeply in service of content learning. This approach allows students to experience disciplinary literacy as a means of learning content. In order to accomplish the goals of these rigorous standards set by states, schools need to develop a comprehensive, coherent literacy program for a full range of learners, including gifted

students, learners who need Title I or compensatory services, and learners requiring special education support.

Digital Literacies

As stated in *Standards 2017,* "teaching and learning must guide learners toward becoming fully literate within a complex, globally connected digital world that revolves around digital devices and tools, use of social media, and digital interactions" (ILA, 2018b, p 16). Teachers must learn new ways of using technology, its limitations, and its benefits. At the same time, students, because of their access to and familiarity with technology, often need instructional support as to how to judge the merit of various resources, and how to use various digital tools appropriately and effectively.

Diversity and Equity

The population in schools and society is changing and requires schools to acknowledge, respect, and value all forms of diversity. Instruction should be relevant and sensitive to students' instructional needs and "embrace their diversity as an asset" (ILA, 2018a, p. 15). Creating environments in which diversity is valued and appreciated requires teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and biases and to gain an understanding of the value of other groups' experiences, beliefs, and identities (ILA, 2018b). Another aspect of this focus on diversity is the emphasis on equity, or providing strategies that enable all learners to be successful.[1]

THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDS FOR PREPARING LITERACY PROFESSIONALS

The issues described above have created challenges for teachers, specialized literacy professionals, and administrators, and have stimulated the need for new ways of functioning in order to provide key educational experiences for all students in today's schools. As one of my colleagues said, "Business as usual must give way to unusual business!" *Standards 2017* provides a roadmap for those preparing literacy professionals, for states that have responsibilities for developing standards for teachers and for students, for districts seeking to employ literacy professionals who have the expertise to teach effectively in today's schools, and for literacy professionals themselves. In this book, we capitalize on *Standards 2017,* using the revised standards as a framework that underlies the content in all chapters.

[1]See the ILA Literacy Glossary (2018a) at *www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/literacy-glossary.*

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LITERACY LEADERSHIP AS A KEY TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In the following section, I describe and summarize key research studies that address both school and literacy leadership. These findings provide literacy professionals with an understanding of ways they can be involved in developing a climate and implementing learning activities that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. I specifically address three categories of findings: (1) A shared perspective of distributed leadership is a factor in school improvement; (2) colleagues learn from each other; and (3) distributed leadership occurs in a culture of collaboration.

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Distributed Leadership Is a Key Factor in School Improvement

Previously, I cited the work of Bryk et al. (2010) that describes the cumulative body of research conducted over a 10-year period in the Chicago public schools. Bryk and colleagues collected and analyzed information from many schools, including some that had substantially improved and others that had not. They identified several critical elements for school success, each of which is essential for student learning. Leadership, however, was identified as the "driving subsystem for improvement" (p. 61). Although they emphasized the importance of the principal as leader, they were clear that the principal cannot transform a school alone, and that there is a need to bring all partners—teachers, parents, and community members—into leadership roles as a means of building school capacity. They highlighted the importance of school leaders in engaging and providing teachers with opportunities for them to lead as well. In other words, they acknowledged the importance of promoting the growth of a professional community that is guided by a shared vision and a coherent strategic plan. Bryk et al. use as their metaphor of school improvement, "baking a cake," to suggest that, just like baking a cake, all the critical ingredients (flour, sugar, eggs, etc.) are important; if any is missing, the result suffers. The five core school-related ingredients include, first, *instructional guidance,* which refers to curricular alignment; in other words, there must be a coordinated set of goals, both vertically (across grades) and horizontally (within a grade). Second, efforts to build *professional capacity* are critical; teachers must be knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, and schools must provide the professional learning activities essential for ongoing teacher learning. Such professional learning includes building a community where teachers interact about their instructional practices and seek solutions for problems that they face. Third, *parent–community–school ties* are essential for school success. Fourth, the *school learning climate* must be one in which students feel safe, experience a sense of order, and value learning. The fifth essential core and the catalyst for school change is *school leadership*—and, according to Bryk and colleagues, some form of distributed leadership is key.

Seashore Louis et al. (2010) conducted an extensive 6-year study of 180 schools in 43 districts across nine states to investigate the influence of school, district, and state leadership on student learning. They found that school leadership was second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning and that many different people exercised formal or informal leadership in schools and districts. Specifically, they found that student achievement was linked to what they call *collective leadership,* in which educators, parents, and others have a voice in making school decisions. They found that such leadership can take many forms, determined by the specific personnel and/or situation in the school. They found that the principal not only played an important role as instructional leader but also established conditions that promoted effective instruction. Several key implications include the importance of focusing on specific goals and expectations for student learning by providing professional learning experiences for teachers and creating a structure in which teachers collaborate. They also indicated that less is known about leadership at the secondary level, but that most frequently, department chairs, or those who have special expertise in various content areas, provide important leadership for other teachers. They highlighted the fact that the principal in such a situation cannot possess the knowledge necessary to be an instructional leader for all subject areas, but again must set the conditions for collective leadership among teachers.

Based on principals' perspectives, Bean et al. (2018) compared ways in which specialized literacy professionals functioned at the elementary and secondary levels. They found that there were few differences in the roles of reading/literacy specialists and coaches across these levels, with both groups having specific leadership responsibilities. Both role groups worked extensively to support teachers in understanding how to use student assessment data. Moreover, principals indicated that these specialized literacy professionals greatly influenced the schoolwide literacy program (e.g., teaching practices and student literacy learning).

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Colleagues Learn from Each Other

Supovitz (2010) investigated the influence of both principals and peers on teachers' instructional practice and student learning. Survey data to address questions about principal and teacher leadership were collected from teachers in a midsized urban district with many schools. Supovitz et al. (2010) found that principal leadership was critical. These authors "found empirical evidence that principal leadership influences student learning indirectly through teachers' instructional practices" (p. 45). Supovitz et al. highlighted the fact that principals had the greatest impact on learning when they fostered a climate of instructional collaboration and communication; in other words, principals "work through other leaders in schools to influence what goes on inside of classrooms" (p. 47). Also, they found that teacher peers

influenced each other's classroom practices through collaborative discussions about teaching and learning, peer coaching, and instructional advice networks. The influence of both principals and peers was also significantly related to students' literacy learning.

The importance of peer interaction is also supported by Leana (2011), who reported that teachers tended to seek advice from their peers to a greater extent than they did from district experts or principals. Such peer interactions were based on a sense of trust among teachers and a focus on substantive issues related to teaching.

One of the approaches to professional learning that provides opportunities for collegial learning is that of professional learning communities (PLCs). Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) provided a review of 11 studies that contain empirical evidence about the impact of PLCs on both teaching practice and student learning—and more specifically, on literacy learning. Their findings include the following: (1) Teachers in these studies appreciated and valued PLCs, (2) PLCs had an impact on practice as "teachers became more student centered" (p. 88), and (3) there were improvements in student achievement. According to DuFour (2016, p. 8), there are three elements in effective PLCs: (1) a focus on learning (i.e., all students are expected to achieve at high levels), (2) collaboration in which all educators take collective responsibility for student success, and (3) an emphasis on evidence or results.

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Distributed Leadership Occurs in a Culture of Collaboration

Distributed leadership cannot occur in isolation; rather, it requires "creating a common culture, a set of values, symbols, and rituals" (Elmore, 2000, p. 15). Elmore discusses Rosenheltz's (1989) work in which she describes two types of cultures: collegial or teacher autonomy. In a collegial culture, teachers have an agreed-upon and coherent set of goals. In cultures where there is teacher autonomy, the focus is on individual goals, and teachers are accountable to no one; rather, they work in isolation. Working in isolation rather than in collaborative teams "has consistently been cited as a primary obstacle to improving achievement" (DuFour, 2016, p. 9).

Leana and Pil (2006), in their study of schools in a large urban district, found that the interactions and relationships among teachers and administrators, which formed what they termed *social capital,* was essential for improved student achievement. Some of the dimensions of social capital included a shared vision and common goals for student outcomes, a sense of responsibility for all students, high expectations for student learning, and a belief that all students can learn. In their later work, Pil and Leana (2009) found that human capital—teachers' experience and task-specific strengths (e.g., knowledge of teaching math)—were important. At the same time, social capital served as a conduit for helping less able teachers gain greater

insights and benefit from the support of their higher-performing colleagues (Pil & Leana, 2009; Leana & Pil, 2014). However, Leana (2011) concluded that an emphasis on human capital alone will not yield the changes needed to improve schools, especially those in urban districts. She suggested that there is "an undervaluing of the benefits that come from teacher collaborations" (p. 30) and that more opportunities should be provided for teachers to talk with each other about substantive issues related to their teaching and student learning.

Creating a collaborative culture is not easy; it requires excellent leadership on the part of the principal and a recognition that the difficult challenges in schools today require a new style of leadership. Heifetz and Laurie (2002) identified several principles related to this new style of leadership:

- View the situation from a distance or, as they state it, "get on the balcony and off the dance floor" (p. 1). In other words, try to see the situation from a different perspective, or step away from the conflict or controversy, thinking about it from an outsider's point of view. What are the beliefs or thoughts of students, parents, or perhaps a small group of teachers that have been identified as resistant or negative?
- Identify the specific challenges and the conflicts that might exist about values and norms.
- Regulate distress by maintaining a balance between pressure and support. Consider the demands that are placed on teachers (i.e., multiple and perhaps conflicting initiatives, overemphasis on test scores). Be deliberate in setting the rate of change. Aim high, but at the same time provide the support needed to achieve the established goals.
- Value the diversity and different perspectives of colleagues. There will always be differences among individuals; effective leaders recognize and value those differences. Moreover, individuals differ in the time they need to adjust to change.
- Instill a sense of self-confidence in the staff members so that they can address challenges. Individuals within the school have different areas of expertise and perspectives to bring to the table.
- Protect those who lead from those who might be negative. Encourage a sense of risk taking among the staff members so that they feel comfortable raising issues.

Vescio et al. (2008), in their study, found that PLCs had an impact on the culture in schools because of the collaboration among teachers, the focus on student learning, and the increased decision-making opportunities for teachers—what Vescio et al. call "teacher authority" (p. 88). Decisions were made based on student data and teachers' knowledge of effective

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instructional approaches and materials. Likewise, Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009), who were interested in PLCs, conducted a 5-year quasi-experimental study comparing achievement gains among nine experimental and six matched elementary schools. In the experimental schools, grade-level teams were given time to meet, support for their efforts, and explicit protocols that focused on how to meet students' needs. The authors concluded that teachers need to be provided with structural opportunities and skills to focus on improving their practices. They also highlighted the fact that just providing time and support is not enough; collaborative work must take place under the right conditions with appropriate leadership.

In 2012, I had an opportunity to observe in five elementary schools in which I saw distributed leadership in action (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Each of these schools was implementing response to instruction and intervention (RTII), which required providing effective core, supplemental, and intensive instruction for students. The purposes of the study were to get a more in-depth picture of how personnel in the school, including specialized literacy professionals, worked together and what skill sets they needed to function effectively. One of the key findings was that these schools functioned effectively because of shared leadership and collaboration among staff. All personnel were involved and represented in instructional goal setting and decision making. Although principals served as central figures for promoting a positive school climate and establishing norms for collaboration, district leadership was important, both in helping to establish goals and to provide support. Moreover, in each school, there was a leadership team that included reading/literacy specialists or coaches, special educators, the principal, and often the psychologist or a teacher of English learners (ELs). This team reviewed schoolwide data, discussed successes and challenges, and made suggestions about ways to support teachers in their efforts to improve student learning. Each school also had teacher groups, generally grade-level teams, which met to discuss student learning and how they might modify instruction to meet student needs. At times, reading/literacy specialists or coaches met with these teams to facilitate the meetings or simply to gain a better understanding of how they, the specialists, might better support teachers' work. Finally, individual teachers also served as literacy leaders in the schools. Teachers with formal roles—that is, reading/literacy specialists and coaches, special educators, speech and language teachers—often met with classroom teachers on an individual basis to problem-solve or provide guidance. Likewise, classroom teachers with experience or special expertise often functioned informally and were sought out by their peers as a source of information or reassurance. In other words, the culture in these schools was such that collaboration was the norm. The social networking that went on was elaborate; that is, there were opportunities for multiple relationships and interactions. Figure 1.1 provides a graphic of the many relationships evident in these schools.

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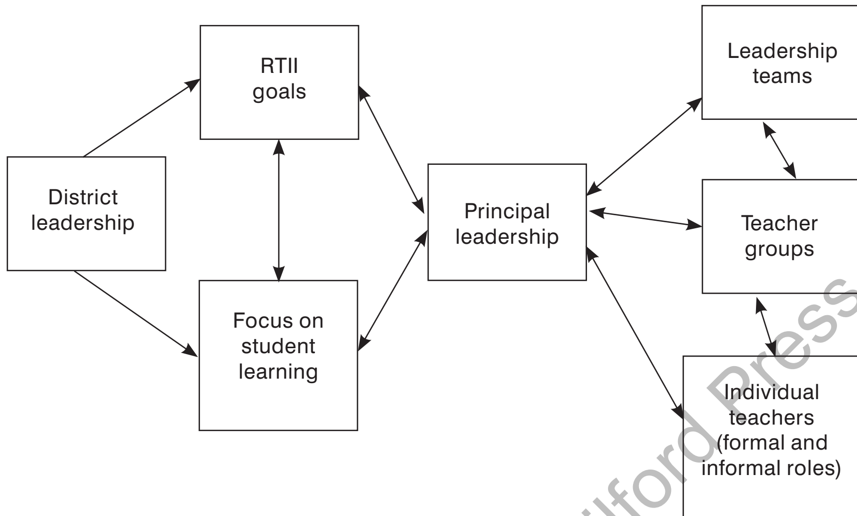

FIGURE 1.1. Shared leadership in RTII schools. Adapted from Bean (2010b) with permission of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

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Bean's findings are similar to those of Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), who in their study addressed several questions about the importance of leadership. They were interested in the extent to which district leadership and district organizational conditions influenced school leader efficacy. They found that the effects of district leadership were largely indirect; that is, district leaders created conditions that were important for enhancing and supporting the work of school leaders. They also found that building a collaborative culture was important. Likewise, Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt (2008), in a case study of a literacy coach initiative, identified the ways that district guidelines and support can serve to either promote or dilute the potential effectiveness of such an initiative. They highlighted the need for both district guidance and acknowledgment of the specific needs of individual schools. In other words, district guidelines must allow for the individual differences and needs of specific schools in the district.

IMPLICATIONS

The evidence that a culture in which there is distributed and collective leadership contributes to improved teaching practices and student learning is strong. But what does it look like in action? Below I highlight implications

of the research that provide some specific conditions and actions for literacy leadership in schools.

- Principals have a key role in establishing conditions for success and involving others in both formal and informal leadership activities. Principals serve as key leaders, not just by facilitating collaboration in schools, but also by developing external relationships with community and families to support teachers' efforts (Dufour & Mattos, 2013; Leana, 2011).

- If teacher leaders (formal and informal) are to be successful, the environment must be one that encourages and promotes teacher leadership; these leaders must be provided with learning opportunities that help them understand what leadership means, how they can develop leadership skills, and how to function as leaders.

- All literacy leaders can influence the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of those with whom they work if they listen and learn from all those in their schools (e.g., students, paraprofessionals, families, other staff, as well as teachers and others). The time spent in active listening can help leaders develop a better sense of what individuals and groups value, how they view the organization (especially as it relates to literacy instruction), and how it might improve. Such leadership behavior will generate a sense of ownership in those whose advice is being sought (i.e., "My ideas matter").

- Literacy leaders should facilitate the leadership abilities of others. This requires having a solid understanding of how adults learn, accept that they will differ in their responses to various school change initiatives, and provide support as they move forward from where they are to an acceptance and ownership of new ideas.

- Literacy leaders must also possess an in-depth knowledge of literacy that helps them think about goals for the program, appropriate materials and resources, and ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. They need to consider what kinds of professional learning experiences might be necessary to support teacher growth.

- Given the importance of literacy instruction across all subject areas, many literacy leaders are needed to improve literacy instruction. Literacy coaches or specialists, for example, can provide important support to principals in analyzing data to inform instruction. At the secondary level, chairs of academic departments as well as coaches or specialists may be responsible for guiding the work of teachers in the academic disciplines. Literacy leadership that enables a school to set a focused, coherent vision and agenda for literacy instruction is critical for school success regardless of level or subject.

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- Effective literacy leaders understand that they are there to support the work of others in the school. They care less about control or praise, and are quick to solicit and acknowledge the contributions of others. They concur with the words of Lao-Tzu (n.d.): "A leader is best when people barely know he exists; when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves."

In sum, effective literacy leadership can be promoted through the development of a culture in which teachers and administrators work collectively to set goals and establish a vision and common expectations for students. Such a culture can promote the development of staff members as decision makers, professionals, and leaders. Jennifer Allen, in her book *Becoming a Literacy Leader* (2016), describes her work as a literacy specialist, highlighting the importance of what she calls *layered leadership,* and her role at the district, school, and classroom levels. She also discusses collaboration with others as a means of developing shared understanding, and the need for school faculty to strive to achieve common goals, or what she calls, "rowing in the same direction" (p. 6).

CONCLUSION

The message is clear! There is evidence that student learning is enhanced when leadership is shared. Such leadership facilitates the setting of common goals and a shared vision for improved student learning. Such leadership is based on the belief that all students can learn and that as educators we have a responsibility to facilitate students' learning. Such leadership transforms schools so that they are places in which collaboration, interdependence, and professionalism exist. This is the message that is conveyed throughout this book across a variety of contexts (e.g., special education programs, Title 1 programs, preschools) and content-specific literacy foci.

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ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Think about the scenario of Brenda described in this chapter and the specific interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills that Brenda might need to be successful in her position. Then individually analyze your own experiences and education: How ready would you be to assume such a position? What skills and abilities would you bring to the position? What types of professional learning experiences would you need or want?
2. Interview a principal at a school and obtain his or her responses to the following questions. Then ask a teacher and a reading/literacy specialist or literacy coach

to respond to the same questions. Finally, analyze the results to determine similarities or differences in responses across the role groups.

a. In what ways are teachers, literacy coaches, and reading/literacy specialists involved in setting goals for the schools? (Question for teacher/literacy coach or reading/literacy specialist: In what ways have you been involved in setting goals for the school?)

b. In what ways are teachers, literacy coaches, and reading/literacy specialists involved in making decisions about curriculum and instruction? Professional learning experiences?

c. What structures are in place that enable teachers and others to participate in shared decision making (common planning time, etc.)?

3. Think about the four categories (goals, people, organizations, programs) of leadership functions described by Leithwood and Janzi on page 6 of this chapter. In what ways are you, in your current role, involved in any of these functions?

Example: Literacy coach	
Function	Identify your role.
Setting goals	As facilitator of a grade-level team, I help teachers set goals for the year for their students. I also work with the leadership team to set schoolwide goals. This year, we are focusing on improving vocabulary instruction in all subjects.

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ANNOTATED RESOURCES

Bean, R. M., Dagen, A. S., Ippolito, J., & Kern, D. (2018). Principals' perspectives on the roles of specialized literacy professionals. *Elementary School Journal, 119*(2), 327–350.

The authors describe, as perceived by principals, ways in which specialized literacy professionals function in PreK–12 schools. They also discuss the views of principals about the influence of these professionals on teaching and learning in the school's literacy program.

Ippolito, J., & Bean, R. M. (2018). *Unpacking coaching mindsets: Collaboration between principals and coaches*. West Palm Beach, FL: Learning Sciences International.

The authors provide ideas for how principals and literacy professionals can work collaboratively as leaders to improve literacy instruction. They describe essential concepts of the leadership role for both principals and literacy professionals.

Leana, C. R. (2011, Fall). The missing link in school reform. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, pp. 30–35. Retrieved from *https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_missing_link_in_school_reform*.

Leana discusses her research on social capital and its contribution to student learning. She suggests that both human and social capital are keys to school improvement.

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