

WCER Working Paper No. 2012-5

May 2012

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Against the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for
Learning (CALL) Pilot Results**

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Blitz, M. (2012). *A Case Study Comparison of School Leadership Practice Against the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL) Pilot Results* (WCER Working Paper No. 2012-5). Retrieved from University of Wisconsin–Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research website:
<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/workingPapers/papers.php>

This paper was prepared for presentation at the American Education Research Association conference, Vancouver, British Columbia. The research reported in this paper was supported by the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (Award R305A090265) and by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Any opinions, findings, or conclusions expressed in this chapter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agencies, WCER, or cooperating institutions. Please direct correspondence to Mark Blitz: mblitz@wisc.edu.

A Case Study Comparison of School Leadership Practice Against the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL) Pilot Results

Mark Blitz

In Year 2 of a 4-year grant from the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES), researchers from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and American Institutes for Research conducted a pilot study on the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL). CALL is an online formative assessment of school leadership designed to examine school-wide leadership tasks. As part of the pilot study, the CALL research team administered the survey in six schools in Wisconsin and conducted interviews with the principal and other survey participants before and after survey administration. This paper reports on the findings of this study and presents implications for school leadership practice and research. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do school principals' self-described leadership approaches compare and contrast with the CALL theory of action?
2. How do school principals' and school staff's understanding of certain leadership practices within their schools compare and contrast to the CALL pilot results?

In an era of high stakes accountability, school leaders have justifiably relied on data to inform local decision-making processes (Halverson et al., 2007). These leaders may discover strengths and areas in need of improvement and must develop school improvement plans and strategies accordingly. Data-driven instructional leadership is closer to becoming common place for school leaders; this fact has led researchers to examine the type of data that leaders utilize. Anderson, Leithwood, and Strauss (2010) examined how school leaders utilize data and found that student test scores and trait-based surveys illuminate areas of strength and weakness in school, but the school leaders did not have information on the work that led to improvements in those areas:

Subsequent research would do well to inquire about how systematically collected data of various sorts are used in combination with principals' and teachers' informal reasoning to construct approaches to their school improvement problems. In particular, what types of systematically collected evidence, if it were available, would significantly improve the quality of school staff's improvement efforts? (p. 324).

CALL works to capture that information, focusing on the work of formal leaders, teacher leaders, and informal leaders in a given school.

The development, validation, and theoretical underpinnings of CALL have been reported to this point (Halverson & Dikkers, 2010; Blitz & Clifford, 2010; Kelley et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2012; Camburn & Salisbury, 2012). The CALL survey focuses on leadership practices in five

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core domains. Table 1 describes the domains and gives examples of the tasks associated with each one.

Table 1
CALL Domains, Descriptions, and Tasks

Domain	Description	Associated tasks
Focus on learning	Examines the role of the primary school leader as an instructional leader, and the degree to which the various roles and practices of school leaders impact learning in school.	Creating opportunities for staff to collectively discuss student learning, creating a shared vision for student learning across the school, and ensuring appropriate and effective services for students who traditionally struggle.
Monitoring teaching and learning	Focuses on summative and formative evaluations of both teaching and learning and examines how the resulting data is used.	Promoting the use of formative assessments in a classroom, developing a standards-based approach to grading, providing useful feedback to teachers on a regular basis, and implementing a meaningful formal teacher evaluation system.
Building nested learning communities	Focuses on developing and supporting professional learning communities. It emphasizes teacher collaboration, mentoring, and coaching.	Exploring the purpose of school-wide meetings, the impact and development of professional learning opportunities, the role of staff in decision-making, and processes utilized for supporting teachers.
Acquiring and allocating resources	Focuses on how school leaders create conditions for teachers to be effective. This includes scheduling, budgeting, and utilizing external expertise.	Assigning teachers to courses and classes, structuring time to promote teacher collaboration, obtaining resources to promote student learning, and effectively working with parents and community members.
Maintaining a safe and effective learning environment	Focuses on how school leaders create conditions for students to learn by ensuring that all students have a safe learning environment.	Implementing proactive discipline policies that focus on positive behaviors, ensuring effective discipline policies that positively impact student learning, ensuring that students who traditionally struggle have the proper resources and support systems, and promoting parental involvement in the classroom.

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Along with a brief overview of the CALL theory of action, the following theoretical framework describes the application of a task-based distributed leadership framework and the justification for its use.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was guided by the CALL theory of action. The defining characteristic of the CALL theory action involves a task-based distributed leadership perspective on leadership practice. To be sure, worthwhile information can be gained from an assessment of an individual leader and that person's capacity to direct and move a school forward. However, in doing so, the metaphorical black box that encapsulates the assessed leadership practice remains closed off from other potentially interested parties and stakeholders. Therefore, an analysis of leadership work would illuminate the central tasks that are taking place or not.

One challenge of distributed leadership research is isolating the exact usage of such a framework. As this review of literature will reveal, distributed leadership is widely adopted by researchers and practitioners alike. The term itself is accessible and supports sensibilities of collaboration and employee empowerment (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Therefore, this theoretical framework serves two purposes: to clearly identify the brand of distributed leadership adopted for this study's conceptual underpinning, and to demonstrate why maintaining a distributed leadership lens will yield different results than focusing on other forms of more individual-centered frameworks.

The concept of distributed leadership is not novel (Gibb, 1958). Over time, however, researchers have used the same term to mean different things (Mayrowetz, 2008). For the purposes of this study, I adopt a distributed leadership model conceptualized and promoted by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001; 2004). According to these scholars, distributed leadership provides a lens with which to understand and analyze leadership rather than support a specific approach to leadership. This model moves away from a leader-centric model. In a distributed leadership model synonymous with delegated leadership, there is a player who is doing the delegating. The Spillane and colleagues position is that leadership tasks *are* distributed. Furthermore, in the utilization of this task-based perspective, researchers and practitioners must first fully conceptualize the work being done in a given school before applying an appropriate theory and approach to leadership practice. Spillane (2005) does not promote a singular leadership style to accompany a distributed leadership perspective: "...a distributed perspective allows for leadership that can be democratic or autocratic." (p. 149). As will be discussed later, the *act* of distributing leadership may be appropriate if the distributed leadership *analysis* of the tasks warrant it. It would seem sensible, however, that a distributed leadership analysis would then lead to a collaborative, shared approach to leadership practice (Burke 2010).

The CALL theory of action, put into action by the CALL survey and formative feedback system, views school leadership as not limited to an individual. With a task-based approach to understanding school leadership, we are able to identify the actual work needed to fill the various

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domains, components (Goldring et al., 2009), or buckets (Wilson, 2011) found in the proliferation of itemization and categorization in leadership theory. As an example, the seminal work by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) revealed the “21 Responsibilities” of the school leader to be successful. The responsibilities include “Culture” and “Monitoring/Evaluating,” with descriptions of each responsibility respectively stated as “Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation,” and “Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning.” These responsibilities are consistent with other standards of leadership practice, and they present a leadership framework on a macro level.

A task-based distributed leadership model promotes the analysis of similar responsibilities on a micro level (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Marzano and colleagues call for the monitoring of school practices, but there is work involved in that task that is not seen within this framework. This prominent scholarship is entitled *School Leadership that Works*. While the key term *works* likely implies the equivalence to *succeeds*, a distributed leadership framework focuses on the term *work* to mean the substance of what is involved in practice.

The distributed leadership framework involves the utilization of artifacts to implement to carry out the necessary leadership tasks (Halverson, 2004; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Artifacts are the plans, programs, and processes school leaders use to accomplish tasks. This should not be conflated with new, emerging initiatives that create communal buzz. Rather, part of an artifact implementation involves a needs-analysis followed by the creation and/or implementation of a plan or program to address specific areas. Moreover, the distributed leadership framework views leadership as part of a context, not a dependent of a context. The reservations for practitioners and researchers alike, regarding any widely-accepted leadership approach, is that a given leadership model will not work in a given school due to contextual nuances. The artifact component of the distributed leadership model, rather than support that dead-end view, calls for a problem-solving process to work within a given context.

Recent critiques of distributed leadership and its various incarnations claim that despite the common support of the fruitfulness of this model, it has not consistently demonstrated a link to school improvement (Mayrowetz, 2008). That assertion simply cannot be applied to the Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001; 2004) framework since it is, after all, a framework. Harris and Spillane (2008) reinforce that this is a framework to be utilized for problem solving and understanding leadership rather than an actual approach: “Distributed leadership is not a panacea or a blueprint or a recipe. It is a way of getting under the skin of leadership practice, of seeing leadership practice differently and illuminating the possibilities for organizational transformation” (p. 33).

In order to further narrow the scope of the CALL theory of action and the distributed leadership framework, it is important to recognize and review other leadership theories adopting a distributed approach. Gronn (2003; 2008; 2010) is a prominent proponent of the more delegated form of distributed leadership, recognizing that a focus on individualized leadership is

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inaccurate and ineffective. Gronn recognizes the descriptive qualities of the Spillane et al.'s framework, but diverges from that framework in promoting a prescriptive distributed leadership approach. Watson and Scribner (2007) also adopt a distributed leadership framework, but also move toward a prescriptive theory of action in the incorporation of activity theory, and therefore move from a lens to a promoted goal. To be sure, some structures promote collaborative work, but to say that leaders must promote collaboration does not further provide insight into effective leadership practice. The focus on micro-tasks should remain.

As a natural progression, scholars often discuss team leadership within the same framework as distributed leadership (Bush & Glover, 2012; Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011; Scribner et al., 2007). It is difficult to fault a move in this direction unless empirical data proves otherwise, but there needs to be a clear delineation between collaboration toward specific goals and work and collaboration as a theory. For example, the CALL theory of action calls for collaboration in difference areas, but it does not isolate it as a singular goal. Rather, after an analysis of the necessary tasks, school leaders should create structures to foster collaboration toward a specific goal. Otherwise, the purpose of the exercise loses value. Whether it is a form of democratic leadership (Johnson, 2004), shared leadership, or team leadership, various leadership models are often conflated with the distributed leadership framework.

Where leadership theory becomes less grey involves the continual focus of the single leader and that individual's practice. At the top of various stakeholders' priorities sits the individual primary school leader's capacity to affect change and be a transformational leader (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1991; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986). The focus on the individual principal has been prominent throughout the history of educational leadership research (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Yet, much of that research focuses on the constraints of leadership. Without a distributed framework, one would not see the various leadership tasks carried out by others in a school organization. Even within studies on transactional leadership (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006), readers need to search for the work involved in being such a leader. Again, the forms of leadership theory, whether they focus on the individual or as group, may or may not be effective. The way to determine the effective leadership model is to understand the work involved, and a distributed leadership framework supports that effort.

Understanding the work of leadership practice is paramount in educational leadership research. Researchers can obtain this information a number of ways. However, the framework utilized in research greatly impacts the findings. Focusing on the individual leader will yield certain data, while conducting a distributed leadership analysis may yield other data. As Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) maintained, "There is often a difference between what people do and what they say they do, a distinction that can be maintained without duplicitous intent" (p. 14). This quote supports the focus of this study in the comparison between individuals' depictions of their leadership practice to the results of a survey designed to capture that practice.

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Methods

In Year Two of a 4-year grant, the CALL research team conducted a pilot test of the survey instrument. The pilot's purposes were three-fold: to examine and compare leadership practices within a school and CALL survey results, to gather feedback from pilot participants on using the CALL system and taking the survey in order to inform survey revision and refinement, and to develop a prototype formative feedback system and gather user feedback on this particular facet of the CALL system and experience. This paper focuses on the first purpose of this pilot study.

The research team administered the CALL survey in six schools in Wisconsin and conducted pre- and post-interviews around the survey. The specific details of this study's methods regarding survey focus, participants, survey administration, interview protocol, analysis, and limitations are described in the following subsections.

Instrument

The CALL survey was developed from rubrics developed by Professor Richard Halverson in collaboration with the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. These rubrics view school leadership through a distributed lens, identifying the necessary tasks associated with effective school leadership. The CALL rubrics contain five domains, and four or five subdomains further deconstruct the overarching domains. Table 2 presents the CALL domains and subdomains. Each of the domains, subdomains, and items aligns with leadership practices as found in current research (Halverson & Dikkers, 2010). The participant responses to both the pre- and post-survey interviews were cross-referenced with survey scores within these domains, subdomains, and the survey items within.

The CALL survey was built from these domains and subdomains in Year 1 of the CALL grant (see Blitz & Clifford, 2010). In Year 2, the survey was uploaded into a database, and the CALL research team created an online platform for survey administration. The pilot version of CALL contained survey items that were all multiple choice questions that inquire about specific leadership practices. School staff were asked to report on leadership practice as well as reflect on their own practice and experience.

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Table 2
CALL Domains and Subdomains

Domains:	1: Focus on Learning	2: Monitoring Teaching and Learning	3: Building Nested Learning Communities	4: Acquiring and Allocating Resources	5: Maintaining and Safe and Effective Learning Environment
Subdomains	1.1 Maintaining a school-wide focus on learning	2.1 Formative evaluation of student learning	3.1 Collaborative school-wide focus on problems of teaching and learning	4.1 Personnel practices	5.1 Clear, consistent and enforced expectations for student behavior
	1.2 Formal leaders are recognized as instructional leaders	2.2 Summative evaluation of student learning	3.2 Professional learning	4.2 Structuring and maintaining time	5.2 Safe learning environment
	1.3 Collaborative design of integrated learning plan	2.3 Formative evaluation of teaching	3.3 Socially distributed leadership	4.3 School resources are focused on student learning	5.3 Student support services provide safe haven for students who traditionally struggle
	1.4 Providing appropriate services for students who traditionally struggle	2.4 Summative evaluation of teaching	3.4 Coaching and mentoring	4.4 Integrating external expertise into school instructional program	5.4 Buffering the teaching environment
				4.5 Coordinating and supervising relations with families and the external communities	

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Each survey item was scored on a 5-point scale. Most survey items contained five responses, thereby facilitating the assigned scoring: the first response was assigned a “1” and the optimal fifth response was assigned a “5.” The research team referred to research on effective leadership practice to inform the scoring for items with four-response options. Therefore, a common scoring matrix for a four-response item was “1-2-4-5”, but based on the item, the range of practices, and the effectiveness of these practices, the research team assigned scores of “1-2-3-5” as well. With the exception of one item, all three-response items were assigned scores of “1, 3, 5”.

Scores for each survey item were determined by the mean response. The research team calculated scores for each participating school in the pilot study. The scores for item are the average responses for participants in each school. The score for each subdomain is the average of the item scores within that subdomain. The score for each domain is the average of the subdomains within that domain. As will be discussed further in the analysis subsection, the quantitative units of analysis are at the subdomain level and at the item level depending on the specificity and breadth of the qualitative data results.

Participants

For the CALL pilot study, six schools in Wisconsin were recruited and secured. Schools were recruited from a medium-sized urban district with over 50% of students considered economically disadvantaged, and schools were also recruited from a smaller suburban district with 22% of students considered economically disadvantaged. The CALL research team sought schools that differed in demographics and geography, and these two districts provided those differences. Table 3 presents the six participating schools in this study as well as school data and demographic information in seven categories.

CALL researchers contacted the superintendents from each district to gain access to the potential schools. The researchers then presented the CALL work and research proposal to the principals who consented to have the CALL survey administered in their school and to participate in three rounds of interviews around the survey administration. A member of the research team visited the school and introduced CALL to the faculty, explaining the purpose of the study and the survey. The researcher provided introductory materials and login information to the staff.

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Table 3
Participating Schools with Abbreviations and Demographics

	Student Enrollment #	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Economic Dis-advantaged	Reading Achievement (Middle school: 8 th grade, High School: 10 th Grade)	Math Achievement (Middle school: 8 th grade, High School: 10 th Grade)
Suburban High School (SHS)	424	1.7%	5.7%	0.9%	91.7%	21.0%	81.2% Proficient/ Advanced	71.3% Proficient/ Advanced
Urban High School 1 (UHS1)	2,093	25.9%	19.1%	1.2%	53.4%	50.8%	55% Proficient/ Advanced	45.1% Proficient/ Advanced
Urban High School 2 (UHS2)	2,034	30.5%	18.4%	1.0%	49.9%	50.8%	54.9% Proficient/ Advanced	32.9% Proficient/ Advanced
Suburban Middle School (SMS)	261	0.4%	7.7%	0.0%	91.6%	19.2%	95.3% Proficient/ Advanced	87.0% Proficient/ Advanced
Urban Middle School 1 (UMS1)	698	25.6%	30.2%	1.9%	41.8%	61.9%	71.3% Proficient/ Advanced	67.6% Proficient/ Advanced
Urban Middle School 2 (UMS2)	796	33.4%	22.1%	1.4%	43.0%	69.7%	75.7% Proficient/ Advanced	55.4% Proficient/ Advanced

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Procedure

CALL researchers conducted three rounds of interviews around the administration of CALL in the six pilot schools. For the round one interviews, researchers interviewed each participating principal. The round one interview protocol focused on leadership practices. The protocol was informed by the CALL theory of action, and the questions corresponded to each of the five core domains of CALL. That alignment allowed for comparisons between principal responses to CALL data within a corresponding domain, subdomain, and for a specific item. Each interview was conducted in each principal's school and was recorded with consent. Appendix A contains the interview protocol for round one.

After the round one interviews, all teachers, administrators, student teachers and/or teacher support staff were invited to take the CALL survey. All but one school began the survey on a given day and had a 2-week window in which to complete the survey. At one school everyone took the survey together in one room. CALL is an online survey, and each participant worked at a computer either in the school or at his or her private residence to complete the survey.

After a school completed the survey, CALL researchers conducted round two interviews. For round two, researchers visited each school and, based on availability, met with three to five staff members who took the survey. The participants included the school principals, associate principals, teacher leaders, teachers, guidance counselors, and activities directors. The purpose of the round two interviews was to receive feedback from the CALL participants about the survey. The round two interview protocol inquired about the participants' experiences in taking the survey in terms of logistics, user-friendliness, and relevancy to practice. In addition to general questions about the CALL survey, the researchers also presented three specific items from the survey. As part of the interview, the practitioners responded to each item and justified their selection. While this portion of the interview was intended to inform survey development, the data also provides insight into leadership practice and school operations which inform this specific study. Each interview was conducted in a private space in the practitioners' schools such as an office or an empty classroom. Each interview was recorded with consent. Appendix B contains the round two interview protocol and Appendix C contains the three items presented to the participants during the interview.

Approximately one month after a school completed the survey, the CALL research team processed the data and created feedback reports for each school. The report contained scores at the domain and subdomain level, a sample narrative from one domain of what the data meant for their school's leadership practice, and a sample of an item response distribution chart. The CALL researchers took the data and feedback reports to each school and conducted the round three interviews. The purpose of the round three interviews was to present each school principal with the data and feedback reports and to inquire about their response to the data. The results from this interview protocol will inform the CALL formative feedback system as well shed light on the use of formative feedback for school leaders (Kelley et al., 2012). Each interview was

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conducted at each principal's school and was recorded with consent. Appendix D contains the round three interview protocol.

Analysis

While the interview protocol aligned to the CALL domains of leadership practice, the resulting conversations took various courses, and the participants touched upon various subdomains and items depending on the initiatives, strengths, and areas in need of improvement specific to their schools. Therefore, I applied the CALL rubrics to the interview data and identified specific overlapping domains of practice. Within that domain I identified the subdomain or the specific item that would match the participant's response. I referred to the school's CALL survey results and compared a subdomain or item score to the participant's description or assertion of particular practices in the school. By doing so, I could get a sense for how an individual's approach to leadership compares to the CALL theory of action. In addition, I could compare an individual's perception of practices in a school to a larger aggregated perspective on the same practices.

Limitations

The limitations of this study do not lie with the qualitative data or the CALL theory of action. Therefore, comparisons between participant responses and CALL theory of action are sound and relevant. The limitations of study lie in the survey data results. At the time of the pilot administration, the CALL survey was in the process of being validated. The data used from this pilot informed a study on the tool's reliability (Camburn & Salisbury, 2012). CALL researchers also used this data to further refine the survey to ensure more reliable data. Therefore, the domain and subdomain scores are not a completely reliable assessment on specific areas of practice. To be sure, the scores provide insight as they reveal user responses in a school. However, they cannot be viewed as the bottom line of leadership effectiveness in a given school.

At the item level, the CALL survey data is more reliable considering those scores do not rely upon the relationship with other items within a subdomain. Therefore, an analysis of participant response to an item score in a given school is more reliable. However, a limitation exists with regards to the scoring of an item. As previously explained, each item was scored according to a 5-point scale whether the item contained three, four, or five responses. A 5-response item provides the most reliable score for that given leadership practice. Items with three or four responses provide accurate scores for that given leadership practice, but are not as reliable as the 5-response items. Nevertheless, considering these limitations, this study effectively compares participants' leadership practice to the CALL theory of action.

One significant purpose of the pilot study was to further develop and refine the CALL survey. Therefore, some areas of the CALL survey were not taken into account. For example, Domain 5, *Maintaining a safe and effective learning environment*, underwent substantial changes after this study. There was not significant correlation between participant responses and CALL results within this domain. Therefore, very few comparisons could be made.

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Findings

The findings are presented on a school-by-school basis and grouped by school type. For each school, I present specific areas that demonstrate a comparison that provides insight into both of the research questions:

1. How do school principals' self-described leadership approaches compare and contrast with the CALL theory of action?
2. How do school principals' and school staff's understanding of certain leadership practices within their schools compare and contrast to the CALL pilot results?

Each subdomain and item was scored on a 5-point scale. Scores below a 3.00 should be considered as areas in need of improvement, and scores above 3.00 should be considered as areas of strength for the school.

While the study's findings would be strengthened if the same leadership domains were presented for each school, the depth and direction of responses to the interview protocol questions did not consistently align among participants. As a result, the findings here demonstrate either an alignment or a divergence between practitioner practices and the CALL theory of action without a direct constant comparison within a common domain.

Suburban High School

Suburban High School (SHS) is a high achieving public high school situated between two large urban areas. The student population is small compared to the urban schools in this study, and the economic status is generally high among attending families and nearby residents. Given the success of the school, interested parties could look to SHS to examine leadership practices in considering the school as a possible exemplar. However, the new principal of SHS, in describing previous leadership practices, viewed his predecessor as a kind individual who spent time walking around the building but did not observe teachers, hold teachers accountable, or promote a particular vision. Yet, the school demonstrated high student achievement results. To be sure, this dichotomy works against a leadership theory that calls for strong instructional leadership and teacher accountability. I will revisit this contrast in the discussion section.

One advantage and/or disadvantage of qualitative research is that a participant responds to an interview question or will be observed in a specific moment in time in which a number of variables would impact a response or action. This particular study was conducted during a time in which public school teachers responded ardently to state policy that would have greatly affected their livelihood. Therefore, given the situation at the time of the interview with the SHS principal, he reflected on the past years' events and considered his work. When asked to describe his approach to leadership, the SHS principal relied more on intangibles than specific practices that lead to success:

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I would just call my style relational and being in a relationship with people, you know? And that just bore out so much this year because, you know, I just feel like we put aside a lot of our building goals and things, and we just had to really take care of each other for several months in that chunk. And I think that came out and that's what I've had conversations with teachers about and conversations with people about is that during that real crisis time when people were really struggling is when they tell me that they appreciate the fact that we're in a relationship with each other.

The principal referred to what perhaps was his most common or most prominent feature of his leadership practice. Working with and supporting teachers would seem to be an important task, especially considering external factors that could affect their practice and personal lives. The principal approached the situation with compassion rather than rigidity. However, this poses an intriguing challenge and opportunity for researchers: can this leadership approach be measured and assessed in a survey? The CALL theory of action focuses on tasks; how a leader goes about accomplishing those tasks may vary, which allows room for personal leadership. However, even a seemingly intangible quality such as "taking care of each other," as the principal intimates, involves work of some kind. What does that entail? Does the leader set aside time to speak with each teacher? Does the leader devote faculty meetings to addressing common concerns regarding external factors? The question of whether or not the principal *should* be doing those things is less important than understanding *why* and *how* the principal adopts those practices.

The CALL survey adopts a task-based distributed leadership model. As discussed in the theoretical framework, differing ideas exist regarding the constitution of distributed leadership. If the term has become ambiguous in academia where scholars work to draw distinctions, then practitioners would likely also conflate terms when discussing distributed leadership. Here, the SHS principal was asked about distributed leadership in his school:

...we had a principal here for six years who was very distributive, almost to the point of, 'could *you* make a decision,' you know? He really relied on his teachers for all decisions and it was hard to be in a partnership or an administrative team with that kind of thing because...because he would say all the right things to us but then really give a lot of discretion and decision-making in staff development kinds of things, even scheduling kinds of things, to his staff.

In referring to the previous principal and his leadership approach, one could say that the current SHS principal is describing a leadership approach as shared or delegated, but it does not constitute distributed by this study's theoretical framework standards. This shared or site-based leadership model can be effective if the approach is warranted. It seems, based on the current principal's response, that while teachers may have welcomed the responsibility, they also wanted the principal to demonstrate decision making capacity. The primary responsibility of an instructional leader is to promote teaching and learning; a shared leadership model may overburden teachers and draw them away from developing their teaching practice.

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In reflecting on both his own leadership approach and that of his predecessor, the SHS principal does not indicate that there has been a strong instructional leadership presence in the school. When asked more directed questions regarding specific instructional leadership tasks, such as the formative and summative evaluation of teaching, the principal's response indicates a potential area in need of improvement, especially in comparison to the CALL survey results in those subdomains.

...you know, we have the evaluation system every 3 years. You do the formal evaluation and the conversations around that and you know, teachers do individual goal-setting and then we conference about that and we do some things. People are like, 'What are you doing? I've been working here for twenty years, nobody has done this.' I'm like, 'What are you guys talking about, because this is a pretty old process'...so I'm not sure, I don't think there is much accountability. And I mean I don't even think in the evaluation system that we have, which is going to be revamped in this next year as well...I mean I don't even think that's a good system but they're not even used to that system.

Subdomain	Score
2.3 Formative evaluation of teaching	2.34
2.4 Summative evaluation of teaching	2.88

For both subdomains shown at left, SHS scored below a 3.00. These scores would seem appropriate given the principal's description of the formal evaluation practice. Teachers not only seem to question the usefulness of the formal evaluation process but also the thoroughness or even the existence of such a process. The principal interacts with the teachers which may lead to discussions centered around instruction,

but a score of 2.34 on formative evaluation of teaching indicates a lack of a formalized process to conducting formative evaluations of teachers from which principals would provide feedback to support instructional improvement. Therefore, taking into account the leadership style of the former principal along with the infrequent normative use of the summative evaluation process, the CALL scores accurately reflect these leadership practices.

The CALL theory of action around instructional leadership promotes school-wide collaboration as a prominent feature of successful schools. An effective leader works to promote meaningful collaboration among staff. However, collaboration for the sake of collaboration occurs for appearances' sake only; the focus and purpose of the collaboration are paramount. The SHS principal felt confident that this was an area in which the school was strong.

I: How about collaboration between teachers: to what extent do teachers work together around issues of teaching and learning?

R: I would say now that is a strength of ours. You know, because we're small enough to do that.

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Subdomain Item	Score
3.1 Focus of teacher collaboration around teaching and learning	2.00
4.2 Provide shared planning time for teachers and staff	2.00
4.2 Use of professional learning time	3.27

In examining the scores from three items that approach *collaboration* differently (shown at left), we see that SHS scored relatively high regarding how professional learning time is utilized when given the opportunity. Teachers seek collaborative opportunities. The principal affirms that solid score by claiming that it is a strength. However, the reasoning behind the strength has more to do with the size of the school and the subsequent communal school culture than a proactive approach to encouraging collaboration through structuring and providing time. The low score of 2.00 regarding school leaders’ work to provide opportunities for collaboration further reinforces the principal’s position that any collaboration that occurs is a product of a relatively small

school. However, the school also scored a 2.00 on an item that examines the substance of a collaborative act. The fact that the school does not routinely or generally focus on teaching and learning while collaborating should question the value of such exercises. If teachers collaborate often around noninstructional issues, then collaboration would be counter productive rather than the perceived strength. While this score contradicts the 3.27 score regarding the use of professional learning time, there are questions as to the universal value of collaboration in SHS.

The SHS principal’s perceptions of strengths and weaknesses are directly and indirectly reflected in the CALL survey results. By widely-agreed-upon standards, SHS has demonstrated high student achievement, but what leadership practices have led to this achievement? It does not seem to be in the area of teacher supervision or teacher collaboration. Other CALL subdomains of distributed instructional leadership reveal higher scores such as the *Summative assessment of student learning* (3.44), *Providing appropriate services for students who struggle* (3.66), and *Clean and safe learning environment* (3.98). SHS demonstrates strength in those leadership practices, and forthcoming CALL studies will examine trends in these areas across schools. For SHS, the intrigue lies in the perception of what is a strength and the explanation behind areas in need of improvement.

Urban High School 1

Urban High School 1 (UHS1) is one of two urban high schools (UHS2) in this study. The urban high schools are very similar regarding demographics and student achievement. However the leadership styles of the respective principals differ as well as the corresponding CALL scores. UHS1 and UHS2 are much larger than SHS, and therefore areas such as teacher collaboration and socially distributed leadership would likely yield low scores on CALL. The UHS1 principal has focused on reigning-in much of the culture of isolation of her school staff. As will be revealed, the size of the school and the culture of isolation contributed to mismatched perceptions of school leadership practice, especially those that address areas of the proverbial “one hand knowing the work of the other hand.”

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The UHS1 principal assumed her position two years prior to this study. An area she viewed as problematic and counter-productive concerned the lack of interaction and collaboration among the UHS1 faculty. Here, the UHS1 principal responds to a question about teacher collaboration and the novelty of such a practice.

We build up these silos, and all we allow them to do is try it within the departments, and it's telling...you know, at the beginning of the year, we start school, I have everybody stand up and say what they do and who they are because people are like, 'I don't even know.' People don't even know each others' names. That, to me, is unheard of.

Subdomain Item	Score
3.1 Focus of teacher collaboration around teaching and learning	2.31
4.2 Provide shared planning time for teachers and staff	1.77
4.2 Use of professional learning time	3.27

CALL examines collaboration from various angles: purpose, structure, and participation. The UHS1 principal is skeptical that any kind of real collaboration has been happening in her school. The survey respondents confirmed her assertions to a degree. The 2.31 score (shown at left) regarding the degree to which teachers focus on teaching and learning during opportunities to collaborate reveals that even if individual departments do internally collaborate, as the principal intimated, the nature of the conversations are likely centered around noninstructional issues. Furthermore, the UHS1 respondents indicated that UHS1 leaders do not provide shared planning time for teachers and staff, which would promote collaboration. The principal was likely aware of this survey outcome, recognizing this culture of isolation

among the school staff. Within that same subdomain, however, respondents perceived professional learning time as much more collaborative and effective. Since *professional learning time* is couched in the widespread practice of *professional development*, the respondents likely reflected on those isolated opportunities such as inservices days in which there is a structured and focused agenda to work with colleagues on specific school-wide learning goals.

The complexity of comprehensive high schools poses a challenge for school leaders to cultivate collaboration and disseminate information effectively without having meetings co-opted by administrative-focused discussions. The principal had lamented that each faculty member does not know each and every other faculty member; the knowledge of other school features may also be limited, as demonstrated by the UHS1 principal's explanation of the school's mentoring program and the subsequent CALL scores by comparison.

We have a mentor-mentee program, just not [UHS1]-specific; it's district specific, and I don't really know how that official that is for our new teachers, but I know they like to pair the teacher, the new teacher, with someone within the building...to be their mentor. So, that person helps them, department chairs also kind of mentor their new people by, you know, giving them some staff development, giving them, you know, helpful hints—

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Subdomain Item	Score
3.4 There is a plan or process organized in my school to provide mentoring for struggling teachers	2.15
3.4 Selecting with whom mentors work	2.81

Based on the results from two specific items focusing on mentoring practices (shown at left), the UHS1 staff was generally unaware that a mentoring program exists. Granted, the principal seems a bit unsure herself as to the mentoring process since it is a district program. In addition, it seems that some of the mentoring in UHS1 occurs informally, which would not constitute a plan or a formal process. The fact that mentoring occurs in the school on some level, even if the focus is on new teachers rather than struggling teachers in general, is a positive for the school. The fact that this is not a widely-known feature of the school’s staff further confirms the principal’s assertion that staff are not fully aware of all the

school’s practices.

Other areas of UHS1 CALL survey results indicate stagnant information flow among staff members, but to repeatedly produce those findings here does not offer new insight. However, taking the perspective of an educational aide who participated in CALL, and comparing that to a particular CALL item, one can see why a particular leadership initiative has been warranted. Here, the educational aide, who is also part of the 12-member school leadership team, described a current initiative:

...Basically getting everybody involved in our vision for the school. We’ve had certain groups get together to come up with, as far as our teachers, come up with a mission statement. And then we incorporated our students and parents (to be) involved in this mission statement, and we’re in the process of collaborating (sic) both additions of their mission statements, and putting them together and coming up with a final mission statement.

Subdomain Item	Score
1.2 There is a clear vision for student learning	1.33

A score of 1.33 on subdomain item 1.2 (shown at left) indicates a lack of vision, which corresponds with ongoing trend for UHS1 that knowledge is not effectively shared among staff. However, the UHS1 leaders recognized the need to implement the initiative of creating a mission statement that articulates a school-wide vision. The leadership team did not have access to CALL or the subsequent results that would have revealed a lack of vision, and yet the initiative was already put in place to address this issue. This bodes well not only for CALL in that it captured a prominent opportunity for the school to address this area, but this finding also reveals that the school leadership team has accurately identified areas in need of improvement for the school without the use of a comprehensive 360 degree school-wide assessment.

In select subdomains, the school demonstrated areas of strength including *Formative assessment of student learning* (3.55), *Summative assessment of student learning* (3.75), and

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Maintaining a school-wide focus on learning (3.10). Based on the analysis of UHS1 interview responses and CALL results, the school leadership seems to be directing their school improvement initiatives in the appropriate direction. Therefore, using CALL would further support their proposed initiatives and demonstrate to the staff the areas in need of improvement. Having data to which the participants themselves directly contributed would work to achieve the necessary buy-in for school improvement work.

Urban High School 2

Urban High School 2 (UHS2), located in the same district as UHS1, faces similar challenges due to the vast sizes of the building, school staff, and student population. Like UHS1, UHS2 has not demonstrated high student achievement, although they have made progress. As a result, they have implemented initiatives to address what they perceived to be areas in need of improvement such as more formative assessments for student learning. As for formative assessment of teaching practice, that is an area the UHS2 principal would like to address, as will be discussed. First, in discussing her general approach to school leadership, the principal spoke of the challenges of leading a large school, especially concerning the responsibility and work of holding her staff accountable:

You know, the difficulty is when you get five administrators in charge of roughly 205 staff. It gets to be tough. I'm not trying to make excuses, but it gets to be awfully tough. I mean, you know, the business model says one manager per eight employees I think. While we are at one per forty, you know. And when we got people spread out all over the place, not only we're talking about not only teachers in the classroom but we got secretary, clerical. You have educational assistants. I have public service employees. You know, so I mean we're talking about a variety of different people with a variety of different jobs and having to know that, I mean...I got to evaluate them, I'm like come on, you know.

The principal is speaking in generalities; the closest allusion to an actual work task is the principal's lament that she and the four other administrators are "in charge of" the staff. The work involved in being "in charge of" would vary depending on the number of staff, the work being done associated with the staff, and the intensity of the tasks as determined by the baseline of where they are as compared to where they should be. One would read this lament and likely turn to a model of shared leadership to reduce the "manager/employee" ratio. Spreading leadership work among leaders would alleviate the burden to an extent; the principal would still be responsible for ensuring that the work occurs. However, to ensure the work is effective and efficient, the school leaders would need to identify the necessary work first before delegating responsibility. School leaders are then able to understand and select the appropriate artifacts in the ways of plans, programs, and processes to fulfill the necessary leadership tasks.

A compromise exists within the CALL theory of action: the tasks are distributed but the principal maintains responsibility for the work. One distinction between the CALL theory of action and a more delegated, manager-style of leadership is that within the former, the principal

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is primarily an instructional leader. UHS2 has a data team that assumes school leadership responsibility, and the principal would like the team to lessen the leadership burden:

I don't want the data team to...everybody's looking at me for the answers. I'm just one of the thirteen (data team members) and I repeat that all the time to the point where they get tired of me saying it. Because if something comes up, they always look at me. I don't want to always be the one who has all the answers.

Subdomain Item	Score
1.2 Staff perceive principal as instructional leader	1.00

Having a data/leadership team may work to ensure leadership tasks are carried out effectively, and the team's use of data to inform decision-making lends itself to a more efficient problem-solving approach, but the principal is still a symbol within the school culture. Even within a distributed leadership perspective, the CALL theory of action positions

the principal as an instructional leader. As the CALL results shown at left reveal, the principal is not viewed as an instructional leader, even if the principal maintains that the staff continually looks to her regarding areas around instruction. Granted, being an instructional leader does not necessary equate to "knowing all the answers," but the leader can work to create a system whereby instructional information is readily accessible.

As previously discussed, prominent features of instructional leadership involve professional development, opportunities for meaningful teacher collaboration, and teacher supervision. The UHS2 principal recognized the need for more professional learning opportunities, citing a paucity of time allocated for such opportunities. The principal was asked about a possible change in resource allocation that would result in more time and flexibility:

I would like to use some of those additional hours to build in additional professional development time into the year. Because right now, we have six early release days. Six early release days for professional development. At two hours each time, so that's only twelve hours. That's not enough.

Subdomain Item	Score
3.1 Importance of school meetings for improving instruction	1.92
3.1 Focus of teacher collaboration around teaching & learning	1.96
4.2 Provide shared planning time for teachers and staff	1.64
4.2 Use of professional learning time	2.58

Based on the CALL results in the areas of professional development and opportunities for teacher collaboration (shown at left), the UHS2 principal is warranted in her desire to increase the time and opportunity for work in these areas. However, while the principal may be limited regarding the capacity to provide shared planning time for teachers and staff, the principal has the opportunity and capacity to directly affect the purpose of school meetings, for which the school scored a 1.92. In addition, when teachers do have the opportunity to collaborate around teaching and learning, the focus of these discussions usually centers around noninstructional-related issues. Therefore,

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while school size may present challenges to the principal to coordinate professional learning opportunities and shared planning time, school size should not necessarily affect the work of directing the focus of the meetings and discussions.

In addition to the work surrounding professional learning and collaboration, the CALL theory of action also prominently features the formative and summative evaluation of teaching as vital instructional leadership tasks. In discussing these areas of leadership, the UHS2 principal again laments that she cannot carry out the necessary tasks to effectively hold teachers accountable.

I: How do you hold teachers accountable for doing some of those things? Or is it- is there an accountability system in place for teachers to be working on?

R: There is, you know, somewhat of an accountability system in place. I mean, we have, we go in and we do a lot of classroom observations, obviously. You know, if I had it my way, it would be nice if we could do unannounced visits to the classrooms.

I: So you can't just walk into the school and visit classrooms?

R: I can walk into classrooms but I cannot technically formulate an opinion about what's going on in that classroom and use it against that teacher.

Subdomain	Score
2.3 Formative evaluation of teaching	2.21
2.4 Summative evaluation of teaching	2.44

To be sure, certain phrasing stands out in this exchange. First, the principal expressed that the current teacher evaluation system is not the system she would implement if she “had it (her) way.” This is an area that leads to an important discussion: to what extent are school leaders constrained in their capacity to carry out particular leadership tasks? For now, however, one should recognize the relatively low scores in the subdomains that address both the formative and summative evaluation of teaching. However, the

principal does not seem to be considering the intended purpose of formative evaluation. She laments the inability to walk into a classroom unannounced and use the acquired information “against that teacher.” While the principal may be considering the summative evaluation process only here, it would seem that neither the formative nor the summative evaluation would work to develop teacher practice if the principal is working within a framework of building cases “against” teachers. Certainly, this may be a result of the principal wanting to eliminate poor teaching performance; the CALL score for the item *Consequences for poor performing veteran teachers* was 1.50, thereby revealing an area in need of improvement that the principal does not feel she has the capacity to address.

Finally, UHS2 demonstrated strengths in certain areas including *Providing appropriate services for students who struggle* (3.27), *Formative assessment of student learning* (3.04), and *Summative assessment of student learning* (3.06). However, overall, the CALL results identified

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a significant number of areas in need of improvement. The principal recognized some of those areas herself, but at the same time cited reasons why the scores would be low. This perspective will be discussed further in the discussion section.

Suburban Middle School

Suburban Middle School (SMS), located in the same district as Suburban High School, is a high performing school, and therefore has the potential to be viewed as a model for school leadership. To what extent does the school recognize a distributed leadership model, and to what extent does it employ shared leadership? What are the processes that create and support those leadership structures? SMS utilizes various committees to carry out certain tasks, which is a reasonable approach for the amount of work and oversight in complex schools. The SMS principal was asked directly how these committees have been developed:

I picked people...I have many staff. People who weren't already obligated for other things. I found two of them really took off with their committees and one didn't. And I was thinking about that the other day, that didn't really play in her strength. So what I am doing there instead of like the team leads, I'm really looking at...truly what are—how can I play with these people's strengths and weaknesses and fit them where they need to be? So in terms of choosing that, that is really more of a personal study leadership type thing to try and figure out who belongs where.

Adopting a distributed leadership model, the SMS principal looks to the skills and strengths of the staff in assigning them committees to guard against ill-fitting responsibilities. In a distributed leadership model, the *who* comes last in an analysis of the necessary work in a given school. Looking at the *what* and then matching that with the appropriate *who* based on skill-set rather than formalized role would result in more likely success in accomplishing a task. However, the actual formation of the committees, and the decision of what committees are needed should be based on a needs assessment and not based on an analysis of staff's skill set and expertise.

To better understand how committees at SMS are formed, we could examine a specific subdomain on the survey. In Round 2, the interviewer inquired about the SMS principal's decision-making process to a participating SMS teacher.

I: Are you aware of any data or information that gets used by the principal, the leadership team, in order to make decisions? Even about like which committees they're going to have. How does that process happen?

R: I really don't know. I don't know how she decides who's on what committees...Some of the scheduling decisions...I don't feel like I was included on. And I don't know if *decision* is the right word, but when there are issues or problems, I don't feel very heard.

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The teacher expresses that he is unaware of how decisions are made. This does not clarify

Subdomain	Score
3.3 Socially distributed leadership	2.72

the sought-after answer on why committees are created and who will serve on them. It does, however, reveal a potential area in need of improvement for SMS leadership practice. The teacher’s feeling of not being heard regarding decision making is reflected in the subdomain score. A sub-3 score indicates that decision making needs to be more transparent in order for

teachers to have faith in the process and not to feel decisions, such as the creation of committees, are arbitrary.

To understand the SMS principal’s leadership approach, the interviewer in round one inquired about how the principal uses most of her time during the day. While she would like to act more as an instructional leader, she recognized that her time and energy are generally co-opted by unforeseen management activities:

I wish I could spend more time doing what I consider leadership activities. Talking to the staff about their strengths and weaknesses, the kids’ strengths and weaknesses, doing a little more professional development, you know, like professional exploration with my staff. And we just don’t get the time to do that because I feel right now (that) a lot of my leadership is more helping teachers put out fires, you know, and giving them the space and the room they need to teach. And...unfortunately, you know, my whole day-to-day is nothing to do with leadership. It’s all to do with, ‘I came across a bad website and I have to deal with kids that were on it’ or whatever. So the teachers don’t deal with that stuff; I have to deal with everything...unfortunately. But if [the staff] were to describe my leadership style, they would say that I have the big ideas and I definitely can...and I give them the freedom but they don’t have a lot of direction, explicit direction, from me.

Subdomain Item	Score
1.1 Maintaining a school-wide focus on learning	3.06
1.2 Formal leaders are recognized as instructional leaders	2.67
1.3 Collaborative design of integrated learning plan	2.48
1.4 Providing appropriate services for students who traditionally struggle	4.07

The SMS principal expresses self-awareness that she does not have the time to do the work of instructional leadership. The subdomain 1.2 score reflects that as well. She believed that the staff would claim that she has “big ideas” but does not impact them individually with regards to their teaching practice. Given that SMS scored above a 3 on subdomain 1.1, the principal’s perception appears consistent with reality: she works on macro-level ideas, but does not have the opportunity to work with staff on more micro-level tasks. The principals’ visibility, or lack thereof, as an instructional leader was reflected in subdomain 1.3. While score of 2.48 is reasonable, a closer examination of specific items within that subdomain validate her concern that she does not take on instructional leadership tasks; on the item

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stem frequency of “learning walks” or classrooms visits the score was 1.67.

Finally, within the preceding passage regarding the principal’s self-perception of instructional leadership practices, she conveys the apparent lamentation that she must “deal with everything.” Within a distributed leadership model, the specific work of dealing “with everything” does not encumber the primary school leader. Therefore, the principal’s assertion that work of “putting out fires” is solely her responsibility may be a reality but not necessarily a certainty. Furthermore, the work for SMS leadership is to ensure that areas in need of improvement are not marginalized in order to consistently manage tasks that do not directly affect teaching and learning. With that said, CALL results for SMS revealed areas of strength in the following subdomains: *Providing appropriate services for students who traditionally struggle* (4.07), *Summative evaluation of student learning* (3.42), and *Clean and safe learning environment* (3.80).

Urban Middle School 1

Urban Middle School 1 (UMS1), located in the same district as the two urban high schools and Urban Middle School 2 (findings forthcoming), faces many of the typical challenges associated with urban middle schools: high poverty and low student achievement. However, the internal challenges the UMS1 principal faces supersede the general challenges. The UMS1 principal had been working in the school for a number of years as a teacher and then assistant principal before assuming her current position of principal. At the time of this study, however, the principal was preparing to leave the school to assume a principal position in an elementary school in the district. Whether this situation influenced the following data remains to be seen; she was much more candid regarding school challenges and shortcomings compared to other participants.

For example, one striking characteristic of UMS1 concerns the influence of the teachers’ union. It should be noted, as previously discussed, that this study was conducted during a time when state policy threatened to limit teacher union influence. Nevertheless, the UMS1 principal, in speaking about school improvement initiatives such as grouping teacher room assignments to facilitate collaboration, referred to a negative culture of teacher leaders thwarting such initiatives.

Well it is kind of frustrating to me because our school improvement plan talks about our flexible schedule. And the room change idea is actually in our school improvement plan, and we wrote it in September. So it’s not a new idea in the building. However, [the teachers] are so possessive of their rooms. That’s why there’s some opposition is the possession of their rooms. The reason why we had talked about room changes when we had wrote our school improvement plan is because we’re going to true teaming this year.

Subdomain Item	Score
3.3 Norms around informal leadership	2.85

The referenced CALL item focusing on informal leadership inquires how informal leaders respond to leaders’ school improvement initiatives. The survey question does not specify who would be considered an informal leader, but the

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principal clarified later in our conversation that “a lot of my informal leaders are very associated with the union in [the district].” The score of 2.85 is not a terribly low score; based on the principal’s responses, one would anticipate a lower score. However, respondents may have viewed “informal leaders” as leadership team members or veteran teachers in general. Nevertheless, the principal cited the influence of informal leaders as an impediment in implementing school improvement plans.

Regarding other instructional leadership practices, the UMS1 principal relies on the use of data to inform decision making and to reveal the areas in need of improvement to the staff. The CALL theory of action calls for data-driven decision making. However, the data used should not be influenced by expediency and alignment with reductive notions of school success. The following description of the principal’s use of data juxtaposed with the CALL results in those areas demonstrate a clear delineation between popular and unpopular data.

I will say we usually focus on data, especially right around those MAP¹ testing windows. So, three times a year we really focus on data. Because I really...I use data cards with the MAP test scores, so that we can color code them: green is at grade level, yellow is caution, red is ‘oh, there’s red flags,’ and then blue is like, sky-high, is how I explain it. So we color code our data cards, and it’s very easy to take our data cards and spread them out on the table and see exactly who’s not doing well in what areas. And now if I could get that data translated into the classroom that would be a big help. But usually three times a year we really, really look at data.

Cross-domain items focusing on the extent to which the school uses analysis of the following information for school improvement purposes	Score
Standardized tests	4.22
Student formative assessments	3.48
Student failure rates	2.78
Student attendance rates	2.74
Student behavior	2.67
Climate surveys	2.78
Teacher evaluation	2.33

The UMS1 principal’s utilization of data to identify areas in need of improvement reveals her approach to leadership for learning. In addition, given the challenges that some faculty may present, she relies on data to present more objective positions. Her desire to translate the data “into the classroom” implies that she is trying to affect change in the classroom through the use of data. In examining CALL results across the domains that focus on the use of data for school improvement purposes, it is evident that UMS1 relies heavily on standardized tests and formative assessments.² The school leaders

rely less on student course failure rates, attendance rates, discipline data, climate survey data, and

¹ Measures for Academic Progress (MAP) is a series of assessments intended to provide formative data on student learning.

² The “formative assessment” of student learning data should be viewed with some skepticism. A forthcoming article will show that many users were unfamiliar with the term “formative assessment.”

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teacher evaluation data to complement the more common and relied-upon student achievement data. Incorporating the various units of analysis rather than the reductive data utilized by policy-makers would sharpen the focus on areas in need of improvement and provide possible causes for these targeted areas.

The UMS1 principal's approach to instructional leadership was also apparent in her effort to make staff meetings more purposeful and focused on instruction. The CALL theory of action promotes this work as well. When asked about the strengths of the school in general, the principal referred to this effort without prompting.

I would say our leadership team is working well, very functional, we get a lot accomplished during our leadership team meetings. Our staff meetings, I changed them this year to...they used to be just informational meetings where you displayed information. I decided that should be done via e-mail, and now they're teaching and learning meetings, so we look at lots of data, we look at best practices, we do book studies. So our staff meetings are really working well.

Subdomain Item	Score
3.1 Importance of school meetings for improving instruction	2.08

While the principal maintains the effectiveness of the staff meetings for improving instruction, the CALL results indicate otherwise. The respondents, most of them teachers, may be skeptical of the substance of the meetings, even if the focus centers around teaching and learning. Veteran teachers weary of data-use or an overall negative school culture could contribute to the contrast between recounted practice and survey results.

Despite some of the challenges facing UMS1, the school scored high in the following subdomains: *Maintaining a school-wide focus on learning* (3.29), *Formal leaders are recognized as instructional leaders* (3.43), and *Summative assessment of student learning* (3.63). These subdomains reflect the UMS1 principal's focus on instructional leadership, and the previously discussed areas in need of improvement suggest a disconnect between perceptions. Some CALL items are more revealing than others: the item focusing on the norms of informal leaders provides possible explanations for low scores in other areas. A negative school culture would not tend to yield high scores in areas directly affecting teacher working conditions.

Urban Middle School 2

Urban Middle School 2 (UMS2) is located in the same district as the other two urban high schools and Urban Middle School 1. Given that the schools work with the same district policies and with the same population of students, they face many of the same challenges. However, in comparing the two urban middle schools specifically, one would find differences in terms of leadership approaches and school culture. While the UMS1 principal was relatively green in her position, the UMS2 principal had been teaching and then principaling in UMS2 for many years. Moreover, at the time of this study, the UMS2 principal was preparing to retire.

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Since the UMS2 principal has been in his position for a while, he has developed a leadership approach that he has found to be most effective. When asked about his leadership style he responded: “More collegial...Just inclusive, I tend not to just make decisions that come down from on high. We meet, we discuss, we have committees, groups of people that are a part of that.” Like the other schools in the district, UMS2 has a data/leadership team that works together to make informed decisions. Other than that, however, the principal relies upon more informal discussions both at the administrative level and the faculty level to cultivate collaboration. The CALL theory of action calls for more structured and formal opportunities for collaboration and decision-making.

Subdomain Item	Score
1.1 Staff engage in collaborative conversations	2.59
4.2 Provide shared planning time for teachers and staff	1.50

As revealed by the CALL results shown at left, the UMS2 staff collaborate to an extent. They rarely, however, have structured time to meet together. The principal recognized this before the survey and lamented that the school does not have the opportunity to incorporate a structure to promote teacher collaboration.

Regarding some personnel practices, and given the challenges of UMS1 and the outspoken nature of the school’s informal leaders, it is important to examine how informal leadership, and union influence specifically, contributes to particular areas of school leadership. Without being prompted, the UMS2 principal spoke about the informal leaders with high regard: “There are people who certainly have risen, and definitely informal leaders who [have risen].” The principal has a productive working relationship with the informal leaders in his school, especially the teacher union representatives. The principal talked about the informal leaders, their work with other teachers, and their effective communication channels. However, the UMS2 principal felt constrained in other areas of personnel management/relations regarding under-performing teachers: “There are definitely some teachers that, you know, I’d love to get rid of.”

Subdomain Item	Score
3.3 Norms around informal leadership	4.00
4.1 Consequences for poor performing veteran teachers	1.71

The principal has managed to partner with informal leaders in his school improvement efforts. However, the principal felt he had a more limited capacity to address poor performing veteran teachers. It would seem that this limitation stems from policies external to the school’s environment, which impacts other areas of school leadership practice as shown in teacher supervision subdomains.

The UMS2 principal’s instructional leadership capacity is apparently constrained to what is permissible by district standards and policies. He expressed as much when asked about evaluating teachers and holding them to high standards of practice:

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...So in those terms it's a self-assessment on behalf of all the teachers, but also through our formal observation evaluation process. But please understand that the [district] evaluation instrument was developed in the 1960s and has never been updated. And then there's informal stuff too. As I am doing my rounds around the building I might see something and go, 'Hey, that was really good,' or 'Have you ever thought of...'

Subdomain	Score
2.3 Formative evaluation of teaching	2.25
2.4 Summative evaluation of teaching	2.65

A score of 2.65 reveals a relatively negative stance on the formal teacher evaluation system mandated by the district. This would correspond to the principal's assertion that the tool and process is out-dated and irrelevant. However, the formative evaluation score is lower and indicates an opportunity for the school leadership to provide consistent feedback to teachers on their practice. Granted, the school leaders may still be limited on the permissibility of formally observing teachers, but the perception in the school is that

more can be done to promote formative assessment of teaching. The principal describes an informal approach to gathering information and providing feedback to teachers. However, the CALL survey examines more specific and higher-level approaches to the formative assessment of teachers that would support improvement in teaching practice.

Another area of note for the UMS2 principals' instructional leadership practice involves supporting and teaching students who traditionally struggle. As a district-wide initiative, schools in this urban district were on the verge of adopting school-wide inclusion policies for all students. While the schools may have been moving toward that approach, the "inclusion" model was not in full swing at the time of this study. Given the school's high-needs population and the moral and legal obligation to appropriately serve all students, it would be advantageous to examine school leadership practices in this area as compared to CALL results. When asked about the inclusion initiative, the principal responded:

Subdomain Item	Score
1.4 Taking responsibility for student learning	3.76
1.4 Providing appropriate services for students who struggle	2.79
1.4 Integration of support staff and regular teachers	2.79
5.3 Student identification for support services	1.48
5.3 Effectiveness of support services	3.24

R: Just to get more Special Ed kids into Regular Ed classes. And so the district has been putting money into hiring additional Special Ed staff so that we can have team-taught classes with a regular teacher and a Special Ed teacher. Because that's pretty much the only way we're able to monitor.

I: Do you have that now?

R: We have quite a bit of it, but not fully across the board in all curricular areas at all grade levels. So we will be doing more of it.

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The CALL results present a mixed bag of findings regarding support services for students who struggle. The school scored high in determining the appropriate responsibility for all student learning, but a bit lower in terms of the integration of the regular education teachers and the special needs teachers. There are various opportunities to explain the discrepancies including the survey participant's application of different meanings to "support staff." The CALL survey targets specific areas across domains, couched in unique perspectives. As shown here, the school scored above-average regarding *Providing appropriate services for students who struggle* in subdomain 1.4, but scored low regarding *Student identification for support services* in subdomain 5.3. The 1.4 item suggests that the school has a solid approach (with room for improvement) for providing services to these students; however, identifying these students for services has been substandard. Nevertheless, according to survey results, the school's support services have been successful in supporting and teaching students as revealed by a high score in the *effectiveness of support services* item.

Overall, UMS2 faces some of the same challenges as their neighboring middle school, UMS1, and scored similarly in some areas, and dissimilarly in other areas. The UMS2 principal's approach to cultivate collaboration and work with teachers more informally is a product of his personal approach and the apparent limitations resulting from district policy. While the CALL survey revealed areas in need of improvement in the aforementioned leadership practices, the school scored high in the following subdomains: *Formal leaders are recognized as instructional leaders* (3.45), *Summative assessment of student learning* (3.73), and *Professional learning* (3.35). Since the UMS2 principal was on the verge of retiring, and since he utilized a more personal, informal approach to leadership, it would be intriguing to see what changes, if any, a leadership change would have on CALL survey results.

Discussion

Findings from this study emphasized four areas that warrant further examination: geography and context as non-factors, shared leadership and distributed leadership, constraints, and CALL's place in data-driven instructional leadership.

Geography and Context as Non-factors

While the participating schools were situated in two regions varying demographically, certain trends emerged, such as consistent scores regarding both the formative and summative evaluation of teaching. Scores in these subdomains were low in both the urban and suburban schools. This could be attributed to the results of a uniform, mandated teacher evaluation system for the urban schools in the same district. In the case of the suburban schools, high achieving schools monitor teachers reactively rather than proactively, and therefore the formative and summative teacher evaluation systems seem to be for compliance purposes, if that. Various reasons may surface as to why scores are low in a given school, and one would look to the individual items at the school level to examine the practices more closely. However, the fact that these scores were consistently low independent of location reveals a likely need to address these leadership practices in various types of schools.

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At the same time, some CALL results varied within the same location and context. The two urban middle schools worked with similar populations and the same teacher union. However, the norms for informal leadership differed greatly from one another. One urban middle school principal had a productive working relationship with the informal leaders while the other viewed them as an obstacle. The surrounding environment often informs a school's culture, but that is not the case with these two neighboring schools. Therefore, internal factors have a significant impact on school culture, and school leaders have more influence in this area than they may assume. A school's history, personnel make-up, and interpersonal relationships contribute to a school's culture, regardless of location (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

In looking at trends across the schools, one would recognize that the formative and summative evaluation of student learning scored high consistently. There are two possible explanations. Due to the accessibility and the wide interest in summative student achievement data, the use of that data has become commonplace for school leaders. Systems are in place to collect that data, analyze the data, and even disaggregate the data. Also, policymakers and community members look to this readily available data. Therefore, leadership practice in this subdomain is ritual and widely understood by all staff members. As for the formative assessment of student learning, while the data presented here is worthwhile, it should be viewed with some reservation. In a forthcoming accompanying report from this pilot study, data will reveal that participants' understandings of *formative* data and assessments varied. Further refining the CALL instrument to ensure uniform understanding will reveal more reliable data. Overall, the findings from this pilot study do not support a claim about leadership practices unique to urban or suburban schools. In a forthcoming large-scale validation study, researchers will be able to identify differences in practice based on school type.

Shared Leadership and Distributed Leadership

During the course of the various interviews, the principals often spoke of their work with their respective leadership teams. They spoke about meeting together, looking at data together, and making decisions together based on those data. Consequently, the principals felt they collaborated often with their staff. However, the CALL data did not always reflect that. CALL examines *collaboration* from various angles as well as inquires about leaders' decision-making processes. Therefore, depending on who was responding, the perceptions regarding the practice would vary. A leadership team member might view the decision-making process as transparent since that individual is part of the process, whereas a non-affiliated teacher would have a more skeptical view. The survey results varied around the issues of collaboration, transparency, and socially distributed leadership. The results would likely depend on who was taking the survey. If the entire leadership team completed the survey, but few non-affiliated teachers completed it, the results would be skewed. Therefore, it is important to identify roles within a school to truly capture a practice.

Returning to the theoretical framework, to examine how leadership practice is distributed across a school by asking the individual principal would allow for some insight, but it would not capture the entire picture. The advent of a leadership team, a data team, or groups of committees

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represent more of a shared leadership or team leadership function. Applying a distributed leadership lens, however, one would see that there are tasks that need further attention and that the formation of a leadership team would need to be in response to that particular work. Otherwise, while the leadership tasks may be shared, the scope of the work is not flattened. As a result, other domains of practice become neglected. Granted, the leadership teams utilize data to inform decisions. What data they use, however, will determine the necessary work.

Perceived Constraints

It is important to identify not only the areas in need of improvement for some schools, but the rationale provided by the school leaders regarding the anticipated low scores. The principals often cited challenges external to the school organizations as constraints to the work they needed to do: an outdated teacher evaluation system mandated by the district, a teacher union contract that disallowed regular formal evaluation, or a challenging student population, for example. To be sure, these are challenges that constrain principals, but may not necessarily prohibit them from doing the necessary work. Moreover, despite these challenges, there are specific tasks that need to be carried out.

I offer the following analogy to emphasize the complexity of this situation along with the importance of working within constraints. In 1970, Apollo 13 astronauts faced the possibility of suffocating as their oxygen depleted due to a malfunctioning filter in their capsule. The scientists and engineers on Earth helped the astronauts develop a new filter using only items that were available to the astronauts in the capsule. They had a contained box of items with which to solve their problem and had no other choice but to work with these constraints. Similarly, each school principal has her/his own box of resources with which to work. Certainly, it would be advantageous to have more options, but like the Apollo 13 astronauts, they too must work with the contents in their metaphorical box in order to achieve particular goals and move a school forward.

CALL's Place in Data-driven Instructional Leadership

Finally, the CALL researchers asked pilot study participants about their school's use of data and what data is used. The most common response referred to the state standardized test scores. This would be the data used to examine student learning, teacher effectiveness, and leadership effectiveness. Aside from the dangers of using reductive data to inform large-scale decisions regarding school improvement initiatives and professional development, the schools did not have data to explain the gaps and areas of concern the student achievement data revealed. A typical response to low scores in math for students identified with a learning challenge would be to incorporate a strategy to address that area in their school improvement plan. How they would determine what strategy becomes less clear. By using a formative assessment that examines the practices that result in the outcomes presented by the student achievement data, school practitioners have the opportunity to correlate practice to outcomes. This would be an efficient and effective process that promotes teacher capacity and school leader responsibility. Data-driven systems target the areas that need attention. Task-based assessments offer insight

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into the work needed that addresses those areas. Snapshot views of student test scores do not suffice to promote effective teaching-for-learning practice; a formative assessment of practice works to fill that gap.

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Appendix A

Round One Interview Protocol

1. What is your title or position at your school?
2. Probe: Thinking back over the year, how do you divide your time over the following tasks, in terms of a percentage of time?
 - i. *Addressing student discipline issues*
 - ii. *Meeting at the district office or working on district-level issues*
 - iii. *Observing and providing feedback to teachers on instruction*
 - iv. *Financial issues in the school*
 - v. *Professional development*
3. If you were to point to areas of this school that are working well, what would they be?
4. If you were to point to areas of this school that are in need of improvement, what would they be?
5. How would you characterize your schools' improvement effort?
6. To what extent do you believe that people in the school share a common vision and mission?
7. Describe what data you normally use for school improvement planning. Specifically, what data do you collect to determine how well the school is functioning?
8. What other practices do you or your colleagues normally do to determine how well the school is performing?
9. What are the major instructional initiatives being undertaken in this school at this time? A major initiative may be a year-long or multi-year effort to improve some aspect of the school.
10. To what extent do you receive regular feedback about your leadership practice, either through an official evaluation or informally from your supervisor or staff?
11. How often are teachers in this school officially evaluated?
12. What student formative assessments are being used in this school?
13. How often do you participate in formal professional development sponsored by your district or school?
14. How often do teachers and other staff meet as a whole school?
15. In this school, who is involved in setting funding priorities?
16. How safe is this school, in terms of students' physical and emotional health? Please explain your answer

Appendix B

Round Two Interview Protocol

1. What is your title or position at your school?
2. Are you currently a part of your school leadership team?
3. Describe what data you normally use for school improvement planning. Specifically, what information, data, or assessments do you collect to determine how well the school is functioning?
4. How, if at all, are data and other information disseminated to teachers, staff, and the community at your school?
5. Tell me about the process for completing CALL.
 - a. *When did you log into the system?*
 - b. *How long did survey completion require?*
6. Please rate how difficult the survey was for you to complete. A “1” is very easy, and a “4” is very hard.
 - a. *What was it about the survey that prompted your rating?*
7. Please think about implementing CALL in your school. Please list specific resources that would need to be in place in order for your school to complete CALL with a 70 percent response rate.
8. How would you adapt CALL, if at all, to meet the specific needs of your school?
9. How, if at all, does CALL complement data that you are currently collecting about this school?
10. Is CALL an assessment tool that you would consider using or incorporating as part of the data and other information that your school uses to plan program improvements? Why or why not?

Appendix C

Selected CALL Items for Reflection In Round Two Interviews

Construct: Taking Responsibility for Student Learning

Responsibility for learning for students who have been identified for special services, (e.g. learning disabled or English language learning students):

- a) Is regarded by classroom teachers as primarily the responsibility of instructional support staff.
- b) Is regarded by classroom teachers as a shared responsibility between classroom teachers and instructional support staff, but the classroom teacher develops the lesson plans.
- c) Is regarded by classroom teachers as primarily their own responsibility, with support staff participating fully in classroom learning designs.

Construct: Predictive Power of Formative Assessments

The formative assessment program in our school:

- a) Does not exist. (We don't have a school-wide formative assessment program.) 1
- b) Exists, but I don't know how well it predicts student performance on state tests. 3
- c) Exists, but does not accurately predict student performance on state tests. 3
- d) Exists and accurately predicts student performance on state tests. 5

Construct: Norms around Informal Leadership

In my school, informal leaders:

- a) Often seem to thwart or undermine the instructional agenda of formal leaders. 1
- b) Are typically not engaged with the instructional agenda of formal leaders. 2
- c) Support formal leaders in efforts to advance the school instructional agenda. 4
- d) Take the lead along with formal leaders to shape and advance the school instructional agenda. 5