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Leadership, Teacher Learning, and Assessment: A Strategic Approach to Improving Writing Achievement

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WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Leadership, Teacher Learning, and Assessment: A Strategic Approach to Improving Writing
Achievement

by

Tommi Hoogsteen

AN ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

In an era with increasing accountability and pressures to increase student achievement across all levels, school-based leaders need support in bringing about such changes. The problem of practice addressed in the organizational improvement plan is stated as: A document known as Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators exists to support leadership for best practice in reading in elementary school. No such document exists for writing. The problem of practice under investigation is the need for a strategic approach to support school leaders in improving student achievement levels in writing.

Attempting to address this gap in a comprehensive fashion and using a strategic approach means lending credence to the myriad of factors that makes change successful and sustainable. Facets of school structure, leadership approaches and practices focusing on instructional, distributed and teacher leadership, staff development and teacher learning through collaborative inquiry, and improved assessment techniques need to be given due attention.

Improving writing achievement has long been a goal, and a struggle in Saskatchewan. Throughout the struggle, advancement in writing has not occurred, and specific areas need to be attended to in order to make it happen. To attain the lofty goals set by the province, schools need to make these areas a priority.

Keywords: writing, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, teacher learning, assessment, teacher leadership, collaborative inquiry.

Executive Summary

Following the lead of many other jurisdictions in Canada and worldwide, Saskatchewan entered an era of accountability and crafted the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), commonly known as the “2020 Plan”, in 2014 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2014). The plan outlined goals in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math, as well as outcomes for student engagement and graduation rates which were to be achieved by June of 2020. As part of this plan, every May until 2016, Saskatchewan Spirit School Division (anonymized for the purposes of the improvement plan) administered a common writing assessment to students in grades 3, 6, and 9. Students were given a prompt to respond to with the goal of writing an expository essay of three to five paragraphs in length. The assessments were collaboratively scored by teachers from across the school division and graded on a rubric with a scale of 1 to 4, 3 being proficient. During this time, Saskatchewan Spirit School Division consistently only had approximately 30-35% of students score in the proficient or higher range. This result is much lower than the 80 % benchmark set out by the ESSP (Government of Saskatchewan. 2014).

As a school belonging to the Saskatchewan Spirit School Division, Broken Blade Elementary School’s (a pseudonym given to the school) own writing achievement reflected that of the school division. However, BBES, a Pre-K to Grade 6 school, has a high First Nations student population, and students from this cultural group have historically scored much lower on the division-wide writing assessment with only 26% scoring in the proficient or higher range in 2016. From this data arises the problem of practice to be addressed: A document known as Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators exists to support leadership for best practice in reading in elementary school. No such document exists for writing. The problem of practice under investigation is the need for a strategic approach to support school leaders in improving student

achievement levels in writing. I define “strategic approach” as integrating leadership approach, school structures, goals and processes, teacher practice and development, and assessment procedures.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) claim that leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its effects on student learning, so including leadership as part of the solution is justified. Further to this, they note that most impactful leadership enact the same basic leadership practices. Leithwood et al. (2012) examined these practices further and identified four domains that are the most strongly related to achievement. *Building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program* are the aforementioned domains, each with specific associated practices. Eschewing a specific leadership model (Leithwood et al., 2012, p.6) the approach is draws from transformational leadership theory and practice but shares similarities to instructional leadership and is intended for school leadership. The four domains and practices alluded to provide the focus for school leadership during the proposed change.

Katz and Dack (2013) state that a student learning need indicates a teacher learning need (p. 35), assuming this is true, including teacher learning and professional community as a component of the proposed solution is rational as well. Collaborative inquiry meetings focused on improving teacher practice in writing, guided by a process outlined in Donohoo (2017), will take place on a monthly basis in an attempt to satisfy teacher learning, student learning, and professional community needs.

Finally, an assessment *for* learning approach, as part of the collaborative inquiry process, whereby collaborative scoring of student writing takes place is proposed to take place of former methods. Assessment *for* learning, as Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds (2008) explain, allows for

the opportunity to provide students descriptive feedback and teachers to adjust instruction based on learning needs. Through the implementation of these three solutions, achieving the intended vision for improving writing achievement can be accomplished.

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Chapter One-Introduction and Problem

Organizational Context

The institution at the center of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is a public, elementary school, and through many prior iterations came to be at its current location in 1961. The elementary school, which houses students from pre-kindergarten to grade 6, is located in a small rural community in west-central Saskatchewan. In an effort to anonymize data and members of the school community, the school will be known as Broken Blade Elementary School (or BBES) for the duration of the OIP.

Aligning with the values espoused by Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017) which include ensuring that the needs of all students are met, BBES's vision includes the articulated of values high standards, open communication, and respect for all. This is paired with BBES' mission to learn through: communication, kindling responsible, lifelong learners, environments which are caring safe and respectful, and student-centered success. Carrying out this vision and mission are the school's 25 staff members (9.5 full-time equivalent teachers and 11 full-time equivalent support staff members).

Over the course of the school's near 60-year existence many changes have occurred. Population and demographic changes being the most significant. Over the last 7 years, though, the population of the town and the school have stayed relatively stable. In fact, the school population has shown a slight increase during that time, and the 25 staff members at BBES are presently responsible for the education and care of 150 students.

Organizational Structure

In terms of organizational hierarchy, Broken Blade Elementary has what could be considered a traditional structure. In 2017-18, the school will have a half-time principal who will share time between the elementary and high school. This is different from years past, as there had always been a full-time principal in the school. Following the principal is a full-time vice-principal who also has teaching duties, a student services teacher, a teacher in each grade from pre-kindergarten to grade 6, and a physical education specialist. The remainder of the staff is made up of an administrative assistant, librarian, school liaison, counsellor, caretaker, a speech and language assistant, and seven educational assistants.

Although the hierarchy of the school can be viewed as being traditional, how the organization flows from that hierarchy is not. The teachers, and, to a lesser extent, the support staff, all engage in shared leadership. For the purposes of this OIP shared leadership will be defined as teachers' influence over, and their participation in, school-wide decisions with principals (Leithwood et al., 2012, p. 31). Shared leadership at BBES extends to most facets of school business, especially those decisions that affect teachers/staff work directly. This includes, but is not limited to, school goals and alignment with classroom practices, professional development needs, and scheduling of events and extracurricular activities.

Professional community is another aspect of shared leadership in which the teaching staff participate. According to Leithwood et al. (2012), professional community includes shared values, a common focus and collective responsibility for student learning, reflective dialogue about improvement, and the purposeful sharing of practice. Teachers at BBES have engaged in this by banding together under a common focus of improving reading achievement during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. To do this, two separate professional communities of primary (grades 1-3) and middle years (grades 4-6) as one group, and the entire teaching staff as

a second, were formed to meet regularly to discuss student data, collective problem solve, and share classroom practice.

Distributed leadership also plays a role within the school's structure, and is most apparent in the relationship between the vice-principal, student services teacher, and the educational assistants. As a practice, the vice-principal and student services teacher work collaboratively to decide on assignments for support staff who work directly with students. After that, the student services teacher is the person mostly in charge of creating timetables, providing resources and support for the educational assistants, and implementing programming for students identified as needing special education services. Spontaneous alignment, defined as leadership task or function that is distributed with little planning, and intuitive decisions determine who should perform said functions, is the best way to describe this pattern of distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2012). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) might define this pattern of distribution as traditional delegation. This type of distribution is characterized by leaders handing over some power to the right people, relying on and seeking others' counsel, respecting autonomy, checking in regularly, and not doing everything (p.138).

Organizational History

As a school has a long history, providing a complete background is challenging. However, it is possible to recount pertinent historical information about BBES from the last decade. Bolman and Deal (2013) present four frames through which the history of the organization can be viewed, human resources, structural, political, and symbolic. For the purposes of this organizational improvement plan, the history of BBES will centre on two frames, human resources and structural. The human resources frame was selected because of its focus on motivation and needs for people working in an organization while the structural frame

was chosen because it concentrates on goals and the structures needed to accomplish organizational goals. Ways in which each frame applies to the problem of practice will be further explained below.

Human Resource Frame

The first frame that can be applied to the problem of practice from is the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal). This view evolved from an effort to question long-held beliefs of those in the managerial ranks. The belief that employees were to work hard, follow orders, and had no rights beyond a paycheque were challenged by early proponents of this perspective. Advocates of this theory argued that skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment from people are essential for the success of an enterprise. Arising from this critique came the human resource perspective. Guiding this perspective are four assumptions. First, organizations exist to serve human needs, not vice versa. Next, people and organizations need each other (people need careers and salaries while organizations need energy and talent). Third, when the fit between organization and people is poor, one, or both will suffer. The final assumption, and opposite to the last, a good fit between organization and people will benefit both parties (Bolman & Deal, 2013,p. 113).

Peering through this lens may help to understand the history of BBES, especially when it comes to staffing. During the last decade, there have been four principal changes, the most recent principal began her appointment in the fall of 2017. Prior to this change, the previous principal served a term of four years. Through all the principal turnover, much of the teaching staff has remained stable, save for a retirement, maternity leaves, or the odd resignation or transfer. In fact, the school has not hired a new teacher for the last five school years, with many teachers having been at the school for seven or more years. While several support staff have also

been at the school for multiple years, there has been a consistent turnover of one to three members each year.

BBES is one of the major employers in the small, rural community. While a moderate level of turnover has occurred, it is reasonable to conclude that for most people the school has also been a good fit. One reason for the success in retaining employees may be the shared and distributed leadership structures alluded to earlier, and this view is supported by Hulpia and Devos (2010) who found that distributing leadership promotes organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Even in this period of relative stability, the latest principal change came about as a result of budget constraints and a staffing reduction of half of a teaching position. The decision was made to amalgamate the principal's role in the high school and elementary school. Although the long-term effects remain to be seen, there is some cause for concern. According to Bolman and Deal (2013) cutting jobs often hurts more than it helps performance and can result in demoralizing people.

Structural Frame

Similar to the assertion that the fit between the person and the organization needs to be compatible as in the human resources frame, Bolman and Deal (2013) present the structural frame which argues that when people are placed in the right roles both collective goals and individual differences can be served. Just like the human resource frame, there are assumptions which support the structural perspective. Six assumptions stand out specifically: first of all, organizations exist to achieve goals and objectives. Secondly, organizations increase efficiency and performance through specialization and appropriate division of labour. Thirdly, coordination and control ensure that diverse methods of individuals and teams mesh. Fourthly, organizations also work best when rationality takes precedence over personal agendas. Fifthly,

structures of the organization serve to fit current circumstances including goals. Finally, as a sixth assumption, problems occur when they are structural deficits which can be remedied through problem solving and restructuring (pp. 49-50).

For the past seven years, BBES has had goals for school improvement related to student learning. These goals, though, were never aligned within the school, were not assessed, or data was never used in a way that teachers or the larger community knew how the school was performing based on the goals. Running concurrently to the staff stability within the school, that has changed over the last four school years and methods have been adopted to measure reading and align instruction throughout the school. A focus on improving reading instruction and achievement was agreed upon after the collection and analysis of school data. Literacy coaches were chosen to lead learning communities and assist teachers in their classroom. Teachers collaborated around data to focus on students needing intervention. It was at this time that the previously mentioned shared and distributed leadership practices began to emerge and take hold at the school. Reading proficiency in grades one to six increased from 52 percent in September of 2015 to 65 percent in June 2017.

Leadership Position Statement

As a leader in this organization, or to be precise, vice-principal as well as the change initiator in this case, influences abound on the chosen and practiced approach to leadership and organization improvement. A main influence is a reflection of several ideas brought out by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008). In their article they make seven claims about school leadership, four of which directly impact the leadership position taken. First, they claim that leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its effects on student learning. This statement provides the moral imperative by which leadership is exercised and why leadership is enacted in

the manner it is. Next, they state that most successful leaders draw upon the same basic leadership practices. These four practices are building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the teaching and learning program. As it applies to the first practice, direction at BBES has become focused on what is essential. This is evident in the school's reading focus for the previous two years. The time and effort needed to demonstrate improvement also makes it imperative, as Fullan and Quinn (2016) suggest, to develop and sustain direction while balancing internal and external demands (p. 17). The latter three practices are connected to each other and pertain to critical aspects of the organization's improvement. One key aspect is developing a case management approach to instruction and student learning. This approach intends to draw attention to how all students are progressing and act as a forum to discuss student work as data for students who are failing to make progress or presenting instructional challenges for their teachers (Sharratt & Fullan, 2012). The final aspect includes a structure for collaborative inquiry which allows teachers to teacher question their practice, examine data, and reflect on what is working and what is not (Sharratt & Fullan, 2012). Leithwood et al. (2008) add two further claims that apply here. First, school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions, and leadership has a greater influence when it is widely distributed. These two claims can be tied back into the aforementioned effective leadership practices and the organizational aspects of BBES. Taking the preceding into consideration, if one statement was required to be articulated on my leadership position, it would be stated as: leadership as it is approached at BBES intends to promote instructional and learning excellence through effective instructional, distributed, and shared leadership practice.

Leadership Problem of Practice

Reading achievement has improved over the last two school years, but the biggest gains were evident in 2015-16 where initial proficiency was 52% and increased to 65% by the end of the year. In 2016-17, when students were assessed at the beginning of the year proficiency levels dropped to 59%, and then again improving to 65% by May 2017. BBES then, is still not reaching desired levels of achievement. The case may be, as Fullan (2005) explains, that the strategies that brought about the initial improvement are not powerful enough to bring achievement to higher levels. Further to this, Lee and Schallert (2015) argue that students can learn to read by writing as well as reading, and can learn to write by reading as well as writing as both actions involve some of the same subprocesses. Considering that reading achievement has improved but levelled off, writing achievement is very far behind the levels of reading, and since both subject areas have ESSP (2014) goals of 80% proficiency by 2020, a change in school improvement focus to writing can be deemed critical.

With that in mind, the purpose of this OIP is to develop a strategic approach to assist school leaders in improving writing achievement. Before delving further into the problem of practice (POP), it will be useful to outline additional historical information to illuminate the importance of this improvement.

Prior to the history of the school already discussed, myth has it, and according to Bolman and Deal (2013) myths and stories become part of the organization's culture, the population of the school decreased from about 250 students to the current number of 150 (which has stayed relatively stable during over the last seven years). As small family farms gave way to larger operations, many families moved from the community. What was once a school made up of predominantly farming/European settler students soon became a school where students of First

Nations or Métis descent arose as the majority. Currently, 57% of students at BBES are aboriginal. The rise in aboriginal population at BBES happened concurrently to the increase in aboriginal population of Canada, a 20.1 % increase from 2006-2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016). As the myth holds, students from the farming community left the school due to the school's increased First Nations population.

2006 was a landmark year for Broken Blade Elementary School as during this year school divisions in Saskatchewan amalgamated into the current iteration, and Saskatchewan Spirit School Division (as it will be known throughout the OIP), of which BBES is part, was born. In the period that followed, the province's first academic goals were developed. Students also took part in standardized testing, Assessment For Learning (AFL), and students in the province and the school division fared well in the writing portion.

However, in 2010 Saskatchewan abandoned AFL testing and each school division drafted their own writing assessments. Students across the province in grades three and six completed the assessments which were based on a single prompt. The assessments were collaboratively scored by teachers from individual school divisions based on rubrics created by each one. The division-wide test took was due in April and scored in May each year. It served as assessment *of* learning, and according to Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds (2008), assessments of this sort provide very limited descriptive feedback to students and results often come too late for teachers to make adjustments to instruction. Furthermore, at BBES results were not routinely passed on to teachers who would be teaching those students the following year. Together, these factors limited the impact of writing assessment. Since 2010, scores decreased dramatically and achievement levels plateaued with about 30% of students scoring proficient or higher. In 2016,

35% students at Broken Blade Elementary School scored proficient or higher with only 26% of the First Nations population achieving proficiency.

In an effort to legislate improvement, the Saskatchewan government created their Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) commonly called the "2020 Plan". In consultation with school divisions the education sector plan was drafted and included goals related to graduation rates, early years achievement, and closing the gap in First Nations achievement. More relevant to this OIP, a benchmark of 80% percent of students being at grade level in reading, writing, and math, was set (Government of Saskatchewan, 2014). Saskatchewan Spirit School Division and Broken Blade Elementary School mirror these academic goals in their respective learning improvement plans and are currently working to achieve these goals.

With the reasons for this OIP established, the POP remains and can be stated as such: A document known as Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators exists to support leadership for best practice in reading in elementary school. No such document exists for writing. The problem of practice under investigation is the need for a strategic approach to support school leaders in improving student achievement levels in writing. I define "strategic approach" as integrating leadership approach, school structures, goals and processes, teacher practice and development, and assessment procedures.

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

When attempting to undertake any change project leaders will face questions about the most efficient and sustainable ways to do so. Trying to develop a strategic approach to improve writing achievement by combining three major areas of school function, leadership approach and structures, teacher practice and development, and assessment, is no different.

As mentioned, school leaders and staff members have been engaged in shared and distributed leadership practices of developing learning communities and collaborative problem solving which include aligning classroom instruction and a focus on the goal of reading achievement. These structures and processes have resulted in marked improvement. Since the school has already undergone change initiatives, an appropriate question to ask is, would the same structures and processes that aided in improved reading also work for writing? As well, considering change initiatives are in progress, is the school ready for added changes? If not, how can change readiness be improved?

When the reading improvement program began, one important consideration was professional learning needs and the same question should be asked for this proposed change. What are the professional learning needs of teachers to support the proposed change and how should they be addressed? In conjunction, what classroom practices would support improved student learning? From this, a companion question can be asked. The population at BBES is largely made up of Indigenous students (57%), and in reading there is no difference in proficiency between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. That is not the case in writing, only 26% percent of Indigenous students meet grade level expectations. That begs the question, what differentiated strategies or practices are needed to support the learning of the school's First Nations population?

Once implementation of change begins, how are we going to know that the change is having the desired effects? Assessment and evaluation of both teacher and student learning will be paramount throughout the improvement process. Questions that need to be investigated then are, how will effectiveness of teacher learning be evaluated? How will student learning be assessed and what protocols and methods can be used or developed for assessment purposes?

Potential Factors Affecting the Problem of Practice

There are two factors that have potential to have an effect on the POP, particularly its implementation and outcome. The first, and arguably the most profound factor is the role the incoming principal will play. Many researchers agree, there can be many sources of leadership in a school, but the principal remains the central source (Hallinger, 2010; Harris, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2012). In a school such as BBES, that has shifted to forms of leadership that allow for participation of teachers, the principal's role is critical. As Harris (2013) suggests that there is a positive relationship between distributed leadership and student outcomes, and to accomplish this, the collective skill and leadership of everyone in the organization needs to be carefully planned to ensure the organization as a whole benefits. But, without the active support from the principal a successful outcome is unlikely. Truth be told, even though the new principal is aware of the initiative, the individual was not the change initiator or involved in the planning. Even though the change initiator, defined by Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols (2016) as the person who identifies the need and vision for change, and champions the change, is myself as the vice-principal, the principal's support remains of fundamental importance. There is reason for optimism though, Leithwood et al. (2012) suggest that coordinated distributed leadership has the potential to mitigate some negative effects of principal turnover. To further this, leadership extends influence to more than individuals, over the course of many years, from one leader to those who come after (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). In other words, a leader's legacy is not determined by student achievement only, but by how many leaders are left behind who can go even further (Fullan, 2005). Considering the staff has remained relatively stable, with the vice-principal and teachers still moving forward with improvement efforts, principal turnover may be a factor, but it may not have the negative impact that was initially feared.

The second issue with potential to impact the POP is attendance and transience. Though the school population numbers have remained steady, there is always a portion of the population that tends to be transient. Likewise, the number of students starting the school year at BBES tends to be roughly the same number of students who finish the year, even if students have moved in or out. The issue with this, and it became apparent during the school's reading initiative, is related to data collection and interventions. When baseline or initial data is collected, and classroom instruction and interventions are designed and implemented based on the data, there will be some students who exit the school during the school year. If this occurs, students who leave will not receive the complete intervention/instruction or complete final assessments. Conversely, there will be students who come to the school part way through the year, therefore not being part of initial data collection or the entire intervention/instruction and taking part in final assessments. Both of these scenarios will impact the measurable outcomes of the PoP.

Perspectives on the Problem of Practice

The aforementioned problem of practice (POP) can be viewed from three major educational ideologies: conservative, neo-liberal, and critical theory. Examining the issue contained in the problem of practice through these lenses is essential because of the difficulty in understanding education in any context without reference to the forces that influence policy and practice (Apple, 2001). While understanding how these perspectives influence policy and practice as well as how they relate to the problem of practice at hand is important, the problem of practice does not fit entirely into any one ideology which makes the integration of these perspectives a must. Following, analysis and integration of the ideologies, the problem of practice will be viewed through a leadership perspective. Subsequently, political, economic,

social, technological, and ecological/environmental (PESTE) factors will be considered. Out of these, political, economic, and social will be given the most attention.

Conservative Perspective

In the conservative view, the purpose of education is to transmit dominant cultural values and practices from one generation to the next. According to Gutek (1997), conservatives generally place little value on innovation in education although technology may be used to transmit tradition and instead believe in a curriculum that places focus on basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. In addition, conservatives tend to believe education should identify elites and perpetuate the status quo. Since improving writing achievement is a pillar of the stated problem of practice, it can be viewed through the conservative perspective. The conservative perspective is a major driver behind Saskatchewan's Education Sector Plan as well, with reading, writing, and mathematics reaching high levels of proficiency being a centerpiece of the plan. However, the context, defined as the province, school division and school, and proposed possible solutions reject perpetuation of the status quo. This point will be elaborated on further in the next section.

Neo-Liberal Perspective

Peering through the window of neo-liberal ideology, further understanding of the problem of practice can be gained. Main facets of neo-liberal education policies include the marketization of schools, characterized by school choice, and increasing accountability using standardized tests as a main performance indicator. While marketization isn't applicable to the problem of practice, increasing accountability in the form of testing is. While data collection, or testing, may take different forms in different school divisions, Saskatchewan's Education Sector Strategic Plan mandates tracking of student achievement (Government of Saskatchewan, 2014).

Testing, may create and solidify deeper issues, however, as there are research findings which show that testing actually increases the gap between marginalized and dominant groups (Ryan, 2012). Boykin and Noguera (2011) suggest that testing does not explain why students performed at a particular level, and responding to the learning needs of students requires more information than just a single test. This is important because of the gap already present between First Nations and non-First Nations students and the past practice of using a single test to assess a student's writing skill. The ESSP recognizes the gap between First Nation and non-First Nation students as well, and calls for significant improvement in indigenous achievement. There is hope though, as not every scholar shares the grim view of data collection, especially when assessments help teachers intervene and tailor instruction to support students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). In fact, Datnow and Park (2009) make the claim that using data to make instructional decisions is critical in closing the achievement gap. Using student data in this manner is currently part of practice at BBES and will remain an essential component included in possible solutions to the POP.

Critical Perspective

Closing the achievement gap, although not explicitly stated in the problem of practice, is essential in order to achieve the desired results. This is especially true given the school population and current writing achievement results. The disparity in achievement between indigenous and non-indigenous students inspired questions that drove the development of this OIP, and will be addressed as part a solution to the POP. Closing the achievement gap is also a tenet of the next educational ideology from which the POP can be viewed.

Critical theorists are committed to principles of equity and justice in education. A critical stance in education attempts to liberate, enlighten, emancipate, and empower those who are oppressed (Tutak, Bondy, & Adams, 2011). Gunter (2001) adds to this by providing a

critical theorist view of leadership. From this view, leadership is considered to not reside in individuals but in the relationship between people, and should be aligned with social vision and not simply organization goals. Again, this organizational improvement plan does not completely agree with this theory since a main driver is realizing organizational goals, but the plan's inclusion of less hierarchical leadership practices such as distributed and shared leadership does fit well with a critical view of leadership. Furthermore, closing the achievement gap through data-driven decision making is an example of critical theory's influence on the problem of practice. Further examples will be discussed in possible solutions to the problem.

Summary of Ideological Perspectives

Due to policy and the current political climate in Saskatchewan, viewing the problem of practice through just one ideological lens would not give a complete picture of the factors affecting the PoP. Conservatism extends its influence over the PoP through policy that focuses on improving basic skills, while neo-liberalism shapes the problem of practice through testing and accountability requirements. Finally, examples of critical theory's impact on the problem of practice is the desire for greater equity within the organization and in student achievement.

Leadership Perspective

Education is widely believed to be crucial for the survival and success of individuals and countries, and comparable agreement also exists about the contribution of leadership to the implementation of any initiative meant to improve student learning and schools (Leithwood et al., 2012). For this reason, viewing the PoP through a leadership perspective is important. The dominant approach throughout this PoP is transformational leadership. However, as will be discussed, transformational leadership shares commonalities with instructional leadership, which in turn works well in concert with distributed leadership. Although both are normally thought of

as separate models, transformational leadership is the foundational theory to which an instructional leadership framework is aligned. Gurr (2017) says that successful principals are not only transformational or instructional leaders but show elements of both kinds of leadership. These two models also contain facets which can be effectively distributed as Marks and Printy (2003) highlight in their work. Moving forward, transformational leadership is implied as the underlying theory for the OIP. However, as explained below, this frame is necessary but not sufficient for school leadership as there are many overlapping areas of instructional leadership to be integrated. To further this, although not explicitly discussed in this section, a method to distribute these functions will occur in chapter two.

As a theory, transformational leadership emerged from the work of Burns (1978) as referenced in Northouse (2016). Since then, transformational leadership has been steadily researched. The theory's influence has extended to disciplines such as engineering, nursing, and of course, education (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership theory postulates that leadership's purpose is to motivate followers to accomplish more than what the follower planned to accomplish. Leaders succeed in this aspiration through concentrating on the follower's values and helping them align their values with those of the organization (Givens, 2008). According to Northouse (2016), this theory of leadership contains four key factors. The first factor is known as idealized influence, meaning that leaders have high standards of conduct and act as strong role models for their followers. The next factor, inspirational motivation, refers to inspiring followers through motivation to become committed to a shared organizational vision. The third element of the theory is intellectual stimulation. This facet of transformational leadership encourages followers to try creative and innovative solutions to organizational issues. Factor four, called individualized consideration, describes a leader's ability to provide a supportive climate in which

they listen to followers, and act as coaches and advisers (pp. 167-169). Another conceptualization of transformational leadership, noted in Hallinger (2003) includes seven components, many of which are the same. These components are individualized support, shared goals and vision, intellectual stimulation, rewards, high expectations, culture building, and modelling (p. 335).

The decade following the emergence of transformational leadership, saw instructional leadership rise to prominence among educational researchers. This trend would continue for approximately the next twenty or so years (Hallinger, 2005). However, the popularity of the two models among researchers is not the only commonality. Both models share focus areas for school leaders. These similarities include creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture that focuses on improving teaching and learning, shaping the reward structure of the schools, organizing activities aimed at staff development, modelling the values being fostered in the school (Hallinger, 2003). Even though transformational leadership is the theory which undergirds this improvement plan, using the related factors and applying them to an instructional leadership approach is essential because of their effectiveness in educational settings. Hattie (2015a) notes that the overall effects of transformational leaders were .11 whereas the effects from instructional leadership was .42.

The complementary theories while similar vary in effectiveness as applied. What needs to be addressed then, are the factors that make instructional leadership more successful. Hallinger (2005) characterizes instructional leadership as being comprised of seven domains that are very similar to those of transformational leadership, only they are focused around school processes. These domains include creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, fostering continuous improvement in the school, developing a climate of high expectations, coordinating

the curriculum and monitoring student outcomes, shaping the reward structure of the school, organizing and monitoring aimed at developing staff, and being a visible presence in the school. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) further examined school leadership practice and discovered four broad categories of school leadership that are most impactful. Research regarding these practices was continued in Leithwood et al. (2012) and recently reaffirmed in Gurr (2017). The categories of leadership practice these works explore are setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving the instructional program and are very similar to transformational leadership and the characterization of instructional leadership put forth by Hallinger (2005). For simplicity, the instructional leadership model used will be inspired by the work of Leithwood et al. (2012). The four most pertinent practices (and those which will be weaved throughout the OIP) are building a shared vision and communicating the direction (setting directions), focusing on school goals and expectations for student achievement (improving the instructional program), keeping track of teachers' professional development needs (developing people), and creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate (redesigning the organization) (Leithwood et al, 2012). Survey data reveals that the latter three practices are considered by principals and teachers to be among the most important while the first two and last practices mentioned overlap with shared and distributed leadership practices as discussed in an earlier section (Leithwood et al., 2012, pp. 64-66). For a visual depiction of the relationship between transformational, instructional, and Leithwood et al. (2012) leadership models refer to Figure 1 below.



Figure 1-Relationship between Transformational (Northouse, 2016), Instructional (Hallinger, 2005), and Leithwood et al. (2012) models.

Political and Economic Factors

In Saskatchewan's current education sector landscape of increased accountability in the form of raising achievement, it would imprudent to not also consider the contemporary political and economic realities of the province. In a publicly funded education school and system it is also impossible to separate the political and economic factors, they are virtually one and the

same since a contentious political issue at this time is government spending. So, in viewing this PoP it is also essential to understand the political and economic conditions which are shaping it. In the 2017-18 fiscal year, the Government of Saskatchewan forecasted a \$685 million deficit, with a plan to balance the budget within three years. The government is also reporting an expenditure of \$3.6 billion in education for 2017-18, a doubling of the \$1.8 billion dollars spent ten years before in 2007-8 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017). While this may be true, the school division to which BBES belongs paints a different financial picture in terms of funding. Saskatchewan Spirit School Division claims significant budget shortfalls over the past six years, and a \$6 million deficit for the 2017-18 year. The division handled the decreased budget through measures such as reducing staff and localizing teacher professional development. In essence, teachers at Broken Blade Elementary are faced with raising achievement with less teaching staff and less funding, and as previously mentioned, reducing staff often hurts more than it helps performance and can result in demoralizing people (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Social Factors

The greatest impact on BBES, its goals, and implementation of this OIP from a social perspective is the change in demographics. As stated, the current student population is predominantly of aboriginal descent. With 15.6 % of Saskatchewan's population being indigenous, and 47% of the province's school-aged population (0-19) being from the same group (Statistics Canada, 2016), this trend is not likely to change in the near future considering that BBES is within driving distance of three reserve communities and draws many students from said communities. The PoP should be viewed through a social perspective for pure demographic reasons but education of Saskatchewan's First Nations population has become a growing focus. In fact, this has been true since 2007 when the Honourable Judge David M. Arnot was appointed

Treaty Commissioner. During his time in office he coined the term "we are all treaty people". This statement referred to the fact the all of Saskatchewan's land is covered under negotiated treaties between the Crown and First Nations and treaty education was added to the Saskatchewan curriculum (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2016). Many schools and teachers have implemented treaty education into their classrooms but it is still an area of growth. This is evidenced by beliefs which have been communicated through surveys. Beliefs which have been espoused include: the school should stop discussing residential schools, events that occurred prior to, before, and after treaty making, differences between groups in achievement data, and that everyone should be "just treated equally". While not intentionally racist, and not representative of the majority, the comments show deficit thinking is present, that is, student success is determined by student factors and not at all by institutional factors. This kind of thinking is present and serves as an impairment to change (Huggins, 2015). Taking into account demographic changes and possible impediments to change these social factors present a particular lens from which to view the OIP and the possible solutions that will be developed in further sections.

Leadership Focused Vision for Change

The Existing Gap Between the Present and Future State

Referring back to the organizational context and history the gap that currently exists between the present and future state is as apparent as it is wide. BBES' vision places value on high standards for everyone. While standards may be high, actual writing achievement at the school level is well below what the province has set as an expectation to be reached by 2020. There is reason to be hopeful though. The school, as mentioned, has experienced strong results in improving reading achievement with focused school structures, and teacher learning. A turnaround of similar magnitude is entirely possible if the same type of focus is placed on writing

despite the starting point for writing is below where the school began with reading. However, in contrast to reading, there are currently no common writing assessments which gives teachers at BBES an opportunity to design and implement instruction as well create appropriate assessments.

Priorities for Change

Priorities for change can be placed into three categories: leadership, teacher learning and instruction, and assessment. Each of these areas will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 but they will be touched on briefly here. In a comprehensive plan for school improvement, leadership is an important consideration for change. At BBES though, as leadership practice and structures are not a major priority, adjustments and alignment of existing practice for current goals may be all that is required.

One particular element that needs to be revitalized and revisited, is that of lateral capacity building. When BBES began the reading project that brought about recent improvements in 2015, there was a concurrent project being run with other schools in the division. Schools voluntarily entered the project and professional development around data use was provided, and school administrators and teacher leaders had the opportunity to share practice with each other. With decreased budgets, the opportunities for lateral capacity building were fewer in 2016, and since conditions have not only changed, but worsened, this trend is likely to continue in 2017. Lateral capacity building is one of eight sustainable leadership practices in Fullan (2005), and he suggests that people learn best from peers if there is focused, continuing exchange, so even if opportunities are not provided at the division level, school leadership must seek out such chances.

Connected to this concept of lateral capacity is teacher leadership. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006) teacher leadership promotes teacher collaboration within and across schools that impacts school effectiveness, improvement, and development. Teacher leadership is a central component of the school's next priority for change, teacher learning. With professional development being decentralized, professional learning at BBES will draw on ideas proposed by Lieberman, Campbell, and Yashkina (2017). These authors suggest that teachers should identify their own professional learning needs to make the content more relevant and engaging which in turn provides a sense of ownership over the learning. Subsequently, teachers need to share their learning with others. This will be supported by concepts of collaborative inquiry as furthered by Donohoo and Velasco (2016) and Sharratt and Planche (2016).

The final priority for change is assessment. Prior to 2017, Saskatchewan Spirit schools completed writing assessments based on a single prompt, then collectively scored the tests, and collected data from the tests. In 2017, the practice was discontinued, and data was collected simply based on the writing curriculum outcome. In absence of any formal testing measure, a necessity for change will be to collaboratively develop an assessment protocol for Broken Blade Elementary. Using a shared assessment protocol will allow teachers to view student work as instructional partners while determining next steps for instruction and solidifying understanding of effective assessment practice.

Envisioned Future State

The envisioned future state expands on the aim of the problem of practice to address the lack of strategic approach to improve writing achievement. This envisioned state can be articulated as: with improved teacher practice and capacity, as well as enhanced assessment

methods, 80% of students will be proficient writers with no significant difference between First Nations and non-First Nations students.

Organizational Change Readiness

Addressing the "why" of change in a meaningful way is necessary in order to define a described vision for the future. Answering "why change" is also a prerequisite to "what to" and "how to" change. The first part of this chapter has attempted to establish the "why" with "what" and "how" to follow, however, when it comes to organizational change there are other factors that determine the effectiveness of change efforts (Cawsey et al., 2016). Assessing change readiness will assist in determining such factors, and will help leaders decide if the organization is ready for change and in turn develop further change readiness.

Cawsey et al. (2016) provide a tool to do just that. Using a questionnaire, change readiness is evaluated over six dimensions. These dimensions include previous change experiences, executive support, credible leadership and change champions, openness to change, rewards for change, and measures for change and accountability. Within each dimension, questions are raised and scored (between -2 and +2) for each affirmative answer. Organizational scores can range from -10 to +25, with higher scores indicating a greater potential for change. A score below +10 is indicative of an organization that will be difficult to change. If that is the case, scores can illuminate areas that can be strengthened to improve readiness (pp. 108-110).

When it comes to previous change experiences, BBES has been subject to several division-wide initiatives with very little resulting change in practice. In and of itself this should result in a negative score, but the most recent (2014-16) school-led re-structuring and capacity building around best practice in reading instruction which led to significant gains in reading achievement merits a positive score (+1) instead. Fullan (2005) supports the notion that short-

terms gains are essential in order to keep change moving forward and to create further progress. Short-term gains have been achieved, but achievement has levelled off with about 65% of students reaching reading proficiency in 2015-16 and 2016-17. The concept of cyclical energizing may apply in this case. That is, the strategies that lead to initial success are not enough to lead to continuous improvement (Fullan, 2005). With that in mind, the school is now moving forward with improving writing achievement, and while some staff members could be classified as negative or cynical (-1), they are members of the support staff and not directly involved in implementing change. On the other hand, teachers at the school are positive and in favour of change (+1) (Cawsey et al., 2016).

The next dimensions to consider are support from senior managers and credible change champions. In the case of Broken Blade Elementary School, superintendents are not spearheading the change as improvement efforts are strictly school-driven, so not every factor applies to the school. Nevertheless, the organization does score positively in a few areas. With a clear vision of the future, central office staff are likely to support this improvement venture considering it aligns with provincial and school division goals and they are well aware of the need to improve achievement in the focused area (a total readiness score of +5) (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Many factors in the final three dimensions do not apply to the current organizational state, the ones that do, do so favourably. Generally most teachers will view the change as appropriate, necessary, and (as long as managed appropriately) possible resulting in a total readiness score of +6. In addition, while accurate assessment measures are not currently available, they will be developed and when they are, teachers at BBES are adept at using data in their practice to inform instructional decision making (+1) (Cawsey et al., 2016).

As stated earlier in this section, a change readiness score below +10 can indicate that an organization will be difficult to change. Broken Blade Elementary School's change readiness, a score of +14, suggests a moderate level of readiness. Being currently engaged in change initiatives with some success already achieved will be the biggest key to propelling future efforts forward.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

Issues of stagnant academic achievement have plagued Saskatchewan as a province, Saskatchewan Spirit School Division as a district, and Broken Blade Elementary as school. As can be gathered from the organizational context and history, writing is an academic area that has proven to be particularly vexing. This, combined with the fact that there is no agreed upon approach to deal with the issue, makes the research contained in this organizational improvement plan all the more relevant. The reasons for attempting to create such an approach established in this chapter will lead to possible solutions to the problem in the next.

Chapter 2-Planning and Development

Overview of Chapter

Chapter 1 of this organizational improvement plan (OIP) introduced the organizational history and characteristics of Broken Blade Elementary School, and the accompanying problem of practice (PoP). Chapter 2 provides an explanation of frameworks to lead the change, an analysis of the organization, possible solutions to the PoP, leadership approaches to change, and a summary of the plan for communicating the need for change.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Integrated forms of transformational and instructional leadership have previously been identified as theoretical foundations and practices that have applications to the selected problem of practice. In fact, a fundamental purpose of transformational leadership is to create and sustain an environment to build human capacity by developing core values and purpose, and building interconnectedness through interaction-focused organizational design (Givens, 2008). To accomplish this end, two particular models for guiding and leading the change process have been chosen, the Change Path Model and the Coherence Model. Sufficient as a stand-alone process model for change, the Change Path Model is a general framework for organizational change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Thus, combining it with a model that is more specific to the education sector makes sense. Fullan & Quinn (2016) outlines a model they call the Coherence Model, which is specific to education and the common processes and needs of the system. Combined, the two change frameworks can provide a powerful model for leading change. While the Change Path Model casts change as a linear process (although the creators acknowledge that this is not always the case), the Coherence Model is more cyclical in nature. Although seemingly contradictory, the two theories can exist in concert. What follows is an attempt to conjoin the

two theories into a unified framework to lead Broken Blade Elementary School through the process of change.

Awakening, Mobilization, and Focusing Direction

The first process in the Change Path Model as described in Cawsey et al. (2016) is known as Awakening. This involves a critical organizational analysis and a scan of internal and external environments to understand the forces for and against organizational shift. Those looking to lead change need to compile data from significant parts of their organization and decide on how the information relates to the forces driving change and the internal and external environments. Many times, the greatest forces for change originate outside of the organization as in the case of legislation (p. 53). In the case of Broken Blade Elementary School the improvement of writing achievement became a focus following the collection of data, examining how writing results compared to other areas in the school (such as reading and math), and the external accountability mandates of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2014).

Mobilization, the second stage of the Change Path Model discussed in Cawsey et al. (2016), includes engaging others in conversations surrounding what needs to change and soliciting participation in the process since the need for change may not be readily apparent. After determining what specifically needs to change, a vision for change (a presentation of the gap between current organizational performance and the desired future state) is developed during this stage (p. 53). As noted in Chapter 1, in the section titled *Leadership Vision for Change*, a vision for change has already been crafted after analyzing the relevant data and engaging staff members on the topic of next steps for improvement for the school.

Correlating with these two stages is Focusing Direction, one of the four drivers contained in the Coherence framework as identified by Fullan and Quinn (2016). Focusing Direction

includes developing a shared moral purpose and methods for attaining that purpose. Fullan (2001) contends that moral purpose is acting with the intent to positively impact the lives of every stakeholder (p.3). However, having moral purpose is meaningless in the absence of progress. Goals are integral to progress, so much so that Schmoker (1999) claims that the introduction of specific, measurable goals is one of the most promising, although underused, strategies that can be introduced into school improvement efforts (p. 23). Donohoo (2017) furthers this by explaining that measurable and challenging goals helps educators achieve purposeful results (p. 30). However, much of the time, the problem facing schools and systems is not the lack of goals, but the presence of too many ever-changing and unconnected goals. This results in multiple initiatives and projects at once without progress. Louis and Robinson (2012) offer an explanation and suggest that these “outside in” efforts at coherence (combining multiple goals in an attempt to create an organized reform) leads to multiple short-lived reforms and due to varying contexts the coherence of a policy will differ across those charged with implementing the policy. The alternative, then, is to develop and sustain focused direction on a limited number of lofty goals although there may be competing demands (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). When completing a gap analysis and considering the requirements of the ESSP (2014), it would be overwhelming to try and achieve its many goals at once. These goals include, but are not limited to, high proficiency in reading, writing, and math, high levels of student engagement, and increasing graduation rates for First Nations students. Couple those goals with others from the school division which include increasing competencies in technology use and it would be quite easy for school improvement plans to become convoluted. While moving through the first two stages of the Change Path Model, it was of utmost importance for BBES to prioritize a limited number of goals and develop and sustain focus on the chosen goals. This would be considered

an inside-out approach to coherence, where school leaders shape the school priorities to align with those of the broad policy goals (Louis & Robinson, 2012).

Acceleration, Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability

The next phase in change according to Cawsey et al. (2016) is Acceleration. It is during this phase that planning and implementation occur and the change comes to life. People are engaged and empowered to advance the change, and new knowledge, skills, and abilities are developed in order to support the change (p. 54). Currently, Broken Blade Elementary School's progress in the change process resides in this stage with the development and implementation of solutions taking place. Acceleration works well in concert with Cultivating Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability from the Coherence Model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016), which in turn align with the possible solutions to be discussed in a later section in this chapter.

Again, within the stage of Acceleration lie the remaining pieces of the Coherence Model. Cultivating Collaborative Cultures is a strategy for empowering and engaging others in the change process. It also involves establishing a culture of growth, leadership that models learning, building capacity in others, and working collaboratively (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Related to this is what is called Deepening Learning. This includes establishing clarity of deep learning goals (which also ties into previous stages), building precision in pedagogies, and shifting practice through this capacity building. Finally, these processes lead to securing accountability, both internal and external. By adhering to the other processes, internal accountability ("buy in" to school goals) can be achieved, which in turn will lead to meeting external accountability measures (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Further to the idea of building "buy-in", Schmoker (1999) states that goals lead to not only success, but also cohesion of a team (p.

24). In addition, Donohoo (2017) and Hulpia and Devos (2010) agree that through processes such as building consensus on goals, leaders have significant impact on school culture, shared decision making, teacher satisfaction, and commitment. As mentioned, these strategies will be applied throughout this phase and expanded upon when solutions to the problem of practice are proposed.

Institutionalization

The final stage of change according to the Change Path Model is Institutionalization. This phase is the conclusion of the transformation to the envisioned or new state. Monitoring of progress during the process and assessment play an important role in determining the impact of the intended change (Cawsey et al., 2016). There are two ways this will occur at BBES, first, collection of student writing data to gauge improvement in writing proficiency (a major intended outcome of the change). Details about this process will be included in sections later in Chapter 2. Another way monitoring will play a significant role is analyzing and assessing the impact of professional learning (a second intended outcome of the change) guided by the work and frameworks of Bernhardt (2017), Guskey (2000), and Killion (2017). This latter form of assessment will be detailed in chapter three. See the Appendix for a table that illustrates the relationship between the framework for leading the change process and other models that inform aspects of the proposed change. See Figure 2 below for a visual summary of the stages of the integrated change model and the actions that occur within each.

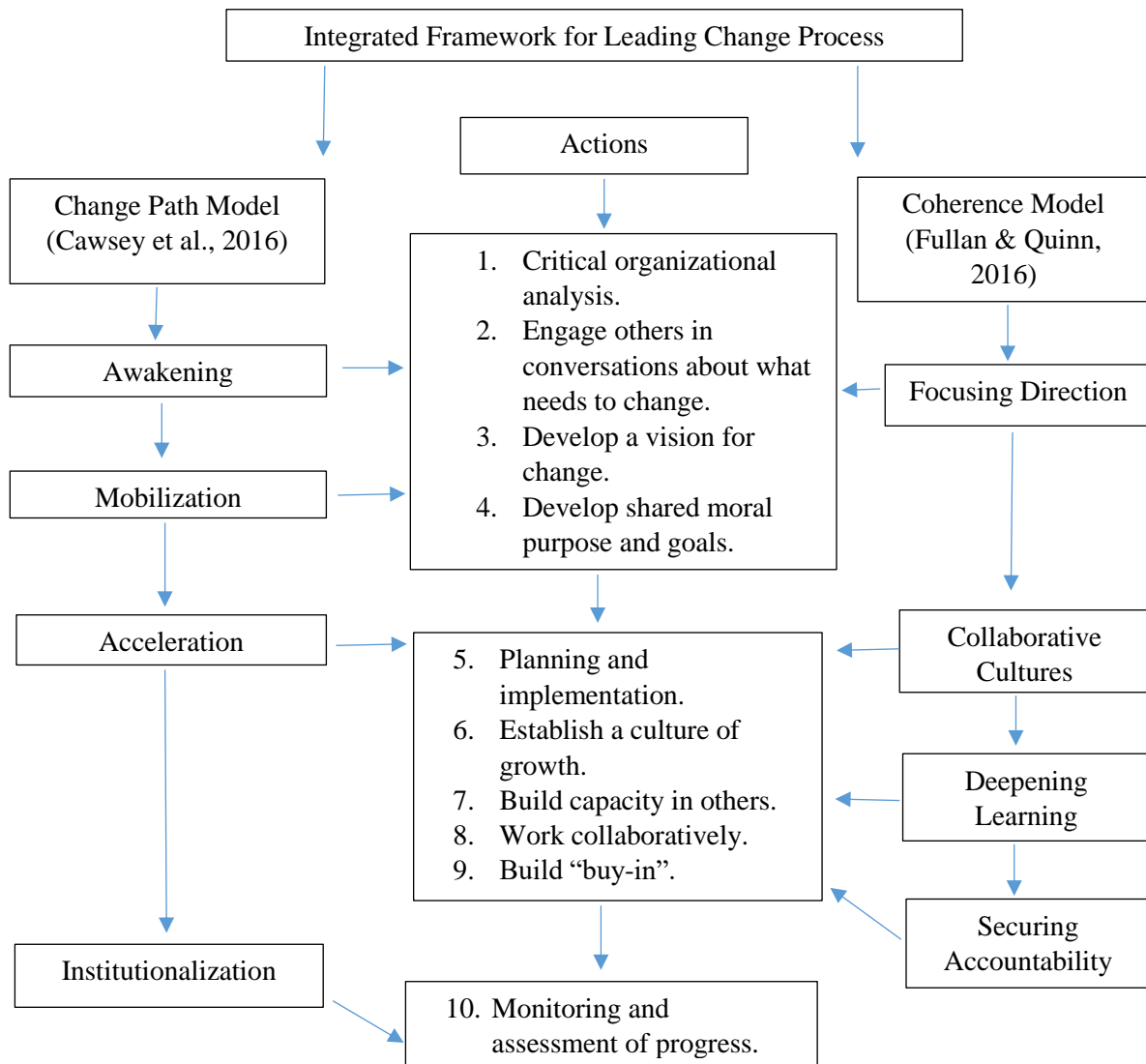


Figure 2-Integrated Framework for Leading Change adapted from Cawsey et al., (2016) and Fullan and Quinn (2016).

Critical Organizational Analysis

Whereas the previous section was concerned specifically with the process of how change will occur at BBES, the current section will deal with what to change. The state of the organization in relation to goals has been established and a future state has been envisioned, however, a more comprehensive gap analysis is required in order to choose precisely what needs to change. To undertake such an analysis, various frameworks exist that could be useful. In fact, Cawsey et al. (2016) list several including Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model, Sterman's Systems Dynamics Model, Quinn's Competing Values Model, Stacey's Complexity Theory, and

Greiner's Phases of Organizational Growth (pp. 64-65). Each framework is useful in diagnosing a particular kind of organizational issue. However, for this improvement plan, Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model has been chosen because it presents a reasonably complete set of organizational variables in a way that stimulates straightforward thinking and balances the complexity of organizational analysis with the simplicity needed for planning and communication (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Nadler and Tushman (1980) outline a model that defines the critical inputs, outputs, and the transformation processes that typify organizational functioning. Their model is based on what is labelled *congruence*. The model views organizations as being made up of components that interact with each other and exist in balance, consistency, or 'congruency'. If organizational parts fit well together, the organization will function effectively. Conversely, if there is a lack of congruence between organizational parts, organizational performance will suffer. An organizational analysis using this model, then, deals with the inputs, outputs, and the organization as a transformation process. What follows is a description of the Congruence Model and then a basic problem analysis using the Congruence Model.

Inputs

Inputs are the materials that the organization can employ, these include environment, resources, history, and strategy. Environment is all of the factors outside of the organization such as government and regulatory bodies, special interest groups, and clients or customers.

Environment affects organizations in three ways, it makes demands on the organization, it imposes limits on activities in which the organization engages, and it provides opportunities for the organization to explore. A second input to consider is the organization's resources.

Organizations have a variety of resources which include employees, technology, capital,

information, perception of the organization, and organizational climate. For the purpose of analysis, two main concerns exist, the quality of the resources and how flexible or fixed the resources are. The third input is the organization's history. Nadler and Tushman state that is important to understand the major phases of an organization's development over time as well as the current impact of past events. The final input to identify is strategy. Strategy refers to matching the organization's core mission, the tactics employed to achieve the core mission, and the performance outputs to the external environment (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 41). Step two of the basic problem analysis will identify the inputs that are specific to Broken Blade Elementary.

Outputs

At the most basic level, outputs are what the organization produces, how it performs, and how effective it is. When evaluating organizational performance three factors need be considered when it comes to outputs, how well the organization meets the standards that are set, makes use of available resources, and whether the organization is able to adapt to changes in environment (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Current levels of reading and writing achievement have already been discussed, but in the basic problem analysis achievement data will be revisited along with other performance indicators such as the utility and effect of professional learning communities.

The Organization as a Transformation Process

Thus far, inputs and outputs have been defined and described as they apply to Broken Blade Elementary School. Even so, to complete an analysis using the Congruence Model, the key components of the organization and the critical dynamic that illustrates how they interact to perform the transformation function must be determined (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 43). In

using the Congruence Model, it allows us to view organizations as being comprised of four major parts, the task, the individual, the formal organizational arrangements, and the informal organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

The first component of organizations, according to Nadler and Tushman (1980) is the basic work to be accomplished by the organization, also known as the task. The task is the starting point of the analysis considering it is the primary reason for the existence of the organization. Analysis of the task includes a description of the basic workflow such as the knowledge and/or skills needed in order to complete the work (p. 44). In a school environment, instruction or teaching and assessment are the most basic of tasks to be completed by the organization.

The second component of an organization is individuals, or those who perform the tasks. The main consideration with individuals is the nature of their knowledge and skills, needs or preferences that they have, and other background factors that may influence behaviour (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). As far as BBES is concerned, the individuals to be analysed are the teachers and support staff and the ways in which they deliver the school's academic program.

The penultimate aspect of organizations, according to Nadler & Tushman (1980) is the formal organizational arrangements. These arrangements include the structures, processes, methods, procedures, that are developed to get individuals to perform the tasks consistent with the organizational strategy. Organizational arrangements incorporate the way jobs are coordinated, designed, the working environment, and finally, how the formal systems attract, develop, and evaluate human resources (p. 44). Step five of the basic problem analysis will delve more into organizational arrangements.

The last component of organizations is the informal organization. To complement the set of formal organizational arrangements, informal arrangements develop or emerge. Informal arrangements are usually unwritten but have a profound effect on behaviour. Informal arrangements can either help or hinder performance. Included in the important features of the informal organization are the behaviour of leaders, development of relationships within and between groups, and informal working arrangements such as rules, procedures and methods (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) provide a definition of culture that is reminiscent of that of the informal organization. They say, it is a framework that a group can use to solve problems, learn how to survive, and pass down what has been learned from one generation to the next. Culture also includes the unwritten rules, collective consciousness, and “the way things are done” in the organization (p.6). Again, this aspect of the organization will be assessed in step five of the basic problem analysis.

Basic Problem Analysis

The main premise of the Congruence Model is that the greater degree of congruence between the various components, the greater the effectiveness of the organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 45) To this point, the organization’s components have been described, they now need to be analyzed. To accomplish this, a basic problem analysis needs to be completed. Nadler & Tushman (1980) created an eight-step process to analyze an organization using their model and definitions for organizational parts. The preceding sections described the model, what follows is an analysis of the school and its parts.

Step 1-Identify Symptoms

To identify symptoms, an examination of available data is of vital importance. Schools are replete with such information. Broken Blade Elementary School is no exception, staff

engagement/retention data, student engagement data, as well as achievement data are all potential sources of information when looking for symptoms. Studying the data on student engagement would not reveal a pressing need for intervention. The same is true when examining staff engagement/retention information. As mentioned earlier the staff has remained relatively stable, especially for teachers. The human resource frame of Bolman & Deal (2013) would suggest that the organization has provided a good fit for most people which has resulted in organizational commitment. On the other hand, student achievement data does reveal more of a problem. Proficiency in reading (65%), writing (35%), and math (50%) are well below the standards set out by the province. Even though improvement efforts continue in reading and math, there is a sense of urgency associated with writing because it is currently lagging behind significantly, which is why writing has become the focus of this improvement plan.

Step 2-Specify Inputs

As stated, inputs include the environment, resources, history, and strategy. As far as Broken Blade Elementary is concerned, the environment includes several components. First, is the provincial government which provides mandated curriculum documents for each grade that include requirements for instructional minutes in each subject area and student achievement benchmarks set out by the ESSP (2014). Related to the aforementioned input is the governing school division. BBES' school division provides another level of external accountability to achievement goals, but also provides support, and resources to help achieve the established goals. Another element of BBES' environment is the school community, especially parents of students attending the school. They are expecting their children to receive quality education and to be safe while at school. Finally, and possibly the most crucial aspect of the school's

environment are the students themselves as they too are expecting to receive a quality education and to be safe while at school.

Resources are the next input to consider. Human resources for BBES include 9.5 full-time equivalent teachers, and 11 support staff positions. BBES may have lost access to human resources (as mentioned in Chapter 1) but an area where the school is rich, is technology with access available to one device for every two students in the school. However, with recent budget shortfalls, capital is another resource that has been cut, with both the centralized budget (school division) and decentralized (school budget) being reduced. Finally, the last two resources can be described together. Within the community a perception exists that the school is failing and this is due (at least in part) to change in student demographics. Student achievement data would provide evidence to support this claim, but the school is working diligently to create a culture of improvement.

Third, a description of the history is required. Chapter one contains a fairly comprehensive known history of Broken Blade Elementary including changes in student population and demographics, principal turnover, achievement data (discussed again above), staffing issues, and initiatives to improve student achievement.

Finally, the organization's strategy needs to be discussed. Currently, and although not explicitly stated in the school's vision and mission, BBES' ultimate desired outcomes/outputs is for students to achieve at high levels in reading, writing, and math. A few of the major tactics to support this core mission are data collection and analysis of student work, professional learning communities, reading intervention programs, and creating shared values, beliefs, and strategies to align and improve classroom practice. Through two years, these strategies have been successful in improving reading achievement.

Step 3-Identify Outputs

Organizational outputs in the form of performance has already been addressed but it is worth revisiting here. The school measures its academic performance in three main areas, reading, writing, and math. All three areas measure below standards set out by the school division and province. Reading proficiency is 65%, math proficiency is 50%, and writing proficiency is the weakest at 35%. Another important output to assess is how the organization uses its resources. Although the decentralized budget of the school has been reduced for 2017-18, historically, the school has not used all the money that is available. Much of the money that is used directly supports teachers and day to day student activities. Use of school staff is another resource to consider. A few key considerations are timetabling and supervision. All teachers instruct 90% of their day with 10 % preparation time. Also, even with a reduction in staff, there was no reduction in school programs or services. So, it could be said that this resource has been used well. A final output to consider is how well the organization adapts to change. In Chapter 1, while discussing change readiness, it was noted that the school had gone through changes previously with adding shared leadership, and changes around literacy improvement including an embedded literacy coach and data analysis meetings. The school has shown improvement through these changes, and Schmoker (1999) and Fullan (2005) agree that short term gains are needed in order to instill confidence for further improvement and changes. In this way, the school has proven to be adaptable and will be ready to adapt in the future.

Step 4-Identify Problems

Through a review of the symptomatic data, the inputs, and the outputs, especially those related to performance outputs and desired results, it is obvious that the biggest problem is lagging achievement. Chapter 1 was written with this assumption already being made. However, as Nadler and Tushman (1980) point out, data indicates that a problem exists, but it

doesn't explain the causes. The remainder of the analysis will move forward with low achievement as the cornerstone.

Step Five-Describe Organizational Components

This step involves collecting data about the four major organizational components, including information about the component and its features in the organization. As mentioned in a previous section the four organizational components are the task, individuals, formal organizational arrangements, and the informal organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). It was also stated that the organization's main task was instruction. In that case, any analysis of instruction would need to determine the impact of instructional strategies which are used. Hattie (2009) provides an extensive meta-analysis which includes two chapters on teaching approaches. In the meta-analysis he lists the teaching strategies with the greatest effects on student learning. When BBES teachers created a list of shared values, beliefs, and strategies, many of the strategies listed by Hattie appeared. Self-report grades, teacher clarity, feedback, metacognitive strategies, repeated reading programs, and direct instruction are some of the high ranking strategies that every teacher in the school uses regularly. While no formal school-wide writing program exists, the listed strategies appear regularly in teacher practice during writing instruction.

The second component to analyze is the individuals in the organization. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus will be placed on teachers since they are responsible for the majority of instruction. At BBES there are 9.5 full time equivalent teachers. All teachers, except for one have at least ten years of experience. The teacher who doesn't, has five years of experience . Two teachers at the school have a Master's degree or higher, while the remaining teachers have Bachelor's degrees. The level of education and experience of the teachers creates an interesting

situation to be further explored in the basic problem analysis. Hattie (2009) finds that the level of teacher training (education) has very little effect on student achievement, while Wiliam (2016) states that it takes ten years for teachers to reach their potential level of expertise.

Next, the formal organizational arrangements need to be considered. As indicated in Chapter 1, at the school, there is a principal (half-time), vice-principal (also the grade five teacher and literacy coach), student services teacher, a physical education teacher, and then a teacher in each grade for pre-kindergarten to grade six. There are also eight (two are half-time) educational assistants, librarian, caretaker, secretary, counsellor, and school liaison. The school generally works in a traditional hierarchical fashion with some exceptions. There are some facets of emergent distributed leadership, where values are shared, and all interactions and relationships are not regulated (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This is apparent in the student services, or special education department of the school, where the student services teacher makes decisions regarding educational assistants and programming. However, it also holds characteristics of spontaneous alignment as this is an intuitive decision regarding who should perform such a function (Leithwood et al., 2012). In the general classroom though, teachers are encouraged to innovate, as well as participate in decision making, so that aligns well with the ideas of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) regarding emergent distributed leadership patterns. Furthermore, teachers engage in professional learning communities. Professional learning communities are a catalyst for the exercise of teacher leadership (thought of as distributed leadership). They also foster practices to enhance students' learning such as shared goals and values (the importance of goals have been previously discussed), creating a common focus and collective responsibility for student learning, reflective dialogue about improvement, and purposeful sharing of practices (Leithwood et al., 2012). Hattie (2009) and Leithwood et al.

(2012) both view professional learning communities as having positive effects on student learning, as long as formal school leaders are involved. In this case, the vice-principal is very involved in all aspects of the professional learning of the school staff. The school's teaching staff also participate in data- analysis meetings where student work is examined, Leithwood et al. (2012) suggests that there was a strong impact on student achievement in elementary schools that are involved in data-driven decision making.

The final component to analyze is the informal organization, otherwise known as the culture of the organization. Culture defines the way things are done in an organization (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015), and can either help or hinder school performance (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In fact, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) go as far to say that a toxic school culture actually expends energy on preventing change (p. 62). Lick, Clauset, and Murphy (2013) say that it is normal for people to be uncomfortable about change, however, teachers at BBES seem to be early adopters (try out new ideas in a careful way), early majority (adopt new ideas before the average), or late majority (adopt new ideas just after the average), especially when it comes to the latest initiative of improving reading achievement. Aforementioned consequences of professional learning communities aided in establishing a school culture where change has become more welcomed. This point also suggests, and one may conclude, that the culture at BBES is not toxic or working against change, considering changes have been made and the school has adapted.

Step 6-Assess Congruence

Retracing the actions the school is already undertaking, the structures that are in place, and the evidence provided for each, one might assume that the school is successful, considering the model's hypothesis that a greater congruence between parts of the organization will lead to

better performance (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Despite the research that positively supports each part of the organization, if the hypothesis is correct, then parts of the organization do not fit as evidenced by the low achievement in the school. After assessing the congruence, it is believed that there is a less than ideal fit between the organization's task (instruction), and a couple of parts of the formal organizational arrangements (professional learning communities and data-analysis team meetings). A formal hypothesis as to why these parts do not fit will follow in step seven.

Step 7-Generate Hypotheses About Problem Causes

Lieberman, Campbell, and Yashkina (2017) say that improvement can not simply be “top down” nor can they be based on individual practices that are not shared and supported widely. Furthermore, professional learning communities are not sufficient on their own. One condition of effectiveness is that conversations be grounded in artifacts of student learning (Hattie, 2009). Katz and Dack (2013) add that professional learning communities are often about activity than they are about learning. Finally, data use needs to occur in the context of developing capacities of teachers to act on the data and improvement goals (Leithwood et al., 2012). Even though high impact instructional practices are used in classrooms, professional learning communities have been implemented, and data analysis meetings occur, they happen in isolation of each other, thus they may be not be having the desired impact. Moreover, Wiliam (2016) claims teachers need ten years to reach their potential expertise, and most teachers on staff have at least ten years experience. Wiliam qualifies this statement further by saying teachers need ten years of deliberate practice focused on improvement. Reeves (2010) also states that effective teaching is about deliberate practice and that this includes performance that is focused on an element of the task, coaching, feedback, and opportunity to apply the feedback. Guskey (2000) supports this

claim with a similar insight, that is, professional development is an intentional process designed to bring about positive change and improvement. If that is the case, teacher experience may not be having the desired effect. The work of Lick et al. (2013) support this claim as they list several reasons for teams to fail and among them are implementation is imported from elsewhere and not adapted to meet needs of the school, and teams will struggle to be successful if they are isolated means of structural change and not linked with other teams. Step eight will identify possible action steps.

Step 8-Identify Action Steps

Hattie (2015b) suggests that we must not allow teachers to work alone. We must emphasize the type of collaboration that allows teachers to develop communities within and across schools. We need communities that collaboratively diagnose what teachers need to do, plan programs and teaching interventions and evaluate the success of the interventions. These communities must promote and share professional development that is aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and expertise that are able to show success in learning and achievement (p. 23). This general concept brings together the organizational components that lack in congruence, that is, instruction and assessment, professional learning communities, and data-analysis meetings. Steps taken to address the lack of congruence need to consider suggestions from Hargreaves and O'Connor (2017) that collaborative practices need to align with the message system (curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation) to which they are related (p. 17). In the case of BBES, collaborative practices should be focused on pedagogy, specifically around writing, and evaluation, expressed as grading and developing assessments as a team. These actions will be a focus of the next section of Chapter 2, where possible solutions to address the problem of practice are addressed.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

With consideration paid to potential influencing factors on the problem of practice (Chapter 1), the critical organizational analysis, and related school improvement literature, three possible solutions have been identified. Leadership, teacher professional learning, and assessment are three areas that can have a profound impact on improving writing achievement if approached and applied with evidence-based best practice in mind.

Solution One-Leadership

As Leithwood et al. (2008) claim, classroom teaching is the only influence greater than leadership when it comes to student learning. This statement provides the rationale for including an infusion of focused leadership as a solution to the problem of practice. Nevertheless, it is what leaders do that creates that impact, and not all practices are equal in their effect. Four particular practices have been identified and supported by a body of literature (previously discussed in the subsection titled Leadership Perspective) that correlate the strongest to student achievement. These practices have been dubbed *building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program*. There are more specific practices within each of these domains, and how they are applied may be different across contexts (Leithwood et al., 2008). These four main practices are proposed as a solution to the problem of practice, and how each can apply to the school will be explained below.

The first set of practices relate to *setting directions*. These include building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectations, and communicating the direction (Leithwood et al., 2012). The implementation of all four practices of this category are viewed as important to the execution of the plan and are directly related to

the chosen framework for leading change discussed earlier in the chapter (specifically Awakening, Mobilization, and Focusing Direction).

Developing people is the second domain and includes another subset of three leadership actions which are providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling appropriate values and practices (Leithwood et al., 2012). In the case of BBES, the first and third practices are the most important. Different teachers will have varying needs when it comes to professional learning and classroom instruction, so differentiation along these lines are crucial. Ways in which this practice can be specifically enacted will be explained further in the second proposed solution. Modeling values and practices will be important as well, so school leaders participating alongside teachers is vital to the plan. Research by Louis and Robinson (2012) supports this position by saying that impactful instructional leaders led as learners by researching good practice and joining staff members in the sustained effort in order to achieve it. As a practice, leading and participating in teacher learning has an effect factor of .84. Although impactful, lesser known is the cause of the association with higher achievement. It is posited that the effect is from the symbolic nature of a busy principal taking part and giving priority to learning and teachers then feeling inclined to do the same (Robinson, 2011, pp. 104-105).

The third category of impactful leadership practices are known as *redesigning the organization*. Comprising this category are building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organization to support collaboration, building productive relationships with families and communities, and connecting the school to the wider community (Leithwood et al., 2012). Most pertinent to the proposed solutions are the first two practices, collaboration also relates to the

previous domain of practices (developing people) as well. Again, the next proposed solution will further connect this practice to the improvement plan.

The final category has the most direct effects on students and is collectively hailed (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2012; Louis & Robinson, 2012) as improving the instructional program. The practices include staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, buffering staff from distractions to their work, and aligning resources (Leithwood et al., 2012). Once again, particular practices are most relevant, specifically providing instructional support and monitoring school activity. An example of monitoring the learning program that can be implemented are what Sharratt and Planche (2016) label learning walks and talks. Administrators performing the walks can ask questions of students such as: what are you learning? How are you doing? How do you know? How can you improve? Where do you go for help? School leaders can follow-up with the teacher and this can include an observation from the walk, a reflective question, and coaching. Following-up with the teacher provides opportunities for learning-focused conversations and can stimulate reflective practice that can have a long-term influence on teacher practice (p. 87-89). On a side note, a possible limitation to follow-up conversations with teachers is the skill required to engage in productive discussions about teaching and learning. As Le Fevre and Robinson (2015) found, school leaders often struggled, and showed limited skill in helping others consider alternative points of view. One possible practice to assist school leaders in framing discussions is what are known as open-to-learning conversations where leaders disclose their observations, check their understandings, listen to the teacher, and then co-construct the resultant plan for moving forward (Robinson, 2011). As with the previous two categories, these practices can be linked to the second proposed solution as well.

Resources Required

Referring back to the organizational analysis, a couple of the main resources will be time and human resources. Specifically, the use of time will need to be maximized in order to make sure teachers have time to meet in order to collaborate. Second, human resources, especially, school administration will need to focus attention on those actions related to staff development and whether or not staff are implementing and assessing the impact of effective strategies. Fink and Resnick (2001) found that most of a school administrator's time is taken up by administrative tasks rather than instruction and learning, with this in mind, focusing time and human resources becomes important.

Benefits and Consequences

The effect of leadership cannot be overstated and instructional leadership may be the most popular of school leadership models. This is evidenced by a review of research in which Hallinger (2005) found instructional leadership was the most researched model for a period of over 20 years (1983-2005). However, Fullan and Quinn (2016) point to the fact that the instructional leadership research has been over-interpreted to position the principal as *the* instructional leader (emphasis added). To truly be of benefit, the most impactful practices explained above need to be the focus, and with collaboration at the foreground, the formal leaders do not have to be lone instructional leaders.

Solution Two-Teacher Learning (Option A)

Katz and Dack (2013) suggest that a student learning indicates a teacher learning need. A student learning need in writing at BBES is evident, thus, a teacher learning need as well. In Black & Wiliam (1998), the authors make the argument that teachers use of classroom formative assessment has the potential to improve quality of teaching and learning significantly. They

define formative assessment as any activities that can be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Wiliam (2011) further defines formative assessment and creates five categories of practices. These include eliciting evidence of learner's achievement, clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and success criteria, providing feedback that moves learning forward, activating students as instructional resources for one another, and activating students as owners of their own learning. Wiliam (2016) continues with a focus on formative assessment but provides a framework to support teacher learning and implementation of classroom formative assessment. This model of professional learning centres on three main aspects, these are choice, accountability, and support. With choice, teachers decide which elements of formative assessment they wish to focus on. Then, they are accountable to their colleagues for attempting to implement and refine their chosen practice. Finally, teachers are supported by school leaders in trying to improve their practice.

Resources

Again, the two major resources needed to implement this solution are time, and human resources. Time is needed for teachers to learn about formative assessment, time to implement the techniques in their classroom, and finally, time to meet with other teachers. Having teachers implement the practices and talk about their use is the human resource required to make possible change successful.

Benefits and Consequences

Implementing a school-wide overhaul to formative assessment could be very beneficial. As Black & Wiliam (1998) offer, the average effect sizes to formative assessment experiments were between .4 and .7. For an educational intervention, that is a large effect size. Further to

this, formative assessment helps lower achievers more than other students and reduces the range of achievement while raising achievement overall. With the intent of the OIP in mind, the connection between formative assessment and the problem of practice is clear. Despite the connection and the potential of such an intervention there are drawbacks. Most importantly, focusing only on formative assessment maybe too narrow and may not be relevant or engaging to all teachers. As Lieberman et al. (2017) explain, allowing teachers to be leaders of their own professional development makes the content more relevant, motivating, engaging, and provides a sense of ownership (p. 34). Secondly, although Wiliam (2016) discusses accountability as part of teacher learning, this likely will not be sufficient in itself to create an effective learning community.

Solution Two-Teacher Learning (Option B)

Even if option A is not considered a viable solution, some of the ideas do hold merit, especially that of teacher choice when it comes to their professional learning. According to Donohoo and Velasco (2016), educators should inquire into problems of practice that affect their students, apply new approaches, reflect on the results, and build collective knowledge. This develops collective teacher efficacy (p.18). Collective teacher efficacy has been defined in Eells (2011) as a group's abilities to organize and execute the actions required to produce certain levels of attainment (p. 50). Collective teacher efficacy has been further defined as the perceptions held by teachers in a school that they can collectively make an educational difference in their students over and above that of their homes and community (Dewitt, 2017, p. 13). Furthermore, CTE's greatest influence is achieved through teacher persistence and effort in attempting to meet student learning needs (Donohoo, 2017, p. 14), and is cited by Donohoo (2017) and DeWitt (2017) as being the number one influence on student learning with an effect

factor of 1.57. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) include collective efficacy as part of what they termed the *Emotions Path* (one of four paths leaders use to influence learning), which they directly link to the human resource frame of Bolman and Deal (2013).

Prior to developing CTE, Donohoo (2017) outlines six conditions which enable such development, these are advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge of each other's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of leadership (p. 29). As it pertains to BBES, most of the conditions are either present, albeit under different labels, or have been identified as areas of improvement. Fostering collective teacher efficacy to increase student achievement then, means that opportunities for meaningful collaboration must be created, teachers must be empowered, goals and high expectations must be established, and teachers must be assisted in interpreting results and provided with feedback (Donohoo, 2017, p. 35).

Considering the potential impact of developing collective teacher efficacy, Donohoo (2017) provides a four-stage collaborative inquiry model that can be applied at Broken Blade Elementary School to meet this end. Katz and Dack (2013) explain that collaborative inquiry is the "how" of professional learning when it challenges thinking and practice. To Donohoo (2017), the first stage of collaborative inquiry involves framing a problem of practice, identifying student learning needs while keeping in mind the goal is to increase achievement for all students. This stage mirrors the statement cited previously from Donohoo and Velasco (2016) regarding inquiry into problems of practice. Teacher inquiry could take two possible forms. One is the decision to pursue a single course of action, whereas the second possibility is to decide on basic priorities (centered on writing instruction) with teachers working toward individual goals based on those priorities. Whichever course of action is chosen, as long as the inquiry is focused on the agreed

upon priorities, the work of teachers is highly interdependent (Donohoo, 2017). Stage two includes teachers working together to develop new knowledge, competencies and implement changes in practice. They also identify sources of information to help answer their question and collect evidence about how their actions are impacting students (Donohoo, 2017). Sharratt and Fullan (2009) offers a practical example which is easily implementable at BBES. They suggest subject-alike meetings where the focus is placed on individual student achievement (at BBES the meeting would focus on writing) by using common assessments and exemplars. This allows teachers to come to an understanding of expectations across grade levels, it promotes consistency, and helps to eliminate variation in instruction between classrooms. Eliminating variation between classrooms within a school is of utmost importance as Hattie (2015) indicates that there is more variation between classrooms in a school than there is across different schools. The third stage of the inquiry process consists of analyzing the evidence, making meaning of the data through identifying patterns, and then formulating conclusions (Donohoo, 2017). To assist with this stage, a data wall containing student writing information such as strengths, areas of focus, next steps for instruction, and that illustrates student growth will need to be created and be used as part of the subject-alike meetings. In addition, Sharratt and Planche (2016) suggest a paper-based data-wall to provide a visual for evidence-based discussion to occur. In the fourth, and final stage, teachers document, share, celebrate their new understandings, and reflect upon what they have learned through their inquiry (Donohoo, 2017). The collaborative inquiry process and accompanying strategies provide a suggestion upon which BBES can build a teacher learning program that is based on needs of students and teachers.

Resources

While presenting the first option for teacher learning, the required resources were identified as time and human resources. This remains the same for this option as well with no significant changes other than the focus of meetings and teacher learning. The issue of focused time and human resources dedicated to collaborative inquiry is essential as found in Butler and Schnellert (2012). The authors' investigation revealed that schools where collaborative inquiry was successful had devoted time as a staff to undertake inquiry. The opposite was true as well, schools that did not provide specific time for inquiry did not achieve the desired effects of the practice because teachers did not follow through with the required actions such as researching new practice. Katz and Dack (2013) further this statement by noting that teachers and administrators consistently cite lack of time as the number one barrier to implementing authentic professional learning communities (p. 3).

Benefits and Consequences

With a proposal such as this, the benefits outweigh the (negative) consequences. As Guskey (2000) explains, inquiry helps educators become more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers. Engaging in inquiry also assists in narrowing the gap between research and practice. However, the process requires individuals to take significant initiative and it can also require a substantial amount of time depending on the complexity of the problem (p. 26). Considering the mentioned impacts on achievement, teacher engagement in professional learning, and also aligning with solution one and leadership practices, the potential for this particular solution to improve student outcomes at BBES is very good.

Solution Three-Assessment

Connected to solution one and two is how to assess student progress in writing. As noted earlier, the major source of writing data collected was a single prompt writing assignment chosen by the school division. Black & Wiliam (1998) say that such tests can cause teachers to teach to the test and acting against their better judgement about the best ways to develop student learning. Behizadeh (2014) agrees with this assertion and believes writing should be assessed via portfolio which can be a combination of student and teacher chosen work. Student chosen work would include an accompanying reflection on the impact of their piece. In addition, the former assessment procedure was more akin to assessment *of* learning and took place once a year. The proposed assessment procedure calls for teachers to collaboratively score writing several times per year. A system such as this provides opportunities to give learners descriptive feedback to improve their writing as well as allows teachers to adjust instruction based on learning needs. Using assessment as a tool in this manner corresponds with what Davies et al. (2008) would term assessment *for* learning. This aligns well with ideas from solution two about developing common assessments and then collaboratively moderating the work.

Resources, Benefits, and Consequences

For this proposed solution, the resources remain the same, with human resources and time needed to develop and score assessments. One major benefit exists, that is, creating assessments that are reflective of student skills, and then using those assessments to gauge student growth and to plan for future instruction. Prior to discussing the chosen solution, see Table 1 for a summary of the four possible solutions that have been discussed.

Table 1

Summary of Proposed Solutions

Proposed Solution	Solution 1-Leadership	Solution 2-Teacher Learning (Option A)	Solution 3-Teacher Learning (Option B)	Solution 4-Assessment
Summary	Leadership will be focused around four domains noted to have most impact on student learning. The domains are setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2012).	A teacher learning program centered around formative assessment strategies. The program relies on teacher choice of strategy to learn, accountability to colleagues, and support from school leaders. Based on the work on Wiliam (2016),	Learning through four-stage collaborative inquiry model. The stages are identifying student learning needs, developing new knowledge and implementing changes in practice, analyzing evidence, and documenting, sharing, and celebrating success (Donohoo, 2017).	Assessment <i>for</i> learning approach to analyzing student writing. Portfolio-style collection of writing samples from students with opportunities for students to receive and respond to descriptive feedback, and for teachers to adjust instruction to student needs.
Resources Required	Two resources are required. First,time, specifically for teachers to collaborate. Second, human resources focused on staff development and implementation.	Time for teachers to learn and collaborate around classroom strategy use.	Time and human resources to allow teachers to meet to analyze evidence and decide upon courses of action.	Time and human resources to create and analyze to student assessments.
Benefits and Consequences	The benefits of focused and improved leadership cannot be overstated, but caution must be taken to not rely on school administration as sole source of instructional leadership.	Teacher choice in learning may be valuable, but too narrow for learning to be effective.	Inquiry can narrow the gap between research and practice, but can be a long process (Guskey, 2000).	Assessing in this manner allows teachers to create assessment that reflect student skills, gauge student growth, and adjust instruction.

Solution Selected

The problem of practice's objective is to create a comprehensive full-school solution to addressing low levels of writing achievement. A full-school approach has to include leadership,

teacher learning and instruction (and related structures and processes), and assessment. For this reason, no single solution can reasonably be applied. Thus, three of the proposed solutions have been chosen, that is, solution one (leadership), solution two (option B), and solution three (assessment). The combination of instructional leadership, collaborative inquiry, and improved assessment address the gaps in the organization and has the potential to have a great impact on student learning. Leithwood et al. (2012) supports this assertion as instructional leadership was found to have significant effects on professional community and on focused instruction which in turn has significant positive relationship with achievement (p. 37). Possibly even more important to BBES' context, is the finding that even though minority status has strong negative associations with achievement, the effects can be negated by the leadership and instructional practices in the school (Leithwood et al., 2012, p. 39). Schmoker (1999) makes a similar claim, that it isn't socioeconomic status that determines achievement, it is the school's effectiveness (p. 73). This can be interpreted to mean that if the school can align the chosen solutions, then writing achievement for all students should improve.

Only one of the four solutions was discarded, and it was related to teacher learning and formative assessment. The proposed solution had some elements that were attractive options for teacher learning such as choice and the potential for improved practice through developing high impact practices. However, the improvement of formative assessment practice among teachers likely was not broad enough engage all teachers, plus the process proposed by Wiliam (2016) neglected to include teacher collaboration as a main driver. To this end, collaborative inquiry and the related processes were chosen instead because this option aligns better with the proposed instructional leadership practices and the enhanced assessment protocols.

Leadership Approaches to Change

Ideas surrounding instructional leadership, as well as its connections to transformational leadership, as practice for change have been discussed at length throughout the improvement plan. The fundamental practices of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving the instructional program have been defined previously as well. Transformational and instructional leadership form the basis of the main leadership method for leading change, as such, the concepts do not need to be repeated here. However, they can be built upon. Distributed leadership can be incorporated into the concept of transformation to create an even more effective practice. This statement can be substantiated by a claim made in Leithwood et al. (2008), which is that school leadership has a greater influence on student learning when it is widely distributed. Hallinger (2010) agrees with this assertion, but believes school leaders must pick the right time and methods of distributing leadership. An attempt to synthesize research and choose the right methods will take place below.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership has only been embraced by practitioners and scholars since the start of the millennium, but its origins go back quite a bit further than that. The concept has been called the most ancient leadership form with accounts of the style dating as far back as 1250 BC. In more modern times though, it wasn't until the 1950's that the theory appeared expressly in leadership literature (Bolden, 2011, p. 252). Although defined differently by different people, Spillane (2005) says that leadership from a distributed perspective is seen as a product of the interactions of school leader, followers, and their situation. Distributed leadership is predominately about leadership practice rather than roles of leaders, functions, routines and structures (p. 144). This perspective acknowledges all individuals and their contributions to leadership practice even if they have not been formally designated as a leader (Harris & Spillane,

2008). Some attempts to define patterns of distributed leadership exist and can be found in Gronn (2002); Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006); MacBeath, Oduro, and Waterhouse (2004); Spillane (2006) (as cited in Bolden, 2011), and Hargreaves and Fink (2006). These configurations are usually defined in a continuum fashion with varying levels of coordination and control with one pattern being considered optimal (Bolden, 2011). No matter the way it is defined, it should be pointed out that the effectiveness of distributed leadership depends on the context in which it takes place and the core aim of distributing leadership (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Specific patterns of distribution were mentioned earlier, but they may not be the most effective in leading, creating, and affecting change. Harris (2003) concurs as she reminds us that simply changing the organization arrangements does little to change create and support pedagogical improvement. For that reason, other forms of distributed leadership are considered.

Teacher Leadership

Keeping in mind the previous statement by Harris (2003), she furthers this by saying that attention must be given to supporting the creation of school infrastructure to support collaboration and mutual learning because an environment of collaboration is the single most important factor for successful school improvement. Research presented as possible solutions regarding the impact of teacher efficacy (DeWitt, 2017; Donohoo, 2017) supports this claim. Teacher leadership as distributed leadership may be the approach to accomplish this purpose. The concept of teacher leadership has become more complex and there is still a range of different understandings of what the practice involves (Lieberman et al., 2017). Despite that, there are some core aspects that define this form of leadership, specifically, teacher leadership has an instructional component, a relational component, and an enabling component. Teacher

leadership can be described then as showing leadership within and beyond the confines of the classroom, identifying with and contributing to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influencing others toward improved instructional practice (Harris, 2005). In fact, a study by Reeves (2008) revealed that teachers more likely to be influenced by the professional practices and action research of their peers than other factors such as professional reading or graduate courses (p. 2). Impacts of this type of leadership have potential to be seen throughout the organization, in other words, at the school, teacher, and student level. At the school level, teacher leadership can help restructure schools and helps protect against principal change. The four-stage collaborative inquiry cycle from Donohoo (2017) and discussed as part of the possible solutions can fulfill the three aforementioned components for teacher leadership. Research also suggests that the ability to improve and sustain that improvement depends on the capacity to foster professional learning communities (Harris, 2005). At the teacher level, evidence exists to say that teacher leadership positively affects changes in teacher practice and instructional effectiveness. Also, a direct relationship between teacher leadership and motivation has been found (Harris, 2005). This is important because formal school leaders improve teaching and learning most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008). Finally, teacher leadership has been confirmed to have a positive impact of student learning where such leadership is focused instructional improvement (Harris, 2005). As Harris (2003) concludes, this ‘distributed form’ of leadership implies a fundamental redistribution of power within a school and has important influences for the way in which change is understood, enacted, and secured (p. 322).

Summary

Combined, transformational and instructional leadership informs leadership practice during the proposed change and specific practices to focus on have been identified. Yet, distributed, and more specifically teacher leadership is inextricably linked to these practices and suggested changes and solutions. Building a community of practice through collaborative inquiry is at the heart of all of these leadership methods as well as the overarching approach to change. See Figure 3 for a visual representation of the relationship between the domains of Leithwood et al. (2012), teacher leadership, and the use of collaborative inquiry to mobilize leadership practice.

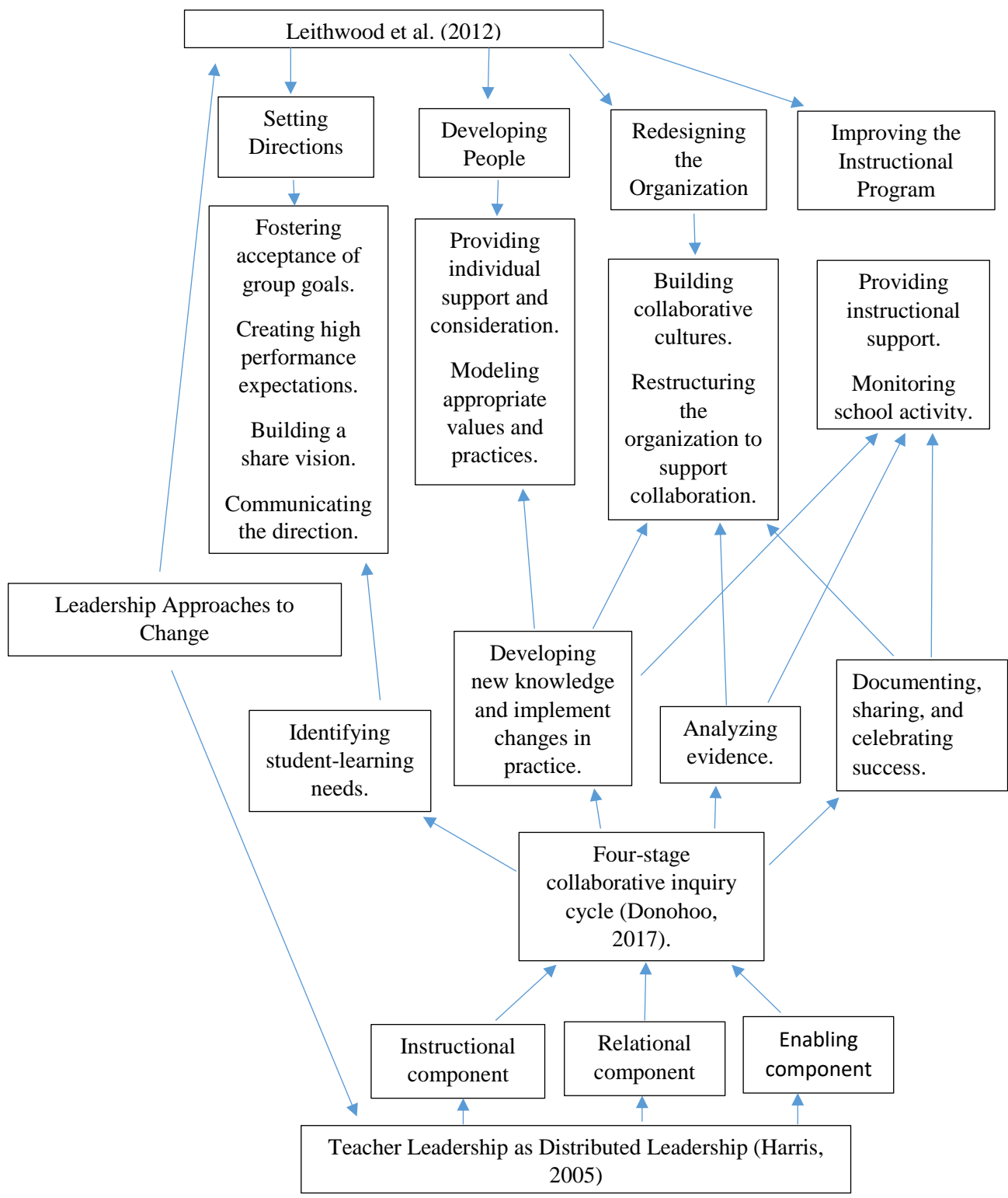


Figure 3-Relationship between Leithwood et al. (2012), teacher leadership (Harris, 2005), and collaborative inquiry (Donohoo, 2017).

Communicating the Need for Change

To communicate the need for change, Cawsey et al. (2016) present a four-phase communication for change model. The model is simple, yet effective in the sense that following the model promotes conveying the importance of change, and connecting with important stakeholders. The phases are pre-change approval, creating the need for change, midstream change and milestone communications, and confirming/celebrating the change success (p. 53-54). Details about each phase and how they apply to this organizational improvement plan will follow.

Pre-change approval involves targeting individuals with the influence and/or authority to approve the needed change, and then convincing them of the need for change. Critical to this phase is linking the change to organizational goals, plans, and priorities (Cawsey et al., 2016). Obtaining pre-approval for the proposed change in this case means receiving permission from a superintendent, considering though that writing achievement is a provincial and school division goal, prior approval is not technically required. In-school administrators are allowed flexibility to choose areas of focus for their schools depending on student needs. While goal documents and school improvement plans are vetted through central office, such processes are more of a formality as long as school goals reflect those of the school division.

Following the pre-change phase, the need for change needs to be developed. When conveying the need for change, communication programs need to explain the issues and then give a clear rationale for change. A vision for change needs to be articulated along with clarifying the steps that will be undertaken during implementation of the plan. This part of the communication plan aligns with the Awakening phase of the Change Path Model (Cawsey et al., 2016). A vision for change has already been created (as shown earlier), the need for change has

been established through presenting the organizational history as it applies to writing, current writing achievement data, the vision for the future desired state, and the planned steps to get there.

As mentioned in the previous section, BBES is currently in the implementation phase of the change, during this time it will be important to incorporate a midstream change communication phase. This includes informing people of progress and seeking feedback on issues, as well as to challenge misconceptions, and clarify new roles, structures and systems (Cawsey et al., 2016). Concerning roles, structures, or systems, this organizational improvement plan currently is not making the proposal to change in any of these areas, but simply uses current structures and makes adjustments to professional learning communities and formal and informal leadership roles to forward the change. Informing people of progress, though, will be important during this phase. Fullan (2005) says that short-term gains are necessary to gain long-term commitment, so communicating progress is essential to securing sustainability of changes enacted. As the change unfolds, seeking feedback on issues surrounding the change will need to occur in order to assess impact and adjust aspects of the plan as needed.

Finally, the last part of the communication plan involves confirming the change phase. Part four of the communication plan informs employees of the change's success, celebrates the change, and prepares the organization for future change (Cawsey, et al., 2016). As far as preparing the organization for future changes goes, this proposal does not consider further efforts to a large extent, if at all. But, when the proposed changes have been completed, communicating and celebrating success through all available and appropriate channels will need to occur.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

Chapter 2 consisted of five sections, with a framework for leading change established, a critical organizational analysis being conducted, possible solutions proposed and chosen, leadership approach to change discussed, and the plan to communicate the need for change summarized. Thus far the reasons for change, and the processes for how change will occur have been acknowledged, Chapter 3 will focus on the implementation, evaluation, and communication of the plan. It will once again consist of five sections, the change implementation plan, change process monitoring and evaluation, leadership ethics and organizational change, change process communication plan, and finally, next steps and future considerations.

Chapter Three-Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

Overview of Chapter

The first two chapters established and explained the reasons for change, how change will take place, and what changes are seen as essential for moving the organization forward. The third, and final chapter, will seek to develop a plan to implement, evaluate, and communicate the proposed change. Chapter 3 will include five sections, Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation, Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change, Change Process Communications Plan, Next Steps and Future Considerations, but it will begin with outlining the Change Implementation Plan.

Change Implementation Plan

Three solutions were chosen to act in concert to improve writing achievement at Broken Blade Elementary School: leadership, teacher learning and professional community, and assessment. Although various models for change implementation exist, one model in particular, that of Mento, Jones, and Dirndorfer (2002), has been chosen to assist in implementing solutions to the problem of practice of improving writing achievement from grades 1-6 at BBES. Building off lessons learned through previous models, and grounded in both theory and practice, Mento et al. (2002) offer twelve steps to implement change. The twelve steps included in their model are as follows:

1. The idea and its context.
2. Define the change initiative.
3. Evaluate the climate for change.
4. Develop a change plan.
5. Find and cultivate a sponsor.

6. Prepare your target audience, the recipients of change.
7. Create the cultural fit-Making the change last.
8. Develop and choose a change leader team.
9. Create small wins for motivation.
10. Constantly and strategically communicate the change.
11. Measure progress of the change effort.
12. Integrate lessons learned (Mento et al., 2002, pp. 49-57).

The model was chosen to guide implementation of change because the steps align with the framework for leading change and other processes such as the critical organizational analysis detailed in chapter two. Further explanation of how the implementation plan correlates with the frameworks for leading change is provided below. See the Appendix for a figure that illustrates the interrelationship between the framework for leading change, change implementation plan, and other frameworks used in the OIP.

Change Implementation: Steps 1-8

Steps 1 and 2 of the implementation model described in Mento et al. (2002) includes recognizing the need for change and then creating a vision for the desired outcome. This aligns with the first stage of unified the Change Path Model (Cawsey et al., 2016) and Coherence Model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) framework described in chapter two of the OIP. In this stage, Awakening, Mobilization, and Focusing Direction, the processes of recognizing the need for change and establishing a vision for change occurs. Furthermore, step 3 of Mento et al. (2002) calls for an analysis of the organization to understand strengths, weaknesses, and the organization's history as it relates to, among other areas, previous change efforts and readiness for change. This step aligns with the critical organizational analysis from chapter two as well as the first phase in the unified

framework for leading change. The correlation doesn't end there though, steps 4-8 of Mento et al. (2002) rely heavily on engaging others in conversations around the need for change and soliciting support and participation in the change process, and this corresponds with the Awakening, Mobilization, and Focusing Direction phase as described in Chapter 2. Several of the steps correspond to those outlined in the Change Process Communication Plan as well, specifically Creating the Need for Change.

Applied to the problem of practice, steps 1 to 3 of the implementation plan involve organizational analysis, evaluation of change readiness, and defining the change and creating the vision for change. These three steps were completed in Chapter 1. An analysis of BBES and its history shows that the school is below provincial benchmarks in the three major academic areas for elementary schools (reading, writing, and math). Nevertheless, reading proficiency has been on an upward trajectory over the last three years, and writing proficiency is significantly weaker than reading or math and has been since at least 2010. Furthermore, an evaluation of change readiness reveals a moderate level of change readiness helped by previous engagement and success in recent change initiatives (structural and instructional changes to improve reading proficiency). Following these two actions, a vision for change was created. Referring back to Chapter 1, the leadership focused vision for change involved increasing writing achievement to 80% proficiency with no difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Mentioned above, steps 4-8 hinge upon engaging others in conversations about the need for change and seeking support in the process. To realize this, meetings in which data comparing the different academic areas and illuminating the historical underachievement in writing were held and the vision for change was communicated. In addition to aligning with the framework for leading change, it also fits well with the step known as Creating the Need for Change from

the strategy for communicating change outlined in Cawsey et al. (2016). Included in these steps was also communicating the exact changes that will take place in the organization. At BBES these changes include changes to leadership practice, professional learning and community, and assessment practice. A final action taken during these steps was to find to teachers with skills and knowledge about the proposed changes that were willing to take part in planning and then gathering their input prior to implementation of the changes.

Change Implementation: Implementation and Step 9

In Mento et al. (2012), there is no specific stage for implementing the desired change, but it does seem to fit between steps 8 and 9. For the purposes of this improvement plan, between steps 8 and 9 is where the implementation of solutions will occur. These two steps correlate with Acceleration, Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability from the combined Cawsey et al. (2016) and Fullan and Quinn (2016) framework where implementation of the plan is executed. The three solutions chosen for change and improving writing achievement are leadership, teacher learning and community, and assessment practice.

From the chosen solutions, changes in leadership are the first to be implemented. Four domains of leadership practice are considered critical to the problem of practice, these are derived from Leithwood et al. (2012). The practice of *setting direction* with the related actions of building a shared vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectations, and communicating the direction are the first leadership actions to be implemented. Many of these actions will take place during the first eight steps of the implementation plan.

The next two domains, *developing people and redesigning the organization*, also have subsets of practices to be implemented at BBES. These practices are providing individualized support, modelling appropriate values and practices, building collaborative cultures, and

restructuring the organization to support collaboration (Leithwood et al., 2012). Professional learning community work through which teachers and school leaders engage in collaborative inquiry cycles and collaborative assessment of student work will be undertaken. In fact, collaborative inquiry and collaborative assessment of student writing are the main vehicles for implementing the remaining two solutions of teacher learning and assessment. The intention of collaborative inquiry is that teachers will develop a shared language, understanding, and practice around writing as well instructional program coherence (Robinson, 2011). When teachers can come to common understandings around teaching, then collaborative assessment is possible. Collaborative meetings will take place at least once per month during designated professional development days.

A final category of leadership practices to be implemented is called improving the instructional program. The actions associated with this category are monitoring student progress and providing instructional support (Leithwood et al., 2012). Monitoring student progress will occur through creation of data boards for each classroom which will include writing proficiency data for each month as well as specific skills each student is working on. Connecting to this monitoring of student progress will be learning walks and talks as suggested by Sharratt and Planche (2016) where the administrator performing the walk asks strategic questions of students and then follow-up with the classroom teacher. Instructional support will be provided through the follow-up conversations which will center on instructional strategies and student learning needs.

During implementation, creating small wins for motivation is essential to continued success. One way small wins will be generated is through monitoring student data after each collaborative scoring session. Small wins could take the form of a greater percentage of students

writing proficiently, struggling students moving up the proficiency scale (a scale of 1 to 4 is used, a score of 3 or 4 is proficient), or students demonstrating skills they didn't have the previous month. Communicating these wins are crucial as well. Schmoker (1999), Fullan (2005), and Reeves (2008) agree that monitoring progress and communicating wins are essential for building momentum and enthusiasm to sustain the change effort. Communication of success will occur through all available channels including directly to staff at meetings, and then to the greater community through newsletters and social media. This aspect of the implementation plan also relates to the midstream phase of the communication plan.

Change Implementation: Steps 10-12

Finally, the last three steps from Mento et al., (2002) involve measuring progress and integrating lessons learned from change and reflecting on the process. These actions relate directly to the final phase, Institutionalization, of the integrated change framework of Cawsey et al., (2016) and Fullan and Quinn (2016), where this same process takes place. It correlates with the Confirming/Celebrating the Change Phase of the communication plan. Killion (2017) and Guskey (2000) provide the models through which measuring progress of the change will transpire. Formatively monitoring the implementation of leadership practice, collaborative inquiry for teacher learning, and assessment practice will be the objects of measurement. A more detailed account of how progress will be monitored is outlined in the section titled Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation.

Strengths, Assumptions, and Limitations

Just as Mento et al. (2002) created their change implementation model because of what they believed to be strengths and limitations of earlier models, using their model to instruct the

implementation of change comes with strengths, assumptions and limitations. These are discussed in the sections that follow.

Strengths

A perceived strength of using this plan for implementing the chosen solutions at Broken Blade Elementary School, as stated earlier, is that the model aligns well with the chosen framework for leading change. Ensuring the plans are congruent is important, but possibly even more important is to consider the amount of stakeholder involvement to be utilized throughout the change implementation. The plan created by Mento et al. (2002) does just that, as step four through eight (develop a change plan, find a cultivate a sponsor, prepare the recipients of change, and develop and choose a change leader team) involve engaging and including others in the process in order to gain support for change (Mento et al., 2002). As Cawsey et al. (2016) explain, success of change is enhanced when people understand what the change requires, the reason(s) for change, what the consequences of success or failure are, and that their help is needed and valued (p. 307). A final strength to examine are included in steps nine through eleven (create small wins for motivation, constantly communicate the change, and measure the progress of the change process). The three stages are inextricably linked and essential because throughout the change it is important to measure progress, then create small wins with the data collected, and then communicate the progress to those involved. Fullan (2005) concurs with the view that short-term wins are vital to ensure change continues to move forward and is successful in the future. Gathering input and engaging others in the change process, combined with consistent measuring and communicating of progress are the main strategies of this plan to avoid and overcome barriers to change.

Assumptions

There are two main assumptions of Mento et al. (2002) implementation model as applied and adapted for change implementation at BBES. The first is that change is mostly a linear process with the steps taking place in the specified order. Once the object of change has been implemented, it seems that steps nine through twelve can be used in a cyclical fashion, however, the first eight steps seem to happen in a linear manner. The second assumption that is made when applying this implementation model is that by communicating the change and engaging others in decisions about the change, resistance will be overcome, or at least be minimal. Such an assumption may be justified, considering the view of Cawsey et al. (2016) that in the case of resistance communication can result in a shared understanding of differing perspectives and may offer new ways of thinking about the situation and possible paths forward (p. 228). Furthermore, barriers to change are more likely to come from misalignment of structures and systems than people engaged in resistance (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Limitations

The biggest limitation to implement the plan as described in Mento et al. (2002) is that there is no explicit step for executing the target of change. Many of the steps in the model are devoted to gathering evidence, choosing what to change, and then engaging others in the process (steps one through eight), but step nine calls for creating small wins. However, if there was not anything in particular changed, then creating small wins is not necessary, or possible. So, in using Mento et al. (2002) to instruct change implementation, enacting “what” to change seems to fit between step eight and step nine and has been added for the purposes of the improvement plan.

A second, yet still important limitation is choice of the particular model. The change management process espoused by Mento et al. (2002) arose out of work done in the defence

industry, not education. Robinson (2006) argues that research used to influence change should be linked to knowledge of teacher and principal leadership and not generic leadership models because such models provide little or no knowledge about the direction or purpose of the influence attempt. However, the change implementation model was chosen even with that in mind considering that the actions that take place during implementation are all guided by literature on the education sector. See Table 2 for a summary of the implementation plan and its alignment with other frameworks used in this OIP.

Table 2

Change Implementation Plan (Mento et al., 2002) and Alignment with Other Frameworks

Change Implementation Plan-Mento et al. (2002)	Implementation Actions	Implementation Plan Correlation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The idea and its context. 2. Define the change initiative. 3. Evaluate the climate for change. 4. Develop a change plan. 5. Find and cultivate a sponsor. 6. Prepare your target audience, the recipients of change. 7. Create the cultural fit-Making the change last. 8. Develop and choose a change leader team. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect preliminary data and information. 2. Study the organizational history, evaluate readiness for change, and conduct a critical organizational analysis. 3. Create and communicate a vision for change using comparative data to show need for change. 4. Engage others in collective discussions regarding possible solutions. 5. Seek those with skills and knowledge about the proposed solutions to assist in implementation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change Path Model-Awakening and Mobilization (Cawsey et al., 2016). 2. Coherence Model- Focusing Direction (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). 3. Change Process Communication Plan- Creating the Need for Change (Cawsey et al. 2016).
<p>Implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Create Small Wins for Motivation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Instructional Leadership-building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program. 7. Teacher Learning-collaborative inquiry cycles guided by collaboratively scored writing samples (meeting once per month). 8. Assessment-assessment <i>for</i> learning using samples from number 7, samples also help track growth in student writing over the course of the year. Growth will be communicated, and celebrated through all channels. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Change Path Model- Acceleration (Cawsey et al., 2016). 5. Coherence Model- Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). 6. Change Process Communication Plan- Midstream Change Phase (Cawsey et al., 2016).
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Constantly and strategically communicate the change. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Continue to communicate progress at staff meetings, community council meetings, newsletters, and social media accounts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Change Path Model- Institutionalization (Cawsey et al., 2016).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Measure progress of the change effort. 12. Integrate lessons learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Host open house nights to build partnerships with parents and communicate progress as well as assist parents in supporting their child's work. 11. Collect survey data from teachers regarding perceived use and impact of instructional leadership strategies. 12. Evaluate impact of professional learning using an integrated assessment framework. Frameworks used in assessment draw from Killion (2017) and Guskey (2000). 13. Use data collected from survey and professional learning assessment to determine the impact of implemented solutions. The information will be used to direct next steps in improvement by deciding what aspects of the solutions worked, didn't work, and those that need to be revised. 	<p>8. Change Process Communication Plan-Confirming/Celebrating the Change Success (Cawsey et al., 2016).</p>
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Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring change is integral to the process of change. An important aspect of monitoring the change process is program evaluation. Evaluating programs is necessary for continuous improvement of an organization and understanding the impact and interactions of the parts on the system (Bernhardt, 2017). As the terms apply to Broken Blade Elementary and the organizational improvement plan, “program” refers to the applied solutions to the problem of practice, while “evaluation” pertains to the formative collection and analysis of data regarding the implementation of the solutions. Bernhardt (2017) provides further clarification and defines evaluation as the collection of information about activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgements about the program, improve program development, and increase understanding (p. 6). This definition provides guidance for choosing to monitor the change process at BBES through evaluating the implementation of the proposed solutions, specifically, leadership and teacher learning.

As mentioned, the change process at Broken Blade Elementary will be monitored through evaluating the implementation of proposed solutions. During implementation, monitoring and evaluation coincides with the “study” and “act” phases of the PDSA cycle, and the eleventh and

twelfth step of the change implementation framework by Mento et al. (2002), measuring of the change process and integrate lessons learned. The aforementioned implementation framework has been chosen to guide implementation of the organization improvement plan. Out of the three proposed solutions, leadership, teacher learning, and assessment, only two will be evaluated. Since assessment is inextricably linked to teacher learning (assessment will take place as assessment *for* learning and coincide with collaborative inquiry cycles) the two solutions can be evaluated together. Leadership and teacher learning will be evaluated separately though, what follows is an explanation of how each solution will be monitored.

Leadership

Leadership will be monitored formatively, that is, conducted during implementation to provide information regarding execution of leadership practices applied by the school's administration. This type of evaluation is essential for improvement, and managing problems related to implementation (Killion, 2017). As a means of formative assessment, survey data will be collected by the vice-principal (myself) once in the middle of the school year and once at the end of the school year. The surveys will seek to measure implementation of instructional leadership practices chosen as part of the solutions to the problem of practice. The practices which the surveys will attempt to measure are drawn from Leithwood et al. (2012) and are described as building a shared vision and communicating the direction, focusing on school goals and expectations for student achievement, keeping track of teachers' professional development needs, and creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate. The surveys will also attempt to measure teacher learning and highlight areas where teachers need further support. The proposed surveys will address four levels of teacher learning which are similar to those of Guskey (2000): participant's learning, organization support and change, participant's use of new

knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes. Sample survey questions are similar to those in Leithwood et al. (2012) and include: did the school administration create consensus around the change vision? Does the school administration promote leadership development among teachers? Does the school administration ensure participation in decisions about school improvement? How often has the school administration observed classroom instruction? How often has school administration discussed instructional issues with you? How often has school administration encouraged collaborative work among staff? How often has school administration encouraged data use in planning for student needs? Further questions drawn from Guskey (2000) include: What was the impact on the organization? Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported? Were you able to effectively apply the new knowledge and skills? What was the impact on students? These sample questions are aimed at measuring the intended outcomes of improved instructional leadership, mainly improved collaboration and student learning, and by collecting data on these questions at multiple times throughout the year it will allow for refinement of leadership practices based on participants' responses. In addition to surveys, journals kept from classroom observations and follow-up conversations conducted by the vice-principal (myself), will be collected and examined as another source of information to help form a more robust data source for evaluation. Orchestrating the evaluation and collecting the data will be the vice-principal with the assistance of the school division's data consultant.

Teacher Learning

The other aspect of the plan to be monitored is teacher learning. As described in Chapter 2, the theory behind teacher learning as a solution is that student writing will improve by using collaborative inquiry based on student writing data, then responding to the data and improving classroom instruction through sharing, researching, and applying new practices. The purpose of

formatively evaluating teacher learning is to determine the impact of collaborative inquiry on teacher practice and student learning as implemented and then make adjustments to the program as required. To accomplish this end, a combined framework drawn and adapted from Killion (2017) and Guskey (2000) will be used. The main framework for monitoring and evaluation is modified from Killion (2017). Although the original configuration includes eight steps, for the purposes of the monitoring the organizational improvement plan, only six rearranged steps will be used. The steps are as follows:

1. Construct the evaluation framework.
2. Formulate evaluation questions.
3. Collect data.
4. Organize, analyze, and display data.
5. Interpret data.
6. Report, disseminate, and use evaluation results (Killion, 2017, pp. 23-25).

It should be noted that the original framework in (Killion, 2017) positioned the construction of the evaluation framework after deciding on evaluation question. I altered it for the purposes of monitoring progress at BBES because it seemed to make more sense to decide on the type of evaluation before deciding on the questions to ask. Furthermore, considering that the evaluation is to be used for formative purposes and will not be conducted by a professional evaluator, eliminating two steps will make the process more manageable. Embedded within the modified framework, specifically step two, formulate evaluation questions, is another structure for evaluating professional development. Adapted from Guskey (2000), the sub-framework contains four levels:

1. Participants' learning.

2. Organization support and change.
3. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills.
4. Student learning outcomes (pp. 79-81).

As with the main framework, the preceding has been adapted from the original. Again, a step has been removed. In this case, step one has been deleted. The rationale behind this is that the questions intended to be answered at level one involve basic needs such as the temperature of the room and whether or not lunch was provided. These questions are not relevant to the context at BBES since all professional learning will be on-site, occur over several sessions, and on most occasions teachers either bring their lunches, or go out to a local restaurant so adding questions to measure this seems extraneous. Formative evaluation of teacher learning will occur once, at the end of the 2017-18 school year. What follows is an explanation of how evaluation and monitoring will be conducted using these models at BBES.

Step One: Construct the Evaluation Framework

Different options abound when deciding upon the framework for conducting evaluations. Evaluations can be either qualitative, quantitative, or use mixed-methodologies. The methodology selected should align with the questions from step two, and should provide evidence needed to answer those questions (Killion, 2017). In the case of BBES, a mixed-method small-scale study will be conducted. Survey data, based on the questions from step two, and student data collected throughout the year from writing assessments will be the two main data sources. In terms of student writing data, proficiency scores, determined by teacher-created four point rubrics from the beginning of the year and from each subsequent collaborative scoring session will be one source. Also, during each scoring session teachers will determine individual student writing needs, student progress in these areas will be considered in data collection as

well. One important note is that most small-scale studies are used in formative evaluation of programs to adjust implementation, while this study will be conducted at the end of the school year, the evaluation will serve to determine the program's effectiveness and whether or not adjustments need to be made. Furthermore, small-scale studies are useful when the scale of the implementation is small such as in the case of BBES (Killion, 2017).

Step Two: Formulate Evaluation Questions

When formulating questions to guide the evaluation, intended users of the evaluation, their needs and expectations, the purposes of the evaluation, and the program's outcomes (clarified in the last paragraph) all need to be identified (Killion, 2017). In the case of BBES, the evaluation of teacher learning serves two purposes: assessing program implementation and its impact on participants. The intended users of such an evaluation are the school's administration and the teachers at the school. Questions designed to evaluate professional learning across four of the levels identified in Guskey (2000) are appropriate to ask at this step. These questions include but are not limited to, was the professional learning useful as designed? Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills? What was impact on the organization? Were problems addressed quickly and efficiently? Did participants apply the new knowledge and skills? Did it affect student performance and achievement (pp.79-81). The data collected from teacher surveys and student writing data will attempt to answer these questions.

Step Three: Collect Data

In this step, data is collected according to the framework. As mentioned surveys will be designed and administered based on the questions from step two. Also, student writing data will be collected as a quantitative source of data. Student writing data will be collected from each

collaborative scoring session, scoring sessions will serve as checkpoints, with the monitoring focus being student proficiency levels and student learning needs at each checkpoint.

Step Four: Organize, Analyze, and Display Data

Step five includes summarizing, collating, synthesizing, displaying, and analyzing data to examine patterns and trends. Visual displays such as infographics help to present data in a such a way that interpretation is easier and conclusions can be formed (Killion, 2017). Throughout the school year, student writing data has been subject to collection, analysis, and responded to through classroom instruction. However, the focus during the data collection cycles is current writing samples, and more in-depth analyses with connections to previous samples are not completed. One purpose of displaying all of the student data is to look at the information from across the whole year and to look for progress. Coupling the student data with information from the teacher surveys will provide insight into any trends or gaps that are present. The expertise of the school division's data consultant will be called upon to assist at this stage.

Step Five: Interpret Data

This stage includes examining the analyzed data, forming judgements based on the analysis, and then making recommendations about the program (Killion, 2017). Again, the expertise of the data consultant will be used in this stage.

Step Six: Report, Disseminate, and Use Evaluation Results

Step six involves preparing both oral and written reports of the evaluation results, sharing the reports, and then using the results to make decisions about the program (Killion, 2017). As stated earlier, the intended users of the evaluation are the school administration and the teachers at BBES. Parents and community members may also be interested in the results. Since the

purpose of monitoring is as a formative evaluation, a written report may be important for teachers and administrators, but communicating the results will also need to include oral/visual presentations. Communication of the reports will occur through all channels to all stakeholders as outlined in the communication plan.

Linking leadership and professional learning to student learning has been not been an easy task, but the leadership practices mentioned above and described Leithwood et al. (2012) have been linked to improved student learning outcomes and the monitoring of evaluation of leadership conducted in this plan will seek to replicate (at least in part) those results. Furthermore, Guskey (2000) states that improvements in student learning have never been observed in the absence of professional development, but while the link between professional learning and student learning is clear, gathering definitive evidence of the link remains a challenge (p. 208). The former and latter points provide the rationale for monitoring and evaluating the organization improvement plan in this way considering the main solutions outlined are professional learning and leadership. Figure 4 (below) provides a visual summary of the monitoring and evaluation frameworks and process.

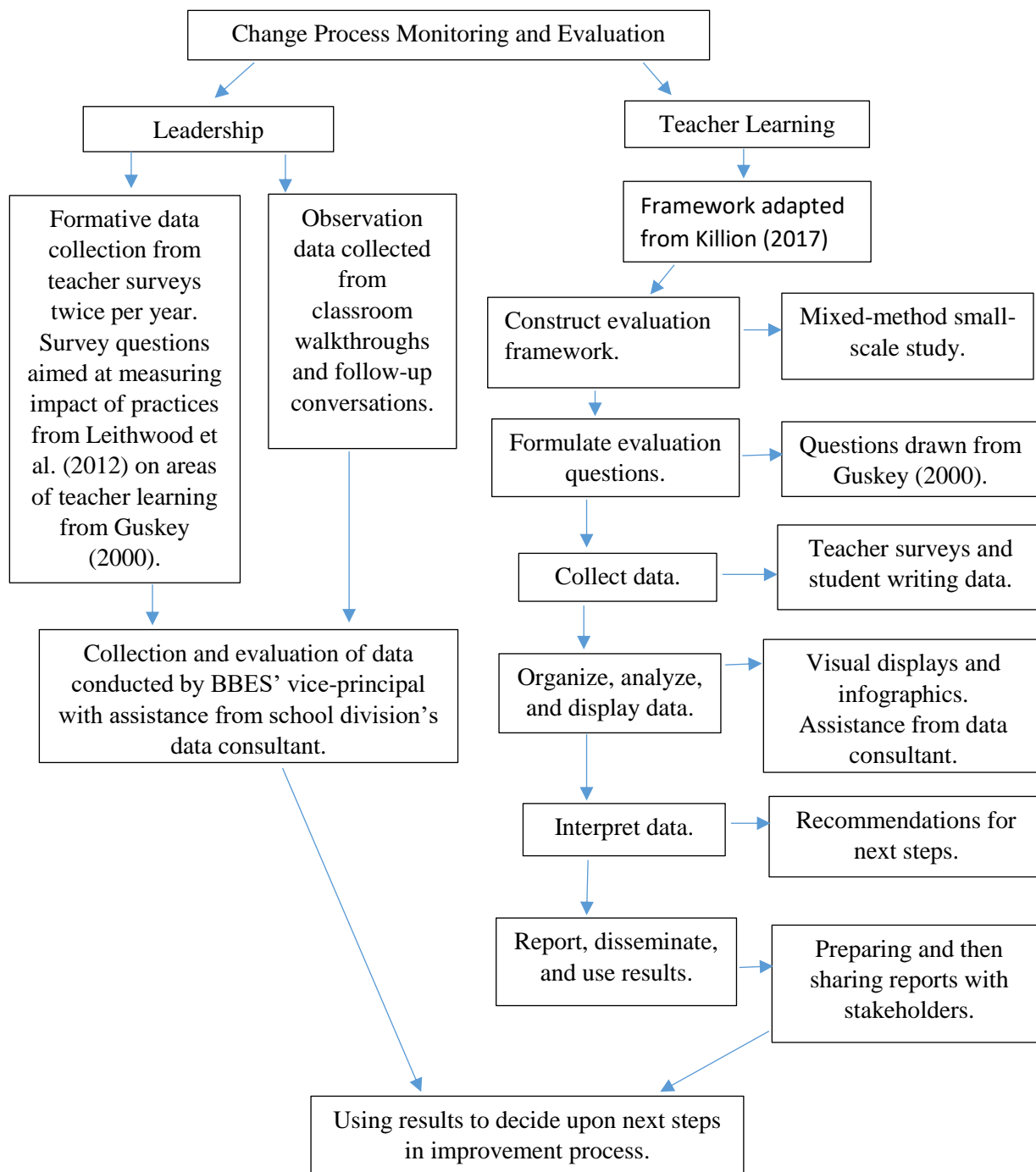


Figure 4-Evaluation and Monitoring Framework adapted from Guskey (2000) and Killion (2017).

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

Ethics has to do with leaders' behaviour, and ethics directs the choices leaders make and how they respond in given situations. As far as leadership is concerned, ethics is who leaders are and what they do (Northouse, 2016). According to Northouse (2016), there are five principles

which provide a foundation for ethical leadership: respect, service, justice, honesty, and community. Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, and Spina (2015) also present an ethical leadership framework that includes three ethics: care, justice, and critique. The ethics and principles of these varying views share overlapping features. For example, the principle of respect is described by Northouse (2016) as respecting others while allowing them to be themselves and approaching people with a sense of unconditional worth and valuable individual differences (p. 342). On the other hand, Ehrich et al. (2015) note that the ethic of care regards the dignity and worth of people and acknowledges an individual's right to be who they are. In addition, the principle of community means that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group to achieve a common goal while taking into account their own and followers' purposes (Northouse, 2016). Similarly, leaders who are driven by an ethic of justice create an environment in which democratic processes build and nurture a strong community (Ehrich et al., 2015). Importantly, it is these two groups of ethics, respect/care and community/justice, that are most applicable to BBES and the plans for change.

Respect/Care

As alluded to above, and as Northouse (2016) explains, the principle of respect includes confirming others as human beings. Comparably, Burns (1978) believed that leaders should assist followers in becoming aware of their needs, values, and purposes, and assist followers in integrating these with the leader's needs, values and purposes. This point is pertinent to the OIP for two reasons, first, Burns' seminal work set transformational leadership apart from other approaches because he notes that leadership has a moral dimension (Northouse, 2016), and because transformational leadership is the theoretical foundation to the leadership approaches to change. Additionally, Chapter 1 compared transformational and instructional leadership, with

one similarity being the *developing people* dimension from the Leithwood et al. (2012) model that calls for leaders to provide individual support and consideration to followers. This notion ties directly into the ethic of respect/care and also into the proposed solutions and leadership approaches to change. Specifically, the practice of individual consideration from the domain of *developing people* was chosen as part of the solution that included instructional leadership. In practice, giving people individual consideration is going to take the form of collaborative inquiry and following the process as outlined in Donohoo (2017) which includes deciding on basic priorities centered on writing instruction, and then working toward individual goals based on the established priorities. Using student writing data to inform teacher learning needs is also part of this process. Collaborative inquiry can be coupled with learning walks and talks as described in Sharratt and Planche (2016). During the learning walks, five questions (as mentioned in the proposed solutions) get asked of students and follow-up with the teacher takes place. The subsequent conversation can include an observation from the walk, a reflective question, and coaching. Following-up with the teacher allows for learning-focused conversations that honors the teacher's voice and views the teacher as being capable of altering practice based on feedback (p.87-89).

Whereas the principle of respect described in Northouse (2016) is concerned mostly with leaders and their followers, the ethic of care posed in Ehrich et al. (2015) seems to be more inclusive and appears to acknowledge every person that a leader encounters in their work. In settings such as a school, this is important, because staff members are not the only people who need their individuality valued, students do as well. The moral imperative as professed in Fullan (2010) would agree because deep learning for all children regardless of background or circumstance is at the heart of the principle. With that said, at BBES, high levels of learning are

expected from students as evidenced by the lofty goals that have been set, however, individual differences, needs, and skills levels of students need to be considered. In an inclusive school environment, such as the one at BBES, many students come to the school with special needs or skills that are not equivalent to their grade-level peers. In this case, high levels of learning are still expected and strived for, but the pathway or the time it takes students to reach goals needs to be considered and adjusted, in other words, their needs and differences are confirmed and valued.

Justice/Community

Comprising the second ethic of concern to the problem of practice is that of justice/community. To Northouse (2016), justice refers leaders' accounting for their own and their followers' purposes while working toward mutually suitable goals. Notions of shared goals are at the center of the underpinning leadership theories for change, transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and instructional leadership (Leithwood et al., 2012). Shared goals are also a part early stages of the framework for leading the change process, Mobilization (Cawsey et al., 2016), and Focusing Direction (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Moreover, both Northouse (2016) and Ehrich (2015) believe that leaders mindful of this ethic are attentive to culture and create democratic communities. Instructional leadership as a proposed solution and approach to change includes a domain known as *redesigning the organization* where leaders are concerned with building collaborative cultures and restructuring the organization to support collaboration (Leithwood et al., 2012) which directly connects to the principle of justice/community. Additionally, just as the relationship between collaborative inquiry and the ethic of care can be shown, so to can the relationship between collaborative inquiry and the ethic of justice/community. Donohoo (2017) outlines a four-step collaborative inquiry process where teachers set priorities, work together to

develop new knowledge and implement new practices, collectively analyze evidence, and then share and celebrate new understandings. Collaborative inquiry as a solution then, helps promote the establishment of community, it also satisfies the conditions for teacher leadership as defined by Harris (2005) where teachers show leadership in and out of the classroom, contribute to a community of learners, and influence others toward improved practice (a leadership approach to change).

Change Process Communication Plan

Chapter 2 introduced the four-phase communication plan to assist in conveying the important aspects of the proposed change. To reiterate, the four phases are pre-change approval, creating the need for change, midstream change and milestone communication, and confirming/celebrating the change success (Cawsey et al., 2016). This particular model for communicating change was chosen because it aligns well with the frameworks for leading the change process, that is, the combined Change Path Model (Cawsey et al., 2016) and Coherence Model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Furthermore, the communication plan can be integrated with the favoured implementation plan of Mento et al., (2002). Details regarding the connections between the aforementioned models and frameworks and how the communication plan applies to the organizational improvement plan will follow in the sections below.

Prechange Approval

The introduction of the communication in the preceding chapter included a brief explanation of what the phase entails. For the sake of clarity, the explanation will be repeated and then expanded upon. As Cawsey et al. (2016) state, in this phase those seeking change need to convince and influence those with the authority to approve the change, such as senior managers, that the change is needed (p. 320). In Saskatchewan Spirit School Division,

Superintendents hold such authority and gaining approval normally comes from endorsement of the school learning improvement plan at the beginning of the school year. Cawsey et al. (2016) explain that tying the change to organizational goals, plans and priorities is essential (p. 320), because writing is a provincial priority as set out in the ESSP (Government of Saskatchewan, 2014), a school division priority, and a school need supported by data, approval for the school learning improvement plan was a mere formality and has been completed.

Possibly even more important for gaining pre-change approval was securing consent from the new principal. Harris (2013) notes that active support from the principal is required for the success of any change. This is important because much of the organization analysis was completed in the spring of 2017, but in August 2017, a new principal took over. Prior to beginning in the position, the new principal had little knowledge of the school's background and academic needs. As vice-principal, I also have other roles in the change plan. Cawsey et al. (2016) would define these as change leader (person responsible for pulling people toward change through the use of a change vision), internal change agent (the employee who knows the organization and is attempting to create change), and the change project manager (coordinates planning, manages logistics, and tracks the team's progress) (pp. 285-286). With these roles in my mind, my task was to convince the new principal of the importance of the change. Approval was accomplished through presenting data (current and historical), defining and sharing the vision for change, and offering the proposed solutions.

Creating the Need for Change

The second stage of the communication plan involves creating awareness of the need for change and explaining issues while providing a clear and compelling rationale for the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). In other words, this phase of the communication plan requires the creation

and communication of a vision for change. This correlates with Focusing Direction from the Coherence Framework of Fullan and Quinn (2016) and the second stage from the Change Path Model, Mobilization, which necessitates including others in conversations about the need for change and soliciting participation in the process and, as mentioned, creation of a vision for change (Cawsey et al., 2016). This too aligns with several stages of the chosen implementation plan of Mento et al. (2002), specifically developing a change plan, finding and cultivating a sponsor, and preparing the target audience for change which include similar processes as the other frameworks at these stages.

At this point in the change process the objective is to communicate the need for change and plans for the intended to change to those the change affects and those who will be implementing the target of change. At Broken Blade Elementary, those who will be charged with implementing the change, and will be most affected are the teachers at the school. Cawsey et al. (2016) note that since there are many competing priorities a strong and credible sense of urgency needs to be conveyed. The situation at BBES is no different, many competing initiatives are apparent in the school division and ESSP. Treaty Education, academic goals in math, reading, and writing, and increasing student engagement are all contained in the current sector plan with intended attainment by 2020. With so many competing goals creating a sense of urgency around a writing goal presented a challenge, especially since the school had been focused on improving reading the two years prior. However, Cawsey et al. (2016) state that increasing the awareness of the need for change can be assisted by communicating comparative data. This was the strategy used at Broken Blade Elementary where comparative data showed that writing proficiency was currently far behind the other academic areas and was in dire need of improvement prior to 2020.

A couple final considerations at this stage of the plan is that teachers need clarification on the specific steps to be undertaken (communicated at the same time as the vision for change at BBES) and people need to be reassured that they will be treated fairly during the process (Cawsey et al., 2016). The latter point is especially important during times when the goals are, at least in part, driven by external mandates and pressures. Ehrich et al. (2015) note that during times such as those mentioned above, tensions can be negated through keeping the focus on improving student learning and using multiple sources of data to inform judgements on school performance. At BBES, this notion was relayed to staff, particularly that the data collected will be used to inform and improve instruction for students and not to judge teacher performance and multiple writing samples are to be collected throughout the year to help gauge progress. Any anxiety around data collection was further nullified due to the fact that teachers had used data to inform instruction for reading during the previous two school years and the staff seem to see the writing focus as the logical next (as well as being connected to previous efforts) step in the improvement progression.

Midstream Change Phase

The third phase of the communication plan coincides with the third stage of the combined framework for leading change drawn from Cawsey et al. (2016) and Fullan and Quinn (2016). The united stage is referred to as Acceleration, Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability in Chapter 2 of the OIP. During this stage, implementation of the solutions occurs. Aligning to the midstream change and the framework for leading change are three steps from the implementation plan as well. The steps are creating small wins for motivation, constantly and strategically communicate the change, and measure progress of the change effort (Mento et al., 2002).

During this period of the communication plan two main concerns are at the forefront for change leaders, communicating to employees how the change will affect their jobs, and communicating progress of the change program (Cawsey et al., 2016). The former concern is of utmost importance if the organization is being reorganized and new systems are being put into place where employees need training (Cawsey et al, 2016). In the course of implementation, BBES will not be reorganized, but adjustments to professional learning communities will take place. Prior to 2017, professional learning communities were a forced, or contrived form of collaboration between the grade 1-3 teachers and grade 4-6 teachers. Meetings occurred for 30 minutes every second week and topics were chosen for the groups or were ad hoc. As part of the implemented solutions, collaborative inquiry sessions will take the place of the professional learning communities. These sessions will include examining student data, formulating a question about trends in the data, and then researching and practicing solutions as suggested by Donohoo (2017). Communication about expectations and processes involved during the sessions has to be clear to make sure that teachers are implementing the new structure properly. As change project manager, I will take part in the meetings and model the process of collaborative inquiry.

The second concern in this phase relates to communicating progress (Cawsey et al., 2016). Progress will be measured in a few ways. One way, is tracking student writing progress from one collaborative scoring session to the next and discussing progress. Furthermore, monitoring progress on the implementation of solutions from the perspective of teachers will occur through surveys and guided by the professional learning frameworks of Guskey (2000) and Killion (2017). Combining student data with teacher survey responses will allow for a robust view of the change process. Results will be shared with teachers and progress will be celebrated.

This will happen at formal meetings such as the collaborative scoring sessions, inquiry meetings, and staff meetings.

Up to this point, the communication has focused solely on ensuring that those who need to approve the change, and those who need to implement the change are duly informed of the reasons and progress of the change. Nevertheless, the interests of one key stakeholder, parents, have been omitted thus far. To achieve the intended levels of student success, it is important to engage parents and guardians in the work of the school as much as possible. As Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) contend, schools can account for 20% of the variation in student achievement, so family variables are likely to be a high-leverage strategy for school leaders. Santana, Rothstein, and Bain (2016) offer the idea of an open house to introduce the three roles that parents can play in order to partner with the school. The first role is support, which includes setting bedtimes and homework help. A second role parents can play is monitor, that is, reviewing report cards and other material coming home. Finally, parents can advocate by reaching out proactively to address emerging problems. Open houses for parents will be used in conjunction with other school/home communication methods to announce progress such as newsletters and social media accounts.

Confirming/Celebrating the Change Success

The final phase of the communication plan comprises of communicating and celebrating the success of the program and also signals the part of the plan where the change experience needs to be discussed with those affected by the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). This step correlates with the final phases of the framework for leading change, Institutionalization (Cawsey et al., 2016), and the change implementation plan, Integrating Lessons Learned (Mento et al., 2002). Similar methods (staff meetings, social media etc.) to communicate the success of

the change will be used in this phase as in the previous phase, only this time communication will revolve around successes with improved teacher practice, improved collaboration, not just improved student writing.

Summary

The central purpose of the communication plan is to inform stakeholders of the need for change, engage stakeholders in carrying out the change, and then communicating progress of the change. The four-stage plan is easily integrated with the frameworks for leading change and the implementation plan. Using this plan in conjunction with the other frameworks outlined in the organizational improvement plan will ensure that communication meets the needs of teachers and stakeholders so that proposed solutions can proceed and succeed as planned.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Chapter 1 framed the problem of practice as well the established the envisioned future state. The envisioned future state at Broken Blade Elementary School was stated as such: with improved teacher practice and capacity, as well as enhanced assessment methods, 80% of students will be proficient writers with no difference between First Nations and non-First Nations students. Arising from the envisioned future state are a few future considerations and possible next steps. First, although the articulated envisioned future state seeks to eliminate differences in achievement between First Nations and non-First Nations students, there is very little, if any, deliberate differentiation in practice evident in the proposed solutions or approaches to change. Initially, practices aimed at First Nations achievement specifically were intended to be included. However, as research and writing on the problem of practice progressed, such practices were willfully abandoned. Reason being, discerning practices that served one group of

students over another seemed unnecessary early in the change because both groups are underachieving in writing.

Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2012) note that strong shared and instructional leadership, strong professional community, and strong instruction moderate the effects of minority status (p. 39), all of which are intended outcomes of the proposed solutions. Moreover, in her review of instructional leadership in First Nation schools, including schools with a high percentage of First Nations students, Burym (2016) found that the same instructional leadership practices are successful, with the addition of building strong student and community relationships.

In addition to the conditions specified above, Budge and Parrett (2018) outline five values present in schools with populations of traditionally underserved students that are high performing. Three of these conditions are most applicable to BBES. The first of these values, commitment to equity, where teachers differentiate support for students based on individual needs. Next, professional accountability for learning, where teachers are responsible for student learning and will persevere when students do not learn right away. Finally, courage and will to take action is a value present in high performing schools. This means that teachers understand that barriers to learning may be present but are not impossible to eliminate (p. 15).

The aforementioned values bear a striking resemblance to collective teacher efficacy, which Tschannen –Moran and Barr (2004) and DeWitt (2017) define as the perceptions held by teachers in a school that they can collectively make an educational difference in students over and above that of their homes and community. Donohoo (2017) notes that there are teaching behaviours positively associated with collective efficacy which include putting forth greater effort and persistence especially toward students who are experiencing difficulty and trying new teaching approaches based on effective pedagogy (p. 13). In addition, studies conducted by

Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2004) and Donohoo (2017) found that collective teacher efficacy is a stronger predictor of student achievement than socioeconomic status. In fact, Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018) state that collective teacher efficacy has more than triple the effect of home environment (p. 42). Further to this, when school leaders believe that teachers are the main influence on student achievement, students and teachers will rise to those expectations (Reeves, 2008). Considering these points, it seems as if collective teacher efficacy is a precursor to effective instruction in every classroom, and Katz and Dack (2013) explain that what teachers do with their students everyday has the greatest potential to impact outcomes for students and the more challenges students face, the more true this is (p.4). Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2009) even go so far to say that it has been conclusively proven that schools control the factors that ensure students master the curriculum (p. 50).

These statements do not negate the consequences that are often associated socioeconomic status, but as Robinson (2011) notes, the influence of school-based factors such as collective teacher efficacy and leadership are much greater than often assumed. Collective teacher efficacy is one of the main consequences of building a strong community as intended in the proposed solutions. Considering that developing strong shared and instructional leadership, strong community, strong instructional practice, and high levels of collective teacher efficacy are embedded in the problem of practice, attention was not paid to cultural differences, but, if these factors do not result in the envisioned outcomes, more culturally responsive methods may need to be revisited.

With a student population that consists of over half First Nations heritage, and a future envisioned state that recognizes the need to increase equity in outcomes between those of Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, the improvement plan fails to recognize another

sub-population of students currently attending BBES. Presently, there are ten German Mennonite pupils attending Broken Blade Elementary, all of which speak English as a second language and who arrived at the school with low English language skills. In addition, there are five students that were born in South Africa and three students of Indian descent that immigrated to Canada who also are English language-learners that attend BBES. In total, there are 18 students at Broken Blade Elementary that are learning English as a second language, that accounts for approximately 12% of the student population. While the proposed solutions are expected to have the same impact on these students as the rest, the possibility remains that they will not, so progress will need to be monitored closely in order to ensure student needs are being met and adjusting practice as needed.

A penultimate consideration that has possible implications for next steps is the choice of leadership models as a solution and approach to change. Chosen because the dimensions and practices contained in the model are easily integrated into other areas of the organizational improvement plan such as the framework for leading the change process and proposed solution, instructional leadership is also known to be effective in educational settings with an average effect factor of .42 (Hattie, 2015b). For this reason, other models and theories of leadership such as adaptive, servant, and culturally proficient, were not engaged. Even so, if practices are applied with fidelity, and monitoring processes reveal that BBES is not achieving the desired results, then other forms of leadership practice may need to be considered, especially with the student population that Broken Blade Elementary School serves. Regardless of the potential need for modifying practice during the course of the change, Robinson (2011) provides further rationale for choosing instructional leadership over other theories. She says that leadership practice needs to be anchored in knowledge of teaching and learning, and that 'education' needs

to be put back into educational leadership (p. 150). As a model, instructional leadership does that, and even though other factors and models may provide possible barriers and solutions, when it comes to school environments, instructional leadership is known to be highly effective.

One final consideration for next steps relates to the glaring absence of specific writing strategies, practices, or programs to aid in the improvement of student writing skills and achievement. The lack of attention given to specific strategies throughout the OIP was intentional. While a student learning need, as Katz and Dack (2013) argue, indicates a teacher learning need, instead of mandating teachers use, or learn to use certain strategies, the improvement plan and possible solutions operated under the assertion by Lieberman et al. (2017) that allowing teachers to have input into their professional learning promotes ownership and engagement over the same. Instead, collaborative inquiry guided by the process set out in Donohoo (2017) was chosen as the vehicle for bringing about instructional change and improvement. Throughout this process, as long as teacher inquiry remains focused on the problem of practice, improvement should be possible. The possibility remains that the desired results will not be achieved, in such a case, other options such as writing programs or specific strategies can be focused upon.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

The third and final chapter included five sections, beginning with the Change Implementation Plan and followed by Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation. These first two sections detail actions integral to producing the desired change and ensuring that intended results occur. Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change, and the Change Process Communications Plan accompanied the aforementioned sections. The latter set out the moral and ethical considerations of the plan while the former expounded the process and importance of

communicating reasons and details of the change plan and the relationship to other areas of the OIP. Finally, Next Steps and Future Considerations provides rationale for decisions made regarding actions included or excluded in the improvement plan.

Organizational Improvement Plan Conclusion

Schmoker (1999) argues that significant, sustained improvement cannot occur in free-lance, isolated schools and improvement only happens when purpose and effort unite. He goes on to contend that the type of environments that schools need in order to improve are those where effective teamwork guided by measureable goals which is then monitored through performance data and supported by school leadership takes precedence. Wiliam (2018) adds that to create the schools our children need, we need to improve the teachers we have and create environments so that all teachers can learn. That is precisely why several approaches and solutions, including those mentioned above, were chosen and weaved throughout this organizational improvement plan. With writing underachievement being so profound and enduring, many solutions working in concert will be required.

However, as Schmoker (2016) notes, there is no single script or sequence by which leaders can implement change to create effective schools, context matters. The organizational improvement plan employs many frameworks and models in order to secure needed change. Although the frameworks and models represent evidence-informed and best practice, monitoring and adjustment according to circumstances and results will be needed in order for desired outcomes to transpire. It is then that the moral purpose and vision for equitable, high-quality learning for every student can be achieved.

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