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## Through A Prism: A Reflection of the Culture of Leadership

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Through a Prism: A Reflection of the Culture of Leadership

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## Abstract

Leadership in education presents from both an informal and formal change agent perspective. An exploration of how an informal leader from a constructivist leadership stance could effect change through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in a hierarchical organization was undertaken. Using Bolman and Deal's (2013) theoretical frames to develop an understanding of the lens through which people view the workings within an educational institute, I chose to use Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingles' (2016) Change Path Model to develop an organizational change plan. The plan is to attempt to effect change through Professional Learning Communities. Using the Provincial Education Program of Studies, the school board's Three Year Plan and the individual school's School Development Plan as a starting point, I look to understand the structure and the philosophy of the organization that I work within. As an informal leader, it is through PLCs and the following of an examination protocol that change can be effected. Assessment of teacher instruction and practice through and a study of student artifacts leads to critical reflection. The deliberateness of the analysis will play a role in the change agent's success. As an informal leader attempting to move practice forward, there are limitations to what can be achieved. Being able to impact other teachers' practice ultimately depends on the individual teachers, as well as the formal leadership within the school. What is significant about this OIP is the journey involved in understanding the impact that stakeholders have on educational practice, how an informal leader can effect change in a hierarchically organized system, and the value in understanding the purpose of work being done in PLCs.

**Key Words:** Informal Leadership, Formal Leadership, Constructivist Leadership, Professional Learning Communities, Change Agent, Critical Reflective Practice

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## Executive Summary

This OIP is based in research; from an understanding of leadership styles and attributes through the works of Covey (1990), Alvesson and Spicer (2011), Sergiovanni (1992), Northouse (2016) and others; through to the utilization and understanding of the political, human resource, symbolic and structural frameworks of organizations as outline by Bolman and Deal (2013). From implementing the Change Path Model of Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols (2016) as a guide to help convince others of the need for change, and help move forward with the change, to developing a deep understanding of Professional Learning Communities and what literacy looks like; research helps inform and add clarity to any organizational plan for effecting change.

Communication is key when working through a change process. Addressing pressing issues and potential roadblocks, clarifying a vision and plan of action or conveying the results and impact of the change is another important step in this plan. Examining how to articulate the research, how and why change needs to occur, and what the impact the potential change is having on teachers and students alike needs to be a part of the examination of any organizational improvement plan.

The crux of any problem seems to be the pervasive nature of change. How can a person effect it? Who can effect it? How does change impact not only the change agent, but the change recipients? How can an informal leader hope to effect change through Professional Learning Communities in a hierarchical organization such as a school? Provincial ministries and school boards incorporate the latest research into their educational plans to better meet the diverse learning needs of the students within their education system. Subsequently continuous change is brought to individual schools. However, there is a notable gap between research and the implementation of its theories and ideas (Fullan, 1993). As educators, we encourage our

students to reflect on their work during and following the process of creation. Thus, as educators, we need to examine how to follow a similar critical reflective practice. To approach and work toward solving this dilemma, a clear understanding of an organization is integral before any change can occur. To be accomplished, a deep awareness and a reframing that “requires an ability to think about situations in more than one way, [and] lets you develop alternative diagnoses and strategies” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 5) is desirable. A key factor in the drive toward school improvement is the need to develop a collaborative community and examine praxis through Professional Learning Community (PLC) work. This can be done in conjunction with an examination of how Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theoretical framework can be understood in the context of organizational change. It can also be accomplished through collaboration and PLCs and how, with this garnered clarity, effective change can occur.

Being cognizant of how an organization is structured; what the political, economic, social, and cultural milieus are that impact not only the values and beliefs of an organization, but also how the resulting policies and practices can be implemented, is part of this critical understanding. From here, a clear perception of the organization’s vision and goals will help guide the development of the problem of practice and what change to effect. As indicated by Tushman and Romanelli, organizations “do not evolve but are more likely to change in strategic reorientations that demand significantly different patterns of operations” (as cited in Burke, 2011, p. 75). Continuous change, as happens in schools based on student needs, means that “small continuous adjustments [are] created simultaneously across units, [and will then] cumulate and create substantial change” (Burke, 2011, p. 78). Change can be slow and meet with resistance but, it is continuous.

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## Definition of Terms

<u>ACCESS Class:</u>	Attitude, Community Competence, Elements (of Academic Curriculum), Social Skills (ACCESS) classes offer intensive supports and services to students in grades 7-12 who are diagnosed with moderate cognitive (intellectual) or developmental disabilities. The goal of the ACCESS program is to prepare students for transition to adult community members. ACCESS teachers work with their students on functional academic and living skills, including communication, community awareness and appropriate social interaction, pre-vocational (work) skills, and assisting students to be as independent as possible in their home, school, and community environment. A modified curriculum is implemented based on the individual needs of each student.
<u>AP:</u>	Advanced Placement program in high school
<u>CTE:</u>	an acronym for Career and Technology Foundations, a new curriculum that incorporates career exploration and technologies to encourage students to make connections between areas of interest and skill development in various occupational areas
<u>ESL:</u>	English as a Second Language
<u>Formal leader:</u>	a person that is in a designated leadership position, ex. principal, assistant principal, learning leader
<u>Grade levels:</u>	elementary school includes kindergarten, grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 (students range from 5 years of age to 11)  Junior high school includes grades 7, 8 and 9 (students range from 12 years old to 14)  Middle school includes grades 4 to 9 (students range from 9 to 14 years old)  High school includes grades 10, 11 and 12 (students range from 15 years old to 17/18)  Division 1 includes grades 1-3, division 2 includes grades 4-6, division 3 includes grades 7-9, division 4 includes grades 10-12
<u>Informal leader:</u>	a person that is not in a designated leadership position, but works in a leadership capacity
<u>IB:</u>	International Baccalaureate program in high school

Multiply dependent handicapped (MDH): students that have severe and multiple disabilities including mental and physical disabilities

Professional Learning Community (PLC): is a group of educators that meet regularly to share expertise and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students

Report card stems: grading system used (4—The student has demonstrated excellent achievement of grade level expectations. 3—The student has demonstrated good achievement of grade level expectations. 2—The student has demonstrated basic achievement of grade level expectations. 1—The student is not meeting grade level expectations.)

Science school: a school designed to meet the needs of students who have a keen interest in science and inquiry-based learning

Specific Learner Outcomes: outcomes that are used to break down courses into subcomponents for separate evaluation, ex. English Language Arts—student reads to explore, construct and extend understanding

STEM room: an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education where these areas are focused on together. A STEM room houses a green screen and specialized computers for programing as well as a 3-D printer

Special needs: students with particular education needs resulting from learning difficulties, physical disability, or emotional and behaviour difficulties

## Chapter One: Introduction and Problem

### Introduction

Like the light that passes through a triangular prism, leadership is multidimensional. Depending on where the visible light passes and bends, it is dispersed into its component colours. As white light can be distributed, so too can the beliefs, traditions, history, and societal expectations of a leader. The lens through which a leader evolves is based on such a reflection and as such, leadership can be transformational and/or transactional; constructive and/or destructive. And, as with light and its prism, educational leadership requires a triangular cross section which includes the teacher, the student, and the parent. Managing change involves the culture that is leadership.

The identified problem of practice involves the ability of an informal leader to effect change in the literacy practice of peers, and the ensuing written literacy abilities of students through work being done within Professional Learning Communities. Recognizing the Constructive Leadership approach of the informal leader, and understanding the change process to be followed, a vision around students progressing in their ability to write, develop and organize their ideas is developed.

### Organizational Context

Bucheli and Wadhvani (2014) claim that “[t]he real promise of a historic turn in organization studies ... lies in the promise of new perspectives on the nature of organizations and their behaviour” (pp. 4-5). The structure of the organization, how theories and practice are implemented, the demographic makeup of schools, and provincial Ministerial Orders that bring

change to curriculum and assessment practices; are a part of the organization, its history and its functioning.

The roots of the Canadian education system are also based in Conservatism. There is a hierarchical order and schools are a direct reflection of cultural standards and an “agency for transmitting the cultural heritage and values from the mature to the culturally immature, thus preserving them for future generations” (Gutek, 1997, p. 204). With its beginnings in Conservatism and as a public domain, the education system continues to be a reflection of the society it serves. The curriculum includes the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic with “[f]ine arts, music, and dance [being used] to expose students to the cultural heritage” (Gutek, 1997, p. 204). These subjects continue to be influenced by changes to society’s cultural demographics.

Current practice is for the provincial Ministry of Education to be responsible for the development of curriculum and the setting of standards. They support special needs students and fund and/or support school boards, be that public, Catholic, aboriginal and/or francophone education. Their job is also to oversee basic education policy and regulations. Their mission is to ensure that students complete their education through the practice of critical inquiry work.

The board that I work for wants to ensure that students’ individual abilities and gifts are evident as they complete high school. The goal is for students to have a foundation of learning that will allow them to thrive in their work, their life and any continued learning that they choose to embark on. (Board of Education, 2016).

The school district serves more than 100,000 students in over 200 schools from Kindergarten through grade 12. The board is conservative and hierarchical in nature. There are over 50 programs that have been specifically tailored to meet the diverse learning needs,

interests, and abilities of the students that this board serves. This includes high school education where there is an AP stream as well as an IB stream, programs for special needs and/or at-risk kids; immersion/bilingual French and international languages; creative and fine arts learning and instructional alternative programs; sports-focused programs; as well as a focus on culture where there is respect for various faith holidays—meaning that no one culture is specifically celebrated (winter break vs. Christmas). The district supports home schooling as well.

Every neighbourhood within the district has a designated school at each grade level. There are areas that are referred to as mixed or inner city where a higher proportion of people live in poverty. There are areas within the city that house a higher than average population of English as a second language learners; as well as affluent areas, and areas specifically known for a particular culture group. Demographics information from 2011 indicates higher proportion of people speaking non-official languages most often at home in particular areas within the city, be that Asian languages, East Indian or Aboriginal. (Community Profiles, 2011). This can result in a diverse population at specialty schools.

The structure of the system begins with the School Board. They are tasked with the hiring of the superintendent who then works with deputy superintendents and directors. At the school level, there is a principal and an assistant principal. There can be more than one assistant principal depending on the size of the school and the number of students that attend. Teachers and principals are in the same union, while support staff are members of a different union. Between September of 2016 and September of 2018, there will be over a dozen new schools opening. (News Release, 2016) This will change the designated areas that determine which school a student attends. Consequently, this will lead to a change in the culture of some schools.

Another change that has occurred, that was dictated by the board as an interpretation of the Provincial Ministerial Order (2013), was a transformation in the way kindergarten to grade 9 students are assessed. (Board of Education, 2015) As teachers, we no longer assess student performance by using a letter or a numerical grade. Students are assessed based on learner outcomes specific to each subject. Within these specific outcomes, there are four levels of assessment—excellent, good, basic and not meeting. One result of this change is that the structure of grade 10 at some schools has moved from a semester system to full year core courses. Students begin high school together, taking the same level of classes with no designation between academic and non-academic streams. The streaming for these students occurs in grade 11.

The school in which I work is a K-9 (students range in age from five to 14) with approximately 650 students who come from throughout the city to attend what is known as an Alternative Program. These students are bussed in and represent a vast distribution of different cultures and socio-economic status'. The school houses a system special education class, referred to as the ACCESS class. Students in ACCESS have been diagnosed with moderate cognitive or developmental disabilities. The staff include: principal, assistant principal, administration secretary, school secretary, bookkeeper, librarian, three educational/classroom assistants, and 29 teachers, eight of whom hold the title of Learning Leader. The school consists of three floors that house kindergarten through grade 9, a main office, learning commons, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) room—where students access specialized technology (robotics programming, green screen) as tools for learning, a gym, ACCESS class, and an ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom.

Because the organization aspires to foster critical thinking skills and problem-solving, its instructional focus is on inquiry, experiential learning and integrated project work where there are opportunities for students to co-construct knowledge and understanding. Professional Learning Communities have been working to reinforce these characteristics. However, it is the content of the subjects that is highlighted, not a student's ability to articulate their understandings in written and oral format. This lack of attention to this aspect of English language literacy is part of the subject of my OIP.

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paulo Freire speaks to the “banking” concept of education whereby education is done through deposits of information given by the teacher to the student (p. 45). The hierarchical nature of our education system can lend itself to this type of education. However, three components that can drive school improvement away from Freire's banking system include working in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to establish and sustain the PLC process, developing a culture of collaboration and having school wide conversations with student leaders and active parents. It is through relationship building that conversations can develop and critical reflection practice can occur.

Specific to understanding the structure of the school board, and the school itself, is to learn if participatory leadership is practiced and/or possible. The nature of the relationship between formal and informal leaders within the board and the individual school is relevant to the work being done within the school. Knowing these dynamics can impact the clarity of understanding of the configuration of the organization and the potential for a change agent to effect any kind of transformation.

Equitable and moral leadership and practice (Rhodes, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992) by both teachers and administration manifest in the distribution of human resources and practices. This

can be seen in who is chosen as learning leader, or who is given a role as a literacy specialist within the school. It can be seen in the equitable and ethical mentoring between administration and teachers, and experienced teachers to new teachers where respectful dialogue happens and the integrity of peers is not questioned. Professional Learning Community work that reflects research-based best practices for teacher/student instruction and formal and informal leadership practices, is also a part of the broader context of how a school functions.

Over the course of my 30 years as a teacher, I have worked for a number of different school districts. The hierarchy remains the same with a board—superintendent, directors, principals, assistant principals, vice principals and learning leaders—but the pattern of leadership within the school varies. Various names can be given to these patterns of leadership—moral, (Rhodes, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992) distributive, transactional (Northouse, 2016)—names that house characteristics/traits, values and beliefs within leadership approaches. How people view themselves and others, what their values and belief systems are and how the Provincial Ministerial Order is interpreted by school boards is what impacts the teaching and learning within the school system.

I have taught in a variety of positions—special education, behavioural adaptation classes, social studies and language arts from grades six through nine, art, drama, and religious education. I have experienced a variety of leadership styles and have evolved in how I work and interact with people using a Constructivist leadership approach. For me, the basic premise of interfacing with others stems from an equitable and social justice perspective as well as tapping into other teachers' as well as students' past experiences. Adams, Bell, Goodman and Joshi (2016) have described social justice as a goal as well as a process. As these authors write, “[t]he goal of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups

in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (p. 1). This practice is not limited to the work that is done with students, it is inclusive of any situation wherein people interact with one another.

Social justice refers to reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition and inclusion. It involves eliminating the injustice created when differences are sorted and ranked in a hierarchy that unequally confers power, social, and economic advantages, and institutional and cultural validity to social groups based on their location in that hierarchy. (Adams et al., 2016, p. 4)

Social justice is about connecting with people on a respectful and considerate level. It is looking at others experiences and ideas and building upon these capacities. It is from this understanding that I move forward with my problem of practice.

The atmosphere and practice within the school can be impacted by the beliefs and values of formal and informal leaders alike. As Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) state, there is “[a] compelling, although still modest body of empirical evidence now [that] demonstrates the significant effects of such leadership on school conditions and students’ learning” (p. 201). This can also be accomplished through the filtering of information from the province through the school board and its directors to school personnel. As staff, we must trust that the principal has a clear interpretation of how and what information needs to be shared. The volume of data that a principal has to read and then pass on, incorporates the political, economic, social and cultural contexts that in turn, serve as the filter for educational practice.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

My problem of practice involves examining how an informal leader can effect change in the literacy practice of the school through the work within Professional Learning Communities.

This stems from my teaching practice at my current school. For the last 10 years, my school has been identified as a science school. This means that learning is done through the lens of science. As research has shifted practice forward, inquiry has moved into the forefront. The struggle for some, is in the interpretation and practice of inquiry and where and how literacy is practiced. A change agent in an informal leadership position has to understand the organization, where they fit within that organization and how change is possible with the formal leadership and organizational structure that is in place. As an informal leader, my leadership role is limited. I can put forth critically reflective questions, bring examples of literacy work practiced within my classroom, and share in-service and professional development strategies. My sphere of influence is constrained within the hierarchical setting of an education system.

Based on the Provincial Achievement Tests as well as Report Card Assessments, students' ability to write, develop and organize information and ideas is seen as a needed area of growth and has been incorporated into the school's School Development Plan. The effects of this literacy problem are evident in the students' struggle to extrapolate main ideas, provide detail to back up ideas and statements, and to express their understanding of concepts across academic subjects. Part of building a collaborative community includes an ability to reframe, and as Bolman and Deal (2013) state, an "ability to think about situations in more than one way, which [allows] you [to] develop alternative diagnoses and strategies" (p. 5). Consequently, my problem of practice asks: How then can informal leader effect change in the literacy practice within a school through the work being done within Professional Learning Communities?

### **Perspectives on the Problem of Practice (POP)**

It is through Professional Learning Communities work that I envision my ability to realize the desired change. I am an informal leader. I do not have a designated title of learning

leader, subject specialist, assistant principal, or principal. Therefore, to move an idea forward, I would like to utilize the examination of student work in PLCs. I see literacy, an understanding of what that term means, how it is practiced by teachers, and how students articulate their understandings, as an area of needed growth within my organization. Questions arise from this POP. To attend to this, an examination of where I come from and how I arrived at my current destination, will provide insight into the choice of POP. Experience changes and reinforces a person's conceptions and helps create a vision for educational practice.

**Contextual Overview.** I do not remember a time when I did not expect to become a teacher. I loved working with young people, be it reading with them or coaching sports. I also went into teaching because I believed that I could be a better teacher than some that I experienced. When I began my career, I was working with a population of students labelled "special needs". As I gained more experience, I became a change agent in terms of moving a segregated population of students that were labeled multiply-dependent handicapped (MDH, students who had both mental and physical disabilities) into a more integrated setting at the elementary level with age appropriate peers. After working to facilitate change for several years, three key insights emerged. First, you must gain support from your administration in order for change to occur. Secondly, there needs to be collective understanding of the organizations dynamics. And lastly, both must also have a set of factors that had to be considered when the process, the development, and the operationalization of this shared vision for change was going to be implemented (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Part of leading is having a vision that others share. "The targets of change must believe that the organization will be better off if they learn the new way of thinking and working" (Schein, 2010, p. 305). This vision allows for growth and learning as an individual as well as a

collective. It allows for creativity and thinking outside the box. It allows for dissenting voices and it allows for the courage of conviction to be practiced. “The focus of [a] vision shifts depending upon the level and position of the change agent. Different parts of the organization will focus on the vision for their areas in ways that reflect the aspirations of their part of the enterprise” (Cawsey, et al., 2016, p. 127). If there is not a clear understanding shared by the staff, any work being implemented can lead to a divided understanding of practice, making cohesive execution of change difficult. This is where the building of a collaborative culture can begin.

Because of the history of the school as an alternative program, the focus has been on a particular vision of inquiry. This includes using the Provincial Education Science Program of Study (Alberta Education, 2003) to drive integrated curriculum, fostering curiosity, critical thinking skills and problem-solving based on science and technology perspectives. It includes providing opportunities for the co-construction of knowledge and understanding through the perspective of science. Instructional focus is on inquiry (asking questions, being curious), experiential learning and integrated project work. (School Science Program, 2016). As it has been practiced, process versus content was emphasized. Although this is a valuable practice, what can be left behind is the inherent value in being able to clearly articulate that process and the understanding that it brings. This is what has led to the literacy and PLCs as part of my Problem of Practice.

**Theoretical underpinnings.** Theoretical and conceptual frameworks provide the constructs by which a change agent can understand not only their way of thinking and the actions that result, but also how to better work with others from where they find themselves ideologically and conceptual situated. If, as Bolman and Deal (2013) claim, “reframing requires

an ability to think about situations in more than one way” (p. 5), then there is value in being able to diagnose and utilize strategies through the structural, human resources, political and symbolic frames.

To grasp the complexities of the day to day happenings within an organization, knowing the lens through which you view and practice, aids in being able to move an organization toward change. Bolman and Deal (2013) outline the assumptions of theoretical frameworks.

Recognizing where informal and formal leaders fit within these frames, appreciating what conceptual framework people work within, helps inform the “how” of necessary actions. From which perspective do you view things? From here, a leader will sit in one of the four quadrants of the theoretical frameworks. These frameworks help inform a person’s actions. “[How] people respond to you ... may say more about you than about them” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 123). Therefore, an informal or formal leader is better served if they recognize where they sit conceptually and theoretically. This means having a clear understanding of the attributes and traits of your own leadership style. Table 1.1 is a brief highlight of the four leadership frameworks as outlined by Bolman and Deal (2013).

Table 1.1

*Bolman and Deal (2013) Frames*

<p><b>Political</b>—sees organizations as coalitions composed of individuals and groups with enduring differences who live in a world of scarce resources— puts power and conflict at the center of organizational decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Organizations are coalitions</li> <li>•Coalitions of different individuals and interest groups</li> <li>•Coalitions members have enduring differences</li> <li>•Differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality</li> <li>•Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources</li> <li>•deciding who gets what</li> <li>•Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests</li> <li>•Scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset</li> </ul>	<p><b>Human Resources</b>—highlights the relationship between people and organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Serve human needs</li> <li>•People and organizations need each other</li> <li>•When fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer</li> <li>•A good fit benefits both</li> </ul>
<p><b>Structural</b>—looks beyond individuals to examine the social architecture of work—uses both vertical and horizontal procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Clear goals (need to achieve established goals and objectives)</li> <li>•set of rules governing performance</li> <li>•Focus on mission (rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures)</li> <li>•Employment as primary occupation and long-term career</li> <li>•Well-defined roles (increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labour; suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh)</li> <li>•separation of personal from official property and rights</li> <li>•use of technical qualifications (not family ties or friendship) for selecting personnel</li> <li>•Top-down coordination (structures fit organization’s current circumstances; troubles arise and performance suffers from structural deficits)</li> <li>•fixed division of labour</li> <li>•hierarchy of offices</li> </ul>	<p><b>Symbolic</b>—highlights the tribal aspect of contemporary organizations—centers on complexity and ambiguity and emphasizes the idea that symbols mediate the meaning of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•what is most important is not what happens but what it means</li> <li>•events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience situations differently</li> <li>•people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith</li> <li>•events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced</li> <li>•culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends</li> <li>•Organizational Symbols             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--myths, vision and values</li> <li>--heroes and heroines</li> <li>--stories and fairy tales</li> <li>--ritual</li> <li>--ceremony</li> <li>--metaphor, humor and play</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>Adapted from Bolman and Deal (2013, pp. 43-285)</p>

The organization that I work within fits the structural framework with its hierarchy and specifically defined goals. (Board Careers, 2016) Each role has clearly delineated responsibilities with a focus on the mission of the organization. It is also organizational in nature as it recognizes the input of multiple stakeholders from provincial politicians, to parents. Aspects of the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) also come into play that can significantly impact the dynamics within the school and subsequently the effectiveness of change. This has manifested in my organization in the elimination of educational assistants and the placement of teachers in “consulting” positions with limited clarity of what that role entails. The human

resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) can be included as well because the goal of an education system is to serve the needs of the students.

There is a clear relationship between the organization and the people within it as they sit in various quadrants of Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames. Each person that a change agent works with needs to be understood in terms of where they demonstrate themselves to be. Key too, is where the change agent sees him/herself. There is a strong part of me that continues to lean toward the structural frame as I believe strongly that the right people have to be in the right position for an organization to work. However, given the very nature of the organization—being one that deals with the education of children—the human resources component plays a fundamental role for me as well.

To successfully effect change, an individual has to be aware of multiple factors. Knowing the organization, how it is structured, and how it functions is one area of required knowledge. Fullan and Quinn (2016), convey the importance of integrating what an organization is doing, as well as the value in cultivating collaboration and in developing skills and competencies from within. Knowing the people that you work with, and their values and practices is also an area of significance. "Skillful leadership and a focus on key areas of school operation are critical to...transforming a ... school culture ... one that does not happen by luck" (Muhammad, 2009, p.115). There is significance in being able to distinguish how to change an organization from what within the organization needs to be changed. Whether utilizing Kotter's (2012) eight-stage change process that looks at establishing a sense of urgency and anchoring new approaches; or Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols' Change Path model (Cawsey et al., 2016), a change agent needs to be aware that different people will be at different stages of a model, at different times. This understanding helps to inform a change agent's actions. Table 1.2 illustrates

Cawsey et al.'s (2016) four stages that people will find themselves in when change occurs, and where they need to move next. This Change Path Model is one I plan to utilize to effect change through the work within our PLCs and with the staff.

Table 1.2

*Change Path Model*

<p><b>Awakening</b>—leaders need to scan continuously both their external and internal environments and understand the forces for and against any particular organization shift</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Identify need for change</li> <li>•Confirm the problems or opportunities</li> <li>•Collect data</li> <li>•Articulate the gap in performance between present and envisioned future state</li> <li>•Spread awareness of day and the gap</li> <li>•Develop a powerful vision for change</li> <li>•Disseminate the vision and why it's needed through multiple communication channels</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mobilization</b>—once change leaders are convinced of the need for change, it is their job to convince others from the top of the organization to the frontline staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Makes sense of the desired change through formal systems and structures</li> <li>•Access power and cultural dynamics at play and put them to work</li> <li>•Build coalitions and support to realize the change</li> <li>•Communicate the need for change</li> <li>•Manage change recipients and various stakeholders as they react to and move the change forward</li> <li>•Leverage change agent personality, knowledge, skills and abilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Acceleration</b>—involves action planning and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Systematically reach out to engage and empower others in support, planning, and implementation of the change</li> <li>•Help develop needed new knowledge, skills, abilities, and ways of thinking</li> <li>•Sue appropriate tools and techniques to build momentum, accelerate and consolidate progress</li> <li>•Manage the transition</li> </ul>
<p><b>Institutionalization</b>—successful conclusion of the transition to the desired new state—monitoring of progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Track the change periodically through multiple balanced measures to help assess what is needed</li> <li>•Gauge progress toward the goal</li> <li>•Make modifications as needed and mitigate risk</li> <li>•Develop and deploy new structures, systems, processes and knowledge, skills and abilities as need, to bring life to the change and new stability to the transformed organization</li> </ul>
Adapted from Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols (2016) Change Path Model (p. 55)

What is relevant and needed is an awareness of why a person wants to effect change, why a person may react to a situation in a particular way, and why this understanding is critical to successful transition.

**Leadership literature.** Another factor to be considered by an informal leader, is the dynamics of the relationship with the formal leader. The element of trust is critical in the building of relationships and its impact on teacher and student leading and learning.

“[I]ncreasing the mutual trust and influence among adults in the school, whether they are leaders

or peers, will improve instructional practices and, thus, student learning” (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 482). This interplay between formal and informal leader, between colleagues and between teachers and students is informed by a person’s perception and influences what is said and done.

First, school leadership has an important influence on the likelihood that teachers will change their classroom practices. Second, transformational approaches to school leadership seems to hold considerable promise for this purpose. Third, there is a significant gulf between classroom practices that are “changed” and practices that actually lead to great pupil learning; the potency of leadership for increasing student learning hinges on the specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 223).

What Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) are saying is that leadership, be it formal or informal, is critical at the school level. The gap between changed practice and student progress can be breached, depending on the particular leadership practice within the school setting.

There are a host of theories that speak to school leadership from various perspectives (Blackmore, 2013; Eacott, 2013; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008), providing a wealth of conceptual frameworks to examine a multitude of leadership practices. Within these ideologies are specifically defined leadership categories that are important to understand if a change agent is going to effectively move an organization forward. English (2008), states that leadership is “both a science and an art” (p. 1). Blackmore (2013) indicates that “good leadership is something we all recognize but find difficult to define” (p. 139). With the myriad of leadership definitions, two general overarching ideologies emerge: transformational and transactional leadership. In simplistic terms, Lynch (2012) defines a transactional leader as someone who

offers some “valuable things in exchange for the follower’s services” (p. 6), while a transformational leader is someone who “focuses mostly on the achievement of organizational objectives through comprehensive approaches” (p. 2). Transformational leadership looks to relationship building and the development of a culture based in trust, whereas transactional leadership presents as a style that is predominantly founded on coercion or rewards. That is not to say however, that transactional leadership is not needed. For example, in a lockdown crisis, a transactional leader is one who would most effectively get the job done. And, as Lynch (2012) further states, “transformational and transactional leadership are different, but can complement each other occasionally, depending on circumstances” (p. 6). Critically, a change agent must understand the lens through which they view others, their own practice, and the situations that impact the learning environment. As well, they need to recognize that as a leader, they often utilize a variety of leadership approaches because the method is dependent on the context, the environment, and the people involved.

At first glance, the numerous categories of leadership practices can seem overwhelming. For example, Lynch (2012) speaks to instructional, distributed, ethical, emotional, entrepreneurial, strategic, sustainable, invitational, and constructivist leadership. Metaphorically, Alvesson and Spicer (2011) articulate that leaders can present as saints, gardeners, buddies, commanders, cyborgs and bullies. Addressing moral leadership and the importance of sources of authority for leadership, Sergiovanni (1992) voices the importance of values “in constructing an administrator’s mindscape and in determining leadership practice” (p. 9). Rhode’s (2006) states that “[t]o be ‘moral’ or ‘ethical’ as commonly understood is to display a commitment to right action. That generally includes not only compliance with law but also with generally accepted principles involving honesty, fair dealing, social responsibility, and so forth” (pp. 4-5).

Regardless of the type of leadership, all of these styles convey attributes, attitudes, and a format by which a leader chooses to lead and effect change.

**Professional learning communities.** “The challenge of changing culture is the challenge of changing behaviour, of persuading people to act in a new way” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 17). Professional Learning Communities, are meetings that occur between groups of teachers to discuss student work, look at the latest research, and examine how that research can be incorporated into teaching practice and student learning. “Teaching quality is improved through continuous professional learning” (Hord, 2008, p. 10). PLCs can lend themselves to shared and supportive leadership, if there is a “sharing [of] power, authority and decision making within boundaries defined by district and/or state policy” (Hord, 2008, p. 12). They can also work to narrow the knowing-doing gap where “there is disconnect between what we know and what we do” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 16). In order to make learning relevant, “teachers must interact with other teachers and with students as they craft lessons ... the line between teacher and learner moves, creating new plateaus for understanding” (Williamson & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 40).

I believe that through PLCs, effective change can occur. With successful movement forward around literacy, the overall social and organizational factors will also move forward.

**PESTE factor analysis.** A PESTE Factor Analysis helps an organization determine how specific factors will affect the long-term performance and activities of an organization. “Much change starts with shifts in an organization’s environment” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 6).

Globalization, government legislation, public concerns for the environment, and economic downturns are examples of “external happenings [that] will drive and push the need for change” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 6). Whether an organization is a private or a public institution, they

must respond to, and be proactive with these outside forces. For example, Statistics Canada (Grant & Agius, 2017) recently released figures indicating that those aged 65 and older have climbed to 16.9 per cent of Canada's population, which has exceeded the share of those under 15 years old at 16.6 per cent. This trend will have an impact, not only on the students entering the education system, but those able to contribute to the taxes that pay for said education system.

Marx (2006) suggests that a PESTE analysis process involves four steps. First, there is consulting; to be completed with experts in the field, followed by a review of media reports, opinion polls and professional literature. What comes next is the conducting of basic research, including demographic information. Finally Marx (2006) puts forward the convening stage, whereby a diverse group of people take an in-depth look at what has been identified so far, and brainstorm what effects external and internal forces might have on the organization (p. 87). How then do educational institutions consider all the external factors and their impact on the teaching and learning of students?

This has to be accomplished in stages. The province will pull together this type of analysis and produce a Ministerial Order, which a school board will incorporate into their Board Development Plan. An individual school then integrates both of these documents with their own data collected from parents, teachers and students and produce their School Development Plan. At the school level, the finances are dictated by the school board, based on the amount of money that comes from the Province.

One example of external data use at the school level is that of Provincial Exams. Results are used to set target improvements for the following year. For example, based on the 2013-2014 exams, teachers were to increase "students' abilities to develop and express higher-level thinking skills, particularly student analysis and synthesis of science information along with

increased student academic engagement” (School Development Plan, 2014, p. 3). The specific target for grade 9 was an expectation that 87.5% of students would receive “acceptable level” on the exams. For the 2015-2016 school year, 90% of students were expected to receive “acceptable level” on the provincial exams. (School Development Plan, 2015, p. 3).

*Political.* Historically, my organization has been in a conservative political environment. At the same time, there is a very neo-liberal bent around accountability and standardization of examinations and curriculum. With the provinces available natural resources, from which its economy is based, the hierarchical nature of the system is subject to the strong attitudes around deregulation, deprofessionalization and privatization of public services.

*Technological.* As technology has advanced, money has been put into buying resources for the school, including Smart Boards. However, there has not been money put aside for the maintenance of these types of technology, therefore when the bulb burns out or the motor stops working, it does not get fixed because of the cost. Consequently the Smart Board is used as a projection screen. Subsequently, STEM has become the “new” focus in education. According to Bybee (2010) there is a belief that “students must acquire such skills as adaptability, complex communication, social skills, non-routine problem solving, self-management, and systems thinking to compete in the modern economy” (p. 996). This emphasis on science and technology is deemed essential for 21st-century learning to better prepare students “to become citizens who are better able to make decisions about personal health, energy efficiency, environmental quality, resource use, and national security” (Bybee, 2010). In our board and our school, money has been put into the designing of a STEM room for students to access the use of the technology associated with using a green screen and a 3-D printer. These tools are to be incorporated into

the CTF curriculum. In terms of budgeting, the question about the life cycle of current technology remains.

The other side of technology has to do with digital responsibility, use of phones in the classroom and the impact that texting language has had on writing and speaking. With these leaps in technological advancements, there is a generational shift in terms of literacy—a reversal in roles almost, with students being more tech literate than some of their teachers.

*Economic.* The budget has been set already for the coming school year. The province has given the school boards their money and that has been distributed with the 2016-2017 budget. The distribution of resources has been set by the principal. When a new principal begins, they tend to wait a year to see how the school works before making any adjustments to the distribution of these human resources. The economic aspect of a school organization is an ongoing reality that is fluid.

*Social.* The social context of a system varies depending on the area of the city that a school is located in. The socio-economic status of citizens, and their culture/race impact the dynamics within a school. This too is an area that must be respected. However, with a standardized curriculum across the province, the cultural diversity of the population is not always considered. As Goddard and Foster (2002) have indicated, this is evident with the Indigenous peoples of Canada where they found “conflict between dominant and minority world views in the curriculum and language of instruction in the schools” (p. 9). What principals and teachers must be conscious of is that a standardized curriculum is a guide. Teachers have the ability to engage students from where they are and allow them through inquiry, to explore issues and areas relevant to them.

The cultural context of an environment or situation needs to be considered in any organization because of the relevant beliefs, values, and practices of various cultures. Canada is a multi-cultural country with two official languages. As the recent 2016 influx of Syrian refugees has proven, world events impact Canada and its school systems. This is demonstrated with Muslim students wearing hijabs and the respect that is given for holidays and traditions of people of non-Christian faiths.

As understanding evolves with gender identity, gender neutral washrooms are becoming an expectation within the school setting. The education system continues to progress, influenced by global events and more social acceptance for the LGBTQ community—to name a few of these important adaptations. People in leadership positions, the political climate of a province and the response to research about education, all impact an organization.

*Ecological/Environmental.* Society has become more conscious of the need to have a more positive impact on the environment that we live in. This is reflected in the schools as well, with increased use of digital student responses instead of printed out assignments. It is shown in the school board's decision to place recycle and composting bins throughout each of their schools. It is demonstrated in Earth Day celebrations where the whole school goes into designated areas within the community to pick up garbage and recycle that has been discarded.

### **Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice (POP)**

Factors that potentially contribute to or influence the problem of effecting change in the literacy practice at a school through PLCs are twofold: How an informal leader responds to their colleagues; and secondly the manner in which the change agent attempts to effect change. The challenge for me is in the desire to have an impact on the literacy issue within my school.

There are a number of questions that arise when addressing the issue of effecting change as an informal leader. Part of what surfaces is the reality of access to information. Based on the hierarchical nature of the organization, there is a limit to what can be accessed in terms of financial information. Furthermore, parent and teacher surveys, associated with the development of a School Development Plan, also have limited accessibility as usually only the school principal is able to purview this data.

Understanding of the organization and the related hierarchical structure is necessary in order to identify who needs to be involved in the change process. In addition, to effect change, a change model needs to be implemented. Therefore, a clear understanding of available models with their acknowledgement of areas of concern, is critical. Following Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frameworks would be indispensable to a change agent.

Another area of inquiry involves researching leadership styles. When leadership research is examined (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011; Covey, 1990; English, 2008; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; Lambert et al., 1995; Northouse, 2016; Sergiovanni, 1992) it speaks to perceptions of individual characteristics as well as the attributes of both the formal and informal leader(s). Does one display the emotional, primal leadership quality that others can look to for "assurance and clarity when facing uncertainty or threat, or when there's a job to be done[? Does] the leader [act] as the group's emotional guide" (Goleman, et al, 2002, p. 5)? Or, as Lambert, et al. (1995) suggest, is there in fact, a need for "reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling" (p. 29)? This constructivist approach defines leadership as a concept that transcends individuals, their roles and behaviours (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 29). How these, and other leadership qualities, are displayed can impact others in a positive or a negative manner.

A Professional Learning Community can also be used to effect change within the school as well as help build a community of collaboration. Unfortunately, there is not a universal definition of a PLC. Consensus suggests that they involve “a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way” (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas 2006, p. 223). Therefore, working together toward a common goal and understanding the process of PLC work is a valuable way to move learning forward. This also includes a consideration during PLCs of one’s own praxis from an authentically examined perspective.

Finally, finding a measurement of the effectiveness of a change is a challenge to be investigated and pursued. Of import is the cyclical nature of PLCs. An informal leader needs to keep coming back to some of these questions to make sure that they are doing what they intended.

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

Ideally, if everything were to go as planned, literacy would be improving at all grade levels. Some teacher practice would change, and teachers would be working collaboratively to sustain this improvement.

When an examination is made of where my organization is and where I see the need for us to be, there is a gap. Because of the work that has begun within our PLCs, there appears to be a willingness to move practice forward. As the school development plan has identified literacy as a focus, committee work has begun. However, tensions arise in finding agreement in how to practically move the literacy work forward.

To successfully effect change, an individual has to be mindful of multiple factors. Awareness of why a person wants to effect change, or why a person may react to a situation in a

particular way, is critical to successful transition. Another factor to be considered by an informal leader is the dynamics of the relationship with the formal leader. This association between formal and informal leader is informed by a person's perception, influences, and what is said and done. For example, within transformation leadership, a leader "will involve students and teachers to come up with solutions to problems as they arise" (Lynch, 2012, p. 14); whereas, an instructional leader may "use bureaucratic authority, in which the hierarchical structures place binds on the stakeholders to achieve certain outcomes" (Lynch, 2012, p. 33).

Part of the gap between the current and desired state of literacy, as identified, is individual understanding of the same terms. There is divisiveness between grade level divisions one, two and three within our school. Bridging that gap is critical. This too presents a challenge because we do not seem to really "hear" what the other is saying. As a grade 9 English teacher, I am getting kids that have been in the school since grade one that cannot write a proper sentence. Based on my experience marking provincial exams, this does not appear to be a problem just within my school.

Key assumptions around the impact of leadership styles, and how these attributes can contribute to the process of change, need to be understood. From this understanding, and given the nature of my Problem of Practice, consideration and clarity of how Professional Learning Committees function is critical, especially with how they can build collaboration around a shared vision and move educational practice forward.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

In an examination of how my specific organization is ready for change, I see two ways to address change readiness. The first is that, in the facilitation of any change, an understanding of the impact of leadership styles and how to move change forward needs to be examined through

an organization's history and the influences on the organization that are both internal and external. One way to assess practice and behavioural influences on an organization is through Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames. The frames provide specific lenses to help decipher and capture a clearer picture of an organization, including the use of time, human resources, fiscal considerations and technological tools. These theoretical frameworks also allow an individual to see where the people within the organization sit philosophically. At the same time, the frames help put into context the actual structure of the education system from the provincial jurisdiction through to individual schools. The second way to approach change readiness is seen via the through line, the thread of connection that leads from and begins with the provincial Ministerial Order. This thread moves to the school board and is interpreted and developed into the Board's Organization Plan. Once the school board has laid out its plan, the individual schools take both documents, plus feedback from school surveys, provincial exams and report card assessments to devise their own School Development Plan.

Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame's assumptions are based on putting people in the right roles and relationships (p. 45). If done, the formally organized structure can accommodate the inherent individual differences as well as the potential collective goals. The structural assumptions are rooted in a desire to achieve established goals and objectives where efficiency is increased and performance is enhanced through a designated division of labour. Personal agendas are secondary to rationality wherein problem solving and restructuring are used to deal with structural deficits and performance issues. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). Expectations and exchanges between both internal and external stakeholders are formally delineated.

The human resource frame is about people and their interpersonal relationships. Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource assumptions center on the requirements of the personnel, because of the fundamental belief that the organization and its people need each other (p. 117). This theoretical frame brings with it controversy around the concept of the "needs" of the people within an organization and if those needs should supersede what is best for the organization itself. Globalization, outsourcing, downsizing, competition, and desire for more profit, combined with pressure to increase skills can create conflict and produce a corrosive effect on staff motivation and commitment to their organization. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 135).

The political frame brings with it assumptions of coalitions between individuals and interest groups wherein values, beliefs, information, interests and perceptions of reality differ. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, pp. 188-189). Allocation of resources and the concept of scarcity of said resources carries with it an implication that bargaining and negotiation between stakeholders must take place.

When trying to make sense of our sometimes ambiguous and contradictory world, Bolman and Deal's (2013) symbolic frames can bring meaning to some of the chaos through the use of symbols that help convey socially constructed meanings that tap into our thoughts, emotions and our actions. Assumptions around the symbolic frame have to do with the importance of what an action means. There are multiple meanings and interpretations of actions based on differing circumstances. It is the culture that is formed through symbolism that can bind an organization and its people together. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 248).

Extending an understanding of leadership through the outlined frames of Bolman and Deal (2013) can help identify what attributes of leadership are displayed and the roles individuals play within an organization. This in turn can assist staff to move toward becoming a more

collaborative community. If a change agent understands and appreciates the value of Bolman and Deal's (2013) theoretical frames, and is able to determine where others may sit within these frames, then the movement to effect change can be done with insight and dexterity. An organization's history plays into its structure and development of leadership roles and expectations of practice. Applying Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames to the education system will add clarity to the work of effecting change. To know if an organization is ready for change, Cawsey et al.'s (2016) Change Path Model as well as their change role understandings, come to the forefront.

Because change can be deemed necessary based on internal or external pressures, knowledge of the reason for the change needs to be clear and intentional. Improving organizational effectiveness is better serviced when employees have a perspective of the organization that they value and are invested in. The building of a collaborative community is connected to the work being done in PLCs to improve the written literacy abilities of the students. When tensions and conflict arise, how then do you move forward with change?

Cawsey et al. (2016) examine four types of organizational change. Anticipatory that is incremental or continuous (a tuning, so to speak whereby change is made in incremental stages that anticipate future events) and anticipatory that is discontinuous or radical (which involves a redirecting or reorienting with proactive, strategic changes based on predicted major changes in the environment). There is reactive that is incremental and continuous (an adaptation of incremental changes in response to environmental changes) or reactive that is discontinuous and radical (where an overhaul or re-creation is needed in response to a significant performance crisis) (p. 21). They also identify key people within the organization that take on specific roles: Change implementers, initiators, recipients and facilitators (p. 25).

What I like about the Change Path Model of Cawsey et al., (2016), is the layout from the first step of awakening, through mobilization, acceleration and institutionalization of the transition of change. Simplistically, the process of awakening involves an examination of the environment of the organization and what forces are influencing it. Once the situation and challenges are understood, the process of mobilization emerges with a further solidified vision for change. Convincing others of this need means invoking the use of varied communication channels that will convey and convince others of the need for change. Acceleration involves the deployment of applicable tools that will facilitate and manage the change. The desired new state comes to a successful conclusion in the institutionalization step with the weaving of the changes into the very fabric of the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). To change some aspect of an organization, or some aspect of your practice as either a formal or informal leader, recognition that it cannot occur overnight, and cannot occur without careful thought and planning and understanding of the people within and without the organization is critical. Knowing what to change from how to change it is more easily understood with the Change Model Theory of Cawsey et al. (2016).

As an informal leader, as a classroom teacher, there are limits to what information can be accessed. This does not mean however, that a person cannot see the need for change. What it means is that a person has to closely examine where they are, where others are at, and move forward with integrity and authenticity. This is clearly facilitated by understanding frames as Bolman and Deal (2013) have outlined as well as finding a process of change that resonates, as the Change Path Model of Cawsey et al. (2016) does.

## Conclusion

Understanding the organization than you work in is a necessary and important part of working as an informal leader to effect change. Bringing theory to that structure as is done with Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames helps with clarity of this understanding. A change agent also needs to know what model of change resonates with their leadership style in order to effect the desired movement. The Change Path Model of Cawsey et al. (2016) addresses the process of change transition within my organization. What follows is the development of a leadership framework to facilitate the understanding and analysis of my organization.

## Chapter Two: Planning and Development

### Introduction

Chapter two of the OIP involves an examination of four specific areas. These include: A framework for leading the change process; and a critical organizational analysis to determine where we, as an organization are, and where we can potentially move. It comprises possible solutions to address the actual Problem of Practice; and finally, leadership approaches to change that can address what leadership actually is and how practices can change to achieve a new vision within the organization.

In order to better understand how an informal leader can effect change in critical literacy practice, an examination of individual practice through a theoretical framework like Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames will give some insight into one's thinking. This, along with an exploration of teacher practice through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), can facilitate improvement around an issue such as school literacy in a K-9 setting. Further analysis of one's organization can also be done through the four theoretical frames as well as the various conceptual frames available. The theoretical frames—structural, human resource, political and symbolic—act as an umbrella under which conceptual frames—including but not limited to feminist theory, distributive leadership theory, and/or moral leadership theory—shelter. For example, if you find you lean toward a distributive leadership style, you develop “employee commitment, which then leads to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organization. Commitment to these goals is achieved through the empowerment and motivation of employees” (Lynch, 2012, p. 2). How this is accomplished depends on where you sit within Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames.

Approaching leadership from a structural perspective has you empowering your employees differently than if you approached things from the human resources frame. If your distributive style sits within a structural theoretical frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013), you ensure that there is a fixed distribution of labour with the right people in particular positions. The choice of personnel stems from “specific technical qualifications and not family ties or friendships” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 46). However, sitting within the human resources theoretical frame would have you distributing and sharing responsibilities based on the relationships that have been developed between people and their organizations. This relationship needs to fit in order for an organization to be successful (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 135). These frames are a “mental model—a set of ideas and assumptions—that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular ‘territory’” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 10). Understanding which frame you work from and where others fall within the four theoretical frames helps guide interactions as well as movement toward change.

I have come to see leadership as a person’s ability to tap into various leadership theories and construct the best way to deal with the people he/she works with, and the situations that arise. Maxine Greene states that [the constructivist] type of leadership is conceived as “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling” (as cited in Lambert et al., 1995, p. viii). This is the leadership framework that I will be using for leading and implementing change.

Constructivist learning stems from the assumptions that “prevailing schools of thought ... have emerged from our social, political, and economic histories and from multiple disciplines” (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 26). Therefore it has been suggested that a constructivist leadership theory must incorporate criteria that involve all adults in the process so that conversational

structures are constructed with knowledge, meaning and collective purpose (p. 27). Lambert et al. (1995) further speaks to the need for sense-making and coherence within constructivist leadership because leadership is “defined as a concept transcending individuals, roles and behaviors” (p. 29). One interpretation of this leadership definition means that the idea of leading, of leadership, is not specific to a particular person or role. You do not have to be in a formal leadership position to lead and effect sustainable change. You need to facilitate the reciprocal process that can lead to a common purpose through constructed meaning. The culture of an organization comes into play here, and as Schein (2010) states, “deciphering elements of [an organization’s] own culture so that [a leader] can assess its relevance to their change program” (p. 315) is part of understanding and being able to effect change.

The social aspect of constructivist leadership views community as an essential aspect of the learning. The imbedded interdependence means diversity through the bringing of “complexity to the network of relationships that contains multiple perspectives and multiple resources and talents” (Lambert et al., 1995, p.40). My problem of practice explores improving the literacy practice of teachers and students within Professional Learning Communities and how, from there, the building of a collaborative culture within the school can occur. Constructivist Leadership theory lends itself quite nicely to this problem of practice.

### **Framework for Leading the Change Process**

**PLC, culture and change.** Change leadership frameworks present ways of thinking about and leading change. As an informal leader, understanding how change can be effected is critical to the process of the work that is being done within PLCs. Because all events associated with change cannot be completely controlled, Abel and Sementelli (2004) indicate a need for a “coherent linguistic array (e.g. a vocabulary or set of images) that ‘frames’ what is happening in

such a way that it renders change familiar and easily understood” (p. 443). Essentially, the language used must be understood by the stakeholders; the words used, at their core, have to have shared meaning. This means, for example, that when artifacts of student work are being examined in PLCs, we all must have an understanding of what the objective of the assignment/project was. Was that understanding articulated to the students before the work began? Was it clear for the students?

Professional Learning Communities were introduced to the education system a few years ago. They were introduced as a means of collaboration so that common goals that were linked to a particular purpose of learning could be achieved. What has to be recognized however, is that there are internal and external organizational components as well as historical structural features that need to be factored into any transformational plans, whether these plans are system wide or within individual grade teams.

The historical organizational structure and the hierarchical nature of the education system, the involvement of provincial politics as well as parents, are something that must be kept in mind when considering and then trying to sustain change. The whole organization must understand the need to amend practices and shift ways of doing. “[H]uman learning in the context of an organization is very much influenced by the organization, [and] has consequences for the organization” (Simon, 1991, p. 126). Therefore, there has to be an awakening, something that means more than “treat[ing] symptoms rather than underlying causes ... and misinterpret[ing] correlations for causality (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 96). Formal and informal leaders within the school have to recognize not only that change is needed, but that systemic change has to happen in order to move forward. For my organization, this means that, as a school, written literacy has to be something that all teachers see as an area of growth. It has to be

recognized too that examining how students gather and organize information and then put these thoughts in written format, is something that is built upon from kindergarten on, to each subsequent grade. All involved must be engaged in these conversations so that a shared perception develops. According to Smith (1991), organizational memory comes into play when there is a desire to effect change.

Since much of the memory of organizations is stored in human heads, and only a little of it in procedures put down on paper (or held in computer memories), turnover of personnel is a great enemy of long-term organizational memory. This natural erosion of memory with time has, of course both its advantages and disadvantages. (p. 128)

For some, continuing to do what has always been done is an embedded part of the culture of the school. The rationale, the pedagogy of practicing in a particular way has been lost. What remains appears as a stubborn and outdated mode of practice that does not utilize the latest research and developments in student learning. This is where applying the process of Professional Learning Communities and their commitment to continuous improvement presents as an important piece within the change process. This is where, as a change agent, an informal leader can effect change.

There is not a lot of turnover of staff at our school, and this can hinder new ways of doing. People cling to what was done, old philosophies, and are reluctant to change their behaviours. Gathering these different perspectives and integrating ways to offer possible collaborative solutions is part of the Change Path Model and the Awakening Stage (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 99). Within this stage too is the need to develop a clear form of communication so that the message for needed change allows for a higher state of readiness and willingness to change.

[S]ustainable effective change must consistently be tailored to current areas of concern, and does not arise simply from behavioral, systemic, or structural changes alone.

Changed attitudes, values, and beliefs must accompany changed responsibilities and formal patterns of interaction if the change is to 'take' and prove useful. Thus, change must involve the qualitative and cultural dimensions of an organization if it is to prove effective and endure. (Abel & Sementelli, 2004, p. 444)

To facilitate this change and embed it within the culture of teacher practice, PLCs can play an important role in this process. A review of the purpose of PLCs and potential protocols to follow when engaging in them can become a part of the beginning of each school year as way to shape the culture within the school. This will allow any staff new to the school to understand how grade teams and divisional work is examined. It can also serve to remind returning staff of the value in the guiding work of the PLCs around what we want students to learn and what we can do as teachers, when they do not. Keeping these two guiding principles of PLCs in mind is helpful for the work that an informal leader is trying to accomplish.

**Change path model vs. eight stage process.** There are a number of different organizational change models that can be implemented. Similar to Cawsey et al.'s (2016) Change Path Model is Kotter's (2012) Eight-Stage Process. His process involves: 1. establishing a sense of urgency; 2. creating a guiding coalition; 3. developing a vision and strategy; 4. communicating the change vision; 5. empowering employees; 6. generating short-term wins; 7. consolidating gains and producing more change; and 8. anchoring new approaches within the culture (Kotter, 2012, p. 23). Kotter's (2012) steps one and three and Cawsey et al.'s (2016) Awakening Stage align, whereby decisions are made about what needs to be changed to bring about necessary improvement to the organization. Here, Kotter's (2012) second, fourth,

and fifth steps fit, and Cawsey et al.'s (2016) mobilization and acceleration stages fit. When it gets to the stage where employees need to adapt to the changes and develop new patterns and habits, they are in Kotter's (2012) sixth, seventh and eight steps, and the institutional stage of Cawsey et al.'s (2016) Change Path Model. Each model has its own advantages and disadvantages in terms of use for implementing change. For a change leader, being cognizant of different change theories allows for the tapping into different language and being able to create the necessary imagery that speaks to the different people that are impacted by the change.

Within my organization, there is an agreement around students need to improve their ability to develop and organize their ideas and information in written format. Teachers are "awake". We currently reside in Cawsey et al.'s (2016) Mobilization Stage where some staff are developing and implementing strategies to move the learning forward.

**Understanding the need for change.** Development of the understanding for change can occur in numerous ways, especially within the education system. It can begin with a change of government at the provincial level where alternative thinking changes the focus of where education in the province should go. Shifts in thinking can start with one person within the classroom and move to teaching partners, then divisional areas and then disseminate throughout a school. Transformation can begin, as it did at my school, with the principal identifying an area of growth based on his examination of report card assessment and provincial exam results. Modifications in the way teaching and learning is done can occur through professional development, in-services and PLCs. As Booth and Rowsell (2007) state,

[T]here are several factors that have proven instrumental in rejuvenating support for literacy initiatives and creating a strong professional community, including space and

time for change, in-service professional development, district professional development, teacher motivation, support systems for teachers, and the support of parents. (p. 18)

Time and space for learning allow teachers to work alone or collaboratively in their area of interest. Discussion and sharing of ideas with colleagues can follow, which can lead to an advancement of skill sets and an implementation of change in the learning environment for students. All factors are interconnected. By working together and through challenges, effective school change can occur. Booth and Rowsell (2007) point out that off-site professional development “creates a common language and forum where staff members and other participants can voice their questions and concerns” (p. 19). Having a common language, and an understanding of meaning, opens a deeper pathway for learning and change to occur. We have had a number of in-services at our school in the last year that have looked specifically at what the writing level at each grade level looks like. Once the analysis of our findings are completed, more work through PLCs can be done to examine what strategies can best be employed to improve literacy in the classroom.

**Types of change.** Relevant types of change can include reactive, anticipatory, incremental/continuous, discontinuous/radical. A reactive change involves who is chosen as a change agent, followed by determining what should be changed, and what kind of changes need to be made. Individuals who may be affected by any modifications must be considered as well as how any change is going to be evaluated. With reactive changes, a caution must be highlighted as change can occur too late within an organization. Being proactive and working in an incremental manner of continuous tweaking to address roadblocks and areas of resistance allows for change to occur at a slower pace, but in such a way that an organization does not become stale. In education, this can occur within the system by staying with the same way of

doing things and not recognizing that all students do not all learn and grow the same way, at the same time.

**Change agent.** The acceleration stage of the Change Path model suggests that to avoid a “one size fits all” mentality, an informal leader can reach out to “engage and empower others in support, planning, and implementation of the change” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 55). Helping teachers and students develop new knowledge, skills, abilities and ways of thinking will lead to support of the change that is being implemented. Anticipatory changes means that time has been given in advance to prepared responses to any issues that may arise from these changes. Part of this goes back to knowing where you and your peers may sit within Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theoretical frames. Knowing and understanding allows a change agent to address any disquiet in a manner that is understood by the people impacted by any suggested alteration in ways of doing.

For example, there is a disconnect in expectations between Division 1 and Division 3 teachers in terms of where students should be in their writing and the quality of a final product. One way to address this disconnect is to have cross divisional PLCs where student artifacts are presented as well as the “how” the assignment/project was presented to the students. Critical reflection of the process as well as the results can lead to more honest conversation and potential change in practice.

The mobilization stage of the Change Path Model tackles this concern as well by suggesting that a change agent assess “the power and cultural dynamics at play and put[ting] them to work to better understand the dynamics and build coalitions and support to realize the change” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 55). Effecting change includes a complex understanding of leadership theories, theoretical frameworks, models of change, and people and organizational

structures in general. Although challenges are ever present, movement forward is a requisite for learning and growth.

Once a change agent understands these dynamics within the culture, they can work through PLCs and conversations with fellow teachers to share ideas and strategies. As an informal leader, I can facilitate this during our cross-divisional PLCs, as well as during Professional Development days where we bring our work to be examined across division groupings.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

When conducting a critical organizational analysis, understanding Bolman and Deal's (2013) theoretical frameworks and recognizing where informal and formal leaders fit within these frames, can help inform a change agent's actions and have that same change agent understand the lens through which others view things. An informal leader not only has to understand where they are, but where the formal leaders are in their thinking and practice. This is needed to better articulate theories and ideas in a manner that will help others comprehend change ideas. It also provides a potential bridge between different ways of thinking.

The critical analysis of my organization can begin with using Cawsey et al.'s, (2016) Change Path Model. As stated, the "awakening" stage is about the recognition that there is a need for a change to occur. It is a confirmation, through data collection, that articulates a "gap in performance between the present and the envisioned future state" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 55). Within my organization, the gap that has been identified is around literacy, specifically students' ability to develop, organize and express ideas and information in written format. For the previous three years we have been working on literacy, but jumping between reading literacy, math literacy, and language literacy. The focus has not been as precise as it is now with specific

attention on written development and expression of ideas. The motivation to move to written expression is based on an analysis of past Provincial Examination Results at the grades 3, 6 and 9 levels, as well as the report card assessment of this LA Stem.

To move an organization forward, there needs to be conversational engagement between colleagues and a compelling rationale of the commitment needed for a particular vision around written literacy. There must also be a “clear sense of the desired results of the change” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 97). What is it that we expect to change? What outcome are we looking for as we examine the data? What changes do we need to make to our practice to begin to effect this change? This conversation “involves gathering new data, posing questions that cause dissonance and disequilibrium between the held beliefs and new information, and reconceptualising or redesigning the ideas in question” (Lambert et al., 1995, pp. 36-37). It is about constructing new ideas and ways of thinking so as to facilitate a change in the pattern of behaviour. And, as Lambert (1995) states, “[t]hose processes that frame actions that embody new behaviours and purposeful intentions involve the most practical aspect of the reciprocal processes” (p. 37). With in-services that address written literacy during the school year, staff can follow up the work within their grade and divisional PLCs. An area to be addressed within my organization and the work being done in PLCs is that any plan around improving the written literacy ability of our students must be systematic, whereby the plan is schoolwide. It must be practical, where the time, space, staff and materials are sustainable and replicable. It must have an agreed-upon standard that targets students’ specific learning needs and it, according to DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008), it needs to be mandatory (pp. 248-249). This involves accessing, through conversation, diverse ways of practice that our staff have, based on their varied education and experience. Using this constructivist approach of reciprocal processes, perspectives of the

internal and external stakeholders can be incorporated, critical reflection on personal experiences can be heard, and the building of a trusting community of practice can begin to be built. Because of the disconnect that exists between thinking and ways of doing between grade divisions at my school, it will be necessary to continue to build trusting relationships to better facilitate the essential critical reflective practice work of the PLCs.

*Change Readiness.* For an organization to move forward and be able to demonstrate a readiness to change, trustworthy leadership is an essential piece within the school. An atmosphere of professional respect in the community can facilitate the forward movement of the work that has been done. Work being done within Professional Learning Communities can progress. Because the principal has identified written literacy as the focus of the work we are to be doing, and backed this desired focus with collected data, a clear area of concentration has been identified. Professional respect between formal and informal leaders and between peers builds an atmosphere of trust between leaders and followers.

*School culture.* Within my school, there is much knowledge. There are many people that can think critically and bring forth 21st century ways of practice. This knowledge is evidenced in the work that people bring to both the grade and the divisional PLCs as well as when there are teacher led in-services. As an informal leader working from a constructivist leadership style, being able to ask questions of others about their ways of doing helps inform my own direction and practice.

Our school has been at the forefront of innovation through inquiry based education. In addition, the incorporation of field studies is a critical component of educational practice, as well as project- based group work. What has also happened is the shelving of past practices that centered on literacy development. We have gotten to the forefront of inquiry practice by

discontinuing previous methods that were promoting and embedding literacy in teacher practice. Occurring gradually, focus turned to more exploration. The presentation of ideas, regardless of format, was encouraged. This seemed to lead to phonetic and other literacy skill sets being considered less important. The data gathered by the principal led to attention coming back to how literacy is practiced and what we need to do as a collective group to facilitate growth in students' ability to express their ideas in an organized written format.

***Culture of accountability.*** There are predetermined deadlines for report cards, individual program plans for students with learning needs, and provincial exams. The stewardship of resources is led by the principal as s/he controls the decentralized budget and determines how the resources of personnel, technology, and education material are going to be distributed. Depending on the type of leadership style practiced by the formal leader, those resources can be equitably or inequitably disseminated. "Since constructivist learning is a social endeavor, community is essential for learning to occur" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 39). Community is built upon trust and open communication. As a school, we are still bound by the distribution of resources as determined by the previous principal. Any redistribution will have to wait until the next budget and school year.

***Communication.*** Effective communication internally and externally has to occur both horizontally (between principal and assistant principal; and between teachers) and vertically (between principal, assistant principal and learning leaders; and between administration and all staff). The process has to be reciprocal in nature as members of the community must "work in interdependence with one another" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 40). Again, in order to be reciprocal and effective, trust has to be inherent. This would seem to be an area of growth for our school as

the very design and structure of the education system sometimes makes it challenging to find the time to consistently and collaboratively share.

***POP and the Change Path Model.*** Establishing what the root causes of the problem of practice within the school are is a vital component of the awakening stage of the Change Path Model. This circles back to the recognition of a need for change to begin with as all stakeholders must be aware of its necessity. Subsequently, the need to help students grow in their ability to write in an organized manner has been outlined as part of the school's 2016-2017 School Development Plan.

What must be considered at the awakening stage is the organizational culture of the school. Cawsey et al. (2016) caution around the idea of strategic frames whereby the “mental models or sets of assumptions of how the world works, become blinders to the changes that have occurred in the environment” (p. 119). The processes for effecting change need to remain fluid and not become routine. As well, values, “those deeply held beliefs that determine corporate culture, [cannot] harden into dogma, and questioning them [cannot be] seen as heresy” (p. 119). Schein (2010) has stated that culture is “both a ‘here and now’ dynamic phenomenon and a coercive background structure that influences us in multiple ways ... [it is] influential in shaping the behaviour and values of others ... [and it] is ultimately created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders” (p. 3). Part of being able to effect change is to recognize that each person brings with them a set of assumptions about the organization and the practice within. It is the shared assumptions in an organization that “take us into ‘cultural’ analysis” (Schein, 2010, p. 11). A second part of being able to effect change is to recognize that there is a moral/ethical component to the change. With literacy at the heart of this OIP, creating a sense of urgency is part of the moral fabric of effecting change. As educators, we have a responsibility to

ensure that our students can become productive members of our society. Subsequently, the culture of an organization is dependent on the people within the community. How a formal leader has led influences that culture. It takes time and trust to move a community in a different direction. However, having a very precise focus backed by data can significantly help in effecting change.

*Change Path mobilization.* Cawsey et al. (2016) speak to the second area within the Change Path Model as mobilization. This involves the need to “make sense of the desired change through formal systems and structures, and leverage those systems to reach the change vision” (p. 145). They state that organizations may “define their systems and structures, [but] the systems and structures shape the behaviour of organization members” (p. 144). What this means is that organization structures are put into place to enhance the goals and guide the decision-making process, as well as create a means of being accountable. The systems are routines by which performance is managed and information systems collect and disseminate data.

Within a school system, the hierarchical structure in place has a school board, superintendent, directors, principals, assistant principals, learning leaders, teachers and educational assistants; this is a precisely delineated outline of decision making and reporting both formally and informally. Certain things are decentralized to the schools, while other decisions emanate from the Department of Education at the provincial level and are centralized within the school board itself. It is with the integration of tasks, the span of culture within the school and the formal vs. informal following of the processes that is central to the work done within individual school communities. “When efficiency is critical to success and ambiguity and uncertainty are low to moderate, a more mechanistic structure will fit best. However, when an organization’s ability to respond to its environment with flexibility and adaptiveness is critical to

its success, a more organized structure will make more sense” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p 149). A mechanized structure stems from a formal hierarchy with decision making and a clear division of labour emanating from a central source, while an organic organization has fewer rules with less reliance on the authority inherent within a hierarchy (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 148). A school can benefit from both the mechanized and the organic structure depending on the formal leader and his/her leadership style.

What this can look like at my school is having the typical hierarchical structure of principal, assistant principal, learning leaders, teachers and educational assistants. Assessment reporting is set by the school board as are the formal documentation of students on IPPs. In addition, our school has designated one second language teacher to support English Second Language learners, four teachers to be part time resource support and one teacher to be part time CTF support. As an informal leader, working to effect change can sometimes be challenging because of how the distribution of human resources is structured.

There are however, common elements that help make sense of the structures. These include: differentiation, which involves the division and subdivision of tasks. Having clearly defined roles and outlined expectations for those roles helps staff work together to determine an equitable division of labour for field studies, parent nights, speciality school events including assemblies and school-wide Earth Day activities. Integration, which is the coordination of various tasks, is facilitated through grade team and divisional team meetings. The chain of command is a reflection of the power structure and decision making responsibilities within the hierarchy that is the education system. This structure is similar across all school systems within Canada. However, there may be variation at the school level depending on the size of the school and the grades housed in the building. At our school, the formal leader is the principal, the

second in command is the assistant principal, followed by the learning leaders, then the teachers, and finally the educational assistants. The span of control involves who reports to whom and is tied into the hierarchical structure. Centralizations vs. decentralization involves the how and where decision making is distributed. This is determined at the school board level. For example, the school proposes a budget to the board based on number of students, and their coded learning needs. The board will approve a set number and outline the parameters of where the money can be spent. For example, given the number of students that are on IPPs, the school receives a certain amount of money specifically to address support for these learning needs. The decision on how to set up support for the students has been decentralized. Therefore, how that money is utilized is determined by the school itself. One significant change in the last two years has been the increase in the number of teachers that are providing support, while educational assistant support has been drastically reduced. This has resulted, for some grades, in a substantial decrease in support for students with identified learning needs.

With specific structures in place, and clear communication channels open to all stakeholders, movement toward change can begin to occur. Part of being able to clearly communicate, stems from an understanding of where the decision making power lies. “Change leaders have a variety of factors they need to consider concerning the use of systems to increase the likelihood of approval” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 161). This includes knowing who the decision maker is, and being able to work with that person. There also has to be a connection made between the change project and the vision of the organization. In the case of a desire to improve the teaching and learning literacy practice within my school environment, having the principal in agreement with this strategy is evidenced by his examination of data and the subsequent inclusion of a literacy goal in the School Development Plan. This is a demonstration

of the desired change being in alignment with the organization's vision. Will there be reluctance to any proposed changes to teacher practice? Probably. However, as a change leader, it is necessary to be able to "carefully assesses the motives of the opposition before deciding on how best to respond" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 163). Part of constructivist theory addresses the importance of talking and being able to "mediate their histories within a common experience so that the journey occurs together. The two most promising of practices are the building of a collegial, professional culture for educators and the work in authentic assessment for children" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 44). Therefore, the alignment of the organization's vision with the desired and necessary change that is backed up by data can make for constructive, critical reflection that allows for dialogue, disagreement, construction of common threads, and an overall desire to move practice forward. This mobilization stage is part of the building of a reciprocal culture of reflection, discussion and research. As an informal leader, PLCs provide the most effective way to help facilitate this movement.

There are multiple stakeholders to be considered when making any change to an organization. This is where the notion of power can come into play. Cawsey et al., (2016) speak about positional power, where power resides with an individual because of their title and position; network power that arises from connections between people and across organizations; knowledge power, where possessing a particular body of knowledge can "increase one's ability to influence (p. 197); and personality power wherein charisma and an individual's ability to encourage and inspire others is expressed. The positional power at my school is based on the placement of the leadership as determined by the hierarchy. The network power presents within the divisions as these groups of people participate in divisional PLCs, grade team PLCs and plan within their division. There is also determination of networking based on physical proximity of

classrooms, which are decided based on grade levels as well as the physical floor plan of the three storied school. The personality power is displayed in the relationships that are developed based on common practice within the classroom as well as common subject matter.

This notion of power is at play within an institute and can have either a positive or negative impact on the culture of that organization. “Culture is pervasive and influences all aspects of how an organization deals with its primary task, its various environments, and its internal operations ... The strength of that culture depends on the length of time, the stability of membership of the group, and the emotional intensity of the actual historical experiences they have shared” (Schein, 2010, p. 17). Through an understanding of the culture of an organization, its power structures as well as a change agent’s leadership style, the value of understanding “why people react to the change as they do and how those reactions are likely to evolve over time” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 219) is evident. Being open to learning, transparent in the change process as well as managing the pace of the change, are elements of the mobilization stage to be cognizant of. The learning that has occurred from the reading and understanding of Bolman and Deal’s (2013) frames and the desire to follow the Change Path Model of Cawsey et al. (2016), has provide for me a framework to work from. Using my constructivist leadership approach to navigate through the culture within the school, effecting change as an informal leader can happen.

What is evident within my organization however, is that the change process is a slow one. There are time frames to be considered in terms of the curriculum to be covered and limited time for teachers to get together to critically reflect through Professional Learning Communities. Small changes can be made within grade teams, but school wide changes will take longer to manifest.

***Change Path acceleration.*** The third section of the Cawsey et al.'s, (2016) Change Path Model is the acceleration stage. At this juncture, the leadership within the organization must empower others and help in the development of new skills and ways of thinking that will continue to support the change (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 299). Nohria (as cited in Cawsey et al., 2016) addresses three change strategies: programmatic change that “involves the implementation of straightforward, well-structured solutions (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 302); discontinuous change, which involves “a major break from the past” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 302); and emergent change, which “grows out of incremental initiatives and can create ambiguity and challenge staff members” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 302). Although there can be ambiguity, tapping into the emergent change strategy would fit my organization because of the reflection, research, dialogue and learning that can happen on an ongoing basis through the PLCs. It is through the making of incremental changes that we can proceed ethically, communicate clearly and plan each step of the change process. This will better facilitate growth for both teachers and students.

***Change Path institutionalization.*** The final category of the Change Path Model is institutionalization. The tracking of the changes and the gauging of the progress toward the goal involve making necessary modifications to allay any fears and potential risks that will derail movement toward the end objective. This is the stage where ownership of the change is solidified.

My organization is not yet at this stage of the Change Path Model. However, there is evidence that we are moving forward. Based on the identification of literacy as an area of growth, and an analysis of the framework through which to effect change, an examination of the organization can be summarized in referencing Patterns of Organization and Management through a mechanistic and/or organic frame. (Morgan, 2006, pp. 44-45). Morgan (2006)

explains the “mechanistic way of looking at organizations is by considering the origins of the word organization. It derives from Greek organon, meaning a tool or instrument ...

[consequently] ideas about tasks, goals, aims and objectives have become ... fundamental organizational concepts, for tools and instruments are mechanical devices invented and developed to aid in performing some kind of goal orientated activity” (p. 15).

In the development of lesson plans and Individual Program Plans for students with specific learning needs, teachers use terms such as “behaviour objective”, “learning objective”, “tools to facilitate student learning”. Objectives and tools are written in a particular way to show how to move a student from one point to another in order to reach their “learning goal”.

Division of labour at work became more specialized as increased efficiency was placed in the hands of supervisors and their machines, not individual workers. From this factory model of organization, you can see how the structure of the education system was designed, and how little of that structure has changed. Morgan (2006) suggests examining organizations “as if they were organisms” (p. 33). It is evident that “certain species of organization are better ‘adapted’ to specific environmental conditions than others...bureaucratic organizations “work most effectively in environments that are stable or protected ... and that very different species are found in more competitive and turbulent regions, such as the environments of high-tech firms in the aerospace and microelectronics industries” (Morgan, 2006, p. 33). When you leave the mechanistic model of organizations and move into thinking about an organic model, what gets taken into consideration are the employees and the recognition that they are “people with complex needs that must be satisfied if they are to lead full and healthy lives and to perform effectively in the workplace” (Morgan, 2006, p. 34). School communities are thus a combination and a balance between a mechanistic structure and working through a biological organism’s way

of being. One way that my organization has moved from a mechanistic way of thinking and reporting on the learning areas for students on Individual Program Plans involves the movement from identifying a long term and short term goal to that of identifying the current learning of a student and the target area for growth. This has changed the language from “student will complete and hand in 3 out of 5 assignments in each subject area” to “student is able to...and student is working towards”. This is a way to balance the mechanistic system that seems to go hand in hand with a hierarchical structure, with the biological nature of the people within the organization.

The following headings are adapted from Morgan (2006) to illustrate patterns of organization and management with environmental changes (pp. 44-45).

*Nature of the environment.* The school community is relatively stable: as a school of choice, a science school, it has had a stable population of students coming through its doors for the last nine years. The staff too is relatively stable. Where change has occurred is in the formal leadership position of principal. Technology too has not significantly changed as each school within the board has a designated ratio of number of students to laptops. The school has a green screen with specialized programs to enhance the educational and technological experiences for the students.

*Nature of the task facing the organization.* Written literacy is the community Problem of Practice as outlined in the School’s Development Plan. The goal is to move students written development, organization and expression of ideas to a higher level. Achieving this objective is to be accomplished through a systematic examination of where students are and how we can, through work in the various grades, move them forward. This is addressed in our grade team and divisional PLCs.

*Organization of work.* The structure of an organization such as a public school is hierarchical with clearly delineated job assignments. The school principal, for example, is responsible for the school's budget, leadership, teacher evaluation, and student discipline, to name a few. The role of a teacher includes helping students apply particular concepts such as math, English, science, and social studies. This involves preparing lessons, grading papers, classroom management and engagement with students and their parents. The teacher is answerable to the school's principal, who in turn is answerable to his/her area director. Within my organization, there is autonomy in the classroom. However, through the collaborative nature of inquiry, cross-curricular practice and the examination of student artifacts in PLCs, multiple perspectives can impact how a lesson/project is developed and implemented.

*Nature of authority.* Because of the hierarchical nature of a school district, authority is top down. Formal positional allocation, where seniority and placement within the hierarchy determines the "importance" a position plays, is significant. Where there is some flexibility, and consideration of the human side of education, is in the leadership style practiced by the formal leader (principal) within the school. The impact of the positional authority varies depending on the leadership style that is practiced by both the formal and informal leaders within my organization.

*Communications system.* Given the numerous stakeholders involved within a school system, communication expectations are clearly outlined. The communication is usually vertical, with some horizontal movement in the form of staff meetings and PLCs at the school level.

*Nature of employee commitment.* An employee is given their job designation. With an acceptance of a job, an employee is making a full commitment to the responsibilities within that

job. This includes bringing forth gaps in the learning of students and working with colleagues to address these concerns as a community.

As is evidenced by this analysis, the school organization lends itself to a more mechanistic frame. Where the organic aspect of the organization comes into play is in the dealing with people. Recognizing that an organization leans heavily toward a mechanistic structure, affords a change agent the opportunity to more deeply understand the realities of what has to be worked with. What cannot be ignored is the human/organic aspect. There has to be an acknowledgment of the history—formal and informal experience—that a person brings with them to the education table. By knowing the organizational structure, what stakeholders are involved, the framework through which various participants view issues/situations, and the style of leadership that is practiced; a change agent can begin the process of effecting change.

### **Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice**

There are a number of possible solutions to my Problem of Practice.

*Possible solution #1.* At the beginning of the school year, an in-service on the purpose and protocol of a PLC would benefit staff and lead to a more cohesive and greater understanding of the role that PLCs can play in improving practice and effecting sustainable change. Although my grade team, as a learning community, have consistently worked toward a common goal; as a divisional PLC, we have not always “assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions” (DuFour et al., 2008, p.17). We have been good at presenting student work based on a common POP, but, possibly because of not having a clear understanding of the true potential of effective PLCs, we have stopped short of critical feedback. “This inability to articulate the desired results in meaningful terms has led to initiatives that focused on methods and processes rather than on results” (DuFour et al., 2008, p.65). By being aware of this and the importance of professional

learning communities to “create conditions for perpetual learning” (DuFour et al., 2008, p.17), an informal leader can help facilitate more critical dialogue around student learning and teacher practice.

*Possible solution #2.* The grade level Professional Learning Community provides an optimal learning environment for teachers to use the Data Wise Improvement Process (adjustment cycle) (Parker Boudett, City & Murname, 2005) to focus strategies to improve student-learning outcomes. In this board initiated tool, there are three stages. The first is referred to as the Prepare Stage. It involves a teacher’s organization of students’ collective work to create a data overview and to build assessment literacy. This is where we ask “What concept or problem of practice are we focused on? What do we expect students to learn?” At this juncture, the teacher that brought the work is explaining what the expectations were, what aspect of the provincial program of studies this was assignment addressing. Next is the Inquire Stage where teachers dig into student data (work brought to the PLC) and examine the instructions given by the teacher to see if they were clear and would meet the learning needs of the students. Here the question asked is “What specific work are we looking at?” This is where the teacher goes into specific detail about the process involved with the assignment, any scaffolding that was done, and what verbal instructions were given on top of the written ones. In the final stage, the Act Stage, teachers are to develop actions plans based on their assessment of student progress. Acting on and assessing the work involves asking questions like: “What is the work telling us? How do we know the students are learning what we asked? Where are we in the adjustment cycle? Do we continue our focus or move on to a new goal? What are the next actions steps? How do we respond when students don’t learn? How will we respond if they already know it?” The ‘what’ may involve looking at smaller pieces of work, providing multiple exemplars and

have students choose, asking for smaller chunks of analysis. The ‘who’ is which teacher and which class or classes were involved. The ‘when’ can be immediately, or within a week or two. The ‘was it effective?’ is generally the starting point of the next meeting. However, an area of growth for our grade team would be consistently beginning the meeting with what changes were implemented between our previous grade PLC and the current one.

Notes are taken for each stage and are referenced at the beginning of the next grade PLC. These PLCs appear to be very effective in terms of moving the learning forward, especially because of the critical reflective piece that is included. Having a number of peers look at not only the student’s work, but also the teacher’s instruction and expectations as well, is a key piece in reflective practice. The adjustment cycle allows for the teacher to set specific goals, adjust strategies that are currently being used and to create new actions that will better meet the student learning outcomes based on the data that was presented. The process within the adjustment cycle can then continue. Because of the trust that has been built up between our grade team members, the reflective practice of the grade PLCs can be seen to impact the work that is carried forward.

*Possible solution #3.* At the divisional level PLC, we have begun to use a slightly different protocol entitled Feedback on Student Data Collection (Glaude, 2005). It is outlined as follows:

Table 2.1

*Feedback on Student Data Collection*

	Purpose of the Protocol	To assist an individual who has implemented a strategy or strategies during the study and has collected some data.
2 minutes	Getting Started	Choose a facilitator and a timekeeper. Review the purpose of the Protocol and relevant ground rules.
4 minutes	Presentation of the Data	One person shares the question he/she has chosen for action research. Write this question for others. He/she then describes the strategy used and shares the data. Data might be qualitative or quantitative. It may be in digital (e.g. electronic, video, audio, multi-media) or print form. Copies of information or data should be made in advance for everyone. Remember to remove student names from all of the work. The presenter may describe impressions of what the data says or how he/she perceived the strategy working, and may direct the group to any areas that feedback is needed.
2 minutes	Reflection	Group members review the data and prepare responses.
5 minutes	Raising Questions	Group members discuss questions, insights or feedback that the using of the strategy/strategies raised for them. The presenter is silent and takes notes on any area that he/she may wish to discuss later.
13 minutes	Conversation	The presenter directs a conversation on any questions, insights, or feedback offered.
2 minutes	Personal Reflection	The presenter offers any insights about his/her learning and names possible next steps

Adapted from Feedback on Student Data Collection (Glaude, 2005, p. 49).

There are similarities between this type of critical reflection and the adjustment cycle used at the grade level. However, this protocol can accommodate larger numbers. The ensemble is divided into smaller groups and adheres to the time frames as outlined. Examination of student work in this manner affords multiple perspectives, but still holds the presenter accountable for what steps to take next, as well as what could potentially be modified to better meet the learning needs of the students. One of the struggles that is evident during our divisional PLCs is in the “conversation” section of the protocol. The facilitator has to make sure that it is indeed a conversation that happens to address the questions and insights of the team.

*Possible solution #4.* A final way to address potential issues with being an informal leader trying to effect change is by attending workshops and bringing that information back to colleagues. This can be done through discussions with the principal on the possibility of presenting on a PD day, at a staff meeting, or arranging a special afterschool in-service. By

taking the initiative and bringing enthusiasm to the learning, sharing with colleagues has the potential to help move learning and practice forward.

When a colleague and I attended a workshop addressing the learning needs of secondary English language learners, specific strategies were presented to help scaffold literacy learning for students across curriculum subjects. We brought forth our enthusiasm for these strategies and discussed hosting an in-service with our principal. The only available time was after school. We prepared and then presented to our colleagues, who were open to discussion around how they could immediately apply some of these strategies in their classrooms. For my grade team members that were not able to attend, I presented these strategies during one of our grade PLCs.

### **Leadership Approaches to Change**

In order to effect change, leadership has to manifest itself. A framework for understanding the change process, including the need for the organizational change, must be understood. For these things to occur, data must be gathered, analysis must take place and the best change model to be implemented must be determined.

“Leadership is a highly sought-after and highly valued commodity ... People continue to ask themselves and others what makes good leaders” (Northouse, 2016, p. 1). The research into leadership, when examined, reveals numerous definitions. When wading through the various classifications, and exploring through the lens of personal narrative, leadership comes down to staying mindful. It is about being cognizant of outside pressures and conscious of the research into best practice within the educational field. It is about remaining attentive to the contextual lens that practice and communication exist within, as well as ensuring that the people that you work with feel supported. How then can leadership be classified? To make this leap out of the

mire, an examination of theories of practice within the learning and leading community is a first step.

Research speaks to styles, skills (Northouse, 2016), behaviours (Northouse, 2016), metaphors (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011), and morality (Rhode, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992) that give voice to leadership approaches and behaviour. Northouse (2016) has stated that “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 8). He also speaks to leadership classification systems whereby leadership is viewed through the focus of group processes, or defined from a skills perspective (p. 5). These are then addressed as specific traits and skills that can be attributed to a leader. An important point that Northouse (2016) makes around leadership is that “[w]hen a person is engaged in leadership, that person is a leader, whether leadership was assigned or emerged” (pp. 10-11). An assigned leader is one who has been placed into a formal leadership position such as a principal or learning leader. An emergent leader, on the other hand, has not been assigned, but has instead emerged over a period of time (Northouse, 2016, p. 8). Within my organization there are specifically assigned formal leaders in the form of principal, assistant principal, and learning leaders. As an informal leader, the effecting of change is subtle and from the perspective of critical questioning during PLCs, the sharing of work from in-services, and the quiet conversations with peers about alternative ways of presenting ideas to students.

Leadership can be approached metaphorically, as understanding the complexity in leadership conception can present multiple possible meanings. Alvesson and Spicer (2011) argue that “[m]etaphors are seen as important organizing devices in thinking and talking about complex phenomena” (p. 31). Metaphors can help make sense of organizations and the leadership within because “[a] metaphor allows an object to be perceived and understood from

the viewpoint of another object” (p. 34); and, they “can be used to communicate insight to others” (p. 38). Based on the works of Alvesson and Spicer (2011), Northouse (2016), Sergiovanni (1992), Lynch (2012) and others, the wealth of leadership theories has led me to a way of seeing that leadership cannot fit into one category or way of leading. Rather, a person who leads must have the ability to tap into various leadership theories and construct the best way to deal with the people s/he works with and the situations that arise. What resonates for my leadership style from the research and my practice is Constructivist Leadership.

To wade through numerous theories of leadership can be daunting. However, it must be kept in mind that, according to Einstein, “it is the theory through which we observe a situation that decides what we can observe” (as cited in Morgan, 2006, p. 339). That said, there are four leadership theories that can be considered broader conceptual representations of leadership: transformational, transactional, constructive and destructive.

As the name implies, transformational leadership is about transforming people, an organization, and a structure. Transformational leaders “are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p.3). It is about helping followers grow through empowerment and the alignment of “the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). Motivating others to do more than they may have thought themselves capable of is another component of a transformational leader. This process “often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership” (Northouse, 2016, p. 161). Another aspect of transformation leadership incorporates six dimensions that can guide a leader in their desire to effect change. These include: building a school vision and goals, whereby the school community has a common understanding of the

desired and needed change; providing intellectual stimulation, whereby staff are encouraged to learn and discuss ways of doing that are creative and innovative; an offering of individualized support that reflects the learning style and needs of individual practitioners; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations where the leader leads by example; and developing structures to foster participation in decisions. What this means is that decisions are not unilateral, they are shared with the people that will be impacted by the outcomes (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999). Because authentic transformational leadership “positively affects followers’ moral identities and moral emotions (e.g., empathy and guilt) and this, in turn, leads to moral decision making and moral action by the followers” (Northouse, 2016, p. 163); it is important to note what pseudo transformational leadership involves. It is still considered transformational leadership because it does create transformation, however, that transformation results from negative and potentially destructive approaches. According to Bass and Riggio, this type of leadership involves someone who is “self-consumed, exploitive, and power oriented, with warped moral values” (as cited in Northouse, 2016, p. 163).

Burns states that transactional leaders, on the other hand, “lead by exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions” (as cited in Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). This is leading through social exchange. Transactional leadership is touched on to highlight the style distinctions that can occur in leaders.

Understanding of what transformational and transactional leadership entails can help an informal leader navigate conversations and figure out how to approach those in leadership to engage in change. For example, as an informal leader I can approach the principal to discuss the purpose of engaging in PLCs. I can suggest that perhaps we need to revisit the purpose as a staff and present suggestions around protocols that will help keep the focus of the PLC on student

artifacts. The formal transformational leader may agree that it is a good idea and suggest that we present at the start of the new school year. A transactional leader on the other hand, may still agree to do the in-service, but it would be in exchange for coaching a particular sport, or heading a particular school committee.

Constructive leadership elevates people instead of tearing them down. It is about solving problems and creating long term solutions. This is accomplished through consistency in behaviour and expectations, and honest communication. Drath et al. indicate that “[t]he most desired outcome of this process [of constructive leadership] is the emergence of a learning organization with the developmental practices of delegation, participation and feedback-giving and a collective capacity to produce direction, alignment and commitment” (as cited in Valcea, Hamdani, Buckley, & Novicevic, 2011, p. 613).

Destructive leadership, as defined by Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad, is the “systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates” (as cited in Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 575). As with other leadership theories, destructive leadership is viewed differently by researchers. Some authors, including Bass and Steidlmeier, and Howell and Avolio, see destructive leadership as a process whereby a “leader’s bad intentions are an essential component of destructiveness” (as cited in Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007, p. 178). Sometimes, as Padilla et al., (2007) state, it can be viewed as an outcome, which means that there can be damage to “followers’ psychological well-being [as well as] ‘good’ leaders [producing] bad outcomes and, ‘bad’ leaders [producing] desirable outcomes” (p. 178).

When teaching children with multiple disabilities many years ago, the program for integrating these students into their age-appropriate classrooms was at the forefront of practice. An educational assistant would accompany the individual into their “regular” classroom and, for example, work at writing their name tacitly in oats or pudding while his/her peers were learning cursive writing. The principal designated two classrooms for the students that were MDH. One he labelled “behaviour”. This classroom was located in a separate wing from the K-6 classrooms. When I questioned him about this, he suggested that I determine which students needed to be in the behaviour classroom. What this allowed for was a respectful understanding of the needs of the whole school, as well as respect for my desire to move the practice of working with children with varying needs forward. This is a clear example of constructive leadership.

Destructive leadership can stem from good intentions. For example, a decision by a principal to replace desktop computers with laptops in a library would be in line with the board’s policy around 21st century learning for students. However, not adhering to the policy of securing the laptops could lead to a number of laptops going missing. Although it would be a natural consequence for the students not to have access to technology, the loss stemmed from the decision of the principal not to secure that technology as was required by the board. At this same school, there was an Accelerated Reader Program (2017) that ran through the library. An initial test was given to students at the beginning of each school year to identify their grade-equivalent reading level and instructional reading level. Books were purchased specifically for the varying levels of ability. The program had been at the school for many years and cost approximately \$2000.00 to maintain for the grades 4-9 students. The principal cut the program completely and then proceeded to also cut the library hours down to three hours each day. The school board’s

Three Year Educational Plan (Board of Education, 2016) has outcomes for student success entailing the building of professional capital, where there is a shared standard of practice. These outcomes include an attention to the stewardship of resources based on values and priorities and evidence-informed decision making. These decisions by the principal have undermined the quality of the educational experiences for the students and clearly goes against the organizations policy.

To help organize the multiple theories, and to incorporate the realization that a leader taps into various theories depending on the people and situation they are in, a quadrant is a good illustrative tool. Transformational leadership can be seen as an overarching category whereby leaders inspire followers and “help them grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2005, p. 3). Transactional leadership, which can be perceived as the complementary or opposite to transformational leadership, is the style of leadership whereby rewards and punishments are used for motivating followers. These two overarching classifications, under which distributive leadership, moral leadership, and metaphorical styles including cyborg and bully fall, are a starting point for understanding leadership. Constructive and destructive leadership, are two more overarching categories under which distributive, social justice, situational or strategic leadership can also fall. By addressing how others view the dark side of leadership, Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007) acknowledge that some researchers believe that by definition, leadership is a “positive force” (p. 178) and therefore people like Hitler with their dark side, are not considered leaders. Constructive leaders on the other hand, build capacity and can lead

through a social justice perspective. These categorizations help me organize leadership into an umbrella process or framework with the differing constructs falling under that either/or umbrella.

Table 2.2

*Leadership Theory Quadrant*

	Constructive	Destructive
Transformational	Distributive Moral Trait Saints Buddies	Cyborg
Transactional	Saints Buddies	Bully Cyborg

Table 2.2 This figure illustrates how transformational and transactional leadership styles can fit into constructive and/or destructive practices. (Beaton, 2016).

Northouse (2016) identifies two factors related to transactional leadership, contingent reward and management-by-exception. The first is an exchange of effort for specific rewards. The second involves “corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement” (p. 171). Alvesson and Spicer (2011) speak to the metaphor of a cyborg leader as being “inspiring and successful but also a mechanistic and sometimes self-centered and non-emotional rational being” (p. 138). A cyborg can therefore be a constructive leader because an organization’s goals can be accomplished, even if it is through the exchange of service for reward. A cyborg can also be seen as a destructive leadership style if it involves Northouse’s (2016) second factor of negative criticism and feedback.

As research continues and there is evolution in thought and practice, the specific leadership approach or model that fits for leading the process of organizational change for my Problem of Practice is that of the constructivist leader. What resonates from this theory is that learning is “a social endeavor, [whereby] community is essential for learning to occur” (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 39). Constructive leadership has its roots in a sense-making or meaning-making

development of our constructed reality over a period of time. The “sense-making systems consists [sic] of principles, beliefs, thinking patterns and assumptions that govern the way individuals experience their lives” (Valcea, Hamdani, Buckley, & Novicevic, 2011, p. 605).

Where constructivist leadership theory differs from other leadership theories is in the reciprocal nature of the construction of meaning and knowledge. “The reciprocal processes that enable ... participants in an educational community to construct meanings ... that lead toward a common purpose of schooling ... is at the heart of the constructivist nature of leadership” (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 32). Constructivist learning stems from the assumptions that “prevailing schools of thought ... have emerged from our social, political, and economic histories and from multiple disciplines” (p. 26) therefore Walker and Lambert suggest that a constructivist leadership theory must incorporate criteria that involve all adults in the process so that conversational structures are constructed with knowledge, meaning and collective purpose (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 27).

What this means is that when leading through a constructivist frame, you are aware of and utilize the experience and learning that has shaped the people you are working with. Lambert further speaks to the need for sense-making and coherence within constructivist leadership because leadership is “defined as a concept transcending individuals, roles and behaviors” (as cited in Lambert et al., 1995, p. 29). For any change to be sustained within an organization, it has to be a collective growth for it to continue. It cannot be specific to a particular person or role. You do not have to be in a formal leadership position to lead and effect sustainable change. You need to facilitate the reciprocal process that can lead to a common purpose through constructed meaning. Because a school community can be equated with a biological ecosystem (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 41), it can be seen as having complexity and interconnectedness, diversity and shared growth. What has to shift in order for change to be effected is the way of seeing leadership. There has to

be a trusting environment; old patterns and assumptions of leading and practice need to be broken; there needs to be a construction of meaning where ideas make sense and a common interpretation about teaching and learning occurs; and finally, with the generation of new and deeper constructed meanings, specific actions emerge (Lambert et al., 1995, pp. 36-37). What can be regarded as a prevalent challenge is not the examination and potential learning, but the “how” of actually implementing a change in both individual and collective practice.

Within my organization, we are known as the Science Alternative Program which is a program designed to meet the needs of students who have a keen interest in science and inquiry based learning. What this means in terms of a constructivist leadership approach is that when introducing the idea of change and trying to move literacy practice forward, it has to be done by utilizing the experiences of others and addressing how a project worked, what the objective was, and how it could be improved. This can be addressed through PLCs when examining student artifacts. For example, Division One spent months on a project where students designed a cardboard city. This was in alignment with their social studies work around community (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 11). During our cross divisional PLC, we asked questions around what past teaching experience did teachers tap into to develop such a cross-grade project; what previous student learning did they draw upon; how did they bring in the literacy component of writing into the work; and based upon this experience, what would they change for next time? Discussion ensued around how the older grades could be brought in to work with the younger kids. What came of this PLC was a better understanding of what the younger grades were addressing and the beginnings of the building of a more trusting relationship between divisions.

Leadership theories, as they relate to organizational change within a school, rely on the hierarchical structure of the education system itself. School boards are responsible for carrying

out policy as mandated by provincial governments. Within this structure, struggle for dominant practice through specific policy has moved between conservatism—an ideology that “preserves established institutions and conditions ... [and] ... advocates a hierarchical conception of society” (Gutek, 1997, p. 197)—and neo-liberalism—which has a “preoccupation with the economy, standardization and control” (Ryan, 2012, p. 22). Regardless of its origins, the education system has a structure that can impact the teaching and learning efficacy of teachers, students, and formal and informal leaders within a school. Consequently, effecting change through PLC work is contingent on the culture created within the school through the formal leadership.

The necessary adjustment to effect any transformation begins with the change agent and the recognition within the organizational community that there is a need to shift and move the organization forward.

### **Communicating the Need for Change**

Preliminary tools to be utilized to measure and track changes, gauge progress and assess change are the provincial Ministerial Order, the school board’s Three Year Plan and Teacher Effectiveness Framework, the individual School Development Plan as well as the work that is being done through the PLCs.

The province’s Ministerial Order has mandated that the fundamental goal of education is for students to achieve success and fulfillment through the development of competencies. These proficiencies, as outlined in the Department of Education Provincial Ministerial Order (2013), include being an engaged thinker, an ethical citizen and having an entrepreneurial spirit. This Ministerial Order is given to the province’s school boards, and their interpretation can be manifested as a school board’s Three Year Plan (2015). The interpretation of the Education

Minister's general statement is evidenced in the board's mandate to personalize learning, build professional capital and engage the public in the education process.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the change process through the lens of my problem of practice, I will utilize my board's Teacher Effectiveness Framework as one tool of measurement. This framework sees teachers as designers of learning who must ensure that the work asked of students is worthy of the students' time and attention. The formative and summative assessment practices developed must be designed to improve student learning and guide our teaching. Interdependent relationships are expected to be fostered, and finally, teachers are encouraged to improve their practice in the company of their peers. Some of this work is done through Professional Learning Communities. Utilizing this tool is about reflection and thinking critically about practice inside, as well as outside of the classroom. PLCs are about taking this same reflective work and examining how student work is changing based on the change of practice as individual teachers and as a collective.

In addition, my school board has a three-year plan for student success that encompasses personalized learning whereby a student's individual learning style, strengths and areas of growth are outlined and considered with every concept, project, and lesson. There is an expectation of the building of professional capital. Fullan and Quinn (2016) break this into three components: Human capital, which involves the development of the skills of individual teachers; social capital, wherein teachers have access to knowledge and information, a sense of expectation and trust as well as a commitment to work as a community toward a common purpose; and decisional capital, where the expertise of individuals is accessed and utilized (p. 54). One more critical piece of the board's three-year plan includes the engagement of the

public and the stewardship of resources. So how, as an informal leader, am I applying these principles?

The school board speaks to critical competencies (Board of Education, 2016) that include: Knowing how to learn—students will be taught how to gain knowledge, how to understand that knowledge through skill development, experiential learning, and interaction with others; students are expected to conceptualize ideas and problems, apply what they know, analyze the situation through past and gained knowledge, synthesize all the information, and evaluate what they have to construct and then solve problems. This critical thinking scaffolding will facilitate the identification and resolving of complex issues. Additionally, being able to access, interpret, evaluate, and use information effectively, efficiently, and ethically is a competency that is essential as technological gains move us so quickly into an ever expanding digital world. Opportunities to innovate are decisively identified so that through play, imagination, reflection, negotiation, and competition, the entrepreneurial spirit can be fostered (Board of Education, 2016). This part I find ironic in that not only the physical, but the hierarchical structure of the education system has not changed much since its inception hundreds of years ago. Consequently, within the antiquated design of the education system, teachers and students must move teaching and learning styles into the 21st century. It is through self-reflection and the reflective nature of PLC that we can accomplish this. Teachers are expected to ensure that good communication skills are applied through multiple literacies including reading, writing, mathematics, technology, languages, media, and personal finance; as well as helping students further their understanding of global culture.

The purpose of the competencies, according to the board document (Board of Education, 2016), is that there is a shift in education from disseminating information to a preferred focus of

inquiry and discovery. Interdisciplinary studies are encouraged not only through cross curricular activities, but across grades. Key work around competencies entails the positioning of students to better manage the challenges and opportunities that await them, especially with the changing demographics, the diversification of people and knowledge, as well as the changing economics as we globalize. Life-long learning is seen as a means of contributing to health, inclusive communities and thriving economies. This can be accomplished by being an engaged thinker and citizen with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The board's interpretation is then processed again at the school level into a document known as the School Development Plan. The current incarnation includes an expectation of individualized learning; project and inquiry based practice; Professional Learning Community work; and, common prep/planning time. Some school administrators' work collaboratively with staff, some dictate the interpretation to their staff. Regardless, there is a needed understanding of where the administration is coming from, how they are interpreting the ministerial order and the board's plans, and the equity of the interpretation in terms of load between divisions and teachers within each division. The style of leadership is another measure to be used when determining the reality of effecting change in an organization.

Alvesson and Spicer's (2011) metaphorical examination of leadership attributes lends itself quite nicely as a measuring tool in extrapolating cognitive clarity of behavioural relationships that impact efficacy. This is accomplished through an examination and understanding of the attributes of a leader as a metaphorical saint—"people who encourage moral peak-performance and provide guidance to their followers through being very good people" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7); a gardener—one who "leads through providing followers with opportunities for personal growth" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7); a buddy—

someone who sees themselves as a “friend in the workplace and makes people ‘feel at home’” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7); a commander—one who tries to “set a strong direction by taking command, creating clear demands, using punishment” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7); a cyborg—whereby rationality and efficiency are emphasized in the workplace (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7); and/or a bully—where a leader “often brutally sanction[s] those who follow” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p. 7). Issues have to be framed differently, depending on the audience. My personal challenge is working on how I can frame ideas and suggestions so that others will listen and receive them in a positive manner.

Growth is an ongoing process, but with a better understanding of Bolman and Deal’s (2013) frames, a better crafted understanding of the process around PLCs, and a better understanding of how to word questions; effective communication will be seen incrementally throughout the school year.

## Conclusion

In the examination of leadership styles, understanding the various approaches benefits an informal leader trying to effect change within their organization. Embedded in this too is the analysis of the organization itself, as clarity of where the organization functions is connected to the problem of practice. Organizing leadership into quadrants helped to establish a clearer picture of the interconnectedness of leadership theories. The research led to an understanding of my own style of leadership and has facilitated my ability to work with others who manage leadership differently. Through further understanding of constructivist leadership, the types of critical questioning have evolved to better facilitate the learning of both teacher and student. This then moves the work of the OIP to strategically effecting change in PLCs.

What comes next is the implementation strategies and stage of the OIP. Here, an evaluation of the organization and the plan for change will unfold. Critical of course to any change agents plan, is a clear and concise communication blueprint.

## Chapter Three: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

### Introduction

How can an informal leader effect change through Professional Learning Communities? To address this POP at this stage of the OIP, goals and priorities need to be clearly outlined so that the planned change can move forward. Stakeholders' reactions must be considered, with foresight used in the development of strategies that may change the plan. Refinement of the plan, ethical considerations and challenges, as well as communicating clearly and persuasively will play into a change agent's next steps.

To outline these areas, a strategic organizational chart has been included as well as benchmarks which are designed to help build momentum within the organization. As the work through Professional Learning Communities and their focus on literacy are the basis of this OIP, the role of an informal leader and their ability to effect change can be impacted by multiple considerations and numerous challenges. Critical reflection, student focus, ethical behaviour and practice as well leadership style influence the level of success that can be achieved when effecting change.

### Change Implementation Plan

The Change Implementation Plan entails an examination of how to utilize PLCs to further the literacy abilities of students. How the organization will begin this process, and how theoretical understandings of concepts can be brought into the change agent role will be outlined. Connections between understanding of self and others, and how these understandings influence interactions and impact potential movement forward within an organization will also be addressed.

**Utilizing PLCs.** The strategy for change is to avail myself, as an informal leader, of a protocol to be used in grade and division PLCs that will help further the literacy skills of our students. Attending workshops and professional development opportunities and bringing that learning back to colleagues through in-service presentations is yet another stratagem for encouraging the desired change of praxis. Bringing student work to focus on during PLCs, and following a protocol that addresses the strategy used by the teacher to tackle an area of learning, can lead to critical reflection through effective questioning and conversation with peers.

PLCs and in-services will play a crucial role in moving practice forward. As an informal leader, conversations and questioning with colleagues can potentially impact the movement toward meeting students' educational requirements and improving the learning situation for the organization. Engagement with people revolves around identity,

[W]ho to be in that group, how much influence or control they will have, whether their needs and goals will be met, and how intimate the group will become. In that process, groups learn how to structure a given relationship in terms of the dimensions of how emotionally charged or neutral it should be, how diffuse or specific it should be, how universalistic or particularistic it should be, and how much the value placed on the other person should be based on achievement. (Schein, 2010, p. 155)

**Beginning the process.** The priority, as outlined in the school's development plan, is to increase students' capacity to clearly articulate their knowledge in an organized and detailed manner. A vital aspect of this goal is students' adeptness to speak and write using comprehensive information, proper sentence structure, vocabulary and grammar. The proficiency of the use of these competencies corresponds to the organization's goal for students to expand their ability to write by developing, organizing, and expressing information and ideas.

Incorporated within this aim, are for the literacy expectations to be addressed across curricular areas, grades and subjects. Much work can be done through PLCs. However, whole school professional development days can also be devoted to addressing this area of concern.

For example, the strategy that was employed at the school level began with a common prompt for writing. Every student produced a piece of writing that was then reviewed by their homeroom teacher. Two or three pieces were ultimately chosen to represent the typical level of ability for that grade. Grade level teachers then got together and discussed each selection of writing to identify the single piece that best represented the work of all the classes within the designated grade. The selections were assessed by first identifying what was done well; and second, the needed areas of growth. The selected piece for each grade was then compiled, photocopied, and ordered from K to 9.

On the next Professional Development Day, grade levels were brought together to review the assembled document. Teachers were tasked with looking for common threads that existed across the grade groups, as well as determining if there was one year's growth between exemplars. Subsequent work will involve discussion and consensus on what the work will look like within each classroom in order to better address the learning needs of the students.

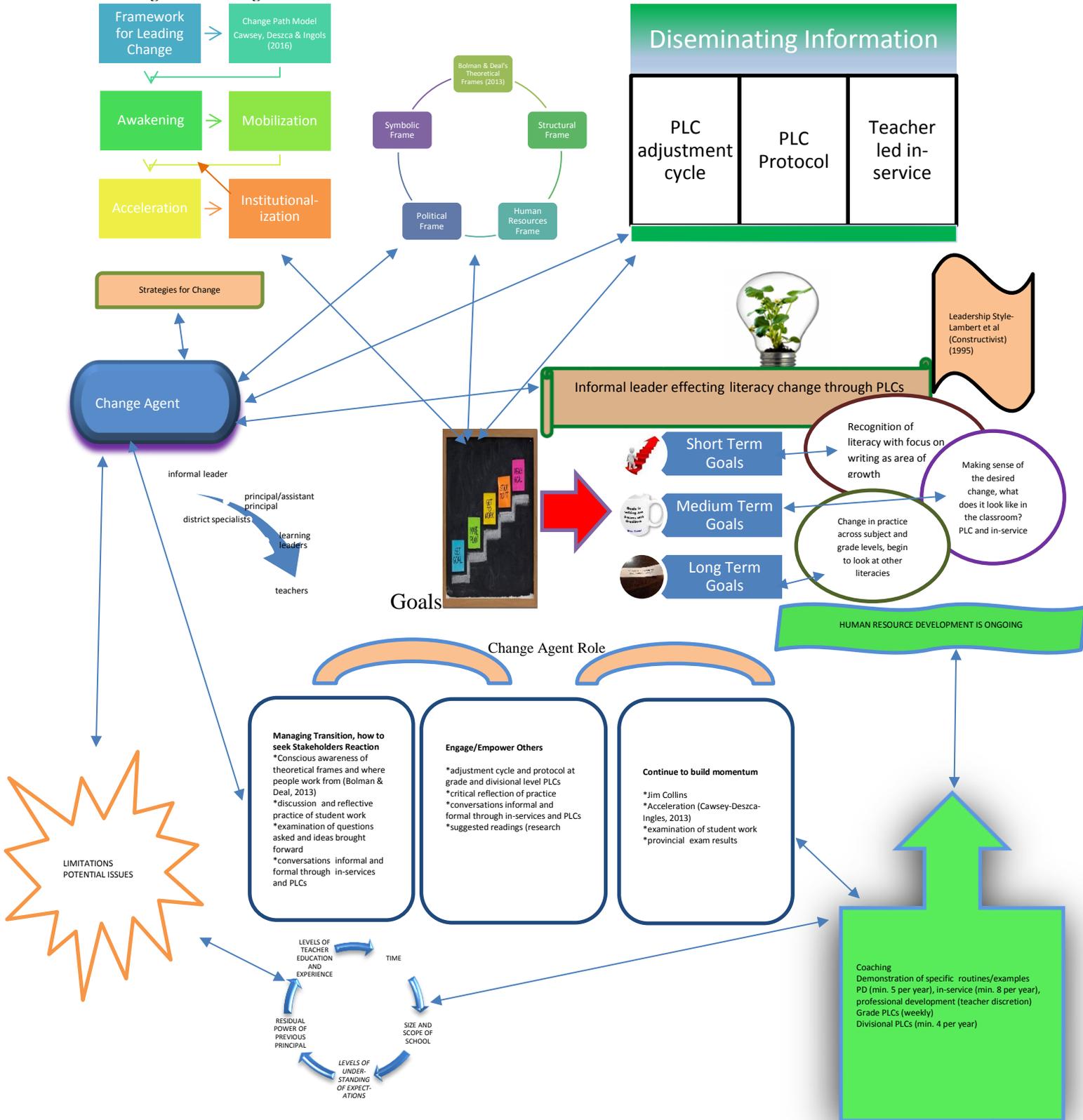
Schein (2010), speaks about culture within an organization. This directly connects to a leader, be they formal or informal, understanding where they sit with Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames, what their leadership style is, what their belief systems are, and what experience they bring with them.

**Strategic alignment chart.** Table 3. 1. is a chart designed to give a visual representation and summary of the OIP as well as display the interconnectedness of all areas within the change plan. The problem of practice involves an informal leader wanting to effect change in the

literacy practice of her school through Professional Learning Communities. Within any problem of practice, identifying the provision for short, medium and long term goals allows for a scaffolding of expectations as well as the outlining of a potential path to follow.

A change agent benefits from critically reflecting on where they stand theoretically as this can help provide clear knowledge of the lens through which they approach leading organizational change. Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames help guide a change agent in effecting any change. The framework that aligns with this particular POP is Cawsey et al.'s, (2016) Change Path Model. In addition to theory, a change agent needs to recognize their positioning with the organization, how they can manage their role and identify what their limitations are and where the potential in effecting change lies.

Figure 3.1  
Strategic OIP Alignment Chart



**Theoretical understandings.** When it comes to outlining a plan to manage the transition between a previous way of doing and the presentation of an alternative way, understanding stakeholders' reactions to change plays a central part in the success of any adjustment. Returning to Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames illuminates how to work toward reflecting the legitimate concerns of the stakeholders. This is accomplished by having an understanding of where others sit within their practice and in the four frames. As an informal leader, my belief system is rooted in having the right people in the right roles and relationships. Much of what has lead me to this place is about the people, the teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders. I strongly believe in the impact that individuals can have based on their positions within an organization. This situates me in the heart of the structural frame, with a desire to establish specific goals and objectives, encourage growth through appropriate division of labour, and problem solve and restructure if issues arise (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). Others may fall within the human resource frame whereby the relationship between people and the organization may change depending on the formal leadership personnel. Understanding that people bring much history and experience to the table can impact the movement toward any change. If some of the people that you work with sit in the political frame, the interests of people in positions of power be they perceived or formal, can also influence perceptions of reality, thus impacting movement toward change. The influence stemming from the sphere of the symbolic frame can also shape peoples' interpretation of a new way of learning and doing. Within the hierarchical nature of an education system, there are both vertical and lateral coordination of school based initiatives with system wide and provincial goals. As an informal leader that strongly believes in having the right people in the right positions, I work from an understanding of the following ten questions:

1. What is our goal?
2. What actions are required?
3. Who should do what? What are the tasks? To whom are they assigned?
4. Who is in charge?
5. How should we make decisions?
6. How do we coordinate efforts?
7. What do individual members care about most: time, quality, participation?
8. What are the special skills and talents of each group member?
9. What is the relationship between this group and others?
10. How will we determine success?

(Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 99)

Questions 1 – 4 can be interpreted within the hierarchical structure of an education system coming from the top down. The through line to follow does emanate from the province through to the school boards to the principals, and then to learning leaders before getting to the teachers.

Questions 5, 6 and 10 involve more of a shared leadership role, while questions 7 – 9 can be seen as originating from the ground level.

Bolman and Deal's (2013) multi-frame way of thinking is interconnected. Subsequently, as I sit comfortably within the structural frame, I do adhere to aspects of the three other frames (human resource, political and symbolic). As a teacher, it is germane to acknowledge that our education system exists to serve the needs of all students. Educators work with the ideas, the energy, and the talent of others. This places us in the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The questions above are not in conflict with the workings and mindset of the human

resources frame because the focus is on the student, their learning and their work. Utilizing PLCs to examine student work as well as taking the time to critically reflect on the manner of presentation and instruction that was given, indicates that people are operating through both the structural and human resources constructs. What is associated with the political frame is the idea of power. Bolman and Deal (2013) speak of positional power, control of rewards, coercive power, information and expertise, reputation and personal power (p. 197). As a leader, whether a formal or informal one, being cognizant of how people work and where their beliefs are in terms of “power” will enable our PLC to determine how to interact with each other. A series of smaller strategies to employ are to express my idea, my vision, state my best understanding of another’s position; identify how I believe I can contribute, and then, present my plan of action, without making demands (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 219). The political employment of power reaches back and links to the structural frame by having the right person in the right role, especially when you are in the position of being an informal leader. How an informal leader engages with others is impacted by the leadership style of the formal leaders. The ability to recognize where others sit, facilitates a smoother engagement among individuals. The symbolic frame and the structural frame are connected through the understanding that

[s]ymbols carry powerful intellectual and emotional messages; [and that] they speak to both the mind and the heart. ... Our own cultural ways, “how we do things around here,” are often invisible to us because we see them simply as the way things are—and ought to be. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 244)

This means that people new to an organization may not be as clear about the way the organization always does particular things, mainly because it is the way it has always been done. In light of this knowledge, and coupled with the understanding that stories can spark action,

communicate who a person is, who the organization is and what values are inherent within; these stories can bring awareness of shared knowledge that can lead people forward (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 254), as well as help scaffold how an informal leader can engage others in critical reflective practice.

What is imperative to appreciate is that the view of effecting change from an informal leadership position within an organization presents numerous challenges. Having a clear understanding of where you, as an informal leader sit theoretically, where others may sit, and what research and data have been collected, may not make a significant impact if the formal leadership within the school is not on board with what you envision. The sphere of influence is based on relationships and shared vision, but it begins with the belief system and style of leadership practiced by the formal leader at the head of the hierarchical structure within the school.

**Potential ways of influence.** Potential issues may arise around what literacy “looks like” and where its development needs to go by the end of a specific grade. A beginning step is to bring awareness of what expectations exist at each grade level. This step can also help inform the practice of the teachers in the previous grade. Whole staff use of exemplars and then assessing them in divisional and grade PLCs, is another way to manage the varying experience levels of staff. If some individuals are presenting as rigid in their thinking and established ways of doing, bringing research about best practice to the forefront can help shed light on different instructional methods. The value of the work done within grade and divisional PLCs can aid in this area of growth, if PLCs are utilized as they were intended to be. Again, professional development around the essence of a learning community and its focus on the learning of each

student through a collaborative culture and commitment to continuous improvement is essential (DuFour et al., 2008).

The power of engaging in conversation is not to be underestimated. This includes dialogue with parents, administration and others within the board. If, for example, parents are reluctant to support the school by having their child read every night, then hosting literacy evenings so that parents and their children can come to learn about the value of reading is one strategy for building understanding and support.

Encouraging others can also happen through Professional Learning Communities. Discourse is an important piece of empowering our contemporaries to challenge themselves and the work that they do with students. As an informal leader, I must make connections with formal leaders to generate movement toward a goal. By working with smaller groups and then moving to whole staff, and from whole staff back to small groups, cultural change can begin to happen. Then, the attainment of a more literacy adept learning community can be realized.

**Cultural change and resources.** Cultural change is hard work and takes time. It is an iterative process. This OIP is designed to set the stage for an ongoing revisiting of problems of practice and their impact on student and teacher learning.

In education, money plays a role in the number and type of resources that are available to staff and students. The school board dictates the ratio of computers to student population. This is designed to promote equity among schools regardless of the socio-economic status of the area. Within my setting, the school's budget is based on the number of students registered in the school by September 30 of a school year. The priorities are identified and built on what the administration determines will be of value. Socio-economics impacts resources at the level of the parent council and affects the fundraising throughout the year. In their support of student

learning, the parent council will suggest where and how they would like to see the money they raise utilized. The relationship that the principal has with the parent council can govern what additional resources are made available to the staff and students.

Technology in my organization is not limited to computers. Our school has a green screen with specialized computers specifically programmed to develop the possibilities of alternative ways of expressing educational understandings. We have a three-dimensional printer as well as numerous cameras for documentation during field studies. Each classroom has a smart board. However, many do not work because the school board did not budget for the cost of repairs. Key to having access to technology in a school is the ability to utilize it. Teachers need to keep up to date on what is available and how to best tap into the technology in a manner that enhances student learning.

Two interconnected items stand out for teachers within context of their practice: time and professional development. Professional development is essential for teachers to keep abreast of the latest research and technological developments that will enhance the learning of their students. However, time is not a commodity that is always accessible in terms of adapting the learning to enhance current practice. The program of studies is full, especially for grades 9 through 12. Process versus content continues to be a topic of conversation depending on the division, as are the provincial exams at grades 6, 9 and 12. Professional development can sometimes take place during time originally set aside for organizing and planning lessons. There is significant value to having PD, however, a teacher needs the time to assimilate the new information and plan how to incorporate the new learning into the curriculum. These external influences and the interpretation of their directives impact the boards, the schools, the divisions and the individual teachers and their students.

Having benchmarks enables momentum to build to keep staff drawn to improving literacy development for students.

### **Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation**

There is a cyclical nature to change. Although neither the hierarchical nature of the education system or the external influences has changed, the practice of teaching has. It has come in the form of the recent acknowledgment and inclusion of First Nation study in the curriculum, to a movement that includes formative as well as summative assessment practices. This cycle can be referred to as PDSA (Plan—plan a change; Do—carry out the change; Study—look at the results. What did you find out?; Act—decide what actions should be taken to improve; and repeat as needed until the desired goal is achieved). The plan, do, study, act cycle connects with the four stages of the Change Path Model (Cawsey, et al., 2016), which, to review, includes: 1. Awakening, 2. Mobilization, 3. Acceleration, and 4. Institutionalization. The planning stage of the PDSA cycle, fits with the awakening state (Cawsey et al., 2016) where the staff has recognized that literacy is a needed focus and an area of growth for students. The gap in students' abilities to develop, organize and express information and ideas has been identified based on report card assessment. The vision is to increase students' abilities to write in a more detailed and organized fashion at all grade levels and across all subjects. The work in which the teachers engage through PLCs, professional development, and in-services will support and move the initiative forward. Literacy has now been included as a major area of the school development plan. The planning continues through the mobilization of the Change Path Model. (Cawsey et al. 2016). In applying this model, teachers make sense of the desired change by examining student writing at each grade level. What is considered typical for that grade is identified. Looking at the program of study, the expectations for each grade, and what the next

grade needs to have students know is also an important part of this stage. The examination of data includes discussion of the particular skills students need to have to be successful in this literacy area. Teachers plan how to work with their students to develop the necessary skills that will improve students' writing ability.

Time comes into play at the 'doing' stage of a PDSA cycle. It can be challenging to support teachers to change their practice or incorporate new ideas into their existing repertoire. To determine what the teachers already know and assess the context in which the new learning needs to be merged can present a need for creative use of time and resources. Purposeful conversation and continued critical reflection are essential for implementation. Further, the change effort is aided by an awareness of school culture and the value of a cooperative movement toward student skill development.

As teachers enter the 'study' and 'action' stage of a PDSA cycle, professional development and teacher-led in-services can add information and strategies to a teacher's gamut of tools and techniques that could further facilitate the development of students' writing skills. This coordinated support for teachers corresponds with the acceleration state of the Change Path Model and also involves the work done in the PLCs. The adjustment cycle enables teachers to examine student work to determine what the work is telling them about students' engagement and understanding of content and process. Specific questions can be used to coach shifts in behaviour with specific attention to questions such as: "What did you notice about how the children responded to the lesson?; What learning did you expect to take place?; and, Is there another way to reach your goal?;" these can then be integrated into the PLC process.

Because the 'study' stage of a PDSA cycle is about looking at the results, it can align with the institutionalization stage of the Change Path Model. A demonstration of specific

routines and the continual cycle of examination and reflection is involved and teachers will steadfastly work at improving and expanding students' abilities to write to develop, organize and express information and ideas. "Institutionalization" does not mean being stagnant or stuck in place. Instead it means that the focus of the literacy goal of writing is becoming incorporated into the day to day learning and assessment and reflection of both teacher and student.

### **Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

When ethics is connected to leadership, terms such as respect, beliefs and values, treating people with dignity, rights, trust, honesty, and fairness; to name a few, come to mind. Sergiovanni (1992) addresses the importance of moral judgement as well as the dimensions of virtue in moral leadership. Hill speaks of moral leadership being about "making a positive difference in others' lives and in our communities" (as cited in Rhode, 2006, p. 283). Greenfield (1995) address the culture of teaching as a belief that professional educators "have a moral obligation to contribute positively to the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of the children in their charge ... [and that a leader] ... is morally obliged to support teachers ... [by securing] the materials and conditions needed for their work" (p. 64). Ethics and moral leadership inform practice, decision making, and interactions with stakeholders. Effecting change as an informal or formal leader must have its base in ethics. By knowing and living your core values, you integrate ethics into your everyday workplace culture. This respect for the rights and dignity of others acts to enhance a shared experience and build trust between stakeholders, which in turn opens up the possibilities for moving an organization forward. As an informal leader wanting to effect change through PLCs, demonstrating ethical behaviour and moral practice are an integral part of fostering trust.

By looking at the lens through which an individual views leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013), and where others sit with their understanding and experience, a change agent needs to respect and work with others from where they are. Helping individuals move forward in their practice, based on data, research, and understanding of individual students, is a goal for any leader, be they formal or informal. How can this be accomplished within the context of this OIP?

According to the ethics of prudence or self-development, expounded by Aristotle, a person of any rank or function can be a leader in an organization if he/she sets examples of right behavior while avoiding wrong-doing, provided wrong behavior is clearly identified. Thus, leaders can ‘set the tone’, ‘create the spirit’ and ‘choose the values’ for the employees of their organization. (Kulshreshtha, 2015, p. 95)

For an informal leader, how then is ‘wrong behaviour’ identified? For a teacher, there is a Code of Professional Conduct that is outlined by the provincial Teacher’s Association. In the Code, there are statements that address the teacher’s relationship: To their pupils, whereby the teacher is expected to teach students in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice; to school authorities, wherein teachers must fulfill contractual obligations to their employer as negotiated by the Association; to their colleagues, where teachers do not undermine the confidence of pupils in other teachers nor criticize the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher; and to the profession wherein the teacher does not act in a manner, or engage in activities the does not maintain the honour and dignity of the profession (Teacher Association, 2004).

Ethics play out at all levels, but are most evident in relationships between colleagues, and between teacher and student. Whether you are a formal or an informal leader, you are addressing

questions of ethics daily. This can manifest in how teachers treat different students for incomplete assignments, or in interactions with a colleague where there is perceived disparity in terms of teaching practice. According to Gautam and Lowery (2017), there is an “implied range of concepts and concerns [that] requires an eclectic approach to leadership” (p. 160). Does it come down to something as simple as, “My decisions about an issue as a moral person should be the same whether the decision will impact the other or me” (Gautam & Lowery, 2017, p. 166)? If indeed the question is that unpretentious, then we have come full circle, as we are led back to conversations regarding leadership “types”. The integrity of an educator, be they a formal or informal leader, should not differ. The morality of an individual directly connects to their chosen style of leadership, how they interact and treat others, and what they value in terms of educational practice.

Sergiovanni (1992) speaks to the heart and the hand of leadership. The heart “has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to—the person’s personal vision ... [i]t is the person’s interior world, which becomes the foundation of her or his reality” (p. 7). The heart of leadership is about the core values of the individual and how those values inform what a person says, and how they act. However, the head of leadership originates from “theories of practice that leaders develop over time” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7). Inherent within the development of theories is the practice of critical reflection of the experienced situations. The work of the heart and the hand go together.

Sergiovanni (1992) emphasized that the “mindscapes—the mental pictures in our heads about how the world works—are tacitly held. They program what we believe counts, help create our realities, and provide a basis for decisions” (p. 8). Because different mindscapes can represent different realities, what makes sense in one may not make sense in another. Changing

the head/mindscape in a leader can be taxing. A leader trying to effect change by challenging the mindscape of change recipients is not easy either. It is in these situations where the values and belief system of a change agent come to the forefront. “We need to be in touch with our basic values and with our connections to others...we must become more authentic with ourselves and others” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 29). Critical reflection of student work, teacher practice and a change agent’s actions must stem from a place of integrity and respect for self and others.

**Applying the Change Path model.** Coming from a place where there is genuine value given to the ideas and way of doing of others, and recognizing that others are sincerely doing what they believe to be in the best interest of the student means the leader is striving to engage with honesty and a desire to build trusting relationships. Numerous ethical situations can present themselves at any stage of the change process. Ethics are rooted in our values and “can be thought of as conscious or unconscious influences on attitudes, actions and speech (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007, p. 400). As a leader, your spoken communication, your behaviour, and actions, convey your values. The category of leadership style that you manifest, falls into the quadrant of transformation/transactional and constructive/destructive leadership (see Table 2.1). What fits into this quadrant stems from Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theoretical frames. Do you view others and educational practices through the lens of a structural, political, human resources or a symbolic framework? If you fit mainly with the structural frame and believe in placing the right people in the right positions, the question that arises is: how do you define ‘right’? Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, and Spina (2015), consider ethical leaders to be “those who act fairly and justly” (p. 199). A fair and just leader would expect to fit within a transformation and constructive leader category so that challenge and growth could be facilitated and encouraged in their staff and students in a manner that respected the integrity and dignity of all. As an informal

leader trying to effect change, supporting the people you work with, understanding the strengths as well as areas of growth that others bring to the table, and working toward moving ideas and practices forward are best accomplished through respectful, ethical behaviour on the parts of all involved. We all have responsibilities, we all have to be accountable for what we do and say. Lasting transformation can only be sustained when it is built ethically.

For an informal leader to utilize the Change Path Model (Cawsey et al., 2016) and proceed ethically, a conscious and mindful awareness of beliefs and values is imperative. At the awakening stage, where an articulation of the “gap in performance between the present and the envisioned future state” (p. 55) may open the door to dissonance on the part of the followers, a leader must present ideas, create dialogue, and build community by tapping into the collective experience of colleagues. A leader can employ professional development and PLCs to aid the recognition of the need for change by acknowledging the external stakeholders and influences, and moving to create and build a shared sense of responsibility. Ethics is always at play. However, when bringing data to the forefront to give credence to the need for change, a leader must make sure that the data has been collected ethically, that it is anonymized and that it is used for the sole purpose of determining areas of growth as a school.

At the mobilization stage, communication with change recipients must proceed around the notion of student care and equity to achieve what is in their best interests. Through PLC work, a leader can tap into the collective skill and knowledge base of colleagues to bring ideas to light. In this stage of the process, an unsettling of underlying assumptions can be drawn out through critical reflection, and moved forward with open conversations anchored in research. Again, the issue of ethics comes into play as trust is being built between colleagues.

There are a systematic engagement and empowering of others in the planning and implementing of any change through the acceleration stage. A change agent can lead ethically by being self-aware, having empathy, and being open to both learning and leading. Teachers strive to individualize the learning of students. Leaders must also understand that change recipients are individuals and not one “collective, homogenous entity” (Smit & Scherman, 2016, p. 3).

The institutionalization stage of the Change Path Model is about tracking the changes and bringing stability. In the education field, this seems to be an oxymoron as the very nature of our work with students changes based on the students themselves. Teachers continually reflect and persistently try to improve practice by examining student artifacts during PLCs. PLC members use critical reflection as “the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions” (Brookfield, 2017, p. 3). The ethics of the need to change, and the facilitation of that change, are accomplished through intentional and guided encouragement.

### **Change Process Communications Plan**

Formal leaders are more adeptly positioned to forward a communication plan. As an informal leader, there are limitations to what can be achieved. That said, a communication plan can still be leveraged by an informal leader as a method of conveying information. It is a tool to be utilized in any change management plan.

Cawsey et al.’s (2016) Change Path Model with its four stages, depends on clear communication. A change agent must know their audience, the members of their team, their own attitudes, strengths and areas of potential needed growth. Further, any communication must be both intentional and proactive.

**Communication strategy.** For the purpose of this OIP, the objective of a communication plan for effecting change through Professional Learning Communities begins with a clear objective. As an informal leader endeavouring to effect change, understanding the process of a PLC is imperative if there is to be effective growth of both student and teacher. Professional Learning Communities are designed to enhance student learning through an examination of student work by a group of professional teachers. They are meant to build knowledge through inquiry, the analysis of data, and reflection through the building of a collaborative culture. It is not work done in isolation. Engagement must be intentional because PLCs create a way to promote and sustain the learning of teacher professionals as well as their students in the school. To effect change through PLCs, the communication plan's primary objectives are to cultivate the examination of student work and nurture critical reflective conversation within PLCs through the discipline and use of protocols to guide said professional learning conversations.

My organization is a K-9 school, and there are differing levels of expectations among the divisions (eg. K-3, 4-6, 7-9). There are varying levels of experience on the part of the teachers, as well as divergent levels of post-secondary education. While this diversity can lend itself to conflict, it can also bring about the sharing of rich ideas that enhance teaching practice. There is, however, a disconnect between divisions regarding the learning that needs to have occurred by each grade in order for that grade teacher to help facilitate further student learning. This gap in awareness by all staff needs to be bridged and begins with trust. PLCs can offer structure through which trust can be encouraged. The target audience in divisional PLCs are other teachers; therefore, questions that promote critical reflection need to stem from a place of honesty and respect. Phrases such as "Have you thought about...?" or "How do you relate this project to the literacy aspect of the School Development Plan?" are strategic in design. The

wording of these questions is an invitation to undertake a deeper reflective examination of the objective of the work. It is also designed to ascertain if the students have demonstrated the desired learning, and how to perhaps create a different but equally enriching experience going forward. The work within PLCs is about improving student understanding as demonstrated through report card results, parent and student surveys, as well as provincial exams. In turn, these data contribute to the School Development Plan.

The strengths of the organization lies in the experience and diversity of staff education and experience. Diversity brings with it different perspectives. These perspectives offer new approaches to implement the required learning. While diversity can be a strength, it can also be a weakness as some teachers may not be as open to trying new ways. In this case, communication and the building of trust play a key role. Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame mandates having the right people in the right roles. Those in formal and informal leadership positions need to be able to communicate effectively and subsequently work toward fostering a community of trust.

Professional development presents opportunities for teachers and leaders to build professional capacity. The sharing of that learning can occur within the PLCs or in other presentation formats such as after school in-services.

Prospects of job change can bring with them new environments and new learning. By moving to a new educational environment, an individual is exposed to a different school culture. This brings with it new personalities and belief systems, new ideas and potential new ways to practice.

Education is a political organization. The province mandates the curriculum, school boards interpret ministerial orders, and formal leaders interpret school board directives. Because

education is a public structure, parents weigh in as well. Public funding combined with a legal mandate for students to attend school also influence the educational realm. What has to be remembered is that with these multiple stakeholders, including the students and their educational needs and desires, there is an interdependence and interconnection. With this affiliation comes responsibility, an obligation to understand where you and others sit within the frames (Bolman & Deal, 2013), where you sit ethically, and how you practice both critically and reflectively.

**Key messages.** Professional learning communities can examine a problem of practice or data presented from student work.

1. A problem of practice is an issue or a problem that is seen to exist in a person's place of work. It is based on a groups' values and what is seen as a goal or goals that are not being met. Collectively, the problem is outlined and a course of action is determined to attempt to rectify the gap that is seen. Meetings are held regularly where data/artifacts (student work) is presented that addresses the proposed change.
2. If the PLC is not addressing a specific problem of practice but rather looking at student work in general, then a more specific protocol can be followed. Addressing the group in the following way is one approach to begin critical reflection: "For the student work that we will be examining, we will be following the protocol that is before you. We use this protocol to keep our group conversation focused in order to generate helpful conversation and feedback in a limited amount of time. It promotes thoughtfulness by allowing personal reflecting time within the group conversation. It is meant to provide a safe and supportive structure for all to inspect their practices and results" (Glaude, 2005, p. 2). To enact this protocol, participants assume specific roles: facilitator, timer, recorder, and presenter.

**Key dates.** Dates for the teams to meet are predetermined by the administration. For example, the grade PLCs may take place weekly, but divisional (K-3, 4-6, 7-9) PLCs occur approximately seven times over the course of the school year. With the examination of student work as the focus, follow-up based on the critical reflection of peers occurs within two weeks for grade PLCs, or six weeks for divisional.

**Benchmarks for success.** Benchmarks can be established in the short term by the responses of the teachers to their critical reflection. If they try to improve their practice, and participate in a thoughtful way with reflective inquiry and suggestions, then student and teacher learning may begin to move forward. It will be more challenging to determine if there will be significant impact on student work through data because report cards are completed twice a year and the provincial exams are given only for specific grades once a year.

What will count as evidence would be the use of protocols during PLCs; more cross-divisional PLCs; improvement on the report card stem from 2's to 3's; and an increase in the number of students that receive proficient and excellent scores on the provincial exams.

**Strategy review meetings.** As stated, divisional PLCs occur approximately seven times a year and are generally conducted within specific divisions. The purpose and process of a PLC must be understood for change to occur at the different divisional levels. A suggestion made to the formal leader about opening the new school year with a review of not only the research that supports Professional Learning Communities, but also process and protocol that can be followed for a deeper critical reflection of practice was well received. Implementing cross divisional PLCs may further foster trust and a desire to share ideas and practice in a more consistent manner. Conversation and e-mails among team members to share ideas and ask questions is

another tool that can help move the change forward. Research articles can be shared through email, or at PLC and PD sessions.

**Limitations.** As an informal leader, there are limitations to my ability to effect change. These stem from the positioning in a hierarchical organization. Learning leaders and the assistant principal and principal are seen as being in a more authoritative position. Therefore, what is relayed and discussed from the people in these positions tends to have more influence. Although critical discourse can be had within the PLCs and sidebar conversations, actually seeing a change in practice or being able to mentor others to move in another direction is again limited by the informal role. As an informal leader, being able to leverage any influence is dependent on how open others are during the discussions, and PLCs. Creating opportunities to mentor younger teachers that may be more open to trying new ways of teaching is something to consider as well. This mentoring can happen through after school in-services, during professional development days where critical conversations can take place, or through casual conversations in the lunch room.

## **Recommendations and Next Steps**

Given the nature of the OIP, understanding that the process will take time, and that it is ongoing, is imperative. Steps have been taken to identify a literacy goal, and create a baseline of student writing. What needs to take place next includes:

1. an examination of the common threads that were identified around the writing on the most recent professional development day
2. from that common identification, what can be done at each grade to improve that particular area of skill development; how can teachers work together in their PLCs to

move their practice forward and facilitate student skill development in the identified area of literacy?

3. professional development, in-services and PLC work must center on the identified area of needed skill development
4. critical reflection of practice and examination of student work through PLCs must also continue
5. examination of report card findings of the identified stem need to be compared to the baseline data gathered in 2016
6. examination of provincial exam assessments of the writing and the percentage of students that moved from satisfactory to proficient or excellent need to be collected

Assessment of teacher practice and student improvement is an ongoing and cyclical process. Continual reflective and collaborative work through PLCs will aid in the effort to effect change in students' literacy ability within the context of the identified problem of practice in this OIP. Ethical leadership and the continued building of trust relationships will add to the change movement.

The scope of my influence as an informal leader is dependent on the formal leadership within the school. If the formal leader practices from a place of transformation and constructive leadership, then engagement, excitement, and collaboration will flourish. People will be able to build trust and understanding of practice between divisions and thus, potentially influence each other's ways of seeing and doing. If transformational leadership is not practiced at the formal leadership position, an informal leader can still effect change through the work of PLCs and the collaboration that can take place between colleagues.

My OIP stems from a desire to see improvement in students' abilities to express their understanding of issues and material covered within the curriculum. It stems from a desire to engage students in critical thinking so that they can make connections between school and their world.

How I effect change is dependent on my understanding of myself and how I relate to others. It is dependent on how I keep abreast of the latest research and development within education as well as my understanding of the people that I work with; be they parent, teacher, administrator or student. What is apparent is the value placed on the iterative nature of the work that we do within the education field.

## Conclusion

The challenge for any change agent in the education field is their ability to work with others to move practice forward in order to better meet the learning needs of the students. It is crucial for educators to be aware of their individual beliefs and values, as well as their theoretical, philosophical, and ethical beliefs. Self-awareness can be constructed by research. Bolman and Deal (2013), Cawsey et al. (2016), and others speak to leadership style, traits, and practices. A change agent will determine their epistemology, as I did with Constructivist Leadership theory, and tap into and assimilate that knowledge as new stratagems for teaching and leading are explored. The work is ongoing. It takes time, patience, and opportunity for both trial and error. Trying to effect change through PLCs, specifically with the literacy levels within my organization is challenging. It takes both perseverance and determination. Most of all, it takes passion—that desire and drive to do better, teach better, lead better, and be better.

Although being an informal leader can be somewhat limiting in terms of effecting change, the very desire to understand leadership, the value in helping construct a change process,

and the ability to articulate and facilitate change in learning and practice creates supports to move into a more formalized leadership role. Being an informal leader is about more than just absorbing theory, it is about connecting that theory to practice and fostering growth in yourself as a change agent and in others through the work done in PLCs. It is about effecting change in both a professional and ethical manner. It is about constructing community through the comprehension of the culture that is leadership.

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