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TRANSFORMING SECONDARY GRADING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON DEPARTMENT CHAIRS' LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

by

Daniel J. Kleinschrodt

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Leadership
June 22, 2023

School of Education
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ABSTRACT

Grading and assessment practices in high schools are often inconsistent within a school and include a mix of academic and nonacademic factors. Redefinition of grading and assessment practices is needed to ensure that grading and assessment lead to accurate reporting of student learning. To understand how new practices are implemented at the teacher level, it is important to understand how school-based leaders work with teachers to implement changes. This study explored the lived experiences of department chairs at the high school level in the study area.

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of the department chairs to determine which leadership attributes and which servant leadership behaviors emerged as being beneficial to enacting changes to grading and assessment. Thirteen high school department chairs participated in interviews as part of this study and the interview transcripts were analyzed using the modified van Kaam method. The following leadership attributes emerged as themes: becoming a leader; having a strong personal philosophy; leading by example and influencing teachers; building trust and fostering relationships; being reflective; coping with difficult emotion; and navigating district context and culture. The following servant leadership behaviors emerged as themes: conceptualizing; emotional healing; helping followers grow and succeed; and empowering followers. Additional themes emerged in the areas of revising practices in instruction, assessment, and grading; encountering barriers to change; and building collective efficacy. This study contributed to the literature on revising grading and assessment practices, and leaders can examine the findings of this study to develop policies and practices for implementing change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF CONTENTS i

LIST OF TABLES iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 2

Purpose of the Study 3

Research Questions 3

Conceptual Framework for Grading and Assessment Practices 4

Theoretical Framework 5

Significance of the Study 11

Definition of Terms 12

Summary 14

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE 17

Conceptual Framework 17

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature 20

Summary 36

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 42

Research Design and Rationale 43

Setting and Participants 45

Sampling Procedures 46

Instrumentation and Measures 51

Reliability 52

Validity 53

Data Collection 54

Data Analysis 56

Ethical Issues 87

Summary 90

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 92

Findings of Qualitative Research 92

Summary 169

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 171

Summary of the Study 173

Implications for Practice 187

Recommendations for Further Research 189

Limitations 190

Delimitations 191

Conclusions 192

Summary 194

REFERENCES 195

APPENDICES 205

Appendix A: Pre-interview Survey 205

Appendix B: Leadership Self-Analysis Pre-interview Survey Questions 206

Appendix C: In-person Interview Questions 208

Appendix D: Field Notes Template 209

Appendix E: CITI Certificate 210

Appendix F: Institutional Review Board Decision 211

Appendix G: Informed Consent 212

Appendix H: Demographic Data of the Schools Represented in the Study 214

Appendix I: Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes 216

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Participant Summary and Self-reported Servant Leadership Behaviors 47

Table 3.2 Sample Coding Table of Interview Transcripts and Artifacts 58

Table 3.3 Example Coding Table - Beth 59

Table 3.4 Example Coding Table - Eugene 60

Table 3.5 Example Coding Table Isabelle 62

Table 3.6 Sample Table for Thematizing the Interview Trancscripts and Artifacts 64

Table 3.7 Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Beth 65

Table 3.8 Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Eugene 68

Table 3.9 Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Isabelle 71

Table 3.10 Sample Table of Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes 74

Table 3.11 Example of Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes 75

Table 3.12 Emergent Themes and Composite Textural-structural Descriptions 84

Table 4.1 Average Scores of Servant Leadership Behaviors 115

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my dissertation committee chair and committee members at Concordia University Irvine for shepherding me through the dissertation phase of the doctoral program. Dr. Kelly Skon's guidance and encouragement as chair were invaluable in helping me refine my research questions and methodology and helping me truly understand the phenomenological approach to qualitative research. I would like to thank Dr. Teresa Hess for her support and feedback as a committee member. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Aliza Gilbert for her wisdom, feedback, and encouragement to finish the dissertation journey.

In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Audrey Rabas and Dr. Joseph Rumenapp who were both on my initial dissertation committee at Concordia University Portland. Dr. Rabas' guidance as my committee chair and Dr. Rumenapp's knowledge as the methodologist were very helpful in selecting the right approach for my dissertation. Although we couldn't finish the journey together, your feedback helped shape this dissertation.

I would also like to thank the thirteen participants in this study. Giving up a few hours to chat with a doctoral student is not usually high on anyone's list of priorities, but I really appreciated the opportunities you each gave me to dig deep into leadership practices and talk teaching and learning. Your insight was invaluable to me in writing this dissertation, and I believe anyone in middle management in school leadership can learn something from each of your contributions.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife and children for their love and support through the doctoral program and dissertation. I couldn't have finished this without my wife's willingness to take care of everyone while I was working on this study. And to my children, I promise that I am done with "homework" for a long, long time.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Changes are needed to grading and assessment practices to create better learning outcomes for students. Although the meaning of grades has changed and evolved over time (Schneider & Hutt, 2014), grading and assessment practices in schools have remained relatively unchanged, with most teachers including a mix of academic and nonacademic factors in final student grades (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). Even with recent reforms like standards-based grading and assessment for learning (Popham, 2017), traditional grading and assessment practices are still in place as a primary means to determine a student's grade in class. If true progress is to be made, assessment practices must be implemented that include formative feedback to help students revise their thinking, multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, and student self-evaluation (Shepard, Penuel, & Pellegrino, 2018). Also, educational leaders should provide learning opportunities and professional development activities to implement revised grading and assessment practices with fidelity (Knight & Cooper, 2019).

Educational leaders can use their position to influence the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervise. For example, using a case-study design, Huggins, Scheurich, and Morgan (2011) determined that principal leadership and involvement in the professional learning community was the most significant factor in increasing teacher and student learning. However, the role of mid-level leadership in secondary schools in the study area, such as department chairs, is not well studied in the literature. Based on my experience in suburban high schools in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest, department chairs have the most interaction with teachers and therefore the greatest opportunity to influence teachers as they determine and implement grading and assessment practices. Understanding how department

chairs lead their teachers in the area of grading and assessment will help other leaders understand which behaviors are most influential in reforming teachers' practices.

Statement of the Problem

There is a problem in the grading and assessment practices of secondary school teachers, and little has been done to directly address the problems of classroom grading (Cox, 2011). That problem, specifically, is that the variety of grading and assessment practices that teachers use leads to inconsistent reporting of student learning (Kunnath, 2017). Currently, alternative grading practices, such as standards-based grading, have only been suggested or minimally implemented to standardize the reporting of student learning. In cases where system-wide reforms have been implemented (Erickson, 2011), there is little information available on how school leaders in those systems worked with individual teachers to change their perceptions of classroom grading and assessment practices and implement suggested reforms. This problem impacts many stakeholders at school, including students, teachers, administrators, and parents because teacher assigned grades have a significant impact on the students' futures. For example, grades are used in placement decisions and determining which students need remediation or additional support; and grades and grade point averages are an important component in the college admissions process (Kunnath, 2017).

There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are the fact that grades are influenced by deeply held teacher beliefs and grading and assessment practices are often left to the teacher to decide. In some cases, the teachers' decision to determine how a student is graded is part of a state's educational law or dictated in policy by the local school board. School leaders and administrators may avoid dealing directly with these issues because of a fear of how a teacher may respond (Feldman, 2019). In a qualitative case-study of professional

learning communities, principal leadership emerged as a significant factor (Huggins et al., 2011). However, many schools in the study area utilize middle level leadership, such as department chairs, to manage, supervise, and evaluate teachers. In these schools, department chairs rather than principals have the closest relationship with teachers and are likely to have greater influence on teacher attitudes and perceptions towards grading and assessment practices. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem of inconsistent grading and assessment practices by focusing on the leadership experiences of department chairs with the teachers they supervise, and how department chairs might influence which practices teachers choose to include or exclude in their determination of students' academic grades.

Purpose of the Study

Although several studies have examined the grading and assessment practices teachers use (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; McMillan, 2001; Russel & Austin, 2010), few studies have focused on the experiences of school leaders when working with the teachers they supervise to influence grading and assessment practices. Furthermore, the literature on the role of school leaders as it relates to grading and assessment practices has primarily focused on the principal or assistant principal level of leadership (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Erickson, 2011; Huggins et al., 2011; Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012; Townsley, 2018). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of department chairs to understand what leadership practices are most effective in influencing teachers' grading and assessment practices.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question (PRQ): What themes emerge as being beneficial to department chairs as they lead and supervise teachers as they relate to the implementation of grading and assessment practices and reforms?

Secondary Research Question (SRQ): What servant leadership behaviors emerge as being beneficial for department chairs as they work with teachers in their departments to develop and/or reform individual and departmental grading and assessment practices?

Conceptual Framework for Grading and Assessment Practices

The grading and assessment practices of teachers have changed over time (Schneider & Hutt, 2014), with grades still including a mix of academic and nonacademic factors (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). Nonacademic factors include components such as effort, behavior, work completion, and attendance. When these nonacademic factors are included in a student's grade, the grade becomes a valid predictor of future success for that student (Thorsen, 2014). However, when nonacademic factors are excluded from a student's grade, the grade assigned shows a stronger correlation to standardized test scores (Hochbein & Pollio, 2016). The assessment practices and grading procedures that teachers use to determine students' grades are often inconsistent because teachers receive little to no formal training in these areas (Brookhart et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2017). As an example of this inconsistency, studies showed that teachers consider many factors when assigning a grade, and the grades assigned to the same student's work varied greatly depending on the teacher assigning the grade (Brimi, 2011; Resh, 2009; Shulha, 1999). Other factors, such as school and teacher characteristics, teacher perceptions, and parent education levels have also been shown to have some impact on students' grades (Feldman, 2019, Klapp Lekholm, 2011; Llosa, 2008; Resh, 2009).

Several grading reforms have been suggested to provide greater clarity and consistency in teacher assigned grades. Several scholars argued that formative assessments should not be a component in the final grades assigned to students (Popham, 2017; Schimmer, 2016; Shepard et

al., 2018). Rather, the focus of formative assessment should be on descriptive feedback that the student can use to improve their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008).

Standards-based grading and assessment is another reform effort that attempts to provide greater consistency. In standards-based grading, student performance is compared against clearly defined criteria, usually in a rubric (Brookhart, 2013; Feldman, 2019; Marzano, 2010). Studies that examined standards-based grading found that teacher beliefs and student efforts influenced grading practices (Cox, 2011); students experiencing a standards-based environment were more likely to earn a grade of an A or B (Hochbein & Pollio, 2016); and a shift to standards-based grading made teaching and learning more effective and enjoyable (Knight & Cooper, 2019).

Other reform efforts have also been recommended to improve the consistency of grading and assessment. These efforts include the use of multiple or alternative assessments (Cox, 2011; Marzano & Heflebower, 2011); grades that only reflect student learning (Erickson, 2011; Knight & Cooper, 2019; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Shippy et al., 2013); and ending practices that do not support student learning, such as using the average in determining a grade (O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

One area that is not well studied in the literature is the role that school-based leaders play in enacting grading and assessment reforms, especially on how school-based leaders work with individual teachers and groups of teachers to implement reforms. Specifically, Cox (2011) recommended that an area for future research should examine the role the organization plays in determining grading reforms. Similarly, Knight and Cooper (2019) recommended that school administrators explore teachers' perceptions of and hesitations about grading reforms, including standards-based grading.

Many high schools in the study area utilized department chairs as leaders to supervise, evaluate, and in some respects coach teachers. As such, department chairs have an opportunity to influence the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervise. In schools with department chairs, these chairs are most likely to have the greatest influence over the teachers within their departments due to the evaluative nature of the department chair-teacher relationship, and the chairs' direct knowledge of and proximity to the teachers they supervise. However, the way in which department chairs interact with their teachers in developing grading and assessment practices or implementing these changes is not clear. There is little, if any research on how department chairs use their position of leadership to influence teachers' practices. This study will attempt to elucidate which leadership behaviors are most beneficial to influence teachers to implement grading and assessment reforms.

There are several theories of leadership which may influence the style of leadership a department chair chooses to employ in working with their teachers. Northouse (2019) examined the evolution of the various ways of conceptualizing leadership styles from the 20th and into the 21st century to arrive at the following definition: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). There are many approaches within this general definition of leadership that a department chair may find appropriate. Often, department chairs may use different approaches to leadership depending on the situation at hand. For this study, the servant leadership approach explained by Northouse will be used to explore the leadership experiences of department chairs. In servant leadership, leaders are "attentive to the concerns of their followers, empathize with them, and nurture them. Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse, 2019, p. 227). Furthermore, Northouse described the components of servant leader behaviors,

which included conceptualizing; emotional healing; putting followers first; helping followers grow and succeed; behaving ethically; empowering; and creating value for the community (Liden et al. as cited in Northouse, 2019).

Although other forms of leadership, such as transactional leadership, may be more effective at implementing a particular grading or assessment practice, little care or attention is paid to the relationship between the leader and the teacher. In my experience, changes to teachers practices that are implemented through transactional based leadership approaches, or similar top-down, authoritative approaches, are often less effective and not implemented with fidelity due to the lack of focus on the relationship between the leader and teacher, and the lack of care for the well-being of the teacher. For this reason, servant leadership is the lens through which the experiences of department chairs will be explored in this study because altruism is the central tenet of servant leadership (Northouse, 2019).

I am studying the servant leadership experiences of high school department chairs as they relate to grading and assessment practices because I want to understand what behaviors and themes emerge as being most beneficial to implement reforms to grading and assessment practices. Grading and assessment practices include the variety of formative and summative tools that teachers use to measure students' understanding and determine students' grades. Several researchers have shown that most teachers include a mix of academic and nonacademic components in students' grades (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). However, teachers receive little formal training in pre-service programs or on the job training in grading and assessment practices (Brookhart et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2017). Although several studies have attempted to shed light in which practices teachers implement (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; McMillan, 2001), more research is needed to

determine why and how teachers choose those practices (Duncan & Noonan, 2007). I am exploring this phenomenon because I want to help my reader understand how department chairs use their position of leadership to influence teachers' grading and assessment practices.

Servant Leadership to Implement Reforms

Servant leadership is one approach to leadership that focuses on two main aspects: the servant and the leader. In servant leadership, the leader is a servant first (Greenleaf, 2002; Northouse, 2019). This style of leadership is superior to other models of leadership in schools because servant leaders focus on the growth and development of their followers, teachers in the case of schools, to become servant leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 2002). This creates positive outcomes for the individual servant leaders and the school and district organization. When it comes to influencing and changing teacher practices around assessment and grading, servant leadership has the greatest potential to move the needle on these practices for an entire school building because the teachers become servant leaders themselves, and in turn have the capacity to influence others.

Background and Overview of Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership was first developed by Robert K. Greenleaf in his early writings in the 1970s (Northouse, 2019). Greenleaf developed the concept of servant leadership based on his interpretation of Herman Hesse's novel, The Journey to the East, in which the servant of the group depicted in the book emerged as the true leader (Northouse, 2019). Further studies of Greenleaf's writings and depictions of servant leadership identified key characteristics and behaviors of servant leaders. Spears (as cited in Northouse, 2019) identified 10 characteristics of servant leaders: listening; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualization; foresight; stewardship; commitment to the growth of people; and building

community. Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (as cited in Northouse, 2019) further described seven behaviors of servant leaders: conceptualization; emotional healing; putting followers first; healing followers grow and succeed; behaving ethically; empowering; and creating value for the community. Together, these characteristics and behaviors create a mindset of servant leaders in which the followers are the central focus of the leadership actions. The goal of servant leadership is to develop the followers into servant leaders themselves. Doing so will create a culture of servant leadership, leading to positive outcomes for all involved. Another hallmark of servant leadership is the positive outcomes that result, including the benefit to the organization and the general improvement of society. Servant leadership is a better model of leadership than competing models of leadership due to this focus on follower development and positive outcomes.

Characteristics of Servant Leaders

The definition of servant leadership and its constituent characteristics used in this study will be those developed by Liden et al. (as cited in Northouse, 2019). The behaviors of conceptualizing, emotional healing, putting followers first, growing followers, empowering followers, behaving ethically, and creating value for the community are cornerstones of effective servant leaders. A servant leader with these behaviors will foster growth in their followers to become servant leaders as well and grow the collective capacity for leadership within the school organization. Each of these behaviors will be described with examples of how they can be implemented in practice.

Conceptualizing. Conceptualizing is the process a leader uses to create a mission or vision for the organization (Liden et al. as cited in Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders use the mission and vision combined with a deep understanding of the organization to guide all

decisions. Servant leaders should work with the followers in their organization to develop a clear mission and vision statement. These become the guiding principles that servant leaders and their followers refer to when decisions need to be made.

Emotional Healing. Emotional healing is the servant leader's ability to show empathy and genuine concern for their followers well-being (Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders go out of their way to understand the emotions of their followers, and take direct actions to support them, especially in times of great need. Servant leaders also put the needs of their followers ahead of their own personal interests (Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders can accomplish emotional healing through one-on-one meetings with each followers to listen to the needs of the follower and build a supportive relationship.

Putting Followers First. Successful servant leaders put the needs of their followers ahead of their own personal interests (Northouse, 2019; Russell & Stone, 2002). One strategy that leaders can implement to put their followers first is to take interest and participate in the activities of their followers on a regular basis. This could come in the form of working with a follower and contributing to a project they are working on, regular visits with the follower to better understand the work they are doing and participating in any projects they assign to their followers. In essence, servant leaders are willing to "talk the talk" and "walk the walk" with their followers.

Growing and Empowering Followers. Servant leaders are follower focused. They invest in the growth of their followers and empower them to make decisions independently (Northouse, 2019). In the same way that teachers identify needs and differentiate support for their students, servant leaders must do the same for their followers. Servant leaders build organizational support by empowering their followers to share in the decision-making process.

Servant leaders must give their followers the time and resources needed to pursue their development.

Behaving Ethically. Behaving ethically means making the right decision based on the values of honesty and trust (Northouse, 2019). In a study of effective school districts, the trust built between effective leaders "lubricates the connections among groups or individuals in a densely connected network of relationships" (Leithwood & Azah, 2017, p. 46). Usually, the easiest decision is not the most ethical. Servant leaders should understand that making the ethical decision usually takes more investment of time and resources to arrive at the right decision.

Creating Value for the Community. Servant leaders create value for the community through active participation in the community and giving back to the community in meaningful ways (Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders also encourage their followers to give back to the community (Northouse, 2019) and they create opportunities for them to do so. Servant leaders become a role model for their followers to create value for the community. In finding opportunities, servant leaders should connect their service to their own passions to make the act of service one that is enjoyable instead of a chore or another check box on a to-do list. Servant leaders should also create opportunities for their followers to participate in creating value for the community and recognize those individuals that participate.

Significance of the Study

The grading and assessment practices of teachers have a direct impact on the daily lives of students. In a recent article in a Chicago newspaper, the increased reliance on maintaining high grades and grade point averages for college admissions is leading to increased levels of student stress, anxiety, hospitalizations for these conditions, and in some cases, suicide (Cullotta, Berkowitz, Fornek, & Baker, 2017). However, districts that have attempted to implement

reforms to grading and assessment practices often face pushback from the community, possibly making educators more reluctant to engage in these reform efforts (Berkowitz, 2020; Giuliani, 2021). As the COVID-19 pandemic re-engaged many educators across the nation in the review and discussion of grading and assessment practices when many states implemented "do no harm" grading in the spring of 2020 (Leone & Cullotta, 2020), several districts implemented grading and assessment reforms for the 2021-22 school year (Esquivel, 2021). Although many of these reforms had been in development for years prior to the pandemic, COVID-19 quickened the implementation of reforms. The question facing school leaders now is whether these reforms become more widespread and permanent when the pandemic is over.

This study is designed to understand how school leaders use their position of leadership to implement grading and assessment reforms that outlast the pandemic and improve outcomes for students. The potential for studying the leadership behaviors of school leaders, specifically department chairs, and their influence on the grading and assessment practices of teachers is quite high. One area that is not well studied in the literature is how department chairs use their position of leadership and which behaviors they employ that might influence the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervise. This study aims to contribute to the knowledge base of which leadership behaviors and practices are most effective in working with teachers to implement grading and assessment reforms.

Definition of Terms

Academic Factors: The components of student learning that are assessed through formative and/or summative assessments and are directly related to the academic knowledge (Bowers, 2011) and skills in the classroom.

Assessment: The strategies that a teacher uses to collect evidence of student learning and adjust teaching and learning (Guskey & Jung, 2013). For the purposes of this study, assessment refers to teacher, school, and/or district developed assessments for the purposes of formative or summative assessment.

Department Chair: A high school leader that oversees one or more academic departments of teachers. In this study, the term department chair also includes division/divisional chairs and directors of a content area.

Feedback: the information that a teacher provides to a student to give the student a direction or specific actions to take to make better progress on learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Furthermore, Hattie and Timperley explained that effective feedback reduces the gap between current and desired levels of understanding and enhances student learning.

Formative Assessment: The formal process of collecting evidence of student learning through an assessment, and the evidence is then used by the teacher to adjust instruction or by the student to adjust learning methods (Popham, 2011). Depending on the grading practices in place at the school or within the teacher's practice, the student grades on formative assessments may or may not be included in the student's final grade.

Grades: "[T]he symbols, words, or numerals that teachers assign to evidence on student learning to signify different levels of achievement" (Guskey & Jung, 2013, p. 64).

Grading: The act of assigning a grade or score to an individual piece of evidence of student learning or determining the overall grade for a student on a report card.

Grading Practices: The overall system of rules or guidelines within which grades are assigned.

Nonacademic Factors: The components that affect a student's grade or overall success in school that are not directly related to content knowledge or academic skills. Nonacademic factors include behavior, participation, and effort (Bowers, 2011). Depending on an individual teacher's grading practices, these grades may be reflected in a student's final grade through assignment of points for work completion, on time work completion, participation grades, and/or citizenship grades.

Servant Leadership: The style of leadership that focuses on the leader being a servant first, and one that is focused on the growth and development of their followers (Greenleaf, 2002; Northouse, 2019). The seven specific behaviors of servant leaders are: conceptualizing, emotional healing, putting followers first, growing followers, empowering followers, behaving ethically, and creating value for the community (Liden et al. as cited in Northouse, 2019).

Summative Assessment: A tool used to determine attainment of overall goals or assign grades; summative assessments usually cover a broader set of concepts or skills over an entire course; and a summative assessment usually takes a more significant amount of time for a student to complete (Guskey & Jung, 2013). Typical teacher created summative assessments include unit tests, projects, written reports, and exhibits of work (Guskey & Jung, 2013). Teacher created summative assessments are almost always included in a student's final grade.

Summary

Grading and assessment in secondary schools is fraught with issues, many of which have gone unresolved for decades. Many teachers include a mix of academic and nonacademic factors to determine a student's final grade in a course (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). Academic factors are those components that are directly related to the academic standards, content knowledge, and skills (Bowers, 2011)

that students should be able to demonstrate in each content area. The nonacademic factors are the components that are not directly related to the academic standards, content knowledge, and skills in the content area, such as work completion, behavior, and participation (Bowers, 2011). While Bowers (2011) would argue that grades that include a mix of academic and nonacademic factors can be useful data points for a school, others (Erickson, 2011; Knight & Cooper, 2019; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Shippy et al., 2013) would argue that grades should only represent a student's understanding of the academic components.

The purpose of this study is to understand how school leaders use their position of leadership and which leadership behaviors have the most influence in changing teacher assessment and grading practices to create systems that are consistent and provide reliable and meaningful outputs for all stakeholders. Although there are several studies in the literature that shed light on how district leadership and principal leadership have influenced assessment and grading reforms, few studies have focused on the specifics of how these leaders implemented change with individual teachers, and no studies were located in the literature that specifically looked at the leadership influence of department chairs on the assessment and grading practices of the teachers they supervise. This study will use the model of servant leadership and seven servant leadership behaviors developed by Northouse (2019) and others (Liden et al. as cited in Northouse, 2019) to examine how department chairs use their position of leadership authority to influence and change the grading practices.

This study seeks to understand how department chairs at the secondary level experience leadership and associated behaviors of servant leaders, and which of those experiences and behaviors are most successful in their work with teachers to influence and change teacher practices around assessment and grading. For individual schools and teachers deeply entrenched

in traditional grading practices that do not enhance learning, this study will shed light on how school leaders can use their position of leadership to move assessment and grading practices to more progressive strategies that enhance student learning.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The grading and assessment practices of classroom teachers in many schools across the country are inconsistent at best. The disparate practices in a single school can lead to the inaccurate reporting of final grades, which affects many facets of a student's educational career, from placement decisions to college admissions and scholarship awards. In schools where reforms around grading and assessment practices have been implemented, there is little information provided about how school and district leaders worked with teachers to change their perceptions and practices on grading and assessment. There is a gap in the literature that focuses on how school leaders, such as department chairs, use their position of leadership to influence the practices of teachers. The PRQ of this study is to determine what themes emerge as being beneficial to department chairs as they lead and supervise teachers as they relate to the implementation of grading and assessment practices and reforms. The SRQ is to determine what servant leadership behaviors emerge as being beneficial for department chairs as they work with teachers in their departments to develop and/or reform individual and departmental grading and assessment practices.

Conceptual Framework

Reforms are needed around grading and assessment practices in order to create better learning outcomes for students. Although the meaning of grades has changed and evolved over time (Schneider & Hutt, 2014), teacher grading and assessment practices have remained relatively unchanged. Most teachers' grading schemas involve a mix of academic and nonacademic factors (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). Even with recent reforms like standards-based grading and assessment for learning (Popham, 2017), traditional assessment practices are still in place as a

primary means to determine a student's grade in class. If true progress is to be made, assessment practices must be implemented that include formative feedback to help students revise their thinking, multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, and student self-evaluation. Also, educational leaders should provide learning opportunities and professional development programs in order to implement grading and assessment reforms with fidelity.

Reasons for Assessment

In education, the term assessment is usually meant to indicate measuring or testing student learning in some manner. Popham (2017) described four traditional reasons for teachers to assess students: to determine students' current status; to monitor students' progress; to assign grades; and to determine a teacher's instructional effectiveness. More recent developments in education have added additional reasons for assessment beyond grades and progress monitoring. Newer assessment practices are designed to influence the perception of educational effectiveness, help evaluate teachers, and clarify instructional intentions (Popham, 2017).

In my various roles as a high school department chair and administrator, I have observed the practices of many teachers. Most teachers I have worked with assess students for one or more of Popham's (2017) traditional reasons for assessment. Although many teachers make a distinction in their grading practices between formative and summative assessments, such as weighting them differently, both formative and summative assessments are included in a student's final grade. Again, very few teachers rely only on summative assessments to determine a grade. The inclusion of formative assessment in a final grade limits the usefulness of feedback for students (O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011). Ultimately, what many teachers would consider formative assessment is summative in nature since it is included in the final grade calculation.

Although many teachers would explain that they use formative assessment practices and assessment for learning, current teacher practices do not reflect new methods of assessment.

Changes Needed in Assessment Practices

There are several reforms that would have a positive impact on student learning. Classroom assessment practices should follow the assessment for learning mindset (Popham, 2017) and incorporate Stiggins' (2017) five parts of a perfect assessment system: clear assessment purposes, clear learning targets, high-quality assessment, effective communication of results, and powerful new links to student motivation. Reform efforts such as standards-based grading meets many of these facets. In addition to standards-based grading, students should be provided with continuous, descriptive feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007); students should be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery (O'Connor, 2017); and students should be involved in self-reflection as a component of assessment (Panadero, Andrade, & Brookhart, 2018). Each of these practices should be considered as components in a larger shift to student-centered assessment. These practices can also be implemented regardless of the overall grading practices in a school. Teachers will need to be provided with professional learning opportunities and professional development to implement the necessary reforms in assessment and grading. District level assessment and evaluation will be needed to ensure that these practices are implemented with fidelity after professional learning occurs. Districts will need to meet the three conditions Killion (2018) argued are necessary for effective professional learning: the changes needed in assessment practices are research and evidence-based; the human and fiscal capital are available to implement the learning; and the evaluation results are used to make decisions about the program. If implemented successfully, reforming grading and assessment practices will have a positive impact on how teachers teach and how students learn in the classroom.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

The grading and assessment practices of teachers have a direct impact on the lives and prospects of their students. However, the current practices of teachers are not consistent and many traditional and current practices do not actually promote student learning (O'Connor, 2017). Grading and assessment practices that teachers use often rely on outdated models of assessing and reporting students' levels of understanding (O'Connor, 2010; Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012). Teacher assigned grades are a multidimensional measure that includes a mix of academic achievement and nonacademic factors (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Thorsen, 2014). Nonacademic components include factors such as effort, behavior, work completion, participation, and attendance. Teachers within the same school and department may weight categories of assignments differently and assign different amounts of points to similar assignments and assessments. These scores are often averaged together to produce a numerical percentage that is then translated to a letter grade. The scales used to determine a grade also lack consistency as different schools have different percentage ranges to determine the letter grade assigned. Several schools or districts discussed in the literature review (Proulx et al., 2012; Townsley, 2018; Welsh, D'Agostino, & Kaniskan, 2013) have moved to standards-based assessment and grading because these systems are considered more reliable in assessing student understanding and reporting more accurate letter grades. Although the benefits of standards-based systems include collaboratively developed rubrics tied to clearly stated standards or learning targets coupled with the use of the similar grading practices, these systems may also lack consistency in grading and assessment (Knight & Cooper, 2019; Peters, Kruse, Buckmiller, & Townsley, 2017; Welsh et al., 2013).

This review of research literature and methodological literature will focus on the broad areas of grading and assessment practices of teachers, grading reform efforts, and professional development required to realize improved grading practices. The section on grading and assessment practices will review the reasons teachers assess and grade, the inconsistencies in current practice, and the various factors that teachers may use to determine a student's grade. The section on grading reform efforts will review alternative and progressive practices that teachers are using that may give a more accurate depiction of a student's level of understanding. Standards-based grading practices will be reviewed as a potential system to be considered in lieu of traditional, points-based grading systems. Lastly, the professional development needed around grading and assessment practices will be reviewed.

Grading and Assessment Practices

Teachers assess students for a variety of reasons. Popham (2017) identified four traditional reasons that teachers assigned grades: determine students' status, monitor students' progress, assign grades, and determine a teacher's own instructional effectiveness. Of these reasons, assigning grades remains a primary influence on teachers' assessment practices. However, the determining factors included in a student's grade are not consistent from teacher to teacher, and the overall meaning of grades has evolved over time (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). These inconsistencies exist because teachers receive little, if any, formal training on grading and assessment in teacher preparation programs or on the job in schools (Brookhart et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2017). Furthermore, grades as originally devised in the U.S. were meant to be communication between teacher, student, and parents (Schneider & Hutt, 2014), but more recently grades have become a tool within the school organization to determine placement, movement, sorting, and coordination within the system (O'Connor, 2010; Schneider & Hutt,

2014). As Bennett (2016) explained, “Rather than a genuine engagement with students, grades allow administrators to assess the scholastic worth of a student quickly and effortlessly, without personal contact or considered reflection” (p. 69). Furthermore, Bennett explained the negative consequences of grading altogether, including reduced risk-taking, cheating, and unhealthy competition between students.

Stiggins (2017) identified the features of a perfect assessment system, including clear assessment purposes, clear learning targets, high-quality assessments, effective communication of assessment results, and links to student motivation. In describing the features of high-quality assessments, Stiggins (2017) explained that the assessment method must match the learning targets assessed. For example, a selected-response multiple choice test is appropriate for assessing content knowledge, whereas a performance assessment is appropriate to assess specific skills or the development of a product. Stiggins (2017) went on to explain that grades and report cards are ineffective as a means of communication of student learning. Instead, he argued that teachers should assess students and assign a grade based on mastery of clearly defined learning targets.

According to Matsumura (2003), quality instruction includes: cognitively challenging and meaningful instruction, clear goals for student learning, and substantive and specific feedback. In addition, quality assessment included: cognitive challenge; clarity of the learning goals focused on student learning; clarity of the grading criteria; alignment of goals and task; alignment of goals and grading criteria; and overall quality (Matsumura, 2003). These claims are based on Matsumura’s (2003) investigation of assessments at the assignment level in classrooms. The high degree of interrater reliability for teacher designed assessments is also supported by other authors' findings of the usefulness of teacher assigned grades and graded achievement (Bowers,

2009, 2011; Brookhart, 2015; Knight & Cooper, 2019). This indicates that instruction and assessment go hand in hand. Instructional practices cannot be improved without a simultaneous improvement in assessment practices.

Assessment and the Use of Rubrics

Popham (2017) identified the main types of assessments that teachers use in their classroom, which included selected-response tests, constructed-response tests, performance assessments, and portfolio assessments. Portfolio and performance assessments often employ the use of rubrics to determine the level of student performance. Proponents of rubrics and rubric based assessments (Brookhart, 2013; Marzano, 2010; Popham, 2017; Schimmer, 2016) argued that there is consistency in assessment because student performance is assessed against a standard. However, Bennett (2016) contended that there are drawbacks to rubrics, including limits on student creativity and a false sense of objectivity on the part of the assessor. To improve the use of rubrics, Bennett argued, students should be given feedback that outlines how they can improve their work, and student creativity should be encouraged by not limiting their thinking to the descriptors on the rubric.

Grades and Standardized Tests

With the increased focus on standardized test results, much attention is paid to the correlation between teacher assigned grades and standardized test scores. Bowers (2011) noted that grades assigned by teachers are typically unreliable predictors of student achievement as measured by standardized tests, with a correlation coefficient in the range of 0.5 to 0.6. An examination of the correlation between report card grades and standardized test scores further confirmed this finding (Ross & Kostuch, 2011). However, teacher assigned grades have been shown to be useful predictors of future academic performance (Brookhart et al., 2016; Thorsen,

2014). Although some implied that teacher assigned grades and standardized test scores should be in greater alignment (Stanley & Baines, 2004), teacher assigned grades can be a useful tool in a school's decision-making processes (Bowers, 2009).

Components Included in a Student's Grade

There are several factors that teachers include in a student's grade. Currently, teacher assigned grades are considered a multidimensional measure of both a student's academic or content knowledge, and nonacademic behaviors (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). In a review of 28 studies that compared graded achievement to tested achievement, Brookhart (2015) found a moderate correlation, and noted that when more nonacademic components are included in a student's grade, there is less correlation to tested achievement. Nonacademic behaviors include items like participation, behavior, completing assignments on time, some extra credit opportunities and other factors not directly related to a student's mastery of content. This mix of factors has been termed a "hodgepodge" (Bowers, 2011, p. 142) because of the mix of "academic performance, classroom participation, effort, behavior, attendance, improvement, and turning in homework" (Bowers, 2011, p. 142). When nonacademic behaviors are included in a student's grade, the teacher assigned grade is a reliable predictor of future performance (Thorsen, 2014). When factors in students' grades only represent student mastery of content, the grades are more strongly correlated with the students' standardized test scores (Hochbein & Pollio, 2016).

In a quantitative study that used a questionnaire to examine the grading practices of teachers, Randall and Engelhard (2009) found that teacher grades were some unknown combination of student achievement, ability, effort, and behavior. Their results suggested that classroom achievement is the primary facet used by teachers in assigning grades, yet students

with excellent behavior were more likely to receive higher grades. They corrected for factors such as grading variations and teacher ratings. In a study comparing grades and test scores, Willingham, Pollack, and Lewis (2002) showed that grading variation was a major source of discrepancy between grades and test scores. Additionally, Willingham et al. showed that scholastic engagement factors contributed to discrepancies. These factors were in three main categories: school skills, initiative, and avoidance of competing activities.

Although most scholars focused on core content areas (e.g. English, mathematics, science, social studies), the same mix of academic and nonacademic factors determining a grade were found in other content areas. Russel and Austin (2010) surveyed the assessment practices of secondary music teachers and found that teachers based grades on academic and nonacademic factors, with more emphasis on nonacademic factors. Russel and Austin hypothesized this heavier reliance on nonacademic factors may be due to teachers desire to please students and maintain course enrollment.

Other Factors that Influence Grades

Several scholars examined additional influences on student grades beyond the usual academic and nonacademic component. Klapp Lekholm (2011) examined how different aspects of schooling affected grades in school. The author specifically examined school and teacher characteristics, and parent education using longitudinal data from a cohort of Swedish students. The author found that parental education level exerted a strong influence on student achievement and grades. This finding showed that there are factors beyond those in school that may have some influence on grades. In a review of two studies on standards-based grading, Llosa (2008) noted that in addition to nonacademic factors that are included in a grade, teachers may also influence the grade assigned through their “beliefs about grading and assessment and their need

to respond to external pressures" (p. 39). Llosa (2008) also concluded scores assigned by teachers using a rubric may also be affected by the teacher's interpretation of the standard or the scoring criteria.

Resh (2009) examined the role of justice on teacher perceptions when assigning a grade and found that teachers used multiple considerations in determining grades, including differential treatment for students considered strong or weak. Feldman (2019) explained that teachers' interpretations of nonacademic factors are inherently filtered through the teacher's own biases, and therefore cannot be objectively evaluated. Shulha (1999) conducted a study in which participants (novice teachers) assigned a grade to a fictional student's work. There were three different student profiles provided to participants. The results showed that teachers marked the student's work differently depending on context. Grades assigned were influenced by grading policies, teacher perceptions of the assessment, and by teacher impressions of the fictional student's profile. Similarly, Brimi (2011) conducted a study investigating the reliability of teacher assigned grades in which teachers were asked to assign a score using a 100-point scale to a student paper after they attended a professional development session on assessment. Of teachers that assigned a numerical score, the scores ranged from 50 to 96, which indicated that teachers may not have a high degree of assessment literacy.

Conclusions on Grading and Assessment Practices

Teachers assess students for a variety of reasons. Two of the primary reasons are to monitor student progress and assign grades (Popham, 2017). Many teachers use formative and summative assessment to determine a student's final grade. In addition, teachers often include other nonacademic factors to some extent as a factor in a student's grade (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014). These assessment

practices are often implemented inconsistently because teachers receive little professional training on grading and assessment (Brookhart et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2017). However, teacher assigned grades can be useful for predicting future achievement, making educational decisions, or determining interventions for students (Bowers, 2009; Brookhart et al., 2016; Thorsen, 2014). Grading and assessment reforms are needed to achieve greater consistency in practice to make better educational decisions and improve the communication of student learning.

Grading and Assessment Reforms

Grading reforms include practices that move beyond traditional points-based systems. Many grading reform efforts, however, have focused on short-sighted fixes to improve standardized test scores. As Bowers (2011) explained,

> [W]hile administrators and policymakers focus on test scores, and researchers urge teachers to reform grading practices, teachers and schools continue to collect grades in much the same way as they have in the past and report them to students and parents, despite consistent pressure to align grades to academic standards. (p. 142)

Several scholars have proposed various alternative grading and assessment practices that should be considered to provide greater clarity of student learning.

Feedback as Formative Assessment

One of the primary methods of formative assessment is to provide students with actionable feedback to improve learning. Popham (2017) described this mindset as "assessment for learning" (p. 15). In this model of formative assessment and feedback grades carry little meaning for students because the grade does not provide descriptive feedback to improve learning (Schimmer, 2016). To be more effective, feedback and grades must be uncoupled; formative assessment should not be graded for points (Shepard, Penuel, & Pellegrino, 2018).

Instead, feedback on formative assessments should be interpreted and used by students to make decisions about the next steps in their learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) provided a framework for formative assessment in which teacher feedback gives students answers to three main questions: Where am I going?; How am I going?; and Where to next? Shute (2008) provided several strategies that should be considered when giving feedback, such as "focus[ing] feedback on the task, not the learner" (p. 177) and avoiding feedback that might harm the student's self-esteem. Panadero, Andrade, and Brookhart (2018) argued that student self-regulated learning (SRL) should play a prominent role in formative assessment. In SRL, students progress through three phases: task analysis, performance, and appraisal; and formative assessment can play a role in these phases (Panadero, Andrade, & Brookhart, 2018). According to Shepard (2019), formative assessment should be correlated with and supported by ambitious teaching as opposed to standardized tests.

Standards-based Grading

Standards-based grading and assessment practices offer teachers a model for creating systems that more accurately assess a student's level of understanding and translate that understanding to a letter grade. O'Connor (2017) pointed out that implementing a standards-based approach more accurately reflects student learning and requires that teachers gather multiple pieces of evidence of learning over time, and places greater emphasis on more recent evidence of learning. Implementing standards-based grading with fidelity requires a systematic approach to avoid pushback from teachers, students, and parents. The following tasks must be accomplished over a sustained period of time through collaborative efforts with all stakeholder groups: developing clearly stated learning targets or standards in student friendly language aligned to standards (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013); creating rubrics that identify distinct levels of

performance for each standard (Brookhart, 2013; Marzano, 2010); designing multiple types of both formative and summative assessments that provide evidence of student learning (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012); deciding on assessment and grading practices that promote learning (Dueck, 2014; Feldman, 2019; Wormeli, 2006); translating performance levels on standards to letter grades (Marzano, 2010); and communicating this change in practice to students and parents (Guskey & Bailey, 2010).

Schools that have moved to standards-based grading reported many benefits. In a case study of high schools in Kentucky that implemented standards-based grading, Hochbein and Pollio (2016) reported that after implementation students' grades showed a greater correlation to standardized test scores. Also, students were more likely to earn grades of A or B and scored higher on standardized tests. In the evaluation of standards-based grading, Iamarino (2014) explained that standards-based grading has the potential to increase student engagement and comprehension over other, more traditional grading practices. Iamarino used the Spokane Public Schools' shift to standards-based grading as an example of a large district that made the shift in grading to categories that were only related to academic areas. In the district's view, the inclusion of nonacademic factors described earlier were not compatible with grades that reflected learning.

Jung and Guskey (2011) described that standards-based grading is also an effective model of grading to assess students' abilities. In their description of standards-based grading, they argued that three types of evidence should be collected and reported separately: product, process, and progress (Guskey, 2006; Guskey & Bailey, 2010). In this manner, teachers collect evidence in each of these categories and report the evidence and grades separately. The

nonacademic factors are no longer commingled with academic learning and progress in the grade.

Several scholars have examined the effectiveness of standards-based grading. Welsh et al. (2013) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the effectiveness of new standards-based report cards, and whether or not grades aligned with test scores. The authors used quantitative methods to compare grade and test score correlation and qualitative methods, interviews of teachers, to determine appraisal style and convergence rate of grades and test scores. Welsh et al. showed a moderate degree of convergence after adoption of standards-based report cards. Knight and Cooper (2019) presented a phenomenological study that explored teacher perceptions of standards-based grading practices. The authors concluded that standards-based practices are a viable reform effort because it makes teaching and learning more focused, effective, and enjoyable. However, Knight and Cooper also noted that teachers need support from school administrators to develop schoolwide systems, such as consistent grading practices and professional development for teachers wishing to implement standards-based grading practices.

Guskey (2000) described four barriers to implementation of standards-based grading and suggested alternative practices. Instead of grading on the curve, it was recommended that teachers develop standards and specific criteria for meeting the standard. It was also suggested that secondary schools move away from a single valedictorian, and instead select a group of valedictorians that meet high academic standards. Lastly, practices that use grades as punishment and include zeros should be ended in favor of alternative practices that support student learning and work completion.

Standards-based grading is not without its opponents. Peters et al. (2017) conducted a study that examined the perceptions of secondary students, standards-based grading continued to meet resistance for a variety of reasons, including concerns with consistency of implementation and concerns with the impact on grades and grade point average. Furthermore, the authors' findings suggested that successful implementation of standards-based grading required greater buy-in and clarity for teachers (Peters et al., 2017). Proulx et al. (2012) discovered that getting buy-in from parents is also a necessary component of a school or district shift to standards-based grading. In their analysis, it would have been helpful if sample assessment tasks had been available to teachers, and high-quality assessments should be in place by year two of implementation of standards-based grading (Proulx et al., 2012).

Revised Report Cards

The implementation of standards-based grading and other assessment reforms will impact how teachers communicate learning. One of the primary methods in which student learning is communicated to parents is through grades on a report card. Schools that revise grading and assessment practices or shift to standards-based grading will also need to revise how grades are communicated on a report card. Guskey (2004) noted the challenges of reporting grades in a standards-based environment and offered four suggestions: avoiding comparative language; providing examples based on student work; distinguishing between levels of understanding and frequency of display; and maintaining consistency in reporting. Revised report cards in a standards-based environment may report performance on only a selected number of standards, report behavior and nonacademic factors separately, and should only include a letter grade on academic standards (Melograno, 2007). Along the same lines, Guskey (2015) challenged the reporting of a single letter grade on a report card, and he and other scholars (Mohnsen, 2013;

Shippy, Washer, & Perrin, 2013) suggested that multiple grades should be reported for separate criteria. For nonacademic behaviors, a separate assessment and reporting system should be developed. To report the frequency of display of nonacademic behaviors, like homework completion, a numeric 1-4 scale could be implemented (Muñoz & Guskey, 2015). However, Muñoz and Guskey argued that these numeric values should not be used in the computation of a students' overall academic grade. Similarly, Townsley (2018) suggested that practice assignments and homework should be recorded as communication, but not assigned a grade. The implementation of a standards-based report card will improve communication and collaboration with families (Guskey, 2004).

Swan, Guskey, and Jung (2014) conducted a study in which they surveyed parents in a district that adopted standards-based report cards. Also included in the survey were teachers in a district considering adoption of standards-based grading. The purpose of the survey was to gather perceptions on new report cards based on standards-based grading practices. The results showed that parents overwhelmingly preferred the new standards-based report cards because it provided more information than traditional report cards. Teachers in the district that was considering adopting standards-based grading were less enthusiastic about the new report cards. The main concern was the increased amount of time it would take to provide information on the new report cards.

Other Grading Reforms

In a study on implementation of grading reforms in a secondary school district, Cox (2011) noted that even after implementation many teachers still used a mix of academic and nonacademic components to determine a student's grade. Furthermore, Cox suggested the following factors are needed to move district grading reforms forward: alternative assessment

methods, common assessments, time for teacher collaboration, a philosophical foundation for reform, and revised report cards. Similarly, Marzano and Heflebower (2011) suggested four practices to improve grading: get rid of omnibus grading; include individual scores in addition to an overall grade; expand assessment options; and allow reassessment. Whether or not a school adopts standards-based grading, these practices improve the reporting of student learning.

Erickson (2011) described the reforms that were enacted in a public high school in Minnesota. School staff determined that students' grades should only reflect mastery of content. To that end, teachers embraced practices that reflected this belief, such as offering reassessment opportunities to students through redos and retakes. Other practices that did not support grades as mastery were ended, such as offering extra credit or including nonacademic factors in a student's grade. A leadership team was also developed at the high school Erickson described to determine the learning needed for teachers and implement professional development that supported that learning. As a result of these shifts, standardized test scores rose, and more students took Advanced Placement exams. Additionally, the school climate improved.

Kunnath (2017) suggested that districts moving to standards-based grading systems should create policies in which grades only reflect student learning. According to Kunnath, this means that only summative grades should be included in a final grade reported on a report card. Also, the author argued that grades should not include the nonacademic factors, what he also termed a "hodgepodge" (Kunnath, 2017, p. 53). He suggested that schools develop a grade meaning statement and then align theory and practice. In this manner, the meaning of grades is clearly established and communicated to all stakeholders, which in turn promotes the integrity of grading practices and grades.

Several other scholars suggested practices that would create consistency and improve the assessment and reporting of student learning. Such practices include connecting grades to academic standards with clearly stated criteria for achievement (O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011). There are also several practices that do not support student learning and should be avoided: the use of averaging in grades (O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011), the use of zeros on the 100-point grading scale (O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Reeves, 2004), and the assignment of grades to formative work and assessments (O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Shepard et al., 2018). Other practices that should be considered in grading reforms include allowing retakes and redos for all students, and separating behavior from academics when responding to incidents of cheating or plagiarism (Wormeli, 2011, 2017).

Conclusions on Grading and Assessment Reforms

Reforming grading and assessment will increase consistency, improve educational decisions, and clarify the communication of student learning. Students should be provided with formative feedback that is ungraded and gives them information to improve their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Popham, 2017; Shute, 2008). Switching from points-based systems to standards-based systems reduces or eliminates many of the nonacademic factors that influence a student's grade and more accurately describes student learning (Iamarino, 2014; O'Connor, 2017). Report cards need to be revised to separate the reporting of academic achievement and nonacademic behaviors (Guskey, 2015; Melograno, 2007; Mohnsen, 2013; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; Shippy et al., 2013). Other strategies should also be implemented to ensure that grading and assessment practices reflect only student learning.

Professional Development for Grading and Assessment

Revising grading and assessment practices requires a robust system of teacher professional development. In one qualitative case study, teacher practices were changed through the implementation of a professional learning community (Higgins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011). In this specific study, teachers were involved in a yearlong learning experience that involved collaborative, problem-based learning in the professional development setting. Strong leadership, in this case principal leadership, emerged as a significant factor affecting teachers' practices.

All stakeholders will need to construct a new meaning for graded achievement and what assessment practices support the new philosophy. According to Bowers (2011), "Teacher-assigned grades are not consistently used for systematic decision making by administrators, central offices, and state and federal policymaking due to their subjectivity and incorporation of nonacademic knowledge, yet grades have been shown to be strongly associated with overall schooling outcomes" (p. 143). Instead, grades should be viewed as a method to communicate student progress (Brimi, 2011). In a study using teacher interviews and a constant comparison method, McGee, Wang, and Polly (2013) conducted a study that examined the teacher perceptions of professional development; perceptions of math teaching and learning; and how the professional development translated into practice. The authors found that teachers must be provided with professional development that meets their needs in order to successfully implement standards-based grading. Furthermore, their findings indicated three main areas for professional development needs: how to provide more in-class support to teachers, how to address teacher's immediate concerns, and how to address the use of standards-based curricula and pedagogy in the context of state-mandated standardized tests.

Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018) summarized the power that building collective efficacy has in schools. When teams of teachers believe in their ability to improve student outcomes, students will reach higher levels of achievement. According to the authors, one of the strongest influences on student achievement is collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is built through a focus on learning over compliance, use of data and evidence to make decisions, and setting the conditions for frequent and productive teacher collaboration. One way this can be achieved is through the implementation of professional learning communities (DuFour, 2007) within schools and departments as a means of professional development to build collective efficacy.

Conclusions on Professional Development for Grading and Assessment

Schools or districts enacting grading reforms need to ensure that teachers are provided with professional development opportunities. The implementation of professional learning communities with strong educational leaders may be one strategy to influence teachers' practices (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011). Additionally, the professional development must be ongoing to sustain grading and assessment reforms (McGee et al., 2013). Building collective efficacy has one of the strongest influences on student achievement and can be accomplished by organizing teachers into collaborative teams (Donohoo et al., 2018).

Summary

Three broad areas have been identified in the review of the research and methodological literature. First, teacher grading and assessment practices include a mix of graded student achievement and inclusion of nonacademic factors that influence grades. In many cases, these findings are found in both traditional and progressive grading systems. Second, grading reforms are needed to move grading and assessment practices beyond traditional points-based systems.

These reforms include formative feedback, standards-based grading, revised report cards, and grading practices that support student learning. Lastly, these findings indicate the need for targeted professional development on assessment literacy and grading practices coupled with strong educational leadership to create a vision for improved grading and assessment.

Grading Practices Include a Mix of Academic and Nonacademic Factors

Teachers include a variety of factors to arrive at a grade. One of the primary reasons that teachers give students assessments and grade them is to assign a final grade (Popham, 2017). However, teachers are provided with little, if any, pre-service or in-service professional development on how to assess and grade appropriately (Brookhart et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2017). Graded achievement includes a mix of academic and nonacademic factors, which many scholars described as a hodgepodge of practices (Bowers, 2011; Hochbein & Pollio, 2016; Kunnath, 2017; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; Swan et al., 2014). The inconsistent grading practices lead to inconsistent reporting of student understanding and learning. A quality instructional program should focus in part on high quality assessments (Matsumura, 2003; Stiggins, 2017). There has been a shift to using rubrics as an effective assessment method to describe student learning or progress in relation to a standard (Brookhart, 2013; Mohnsen, 2013; Popham, 2017). However, detractors of rubrics point out that the descriptors may limit student thinking and creativity (Bennett, 2016).

Nonacademic factors have an impact on the final grade assigned to a student. Teacher assigned grades show a moderate correlation to standardized test scores (Bowers, 2011; Ross & Kostuch, 2011). When nonacademic factors, such as behavior, participation, or effort are included by the teacher in a student's final grade, the grades are useful predictors of future performance and may be used for decision making or intervention purposes (Bowers, 2009,

2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Thorsen, 2014). Grades show a greater correlation to standardized test scores when nonacademic factors are excluded from the grade (Brookhart, 2015). Other nonacademic factors, including school and teacher characteristics, teacher perceptions, and parent education levels have also been shown to have some impact on students' grades (Feldman, 2019, Klapp Lekholm, 2011; Llosa, 2008; Resh, 2009).

Grading and Assessment Reforms Provide Alternatives to Traditional Grading Systems

Many grading reforms have been proposed to eliminate inconsistencies in grading practices and make grades more reflective of student learning. Standards-based grading is one alternative to traditional, points-based systems of grading and assessment. In standards-based systems, teachers compare student performance to descriptors based on clear success criteria (Marzano, 2010; O'Connor, 2017). Schools that shifted to standards-based systems saw several benefits: teacher assigned grades showed a moderate correlation to standardized test scores (Brookhart et al., 2016; Hochbein & Pollio, 2016; Welsh et al., 2013), teachers reported delivering better instruction (Hochbein & Pollio, 2016), and improved the student experience (Knight & Cooper, 2019).

Other reform efforts included changes in how some assessments and nonacademic factors are factored in final grade calculations. Formative assessments should be considered only in terms of the feedback offered to students, and thus not be included in a student's final grade (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard et al., 2018; Shute, 2008). The feedback given to students through formative assessment must be aligned to the learning task and oriented towards giving students an opportunity to improve their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Popham, 2017; Shepard et al., 2018; Shute, 2008; Stiggins, 2017). Similarly, nonacademic factors should also be excluded from a student's grade calculation (Erickson, 2011; Knight & Cooper, 2019; Muñoz &

Guskey, 2015; O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Shippy et al., 2013). Traditional report cards may need to be revised to better reflect student learning with these factors excluded. The final grade reported on a report card should only reflect student learning, and other nonacademic factors should be reported separately (Guskey, 2015; Mohnsen, 2013; O'Connor, 2017; Shippy et al., 2013; Swan et al., 2014).

The Need for Effective Professional Development and Leadership

Changes in grading and assessment practices must be accompanied by comprehensive and ongoing professional development for teachers. Teachers should receive training in assessment literacy (Popham, 2017) and professional learning time to share best practices with colleagues (Erickson, 2011). Also, teachers should be provided with learning experiences that shift their view of grading from assessment of learning to assessment for learning (Popham, 2017; Stiggins, 2017), and experiences that change their perception of grading to view grades as communication of student progress (Brimi, 2011). Even after schools implemented reforms such as standards-based grading or trained teachers in specific techniques, some traditional practices and perceptions remained (Brimi, 2011; Llosa, 2008; Proulx et al., 2012). Schools need strong and effective leadership to help teachers implement grading and assessment reforms with fidelity.

Critique of Previous Research

Grading Practices Include a Mix of Academic and Nonacademic Factors

Teachers have historically used a mix of academic and nonacademic factors to determine a student's final grade in a course. Teacher reported grades may be useful for a variety of purposes whether nonacademic factors are included in a grade. However, the review of literature did not provide conclusive evidence for a school or district to determine if nonacademic factors

should be included or reported separately. Several scholars, including Guskey (2004, 2015), Kunnath (2017), and O'Connor (2017) recommended that nonacademic factors should be reported separately, but these suggestions were presented in a theoretical context. Several scholars focused mainly on teacher (Cox, 2011; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Erickson, 2011; Swan et al., 2014), student (Peters et al., 2017), or parent (Swan et al., 2014) perceptions of grading reform efforts in which nonacademic factors were excluded from grade calculations. These studies did not examine the role that school or district leadership played in the grading reform efforts, or their perceptions after reforms were implemented. The study (Huggins et al., 2011) that examined the role of leadership in implementing reforms focused only on principal leadership's effectiveness on reforms in PLCs. There are other levels of leadership in many schools, including instructional coaches, department chairs, and assistant principals that could be examined in terms of their impact on grading and assessment reforms.

Grading and Assessment Reforms Provide an Alternative to Traditional Grading Systems

A common theme in the review of literature was that traditional, points-based systems were outdated methods of grading and assessing students. Shepard et al. (2018) suggested that the school district level is the most appropriate hierarchical level within which to enact reform around instruction and assessment to move away from these outdated systems. Hochbein and Pollio (2016) examined such a district level reform effort to implement standards-based grading, and they found that students were more likely to earn a grade of A or B and grades were more closely correlated with standardized test scores. Cox (2011) studied teacher perceptions and practices in a district in which district leadership enacted reforms. In another district level reform effort, Erickson (2011) discussed the strengths of a shift to more progressive grading and assessment practices. However, there were no studies found that focused on bottom-up grading

and assessment reform efforts, or the role that middle-level school leadership (e.g. department chairs) played in these reforms.

The Need for Effective Professional Development and Leadership

It is evident from the review of literature that a strong program of professional development is needed to sustain grading and assessment reform. Huggins et al. (2011) highlighted the important role that principal leadership played in driving change in the PLC model of professional development. Duncan and Noonan's (2007) study focused mainly on teacher grading and assessment practices with no attention given to the influence of professional development or school leadership on those practices. Although five of the seven participants in Knight and Cooper's (2019) study on standards-based grading were in leadership roles, there was no discussion of the influence of their role in their practices or in the practices of their peers as a result of their leadership. However, they identified that school administrators need to "develop schoolwide systems to support teachers as they transition to [standards-based grading], create grading expectations that foster consistency, and provide meaningful professional development opportunities" (Knight & Cooper, 2019, pp. 85-86). Furthermore, they identified possible strategies that leaders might employ to meet these needs. McGee et al. (2013) identified three main areas of professional development needs: how to provide more in-class support to teachers, how to address teacher's immediate concerns, and how to address the use of standards-based curriculum and pedagogy in the context of state-mandated standardized tests. Additionally, the teachers in the McGee et al. study maintained logs of their leadership activities. The areas of professional development identified by McGee et al. could be explored further using the leadership logs in the context of the influence of school leadership in these areas.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to investigate how department chairs and at the secondary level used their positions of leadership to influence teachers to implement grading and assessment reforms. Currently, the grading and assessment practices that many teachers use include a mix of academic and nonacademic factors (Brookhart, 2016; Cox, 2011; Kunnath, 2017). This mix of factors leads to school grades that do not necessarily correlate with levels of student understanding and comprehension (Bowers 2009, 2011). In schools with department chairs as mid-level leaders, the chairs have the most potential to influence the grading and assessment practices of their teachers. Depending on the administrative structure in place in the high school, this mid-level leadership takes on different forms. These leaders may be department chairs of a single department and are sometimes called directors. In other schools, the leaders oversee multiple departments and are called division/divisional chairs or directors. For the purposes of this study, all forms of this mid-level leadership will be referred to as department chairs and does not include assistant principals or vice principals. The Primary Research Question (PRQ) of this study aimed to identify what themes emerged as being beneficial to department chairs as they led and supervised teachers as they related to the implementation of grading and assessment practices. The Secondary Research Question (SRQ) aimed to identify what servant leadership behaviors emerged as being beneficial for department chairs as they worked with teachers in their departments to develop individual and departmental grading and assessment practices. The purpose of this study was to help school and district leaders understand how to leverage leadership to implement grading and assessment reforms that stick.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions were best examined using a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is grounded in the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two different types of phenomenology include hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on interpreting the meaning of the lived experience, whereas transcendental phenomenology is focused on the participants' descriptions of the experiences themselves. van Manen (1990) explained that the type of reflection in hermeneutic phenomenology is "on the meanings and significances of phenomena of daily life" (p. 4). Transcendental phenomenology is one "in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) explained that transcendental phenomenology avoids prejudgments and presuppositions. To examine the research question and secondary question, transcendental phenomenology was used in this study.

Phenomenology was the most appropriate research design to address the research questions. Moustakas (1994) described the features of research questions that make phenomenology an appropriate approach, some of which included: the questions seek to reveal the meaning of human experience; the questions do not try to determine relationships; and the questions are explored using comprehensive qualitative descriptions as opposed to quantitative measurements or scores. The phenomenon of human experience in question in this study was leadership. Specifically, this qualitative study focused on the servant leadership behaviors of department chairs as they interacted with teachers in their department as they determined grading and assessment practices for their classrooms. The research questions were formulated to capture

the experiences of department chairs through description as opposed to numerical ratings or scores.

Phenomenological research is designed to capture the details of a single concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018), in this case department chairs' leadership and servant leadership behaviors as they interacted with teachers as they developed grading and assessment practices. Phenomenological designs use a heterogeneous group of individuals ranging in size from three to four individuals to larger groups of 10 to 15 people (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A group size between these ranges was appropriate to examine the experiences of several department chairs within the same school or district, or across several schools or districts. Thirteen participants were included in this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) also described that phenomenology can be used to develop practices and policies. One of the goals of this study was to help educational leaders understand the experiences of department chairs in order to develop grading and assessment policies for schools.

Prior studies that have examined grading and assessment practices used a qualitative phenomenological approach. For example, Knight and Cooper (2019) used a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experience of teachers with the phenomenon of standards-based grading. The authors argued this approach was appropriate because "It would not have been possible to encapsulate the intricacies and interconnectedness of teachers' planning, instruction, assessment, and classroom management through quantitative data" (Knight & Cooper, 2019, p. 70). Similarly, the essence of the leadership experiences of department chairs in the research questions in this study would not have been appropriately captured in a quantitative study. Although a quantitative study could have identified which leadership behaviors leaders perceived to be effective, a qualitative study allowed for in depth exploration of the leadership experience

to give a more complete and more nuanced picture of how school leaders interacted with their teachers. Initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and examination of artifacts that participants shared further contributed to the deep exploration of the leadership experience of the participants in this study.

Other studies (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; McMillan, 2001) examined grading and assessment practices using a quantitative approach. However, in summarizing their findings, Duncan and Noonan (2007) wrote that "Understanding why teachers make classroom assessment decisions and how this interacts with what decisions are actually being made will contribute to developing and modifying assessment principles, which may ultimately improve instruction and student learning" (p. 17). Further quantitative research was not well suited to answering the questions of why and how. Transcendental phenomenology was the best approach to address the research questions in this study because it addressed the questions of why and how department chairs experienced leadership and servant leadership behaviors in their interactions with the teachers they supervised.

Setting and Participants

The research population for this study is department chairs working at the high school level. However, since the role of department chair in a supervisory capacity is unique to certain geographic settings, the area for this study will be high schools in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city. This ensures that the participants will be accessible to me for in-person interviews, and that the study's findings are generalizable to other schools in the study area. Also, to ensure that study participants have sufficient knowledge of the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervise, the population for this study will be limited to department chairs that are in at least their second consecutive year in their current role.

Sampling Procedures

Several sampling techniques were employed in this study. For phenomenological studies, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that researchers use purposeful or criterion sampling methods to ensure that "all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 157). For this study, both purposeful and criterion sampling were used to identify department chairs that met the following criteria: they worked at the high school level; their high school was located within the suburbs of the study area, a large Midwestern city; they were in at least their second year in their current role; they had some level of autonomy, control, or influence over the grading practices of the teachers they supervised; and they exhibited some level of servant leadership behaviors. Department chairs that met these criteria were identified through examination of school websites, contacts through professional organizations, and contacts through email listservs of department chair organizations in the study area.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the sample size ranges from three to fifteen participants for phenomenological studies. Similarly, Daniel (2012) noted that phenomenological studies usually involve six to ten participants. For this study, the target sample size was 6-8 participants, or until saturation was reached. Data saturation occurs "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 186). However, fourteen department chairs responded to the study invitation, and thirteen of them ultimately met the inclusion criteria and followed through with full participation in the study. Although snowball sampling was considered as a potential method to recruit participants, it was not needed in this study. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling strategy in which the researcher asks participants in the study to identify or refer other participants that may not be known to the researcher (Knapp, 2017). The thirteen participants in this study each responded

individually to the invitation to participate. A summary of the participants is shown in Table 3.1. Appendix H shows the demographic data for the schools in this study.

Table 3.1

Participant Summary and Self-reported Servant Leadership Behaviors

Participant	Participant summary	Servant leadership behaviors
Alden	• Division chair of multiple departments • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a high degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Beth	• Department chair of a single department • 2-5 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a medium degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Carl	• Department chair of a single department • 10 or more years experience in their current role • Self-reported a medium degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: Moderate • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: Moderate • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High

Participant	Participant summary	Servant leadership behaviors
Daryl	• Department chair of a single department • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a medium degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Eugene	• Department chair of a single department • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a medium degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: High • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Finn	• Department chair of a single department • 6-10 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a low degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: Moderate • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Glenn	• Department chair of a single department • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a medium degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: High • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High

Participant	Participant summary	Servant leadership behaviors
Henry	• Director of a single department in two schools • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a high degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: Moderate • Behaving Ethically: High
Isabelle	• Division chair of multiple departments • 6-10 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a low degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: Moderate • Behaving Ethically: High
Jerry	• Department chair of a single department • 6-10 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a low degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: Moderate • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Kent	• Department chair of a single department • 10 or more years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a high degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: High • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: High • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: Moderate • Behaving Ethically: High

Participant	Participant summary	Servant leadership behaviors
Lori	• Department chair of a single department • 2-5 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a high degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: Moderate • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High
Morgan	• Division chair of multiple departments • 6-10 years of experience in their current role • Self-reported a high degree of influence on grading and assessment practices of their teachers	• Emotional Healing: High • Creating Value for the Community: High • Conceptual Skills: High • Empowering: Moderate • Helping followers Grow and Succeed: High • Putting Followers First: High • Behaving Ethically: High

Note: A pseudonym was used for each participant. Departments represented include career/technical education, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. Departments are not specified for each participant to maintain confidentiality.

Triangulation occurs when the researcher uses multiple sources of data to corroborate evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data for triangulation in this study included pre-interview surveys, initial interviews, follow-up interviews, field notes kept in a researcher journal, and examination of documents and artifacts shared by participants. Ideally, the participant interviews would have taken place in-person. However, most participants preferred video-conferencing interviews due to COVID-19 concerns or scheduling. During the interviews, I made observations and took notes in a field journal. For both the in-person and video interviews, the field notes included observations of the setting and nonverbal attributes during the interview. Two participants felt comfortable sharing documents from their districts related to grading and assessment. One participant shared two documents: departmental grading guidelines they

developed with their teachers, and survey responses of their teachers that asked questions about current grading practices. The other participant shared a syllabus they created for a district professional development course on assessment for learning. These documents were examined as a method of triangulating the participants' responses to the questions about the grading and assessment practices employed by the teachers they supervised.

Instrumentation and Measures

As a qualitative research study, I was the main research instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I collected data primarily through surveys, interviews, field notes, and examination of three documents and artifacts provided by two of the participants. An initial pre-interview survey was utilized to identify study participants from the research population (Appendix A). The research population was identified by examining the websites of districts that included high schools in the study area, which included suburban communities surrounding a large, Midwestern city. Potential participants were invited to participate in the study via an introductory email with a link to the pre-interview survey. The pre-interview survey included basic demographic questions and a servant leadership questionnaire (Northouse, 2019) adapted for self-analysis (Appendix B). In-person and video interviews were scheduled for participants at their convenience for individuals that met the criteria for inclusion in the study. These interviews followed the semi-structured format described by Galletta (2018). The in-person interviews lasted up to one hour, and I was the primary instrument for this portion. The interview included nine main questions, with several probing follow-up questions as needed to engage the participant in deeper exploration of the concepts and theories (Appendix C). Interviews were recorded electronically and automatically transcribed via an internet based application, which allowed me to take field notes during the interview. These field notes included observations

about the setting or behaviors of the participants during the interviews as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). A field notes template based on the work of Bogdan and Biklen (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018) is shown in Appendix D and was used for this study. Additionally for triangulation purposes, documents and artifacts were requested from all participants and provided from two participants.

Reliability

Reliability of the study refers to the degree that the findings are consistent, and the approaches are reliable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure reliability in this study, I documented all aspects of the study and kept detailed records of the procedures and steps used in both field notes (Appendix D) and a researcher journal. The interviews were recorded using an internet based application to transcribe the interviews verbatim. Each interview transcript was compared to the original audio recording and edited to ensure accuracy. The edited transcripts were shared with participants and edited when necessary based on their feedback to ensure that the transcript matched what they said in the interviews. Additionally, recorded field notes to ensure that the data captured included a complete picture of the participants, the nature of the dialogue, and a description of the setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I kept a researcher journal to record reflexive memos on the field notes and the interview process throughout the study. During the coding portion of the data analysis, I continually compared the data to the codes to minimize a drift in the definition of the codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a final measure to increase the reliability of this study, I employed a secondary coder during the data analysis phase of the study. The secondary coder and I checked codes during the analysis to ensure intercoder agreement as defined in Creswell and Creswell (2018) as agreeing on the same codes used for the same portions of the transcript. Also, the secondary coder and I will aim to achieve

consistency of coding agreement at least 80% of the time (Miles & Huberman as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Validity

Validation of a qualitative phenomenological study ensures that the results are credible, dependable, and trustworthy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To achieve valid results, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that researchers employ at least two methods of validation in any qualitative study. I selected the following three strategies for validation in this study: triangulation of multiple data sources, engaging in reflexivity, and member checking. Credibility was established using data triangulation and member checking. Multiple sources of data were collected to corroborate all the evidence collected. The data included responses from the pre-interview survey questionnaire; the interviews and follow-up interview; and the examination of documents shared by participants. Careful examination of all the evidence allowed me to verify that the leadership experiences reported by the participants were accurate, and that they had true knowledge of the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervised. I engaged in reflexivity using field notes and written memos in the researcher journal throughout the study to continually address my biases. Reflexivity required that I addressed my biases through my past experiences and making those known to the reader and disclosing how my biases influenced the direction of the study or the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I shared the transcripts of the interview with the participant for verification and feedback to ensure that the data was captured accurately. Creswell and Poth (2018) also suggested sharing with participants the preliminary analyses to corroborate findings. I shared the preliminary analysis of this study with participants for feedback and to ensure that the findings accurately captured the phenomenon of leadership they described and to determine if I missed or overlooked important aspects of leadership.

Throughout this study, peer debriefing was utilized to increase the qualitative validity of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The peer debriefer served as a resource to ask questions and review the research process to ensure that the study was understandable and meaningful beyond myself.

Data Collection

Data was collected from a variety of sources, including pre-interview surveys, in-person interviews, field notes, and documents and artifacts shared by participants. The following protocols and procedures were used throughout the study for data collection. First, I completed a basic course in social and behavioral research protocols under the requirements set by Concordia University Irvine and provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). The completion certificate can be viewed in Appendix E. All necessary approvals were sought for participants selected for the study. This included Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix F) and any approvals necessary from the schools or districts in which the department chairs were employed. Participants were then informed of the purpose of the study and procedures as well as their rights in the study and they electronically signed an informed consent document if they agreed to participate. Participants were provided with a copy of the informed consent (Appendix G). Potential participants for this study will be identified using purposeful and criterion sampling methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research sample was identified using publicly available information in staff directories on school or district websites in the study area. Participants must hold a department chair role to be included for participation in this study and must meet the following criteria: worked at the high school level; their high school was located within study area, the suburbs of a large Midwestern city; they are in at least their second year in their current role; they self-reported having low, medium, or high influence

over the grading and assessment practices of the teachers they supervised; and they exhibited a servant leadership score interpretation of low, moderate, or high for at least four of the seven servant leadership behaviors using the servant leadership questionnaire adapted from Northouse (2019). A pre-interview survey was administered to potential participants to ensure that they met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The pre-interview survey was administered electronically (Google form) to collect demographic information as well as responses to the servant leadership questionnaire (Northouse, 2019) to determine what level of servant leadership behaviors the participant exhibited.

I contacted participants that completed the pre-interview survey and servant leadership questionnaire and met the above criteria to schedule an initial one hour in-person or video interview at a place and time convenient to each participant. Additional follow-up interviews were scheduled with participants to further explore their lived experiences with leadership. After the initial interview, participants were asked to share documents and artifacts, such as course syllabi or faculty handbooks. The follow-up interviews were structured to engage the participant in deeper conversation and discussion of their experiences and, if applicable, explore the artifacts they shared. When circumstances prevented in-person interviews but the participant wished to proceed with the study, the participant was offered the option of scheduling an internet based video conferencing application (Google Meet) or a phone interview at a time convenient to the participant. All interviews were recorded using an internet-based application (Otter.ai, 2023) which recorded audio and transcribed the interview. The interview followed the three-part semi-structured interview protocol described by Galletta (2012). The opening segment of the interview was used to establish rapport with the participant and used “broad questions that create openings for the participant to speak from her or his experience” (Galletta, 2012, p. 47). The middle

segment of the interview used questions specifically related to the research questions in this study and used additional, probing questions as needed to engage the participant in deeper analysis. The concluding segment of the interview gave the participant an opportunity to revisit areas that needed more exploration and provided closure. The interview questions are listed in Appendix C. I took notes during the in-person interview using the field notes template shown in Appendix D. Participants were asked to share any documents or artifacts that relate to grading and assessment practices within their department or school for triangulation purposes. These documents and artifacts included but were not limited to any district grading and assessment policies, faculty handbooks, school-specific policies, or course syllabi. I thanked the participant for their contribution to this study at the conclusion of each interview. Each interview was transcribed automatically using Otter (Otter.ai, 2023) for later data analysis purposes. I listened to each recording and edited each transcript to ensure that the transcript matched what was said verbatim by the participant. As a form of member checking, the transcripts were shared with the participants for review and feedback prior to analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study came from the pre-interview surveys, in-person interviews, field notes, and artifacts shared by participants. The data from the pre-interview surveys was used to determine participants that met the criteria for full inclusion in the study and participation in the in-person or video interview portion of the study. The examination of the field notes and documents and artifacts shared by the participants was used for triangulation purposes to corroborate the themes identified from the interviews.

The interview transcripts were each analyzed using the steps of the modified van Kaam (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) method: horizonalization; reduction and elimination; thematizing

the invariant constituents; identifying the invariant constituents and themes by application; creating individual textural and structural descriptions; creating a textural-structural description; and developing a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience. The resulting descriptions were then analyzed to arrive at the essence of the lived experiences of the participants to understand what themes emerged as beneficial to department chairs as they worked with teachers to implement grading and assessment reforms, and what servant leadership behaviors were beneficial.

The first step of the modified van Kaam method is horizonalization in which the transcripts and artifacts were coded with initial attributes that emerged from the data. As Saldaña (2021) noted, there may be only one or multiple types of coding needed depending on the study. For this research study, I used in vivo, descriptive, and process coding of the interview transcripts. For in vivo coding, the researcher uses individual words or short phrases in the participants' own words; in descriptive coding the researcher assigns words or phrases to summarize the data; and in process coding the researcher uses "-ing" words to describe observable actions in the data (Saldaña, 2021). The interview transcripts were anonymized and loaded into Delve (Twenty to Nine LLC, 2023). A second coder was used in the initial coding phase to engage in clarification of the emerging themes from the data. We initially worked separately to code the transcripts and then compared codes until we reached agreement on the codes and themes that emerge from the codes. After initial coding, the codebook and snippets (coded interview excerpts) were downloaded from Delve into a spreadsheet to organize codes. Table 3.2 shows a sample table of how the data was organized in the spreadsheet after the initial coding phase using a modified version of a coding table (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). Tables 3.3-3.5 show examples from selected participants.

Table 3.2

Sample Coding Table of Interview Transcripts and Artifacts

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Coded snippets (interview excerpts) will appear here.			

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.3

Example Coding Table - Beth

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Researcher: Maybe talk a little bit about you know, what leadership behaviors or leadership styles, or how you work in general in your role.			
Beth: I mean, that's a hard question to answer. I think I'm still trying to figure that out. Because I was new to administration when all this started. I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance. The other balance that I would say, I'm trying to be politically correct. Don't quote me on that, is research versus implementation. Right. So there's a lot of really great research and theories out there. A lot of textbooks. That doesn't always look the way you want it to look when you're implementing. And so that's the struggle. And then the other big struggle is supporting your teachers, right. And I guess one thing that I try to do is make sure that I really believe it, and can stand behind it before I asked my teachers to do it. On the other thing that I've done is I've, I'm in it with them. So I taught [course names redacted]. So I've been at the ground floor, planning, writing, assessment, writing curriculum, doing the grading, working with the kids through this whole thing, I think. I think that's essential. It definitely gives me a greater voice as at the district level, because I can speak to all the sides. I think it gives me [inaudible] my teachers because they know that I'm in the trenches with them struggling because it has been, it's been a lot of work and a lot of struggle.	still trying to figure that out always trying to work on that balance research versus implementation in it with them been at the ground floor speak to all the sides in the trenches	vision balance lots of resources available struggle to support teachers	finding a balance believing in your vision writing curriculum and assessments struggling along with teachers

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.4

Example Coding Table - Eugene

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Eugene: So with respect to the CBE [competency based education] rewrite very much, and that will directly affect freshmen next year, sophomores the year after. And juniors and seniors the year after that. With our current setting. We did a curriculum rewrite just before I got here, and it was turning whenever we did traditionally, and just into standards based, standards referenced, education and grading. And so we've had rubrics and interrater reliability and all this stuff for a long time. But we haven't aligned it 9-12 on a rubric that is continuous and with performance indicators that are across the district and now we do have that. So that's what we've been working on, in turn though, was long as we're putting them into place we are revamping our assessment process to to shift a bit more towards whatever gaps we see happening. Like I said, there's probably about 20 different little criteria and some of which were nailing and some of which were not. That's what I will be in workshops with teachers directly going over that and as they build their units of instruction out. I'll be sitting with them and working with them on it. So it's a pretty ideal place to be for a legacy project. So, but on a day to day, day to day, I belong to several, a third, a quarter, maybe like 40, let's say a third of people's Google Classroom, so I see what goes out. And, and I can pay attention to the kind of the recursive nature of it. Of the assessment. So in those cases, it's through dialogue that I can talk to the teachers, but a lot of times assessment is, is so that's that can influence their kind of their practices along the way. But the structural stuff, it's, it's remarkably durable. So it's good to be on hand when	haven't aligned it 9-12 some of which were nailing and some of which were not pay attention influence their practices good to be on hand	Competency-Based education move to standards-based grading use of rubrics professional development for teachers in it with them work with teachers	rewriting curriculum revamping assessments sitting with them belonging in teacher's Google classrooms talking to teachers influencing teachers

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
we're building. We're building the roads, you know.			building the roads

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.5

Example Coding Table - Isabelle

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Researcher: Are you kind of tailoring how you work with your teachers and your departments depending on the discipline?			
Isabelle: I do think I tailor it differently. I lead from experience much more with the [department name redacted], and I share my own teaching experiences with them more frequently, I would say, than I do with the [department name redacted]. Right at the beginning, I will say I guess I felt that I had to almost validate my ability to lead [content]. I think they tried me a little bit more, but I do think good teaching is good teaching. So I think there's a lot of overlap, like I said already within the disciplines. A lot of my leadership styles are based on relationships. So I do work hard to build relationships that are trusting and where people feel like they can ask me questions and get feedback without being, without being judged. And I try to model as much as I can, which I think is something I learned from being a classroom teacher for so long, that kids need that and adults need that. And so I still try to do that. I am, I don't know which positions you've been at where, but I do still teach also. So I've taught, the teaching here is the first time I didn't teach [course name]. So I actually taught an [content area] class, which is not in my wheelhouse, until last year and the year before. So that caused me to kind of go back to being a learner also and being like a totally different teacher, who I had not worked with teachers that taught mostly [content area], different instructional styles for sure. So that was an interesting dynamic also that I've had that opportunity. And I do think there is something to teaching	tailor it differently good teaching is good teaching model as much as I can	share teaching experiences with teachers trusting relationships in it with them, teach a class	leading from experience building relationships with teachers applying skills learned in the classroom teaching outside area of expertise being a learner

Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
especially in the pandemic, to kind of being right there with the teaching staff and talking through the challenges that I also had with kids on Zoom and all of the challenges that went with that.	right there with the teaching staff	in it with them	being with the teachers

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Following horizontalization and coding, reduction and elimination was used to identify similar relevant concepts and attributes (invariant constituents) and remove redundant and extraneous data that was not related to the PRQ and/or SRQ of the study. Each quote was analyzed to ensure that it was essential to the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon of leadership or servant leadership behaviors and could be abstracted into larger themes. Horizons that did not meet these criteria were eliminated. The invariant constituents that remained were clustered and thematized into groups that represented the participant's lived experiences related to leadership on grading and assessment. These invariant constituents were then compared to the participant's verbatim transcript to ensure that the meaning of the attributes or themes was explicit and compatible with the participant's original story. Next, textural descriptions were created based on verbatim quotes from the participant interviews, and then structural descriptions (emergent themes) were interpreted from the attributes. From these, a textural-structural description was created for each participant to describe the essence of their experiences. At this phase, new tables were created to summarize these emergent themes that are common among multiple participants in the study (see Table 3.6). Additional examples are provided for selected participants in tables 3.7-3.9.

Table 3.6

Sample Table for Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
		Coded snippets (interview excerpts) will appear here.			

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.7

Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Beth

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript / artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptual-izing (School/ District) Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Navigating District Context & Culture	Conceptual-izing a vision (School/ District) Interpreting district leadership	Beth: I mean, that's a hard question to answer. I think I'm still trying to figure that out. Because I was new to administration when all this started. I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance. The other balance that I would say, I'm trying to be politically correct. Don't quote me on that, is research versus implementation. Right. So there's a lot of really great research and theories out	still trying to figure that out always trying to work on that balance research versus implementation	vision balance	finding a balance

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript / artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Building Collective Efficacy: Organizing Teams of Teachers	Providing professional development	there. A lot of textbooks. That doesn't always look the way you want it to look when you're implementing. And so that's the struggle. And		lots of resources available	
Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptual-izing (Personal)	Conceptual-izing a vision (personal)	then the other big struggle is supporting your teachers, right. And I guess one thing that I try to do is make sure that I really believe it, and can stand behind it before I asked my teachers to		struggle to support teachers	
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading by example	do it. On the other thing that I've done is I've, I'm in it with them. So I taught [course names redacted]. So I've	in it with them		
Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices	Aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment	been at the ground floor, planning, writing, assessment, writing curriculum, doing the grading, working with the kids through this whole thing, I think. I think that's essential. It	been at the ground floor		believing in your vision

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript / artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers; Coping with Difficult Emotions	Leading by example Experiencing difficult emotions	definitely gives me a greater voice as at the district level, because I can speak to all the sides. I think it gives me [inaudible] my teachers because they know that I'm in the trenches with them struggling because it has been, it's been a lot of work and a lot of struggle.	speak to all the sides in the trenches		writing curriculum and assessments struggling along with teachers

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.8

Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Eugene

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices	Aligning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Eugene: So with respect to the CBE [competency based education] rewrite very much, and that will directly affect freshmen next year, sophomores the year after. And juniors and seniors the year after that. With our current setting. We did a curriculum rewrite just before I got here, and it was turning whenever we did traditionally, and just into standards based, standards referenced, education and grading. And so we've had rubrics and interrater reliability and all this stuff for a long time. But we haven't aligned it 9-12 on a rubric that is continuous and with performance indicators that are across the district and now we do have that. So that's what we've been working on, in turn though,		Competency-Based education	
Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices	Aligning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment			move to standards-based grading	rewriting curriculum
	Using Rubrics		haven’t aligned it 9-12	use of rubrics	

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices Building Collective Efficacy: Organizing Teams of Teachers; Supporting and Coaching teachers Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Changing Assessment and Grading Practices Providing Professional Develop- Ment; Coaching Teachers Leading by Example	was long as we're putting them into place we are revamping our assessment process to to shift a bit more towards whatever gaps we see happening. Like I said, there's probably about 20 different little criteria and some of which were nailing and some of which were not. That's what I will be in workshops with teachers directly going over that and as they build their units of instruction out. I'll be sitting with them and working with them on it. So it's a pretty ideal place to be for a legacy project. So, but on a day to day, day to day, I belong to several, a third, a quarter, maybe like 40, let's say a third of people's Google Classroom, so I see what goes out. And, and I can pay attention to the kind of the recursive nature of it. Of the assessment. So in those cases, it's through dialogue that	some of which were nailing and some of which were not pay attention	professional development for teachers in it with them	revamping assessments sitting with them belonging in teacher's Google classrooms

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Emotional healing	Emotional Healing	I can talk to the teachers, but a lot of times assessment is, so that's [how I] can influence their kind of their practices along the way. But the structural stuff, it's, it's remarkably durable. So it's good to be on hand when we're building. We're building the roads, you know.	influence their practices	work with teachers	talking to teachers
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading and Influencing Teachers		good to be on hand		influencing teachers
Building Collective Efficacy: Encouraging Innovation	Innovating				building the roads

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.9

Example of Thematizing the Interview Transcripts and Artifacts - Isabelle

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading and Influencing Teachers	Isabelle: I do think I tailor it differently. I lead from experience much more with the [department name redacted], and I share my own teaching experiences with them more frequently, I would say, than I do with the [department name redacted]. Right at the beginning, I will say I guess I felt that I had to almost validate my ability to lead [content]. I think they tried me a little bit more, but I do think good teaching is good teaching. So I think there's a lot of overlap, like I said already within the disciplines. A lot of my leadership styles are based on relationships. So I do work hard to build relationships that are trusting and where people feel like they can ask me questions and get	tailor it differently		leading from experience
	Leading and Influencing Teachers			share teaching experiences with teachers	
			good teaching is good teaching		
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Building Trust and Fostering Relationships	Building Trust and Rapport			trusting relationships	building relationships with teachers

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading by Example	feedback without being, without being judged. And I try to model as much as I can, which I think is something I learned from being a classroom teacher for so long, that kids need that and adults need that. And so I still try to do that. I am, I don't know which positions you've been at where, but I do still teach also. So I've taught, the teaching here is the first time I didn't teach [course name]. So I actually taught an [content area] class, which is not in my wheelhouse, until last year and the year before. So that caused me to kind of go back to being a learner also and being like a totally different teacher, who I had not worked with teachers that taught mostly [content area], different instructional styles for sure. So that was an interesting dynamic also that I've had that	model as much as I can		applying skills learned in the classroom
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading by Example				teaching outside area of expertise
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Being Reflective	Being Reflective				being a learner

Composite textural-structural themes	Textural descriptions	Transcript/artifact	In vivo codes	Descriptive codes	Process codes
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	Leading by Example	opportunity. And I do think there is something to teaching especially in the pandemic, to kind of being right there with the teaching staff and talking through the challenges that I also had with kids on Zoom and all of the the challenges that went with that.	right there with the teaching staff	in it with them | teach a class in it with them	being with the teachers

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Lastly, the composite textural-structural description was created to synthesize the common constituents and themes across all participants in the study to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon of leadership as it related to grading and assessment practices. The composite textural-structural descriptions were summarized in a table using quotes and excerpts from the interview transcripts that supported the theme to describe the essence of the lived experience of leadership (see sample in Table 3.10). Table 3.11 shows a sample table for the composite textural-structural description of the theme of Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers. Additional tables for the rest of the composite textural-structural descriptions of themes can be found in Appendix I.

Table 3.10

Sample Table of Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes

Participant	Composite textural-structural theme Participant quotes
Participant 1	Quote 1
	Quote 2
	Quote 3
	…
Participant 2	Quote 1
	Quote 2
	Quote 3
	…
Participant 3	Quote 1
	Quote 2
	Quote 3
	…

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2021).

Table 3.11

Example of Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
Alden	[A former curriculum director] then he ran a sort of like an assessment club, select people he really liked to work with. We never got feedback, or heard anything from him. So he had them doing these pilots. So he had five teachers doing five pilots, five different ways, what it was going to look like, and then he retires. We had this rogue operation going on. Other teachers, myself, with the book, was talking about it. I think we went to one or two, the first institutes/conference, they had up in West Aurora conversations and presenters, and that, we need to start looking at this start moving this way. So that was basically [inaudible]. This is district, let's do it on our our PLCs, we'll do it on the side, we can run like one teachers running a parallel Gradebook, just to see how they're scored out, versus our standard bad practice of points and totals and about weighted grades and such. So let's start aligning. A lot of it is going to come down to the relationship I have with people and people's perspective, me having the ability to influence or not influence. Some people think I have a greater influence than I do. And others have a solid understanding, say, of where I fall within middle management and the top principals superintendent has to be the teacher.
Beth	On the other thing that I've done is I've, I'm in it with them. And then being vulnerable, I would say because I'm teaching it with them. I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs [professional learning teams] at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them. I think it gives me [inaudible] my teachers because they know that I'm in the trenches with them struggling because [curriculum development] has been, it's been a lot of work and a lot of struggle. I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them. I think that for me, I will always go back to what's our why. And the hardest part of me being an administrator for the last four years is I feel like that's often

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
	missing. I truly believe that in order for there to be success, that hard work, as much of it, as you can, needs to be established in the beginning and everybody needs to understand it. So where I went wrong, and where our district went wrong is we didn't spend enough time with our teachers really making sure that they understood the why and giving them a voice in the why and then letting them go.
Carl	So many, many, many, many years ago, when we were introducing their assessment system, you know, they go, here's a level three, DOK [depth of knowledge], 1-2-1-2-1-2. Then I'd say, “Well, what'll make it a three?” And then they say, "Oh, this is how we would do it." And then they go, "Ah, that's so much better." Then, they realize the value of a higher level question. So you know, giving them some examples to help them see what we're talking about. Really helpful.
Daryl	I definitely think if you were talking to my group, they know that, like, I'm in it with them, you know. I mean, I think that it's, you know, like servant leadership, maybe might be one that I would I would gravitate towards, you know. I definitely think if you were talking to my group, they know that I'm in it with them, you know…You know, so I think that I try to be as like, put myself in their shoes as much as possible to just really, you know, you know, and seek them out in terms of like, "What would make your job easier? You know, what are some things I can do to either order for you set up for you or arrange for you that would be that just literally makes your ability to concentrate on the classroom easier, stronger or clearer?"
Eugene	I'll be sitting with them and working with them on [curriculum]. So, but on a day to day, day to day, I belong to several a third, a quarter, maybe like 40, let's say a third of people's Google Classroom, so I see what goes out. So in those cases, it's through dialogue that I can talk to the teachers, but a lot of times assessment is, so that's [how I] can influence their kind of their practices along the way. And so operationalizing it and just making sure it really happens is what we what we've got to do. We are on year three of four of a pre-competency based education pilot, which we're going to detrack and unweight English credit for grade nine and then the following year will be grade 10. So we've been at it for a while. One of the things that you and I might want to talk about is we have a matrix of different beliefs about assessment. And I just recently did a kind of an analysis of which of these beliefs are we have locked in which ones are we'll have to work on a little and which ones are going to take significant work.

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
Finn	During I'm trying to figure you know, you got to, you really got to figure out ways, from my perspective, I really have to figure out ways to get myself into the course, you get yourself into a course team on a functional level, right? And all the admin here do a ninth grade study hall. 'm teaching the extension course. So we have like a support class. That goes along with algebra one, there's an algebra one extension, a geometry, extension and Algebra Two extension. So I taught regular, I taught the actual class like, three years ago. And then the last the last year, and this year, I've been teaching the extension class, it's just easier for my job to, like, you know, we get called into meetings and stuff like that, like, there's certain parts of our schedule that we don't control. So teaching extension is actually really nice, because when I need to be gone, it's not as big of a deal, I have a para in that class with me as well. So it's, you know, it's just an easier class to miss. And it also is helpful in terms of like, what are the real on the ground problems that students have with the [content area], like what, you know, as extension, theoretically is populated by students who we're worried are going to fail the course. So, you know, I'm getting the kids who, you know, in theory, are going to struggle to be successful are going to struggle to complete homework and those types of things. So it helps me kind of get a feel for what the course you know, what, what some of the issues of the course might be. But anytime there's an opening, anytime anybody suggests anything, the answer, like, especially about assessment, it's, you have to give an automatic "Yes." Even if it's not, what I would do, even if it's not something that I think is the best, non traditional way to assess a student, I'm gonna say yes, immediately to every idea. Because you're trying to open up that space, you're trying to open up that thought process for people. And so, as an as an administrator, as a leader, like whatever spin you want to put on it, the answer is yes.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	I worked in both buildings and had to teach a course. But [the teachers] really shaped the beginning of conversations and I began to codify that so that when we returned back to school in the fall of 21, we began to put things together and in writing and surveying, I gave lots and lots of freedom that year for people to experiment. They actually put some formal pilots together and kind of played some of the traditional structure to their traditional ways. But a lot of the progressives continued to shape things. And so that's how we ended up with discussions all last second semester. And then over the summer, I created this document that I thought everybody could buy into and that there was

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes

still freedom for people to exercise their own beliefs within, pardon me their own practices within a belief structure. And that's what that's what we came up and that's what we have as a document.

I think the probably the most influential piece that I have is in helping people see outside of their current situations as teachers and try to help them grasp a wider amount of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning.

And for many people, unless they're out there and they're involved and they're reading, they don't necessarily have those same ideas. And so they need to figure out where they're going. And if somebody doesn't show them that, you know, Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem on the hill, they're gonna think that they live in the New Jerusalem.

So much of what I would say, you know, kind of looking back over my time here is and even in other districts where I you know, I was, and have left, it's been planting the seeds, it's been having the conversations, it's having them think towards the future.

Instead you have to figure out how they're going to, you know, be pulled in and accept something.

So for example, there was a big discussions about zeros and what does zero mean and all those different sorts of things. And rather than saying to people, no, you can't give a zero, we took a more positive approach and the statement in our practices, the belief is that we put, students must have the opportunity to continuously improve their skills as they move through language acquisition steps, okay? And then the actual practice is: retakes must be available for summatives for students to demonstrate, demonstrate growth. And late work should be accepted, but only until the end of the unit. So that allows somebody who really wants to still give that zero and feels like that's the only way kids will do their work. But it forces them to have a longer period of time for the kid to demonstrate. And I think that that's, that was something they all agreed that they could live with that.

But I think a lot of that has been based on selecting some individuals who are going to keep doing that. My French team for example, I had someone who hired in the same year that I hired in and you know, she answered questions interview wise, that I in a way that let me know she was very much a progressive, progressive person. The long term teacher who had been here forever and ever and ever was one of the movers and shakers that began to move towards proficiency, particularly with the influence of the new teacher. And then as we've hired part time people coming in, we've made sure that they have that

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
	same philosophy. And so then the French team has become this model for everybody else about how to transform curriculum, how to transform practices, how to transform grading. And I have given them whatever they want, or they need in order to make them successful.
Isabelle	I do think I tailor it differently. I lead from experience much more with the [department name redacted], and I share my own teaching experiences with them more frequently, I would say, than I do with the [department name redacted]. And I try to model as much as I can, which I think is something I learned from being a classroom teacher for so long, that kids need that and adults need that. So I've taught, the teaching here is the first time I didn't teach [course name]. So I actually taught an [content area] class, which is not in my wheelhouse, until last year and the year before. And I do think there is something to teaching especially in the pandemic, to kind of being right there with the teaching staff and talking through the challenges that I also had with kids on Zoom and all of the challenges that went with that. I do think I tried to give the opportunity of leading or co-leading to a teacher. I think I get some buy in sometimes. So I've really tried to move away from that [traditional grading practices] in my own grading practices and model that with my colleagues here. Right now, I'm trying to, with my [course] team, kind of demonstrate a willingness to try something new without knowing how it will work. My team is a little traditional in their practices. And so some of the things I've brought up, they've not really even understood sometimes so I've had to, which is good, so they've asked questions. “Why would you ever do a 50% minimum because isn't that unfair to the kids who got a 50 versus the kids that got a 10?” So like, even having like the conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are that are unique, so I have been willing to allow some PLCs to go have some people go a little rogue on their PLC like to try something new with the intention of like action research, like they want to try it, they have a good reason why, they want to share out, which is good. But I've started to lean into the like, "Hey, I'm having an optional meeting to discuss the "what the zero does, if versus what the 50 does," and I'm gonna do it this Wednesday and next Wednesday. Come if you're interested. I'm a little

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
	disappointed when I'm like oh, only six people came out of 36. But then I'm like, but who cares? Six, that's six. That's great. You know, and hopefully they'll go back and it'll spread or they're thinking about it enough. I do think I tried to give the opportunity of leading or co-leading to a teacher I think I get some buy in sometimes. And I have a few teachers that like are very aware of like my limitations as a department head. So they'll be like, do you want me to send the email? And I'm like, "Yeah, that would be great." And so they're like, I'll send it and say you and I are hosting but it's coming in. So like, I do think that that helps. It does not sound like [name redacted]'s asking you to do this. And hey, "I believe it too." And so she and I together. So that's like that like team building side.
Jerry	So I have the opportunity to teach in the summer, and it's not the same, but there's enough there that it can keep me grounded. I'm going to try as much as possible to figure out every angle I can to understand that piece as opposed to “Hey, guys, I read this, I have a brainstorm.” Let's figure it out together. I'm not married to an idea, but I want to go in sort of having done my homework, I guess. So last year, I challenged them before the school year started, “I want you to do one significant change for the second quarter or maybe it's all of the first semester.” And then at the end of the year, I challenged the whole department. Again, because of the autonomy piece, they're not gonna listen or hear well, like you must do this, but a challenge, and that's optional, and we're good with that. And so that really led to a lot of great changes. I was really surprised in the spring how many teachers said, "I will accept that challenge. I can try something new," and they tried different things. So now this year with course teams, getting into each team and we are for the first time going to have some common assessment questions in the hopes that they can start to see, first of all that they're really similar for the most part, and secondly, to learn from one another. And I think as part of that it's going to come out like well, how do you, what is a good question, or how do you, how do you grade this to get to really assess student learning well? And then how do you assign a grade to that? So I'm hoping that those conversations come out almost through the task that I'm having them do, like, almost subversive but like the hidden curriculum is hoping they bring through the grading practices and discussion. I told you a little bit advocate up, advocate down, so I'm going to... whatever admin is saying I'm going to try to advocate for them with my teachers and whatever teachers are saying I'm trying to advocate upward to admin. I'd like to get my hands dirty in the thing, whatever it is.

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
Kent	Yeah, so like when we have staff development, certainly I'm, I'm leading that staff development, but that planning, the planning and leadership is done with that core leadership team. So it's myself and I, and then our four core leaders. So there's six of us, we meet twice a week typically. So we're moving them around a whole host of things and we structure in all the same things that we would ask for a team within the PLC model to do, we do, other than building curriculum, I guess, although the staff development is our curriculum, but we look at data. And then we had a couple of, that we have to [inaudible] out of that that tried to pilot some flavor of standards based grading. And that, I would say they had mixed results, and then they kind of abandoned that. And then there were some people that started getting a vision for standards based grading that was focused on skills. And that was probably like 2011, 2012 and like Driver's Ed was one of the classes that piloted it. And so they started getting a sense, then they just started inviting some early adopters to come in to that process. And then if you remember that whole window that was then from like, 2011 to 2015 was the window of Common Core, Common Core, NGSS and then the, the social studies framework. So we used that time to really take a deep look at our curriculum. SLOs were also going on at that time. So we tried to roll all those things together, where SLOs were skills based. Just like we wanted our grading system to be based. So we wanted the SLO to be focused on a skill to monitor growth. Then that naturally progressed into let's just do our whole course that way. So that was that and I think probably by 2020... 2020 was probably the year I'm guessing 2019... Probably 2020, Fall of 2020, because I think it was COVID year like of all years. That was the last year, so those who were the resistors the last adopters, like all teams must be standards based grading by 2020. It's called "in praise of top down leadership" and DuFour wrote in 2007. And specifically, he was talking around leadership around professional learning community adoption, but I think it also speaks to when you caught a vision for a way to do things better. Like I now know better. And I'm going to work to build consensus. I'm going to work to bring you alongside I'm going to work to include you in that like the servant leadership kinds of things. But at some point, we're like we're doing this, we're doing this and I'm gonna ask you questions like, you know, where, where have you found support for what you're proposing? Because it's not okay to stick with practices that we know are no longer as effective. We found better ways to do it. Or rather, we started letting teams innovate and try it and they started going and then you start realizing like, oh, that's better, that's better. And then it's almost like one of those things that once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. And there's no way you could go back.

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
Lori	I also share things with teachers I'm working on, like a lot of stuff with [standards-based grading.] I make sure to ask teachers a lot of questions about their experience, opinions, and what they would like to see happen in the school or department. When I first started the job I was surprised to learn that many teachers had not be given an opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions or ideas. This was a great trust builder, especially when I was able to act on a recommendation they made or follow up about a topic that gave them closure. As teachers talked with one another about their experiences, I noticed more teachers being vulnerable and sharing what was on their mind. I often reiterate to teachers that I have their best interest in mind and that I'm on their team. I am transparent about my decision making and always give the "why" (when I can) behind decisions that they are impacted by. You know, both during evaluation like post-observation conversations and like chats in the hallway, and ask them to work back backwards from there. I feel like that is one of the few opportunities that I get to have more of those like big picture, dreamy conversations. Some teachers who are like “Oh, yeah,” like, "Yes, and…" people, like “Let me give that a shot.” Or like, “That's really interesting. I haven't thought about that. Let me do some digging.” They're the ones who are already starting to try some pieces of it. Teachers. I've also found that there are teachers who are just really comfortable doing things the way that they've been doing it for years. But they're also the same people who are saying like oh, yeah, like I know, things are changing. And I know you want us to go in this this particular direction. I just haven't convinced myself to do it yet. So you know, that eventually goes back to like, the support site in place to help them embrace the change. But I think it's like a fear of the unknown right now. I use my favorite strategy ever. Of like the five why's or the nine why's to like get them get back to like what is the core reason for why you feel like you're not ready or you don't want to do it. And that's different for different teachers that I work with. But I feel like once I understand what the what the what the barrier is. That's where I can provide the provide the support, and I would say a lot of the support comes through just continued conversations, or me giving examples or us like co-creating things together to help them like take that next step. I guess it's not as much of like vulnerability as it is like, I just am willing to open I want to give you examples, but I tried to show as much of like my human side as I possibly can.

Participant	Exhibiting leadership attributes: Leading by example and influencing teachers Participant quotes
Morgan	I believe that you build trust with people who you're evaluating by making sure that you know what it feels like when they're doing their job. But I think you have to work really hard to make sure that they understand that you're willing to be where they are. Well, I think if you can, if your teachers will see that you're willing to "Hey, I'm gonna give you some tools to be able to work the gray area, to figure out how to make this work. So that nobody's crawling up your tail about grades. But if a kid ain't doing it, I'm also going to support you there, too. And I'm fully aware of that and fully willing to fail that kid and live with the consequences that go along with that." But I think any tool can be useful to move teachers' practices forward if the evaluatee and the evaluator are setting that as a goal.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Table 3.12 shows a master table of the emergent themes and composite textural-structural descriptions within each theme, as well as the textural descriptions that went into developing those themes.

Table 3.12

Emergent Themes and Composite Textural-structural Descriptions

Emergent Theme	Composite textural-structural description	Textural descriptions
Exhibiting Leadership Attributes	Becoming a Leader	• Becoming a Leader • Displaying Servant Leadership • Leadership Attributes
	Having a Strong Personal Philosophy	• Having a Strong Personal Philosophy
	Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers	• Following Through • Communicating Effectively • Holding High Expectations • Leading and Influencing Teachers • Leading By Example
	Building Trust and Fostering Relationships	• Being Visible • Building Trust and Rapport • Culture of Shared Responsibility • Encouraging Play • Fostering Relationships • Listening • Promoting Connection
	Being Reflective	• Being Reflective • Having Humility • Staying Humble
	Coping with Difficult Emotions	• Experiencing Difficult Emotions
	Navigating District Context & Culture	• District Culture and Context • Interpreting District Leadership • Working with Resistant Teachers

Emergent Theme	Composite textural-structural description	Textural descriptions
Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors	Conceptualizing (Personal)	• Conceptualizing a vision (Personal) • Conceptualizing a mission (Personal) • Conceptualizing goals (Personal)
	Conceptualizing (School/District)	• Conceptualizing a vision (School/District) • Conceptualizing a mission (School/District) • Conceptualizing goals (School/District)
	Conceptualizing (Future Goals)	• Conceptualizing a vision (Department) • Conceptualizing a mission (Department) • Setting Goals with Teachers
	Emotional Healing	• Emotional Healing • Listening
	Growing and Empowering Followers	• Helping Followers Grow and Succeed • Empowering
Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading	Developing a Philosophy	• Developing an Assessment Philosophy • Developing a Grading Philosophy

Emergent Theme	Composite textural-structural description	Textural descriptions
	Identifying Problems with Traditional Grading and Changing Practices	• 100-point scale • Accepting Late Work with Penalties | Not Accepting Late Work • Averaging Grades • Frequency of Assessments/Grades • Including Nonacademic Factors • Meeting Expectations of Assessments/Grades • Playing the Game of Grades • Using Electronic Gradebooks • Zeros | Zeros on the 100-point scale
	Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices	• Aligning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment • Assessing Skills • Changing Assessment and Grading Practices • Devaluing Homework • Excluding Nonacademic Factors • Focusing on Best Practices • Grading as Communication • Improving Feedback • Using Reassessments and Retakes • Using Rubrics • Standards-based Grading • Using Multiple Assessments
Encountering Barriers to Change	Meeting with Resistance and Pushback from Stakeholders	• Community Pushback • Concern With Low Grades • Getting Pushback
	Interpreting and Responding to District Leadership	• Dysfunctional District Leadership • Interpreting District Leadership

Emergent Theme	Composite textural-structural description	Textural descriptions
	Operating within Teacher Autonomy, Contracts, and Unions	• Teacher Autonomy • Teacher Contract • Teachers' Union
Building Collective Efficacy	Organizing Teams of Teachers	• Needing Professional Development • Providing Professional Development • Providing Time for Professional Development • Fostering Collaboration
	Encouraging Innovation	• Encouraging Innovation • Innovating • Teachers Being Innovative
	Supporting and Coaching Teachers	• Coaching Teachers • Representing Teachers' Voices • Using Instructional Coaches
	Seeking New Perspectives	• Bringing in Authors and Experts • Conducting Site Visits • Seeking New Perspectives • Using Professional Resources (Articles and Books)
	Managing Change	• Being Okay with Imperfection • Easing Transition • Managing Change • Questioning Existing Practices

Ethical Issues

Maintaining high ethical standards was paramount to ensure that the results of this study were valid and transferable, and to protect the participants in this study. To address ethical issues, I considered potential conflicts of interest, my position in the study as the researcher, and

ethical issues for the participants involved. Steps were taken to mitigate issues in each of these areas.

To address potential conflicts of interest, I considered my professional relationships with participants in the study. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) recommends that researchers disclose all prior professional relationships with any participants in the study should those exist. Prior to their participation in this study, I had been introduced to three of the participants professionally through a group of department chairs that met one or two times per year. I also knew three other participants in this study professionally because we had worked as colleagues in the same district in the past. However, I did not have any current or past evaluative or supervisory role over any participants in the study that would have unduly influenced their participation in this study. Also, none of the participants in this study were currently employed in the same district in which I am employed. All the department chairs in this study agreed to participate based on the email invitation that was sent to all potential participants and they were advised through informed consent (Appendix G) and throughout the study that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, I had no financial or economic interests which presented a conflict in this study.

To address my position as the researcher within the study, I considered how my professional experiences may have introduced my personal opinions and feelings into the study. As Creswell & Poth (2018) noted, the researcher must position themselves within the study by disclosing their personal values and biases. I have been a follower of the servant leadership model of leadership since I began my career as a school administrator. I believe that the behaviors of servant leaders are very effective in building positive professional relationships with the teachers I supervise. Also, I believe that the most effective grading and assessment practices

minimize or eliminate the impact of nonacademic factors on students' final grades. To address these biases in the study, I engaged in the practice of reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018) using field notes and writing memos throughout the study. I positioned these reflexive comments here by discussing how my interpretations of servant leadership behaviors, and grading and assessment practices were shaped prior to and throughout the study.

Lastly, I considered the ethical issues of the participants in the study. The main concerns were addressed by providing informed consent for the participants at each stage of the study and allowing participants to withdraw from the study at any time as discussed earlier and protecting the confidentiality of the participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described ethical issues that must be taken into consideration at various points in the study: prior to conducting the study; beginning the study; collecting data; analyzing data; and reporting, sharing, and storing data. I took steps to address ethical issues at all points in the study. Prior to conducting the study, I received training on behavioral and social research practices (Appendix E) and approval to conduct this study was received by the Institutional Review Board at Concordia University Irvine (Appendix F). At the beginning phase of the study and prior to participation, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and they acknowledged their informed consent (Appendix G). They were informed of the potential benefits and risks of the study, as well as their ability to withdraw from or refrain from completing the study at any time during the study without consequence. The benefits included helping the researcher and others understand how the leadership behaviors of department chairs influenced the grading and assessment practices of teachers. The risks to participants included disclosing closely held beliefs about their own leadership practices and their views on grading and assessment practices. However, this risk was minimized by providing confidentiality to the participants through the pre-interview, in-person

interview, analysis, and reporting phases of the study: the study setting was identified as the suburbs of a large, Midwestern city; no school or district names were used; and pseudonyms were created for each participant. Additionally, participant quotes were redacted where necessary to prevent inadvertent identification of any individual. Several steps were taken to secure the data collected in this study. Data (including pre-interview and interview data) and contact information (e.g. participant email addresses, phone numbers, and addresses) was stored on a password protected laptop computer. Two-factor authentication was required to gain access to the computer. Recordings of the interviews were permanently deleted after the transcription and member checking steps were performed. Participants were assigned a pseudonym and necessary redactions were made prior to coding of the transcripts using Delve (Twenty to Nine LLC, 2023) and prior to inclusion of any quote in this study. At the conclusion of the study, all data that was stored online electronically was downloaded before permanent deletion. All data will be stored locally offline for five years and then discarded as recommended by the APA (2010).

Summary

The research questions proposed in this study were examined using a transcendental phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was the most appropriate method to use because phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experience of the participants and capture the details of a single concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants in this study were a sample of thirteen secondary department chairs that met the selection criteria. The phenomena under study was the leadership experiences and servant leadership behaviors of the department chairs related to the assessment and grading practices of the teachers they supervised. All ethical concerns were addressed in the study design and approved by the Institutional Review Board. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using the modified van Kaam method as described

by Moustakas (1994). Data was coded using Saldaña's (2021) in vivo, descriptive, and process coding techniques, with the leadership behaviors and assessment and grading practices serving as initial attributes. Redundant data was eliminated; the invariant constituents were used to develop textural descriptions; and then composite textural-structural descriptions were created to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon of leadership as experienced by the department chairs.

Department chairs that participated in this study had an opportunity to share the phenomenon of the lived experience of leadership, and more specifically servant leadership behaviors, which has the potential to inform other leaders which behaviors are most successful at influencing teacher practices around assessment and grading reforms. Similar studies have used a phenomenological approach to examine the assessment and grading experiences of teachers as they implemented standards-based grading (Knight & Cooper, 2019). Using a phenomenological approach to this study will help answer the research questions of which leadership themes are beneficial to department chairs.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to understand high school department chairs' lived experiences as they supervised and led teachers within their departments. The primary research question (PRQ) sought to determine what overall themes emerged as beneficial to the chairs as they supervised and lead their teachers in grading and assessment reforms, and the secondary research question (SRQ) sought to determine specifically what themes around leadership behaviors emerged as being beneficial to the chairs as they worked with teachers in their departments on implementing grading and assessment reforms. Transcendental phenomenology was utilized to focus "more on a description of the experiences of participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thirteen participants were interviewed, and the transcripts were read, coded, and thematized using the modified van Kaam (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) method. The participants in this study represented nine different school districts and a variety of departments, including career/technical education, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and department names were redacted or otherwise were not linked to individual participants to maintain a high level of confidentiality. A participant summary is shown in the previous chapter (Table 3.1).

Findings of Qualitative Research

All the participants in this study currently serve as a department chair of a single department or a division chair of multiple departments. Prior to becoming a department chair or division chair, each participant was a classroom teacher. They described their experiences in transitioning to a leadership role and then leading their departments. The following themes emerged in this study: exhibiting leadership attributes; displaying servant leadership behaviors;

revising practices on instruction, assessment, and grading; encountering barriers to change; and building collective efficacy.

Exhibiting Leadership Attributes

The PRQ sought to understand which leadership practices emerged as being beneficial to the department chairs as they sought to implement reforms to grading and assessment practices. Their experiences in becoming a leader and then transitioning to leading their department emerged as major themes in response to the PRQ. Within the theme of exhibiting leadership attributes, the participants described the following experiences: becoming a leader; having a strong personal philosophy; leading by example and influencing teachers; building trust and fostering relationships; being reflective; coping with difficult emotions; and navigating district context and culture.

Becoming a Leader

The participants in the study experienced a variety of situations prior to taking on their leadership roles and decided to take their leadership roles for a variety of reasons. Some of the participants gradually took on additional leadership responsibilities while still teaching or took on new roles such as instructional coaching. There was not a common theme, necessarily, in why each participant made the decision to step into a leadership role. However, each participant shared how the experience of becoming a leader played a pivotal role in their professional lives.

Some could be considered reluctant administrators, such as Kent, who said, “I'm not sure if I want to be an administrator, but like, ‘Okay, let's talk,’ and then I kind of was a reluctant administrator.” He further explained,

> [The superintendent] said, “Well, what if we do this?” Because right at that point, I was a teacher leader and teaching four classes. He said, “What if we make you not a core

> leader, but a super core leader? You'll teach three classes and take a little more time and you'll join some of the administrative conversations." So, I went from four classes to three, to then two, to one, to zero over the course of years. Metaphor, you know, almost like a frog in boiling water or whatever.

Similarly, Morgan described his transition to a leadership role in a somewhat negative light. He was originally a teacher and then a department chair of a single department. However, changes at the district level to move from department chairs to division leaders of multiple departments forced him to have to reapply for his position. He described the experience of becoming a full-time administrator this way: "And I guess that's when I knew I had kind of arrived because I was different, but I hated it. And to this day, I still hate it." He elaborated,

> I will tell you that the one of the most difficult, the most difficult thing I've done professionally in my life was to go from being what you are right now as a as a department chair who sat in the middle of everybody, desk was in the middle of the group, part of the group, part of everything else, and then become the guy who's now evaluating all of those people.

Other participants described their transition to leadership in more positive terms. For example, several participants described a love for teaching and technology, and a desire to take on more leadership responsibilities, or take on new challenges in their respective schools. Lori, for example, described her pleasure in becoming a leader. She said, 'And it just brought me a lot of joy to have conversations about teaching and learning and assessment." She further explained, "I was like, this is more of the direction I'd like to go. I love working with students in the classroom, but I really enjoy working with adults and I just liked having conversations about practice."

Daryl described his gradual transition from a classroom teacher to a full-time administrator. He said, “I think I was exposed to some leadership roles really early on in my career and I'd never anticipated really anything.” As he took on the role of team leader, he realized he enjoyed the additional responsibilities. He described his current role as a good blend between teaching and administration when he said,

> And I like kind of, you know, being the one to adjust meetings when we didn't need to have them and kind of make some decisions and make things more efficient for people. And so I kind of liked having that ability to have input. So this role, I think, is the perfect blend, because it's that first still connection to the to the classroom where I still have to walk my talk, so to speak, but then at the same time, I do have at least some level of say, to the, to certain degree, with leadership and with it with adults in the building. And I think that my day is not consumed with all adults, like upper levels of management would be, you know, like leading [the building.] I think that balance is what I enjoy the most.

Other participants described a similar desire to work with adults and have a greater impact on all the students in their schools. In fact, the desire to have a greater influence in their schools and on all students in the school was a thread that ran through several participants’ responses. Beth reported,

> I feel like in our role, we actually can impact more students now by working with teachers who work with students. And so I find that to be rewarding and also really stressful because I am impacting a lot of kids lives with some of the decisions that I help make as a larger district.

Jerry had similar feelings when he said, “And I just kind of realized, I think I can make a bigger impact…I want to get a broader impact. More students.” He also noted that he “was loving mentoring young teachers.”

Henry described his desire to have a greater influence in this way:

> And then I moved to Illinois, in [the] Chicago area, and really saw what leadership potential there was and decided that I wanted to be able to have greater influence on the classroom teacher and help to move conversations about curriculum and teaching and learning to a different level, particularly moving them forward in a more progressive way.

Isabelle also noted that she was “ready for the next challenge.” She further described her desire to have a larger influence in her building. She said, “But yeah, I felt as if I could have a lot of impact on students, supporting the teachers and looking at more overall practices within the classroom, and less, you know, my individual impact on my students.”

Having a Strong Personal Philosophy

Nearly all the participants mentioned their own personal philosophy of leadership as part of their leadership attributes. Some of the participants spoke about their philosophy of education and how this philosophy impacts their leadership. Other participants spoke in a more aspirational language of where they are currently and where they hope to go with their role in the future. Still other participants shared how their views of grading and assessment are shaped by their personal philosophy, and how they use that philosophy to influence teachers.

Alden shared his core philosophy on education that went beyond any content area. He said,

> I have a fundamental belief that public education is the avenue for self-development, and the avenue out of poverty. I politically lean probably more to the left, it's more of the left, and know that the only way you can stop the tree of trauma or all the tree of difficulties that families sustained from the parents and damage that they do to the children, that public education is the option for people to better their future. With that, as a fundamental goal, we have to provide opportunities for students, we have to give them the best that we can provide here.

Alden went on to share that, “I think that the comprehensive opportunities for all students to be able to be successful, and achieve, maximize that they can and want to, at this level with a non-fully developed brain,” and that as a result, “we have to provide every opportunity we can.”

Carl described his vision of leadership as he became a department head. He said,

> I think one of the things that I was looking forward to when I was starting out was being able to direct a vision and help the department head in a certain way and, and also help teachers reach their goals because a lot of teachers have some great ideas, but, you know, they felt like there were some roadblocks in the way and I felt like maybe I'd be able to help them overcome some of those roadblocks.

However, as he took on the role of department head, he tempered his own personal vision somewhat to align with his district’s vision. He explained,

> But then with time, I became more of the middle management type of person who had to link between the building and district administration with the faculty. And it became less of my vision and more of leaning towards the building's direction. So, which is rewarding, but not as rewarding.

Eugene spoke about his philosophy of education in terms of his goals for his department. He started out describing his short-term goal as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning. He said,

> Right, so the short short term goal is to hand the baton back to the kids in discussion and try to get them to emerge back and take the lead in discussion and to cultivate cultures of, of intellectual risk in speaking across differences politically, racially, culturally.

He went on to describe his longer term goal of "Developing a strong, heterogeneous grade 9 and 10 experience that uses let's call it progressive assessment, with such practices as portfolios, micro-summatives, gives more authentic assessment." He also explained that a reach for him and his department "would be giving them a menu of assessment choices, à la UDL [universal design for learning], and I'd love to get to that spot, too."

Finn explained that his philosophy is to keep students centered in the conversation whenever having difficult conversations with his staff. He explained that,

> Anything you'd want to talk about, constantly frame it in terms of students. Because that is what the whole thing, like that's the one benefit, I think of education is that like, ultimately 98% of people are here to help kids. And if we're having the conversations from the framework of like, this, we I think this is going to help children I think this is gonna help students.

Later in the same portion of the interview, he said, "I'm trying to make things better. You're trying to make things better for kids, for students, for learning." He said this as he was discussing his experience of having difficult conversations with some of his staff when it came to changing practices. He used his personal philosophy to keep pushing the conversation forward. He expanded on this a few moments later in the conversation when the topic shifted to racial

inequities in our educational system and how he keeps students at the center of the conversation. He said,

> The racism conversation, right? Like that's a tough conversation for people to have right now. Like, how does that not become political? Well it becomes political when you talk about it as our kids. Like, our students are growing up in the United States. The United States has a history of racism. Those are not controversial statements. The history of racism in the United States impacts our students. So, because they live in our society, so we need to be aware of it and be thinking about it because that's going to help us teach our students better. Not because of a political agenda, but because we're in a school, we're trying to help kids and this is the reality that they live in. So, you know, we're trying to be aware of that. And I think that again, just like we'll bring out you know, that's like the angle that I constantly try to recenter everybody on is like this is about kids.

Henry focused his personal philosophy on his view of grading and assessment. He shared that he is "an extraordinary huge believer in standards-based grading and a standards-based curriculum that focuses on student success." However, he leads his department in a district that does not have a clear vision or goal to move to standards-based grading. Thus, he has made it his own personal goal to use his philosophy of standards-based grading to move his department there, or at least create the conditions for a successor to make that move since he is retiring in a few years. He explained,

> What I am going to be able to do, and what we have is an explicit goal, is that we will do it within the next three years. So even though I'm going to retire, I'm going to have conditions set up that a predecessor or pardon me, a successor can step in and begin to continue to push that towards standards-based grading.

Isabelle described in general terms that her philosophy of grading should be consistent practices within a department. She said,

> I think that the grade the kid gets should be based on what this kid knows. And I think that that is a little different, [in one content area versus another]. I think as a department, there should be consistency among grading.

She went on to describe changes she has made to how she grades and assesses students based on her philosophy. She explained,

> I have definitely moved away from more points is better. And I have way fewer graded things in my recorded Gradebook, but I have, but I still provide feedback all the time. I still theoretically, they grade and return things. It just doesn't get recorded. Because my goal is like learning, learning, learning learning, I'm teaching you this so that at the end, you know how. I think that works really well. I think kids buy into it and feel less threatened than worrying if it's going to count for points and I have not seen a decline in their willingness to do work.

She closed this portion of the interview explaining how she uses her philosophy and her practices as a model for teachers in her department. She said, “So I've really tried to move away from [averaging grades] in my own grading practices and model that with my colleagues here.”

Leading by Example and Influencing Teachers

Many of the participants in this study also teach a class in addition to their leadership responsibilities. The participants in this study that do not teach a class are full time administrators due to the large number of staff they supervise or due to supervision responsibilities in more than one building. No matter their current roles, all the participants in this study did start their careers as classroom teachers. Nearly all the participants in this study

mentioned that they opt to lead by example as a means to influence their teachers. Leading by example is different for each of the participants, though.

For participants that also teach a class, many of them mentioned this in some aspect as one way in which they lead by example. Some others also mentioned that participating in curriculum projects or sharing curricular materials are other ways to lead by example. Beth noted both of these methods as examples. She demonstrated her empathy for her teachers when she said, “And then being vulnerable, I would say because I'm teaching it with them.” She also said,

> I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs [professional learning teams] at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them.

This concept of being “in this with them” that Beth described was also mentioned by other participants. Daryl said, “I definitely think if you were talking to my group, they know that I'm in it with them, you know.” Similarly, Eugene said, “I'll be sitting with them and working with them on [curriculum.]”

Other participants also described similar ways that they lead by example as a means to influencing their teachers. Isabelle noted that being open about her own challenges teaching during the pandemic helped her empathize with her staff. She said,

> And I do think there is something to teaching, especially in the pandemic, to kind of being right there with the teaching staff and talking through the challenges that I also had with kids on Zoom and all of the challenges that went with that.

Shen went on to describe how she is open with her staff about practices she is using in the classroom. In one example, she said,

> Right now, I'm trying to, with my [course] team, kind of demonstrate a willingness to try something new without knowing how it will work. My team is a little traditional in their practices. And so some of the things I've brought up, they've not really even understood sometimes so I've had to, which is good, so they've asked questions. Like, “Why would you ever do a 50% minimum because isn't that unfair to the kids who got a 50 versus the kids that got a 10?” So like, even having like the conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are that are unique

Lori, who is newer to her leadership role than some of the other participants in this study, explained how she shared curricular resources as a way to lead by example. She said, “I also share things with teachers I'm working on, like a lot of stuff with [standards-based grading.]” She also explained how she used her instructional coaching experience to influence teachers through evaluation post-observation conferences. She said,

> You know, both during evaluation like post-observation conversations and like chats in the hallway, and ask them to work back backwards from there. I feel like that is one of the few opportunities that I get to have more of those like big picture, dreamy conversations. Some teachers who are like “Oh, yeah,” like, "Yes, and…" people, like “Let me give that a shot.” Or like, “That's really interesting. I haven't thought about that. Let me do some digging.” They're the ones who are already starting to try some pieces of it.

Later in the same portion of the conversation, she described how she supports teachers that are not as open to change. Lori said, “So you know, that eventually goes back to like, the support site in place to help them embrace the change.”

Participants that do not teach a class take a different approach to leading by example. For example, Jerry does not teach a class in his department. However, he does try to teach a summer class whenever possible. He noted, “So I have the opportunity to teach in the summer, and it's not the same, but there's enough there that it can keep me grounded.” Since he does not teach a class during the regular school year, he described the extra lengths he goes to sometimes in an effort to fully understand situations. He said,

> I'm going to try as much as possible to figure out every angle I can to understand that piece as opposed to “Hey, guys, I read this, I have a brainstorm.” Let's figure it out together. I'm not married to an idea, but I want to go in sort of having done my homework, I guess.

He then explained how he issued challenges to his teachers as a method to influence their practices. He said he found more success with issuing a challenge as an optional activity for teachers because he would have been met with pushback if it was issued as a directive. Specifically, he said,

> So last year, I challenged them before the school year started, “I want you to do one significant change for the second quarter or maybe it's all of the first semester.” And then at the end of the year, I challenged the whole department. Again, because of the autonomy piece, they're not gonna listen or hear well, like, “You must do this,” but a challenge, and that's optional, and we're good with that. And so that really led to a lot of great changes. I was really surprised in the spring how many teachers said, "I will accept that challenge. I can try something new," and they tried different things.

Similarly, Kent, who does not teach a class, explained how he co-plans professional development activities for his staff as a way to be involved as a leader and lead by example, but also as a way to influence the direction of his department. Kent said,

> Yeah, so like when we have staff development, certainly I'm, I'm leading that staff development, but that planning, the planning and leadership is done with that core leadership team. So it's myself and I, and then our four core leaders. So there's six of us, we meet twice a week typically. So we're moving them around a whole host of things and we structure in all the same things that we would ask for a team within the PLC model to do, we do, other than building curriculum, I guess, although the staff development is our curriculum, but we look at data.

Building Trust and Fostering Relationships

All of the participants discussed scenarios related to the theme of building trust and fostering relationships between themselves and their staff, and between and among their staff members. Some of the portions of the conversations that aligned with the theme of building trust and fostering relationships also arose in conversations around the theme of displaying servant leadership behaviors: emotional healing. One of the common ways that participants built trust with their teachers was by having conversations with their teachers and listening to them, and by being visible in their classrooms or in their department spaces. They used these conversations as a way to truly get to know their teachers.

Beth explained her position on listening this way,

> Yeah, a lot of talking. A lot of listening. Some of that definitely happens after 3:30, it’s sometimes when you have your best conversations. So making sure that I'm around when [teachers] are finally ready to talk because they're not always ready to talk

> during the day because they're just doing their job. You know, asking questions and listening. And that's so important. And I know that sounds super obvious, but really listening and then trying to follow up. What I'm bad at is I often try to solve the problem right away. And that isn't always what they need. They just need this. So there's that.

Lori explained that she has structured meetings with teachers on a regular basis as a way to build trust and rapport. She explained,

> I have a ton of one-on-one conversations with teachers. For the first two years I had bi-weekly meetings with teachers in years one and two. Just to make sure they were feeling supported and had everything that they needed. It was a good opportunity for me to know how I could support them and coach them in a non evaluative manner. I also had monthly conversations with more veteran teachers. So in years three plus, again, just to serve as personal and professional check ins to get to know them as humans… What do they love outside of this building? And I feel like that was a really great way to just build good rapport and get to know them on a more personal level.

Being honest or transparent with their teachers was also a common experience. Alden shared that doing so makes his job easier. He said, “But if we go, if we're honest with people, and we share the facts, most of the things we do should be very easy.” Similarly, Beth noted, “But I think they see that I'm pretty transparent.” Morgan also described his honesty in communication:

> Yes, you treat them the same, you communicate. You're open, you're passionate. You tell the truth, and live with consequences. And sometimes I get in trouble for being a little bit too direct. But people always know where they stand and they know I care.

Other participants described the building of trust and fostering relationships as a balance, sometimes seeing themself as a conduit between the district administration, or having learned from past practices. Carl mentioned that maintaining this balance between himself and district administrators is important to maintain relationships. He explained,

> I try very hard not to show my frustrations along the way. But there are times when they ask a question and you know, you have to sit there and put on a poker face. And so they realize, I work very hard to represent them at the building level. And then try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf. But they also know that there's some times when I just have to come in and say, this is the way it's going to be. And there are times though, when, if there's a debate going on, in let's say the [course team] group, and that a decision just has to be made. And I say, "Look, guys, we've got to move forward, if you don't make a decision, I'm going to make a decision for you from the options and let's just move forward. We've gotta move forward and get going." And they respect that. Sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it.

Henry explained the importance of knowing people's personalities and how that dynamic plays out when working with his staff. He said,

> I react a lot more to personalities now than I did early in my leadership career. Making sure that people are a little more comfortable. A lot more honey for the flies than vinegar these days. Although occasionally I'm given a lot of vinegar back that I tried to sweeten up and try to make it more palatable. It's very much a, you know, I almost think sometimes that as a leader in my department that the law of attraction is probably the most important piece to try to create things that will draw people in.

A couple of the participants also mentioned more structured or intentional ways that they build trust and foster relationships with their department members, which are later used to build strong teams. Kent described that,

> We have fun together. We spend time together eating, in social situations, and in intentional team building and getting to know you experiences in team meetings, staff development, office socials, and outside activities. While not all participate in all of these, it does establish a strong bond. In addition, we are very clear with new hires about our culture and expectations, and that we rely on collaborative relationships. Finally, we empower our teams to make many decisions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As such, the team must come together on those items to gain consensus.

Similarly, Jerry described that, "I've done a number of things through the years from zoom coffee hours during COVID, to celebrating birthdays, to icebreaker questions at department meetings." He further elaborated,

> We are also going on four full day department retreats this year. Some are off campus, and some are on campus. In either location, getting away together for a good meal, some games, and to engage in deep collaboration as course teams has been really helpful (at least the first retreat was!).

Providing food was also a way that Glenn brought his staff together. When asked how he fosters relationships, he simply said, "Food in the office periodically."

Being Reflective

All of the participants in this study are responsible, to some extent, for supervising and evaluating the teachers in their departments. Part of the evaluation tool that many districts use involve a component of reflection on teaching, so it was not unexpected to see the theme of

being reflective emerge in their leadership roles as well. Many of the participants supervise a large number of teachers, and several shared their experiences reflecting on their work as they led their departments.

An underlying component in the theme of being reflective is examining past situations and determining a new or different path forward when a similar situation arose. This could also be described as an openness to change. Isabelle summed this up when she simply said, “I've definitely changed drastically in my 22 years in education.”

Henry also described how he learns from setbacks. He said, “You know, I think one of the biggest challenges as a leader is how you react to a setback. And setbacks can define you for a long period.” He further relayed a specific scenario that changed how hard he pushes people:

> I have a very vivid memory of working on curriculum, and having one of my teachers, as she was working with a national consultant, burst into tears and run out of the room crying, because the curriculum work, we were doing was so hard from her perspective, and that marked me pretty much in terms of how hard you push people.

Some of the participants described how they sought out feedback from their teachers as part of the reflective process. Beth said, “Because again, I feel like I understand the guiding principle knowing that it's a learning process with [teachers], and really listening to their feedback.” Similarly, Lori said, “I have asked [teachers] for feedback about that every year that I've been in this position.” She further elaborated how she uses the feedback to make changes:

> You know, there are areas for feedback for me are like, you know, spend more time reaching out to community partners and making those relationships, or continue to have conversations with 12-month employees like principals, assistant principals, so they don't have to, and really being like that communication tool.

Kent presented a story about how his district, and specifically his department, used feedback from parents and the community on their standards-based grading model and letter grade determination to make modifications to their assessments:

> One of the, one of the things that I was like, you know, gosh, I would have done that differently when we were doing SLOs [student learning objectives], is kind of like a sliding towards standards-based. So the SLOs, we position those as they need to be skills focused. And we tried to make those content agnostic where it's, it's all about the skill. It's all about analyzing and interpreting data. And so we try to make it all about that and if a kid doesn't understand the [specific content], it's okay, like, that's not what we're, we're not assessing on that. It's only the skill. And what we found is like, that was just silly. It was very forced, and people got frustrated and rolled their eyes because ultimately, you know, so we acknowledged that the success criteria needs to be, you know, can use content specific vocabulary correctly, you know, reasons appropriately using things that we've learned in class, it has to be both and so, not to try to divorce the skill from the practice, kind of like, you know, [national standards] when we compartmentalize those three strands, we're really doing a disservice. So I think that was one thing, that would have been a misstep.

Kent went on to explain how he and his district continued to learn from this and explore changes to their system. It is definitely still a work in progress for them.

> One thing that we learned on the global scale that we're still struggling a little bit with, is parents early on, we tried to be very idealistic about where kids are going… we're going to be gathering evidence over the course of a semester. And we don't really give you a grade projection until later. What we found out is there was a little bit of mutiny because

> parents want to know before six or seven weeks, is my kid doing okay? And so you can say, "Well, don't worry, I'm collecting evidence and they're not proficient yet. But it's okay, because we just started the class." And so we've tried to find the balance between projecting a grade that's going to be on the semester transcript after you've got enough evidence to do that in a meaningful way. I still think we're probably, now we've swung the other way. We're projecting a little bit too much too early. So we've been talking about some ways to maybe delay that a little bit longer, and maybe have a gradual release, like "Hey, the first, the first three weeks or first four weeks, we won't project any grade. Then we'll go another four weeks and it'll be more like, Hey, you're passing or failing, then it'd be a little bit longer. [inaudible.]" That's been something we've tried to balance out. The ideal is, the idealism of not projecting grades too soon, but not keeping parents in the dark. So they're not all of a sudden, you're in November and they're like, "Yeah, my kids getting a C, what the heck that might be good for you, that's not okay for us."

Coping with Difficult Emotions

Nine of the thirteen participants described situations where they coped with difficult emotions as an attribute of their leadership or leadership role. Many of these emotions could be described with a negative connotation, such as stress, anxiety, or frustration. The source of these emotions were often due to the supervisory nature of their roles or due to their position as a leader in charge of making changes that impacted the staff in their departments.

Beth spoke about the nature of these emotions. She called her job “the greatest roller coaster of my life” which implied there were both positive and negative emotional aspects. She spoke openly about the negative emotions, mentioning “there have been tears like from

everybody." Many of the tears she described came as a result of her department undertaking a large curriculum revision, which required many hours put in outside of the regular work day. She summarized the stress of that undertaking when she said, "I just, that [curriculum revision] was my life. [That's] why, for the first time ever, I'm teaching the same class because I was going to have a nervous breakdown. I do not recommend that." She also described the peaks and valleys of her role when she said, "So, you know, I'm happy to work for a team that is completely willing to go against what everybody else is doing and try things, but then with that, just comes a little bit of stress and anxiety and uncertainty."

Eugene spoke about the dual nature of his role, both as an evaluator and as a coach. Prior to becoming a department chair, he spent some time in an instructional coaching role. He described how this prior role influenced his mindset as an evaluator of teachers. He said,

> I honestly think I'm, I'm put more in the role of coach. It's gonna lean on my instructional coach background more than my formal evaluator background. So we went through a spate of time where we were really hitting that really pretty hard. You can't do both at the same time. It's really hard to do both, to really be an evaluator and a coach in the same position. You can do both in the same human, but it's hard to do both in the same conversation.

Carl spoke about the frustration he sometimes feels as a leader. He explained this in the context of having to deliver difficult messages or directives from upper administration that he knows will not be popular with his teachers. He said,

> I try very hard not to show my frustrations along the way. But there are times when they ask a question and you know, you have to sit there and put on a poker face. And so they

> realize, I work very hard to represent them at the building level. And then try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf.

Of note, he described that he tries to make his teachers' lives easier by making things manageable for them.

Similarly, Lori explained how she tries to mitigate information for teachers in her department. She said she does so while knowing that she still needs to follow the expectations of upper administration. She shared,

> I feel a great deal of pressure to make sure that my teachers live up to that expectation, but also kind of like mitigating the information that I'm getting from the central office and making it digestible and attainable for the teachers that I work with.

Navigating School/District Context and Culture

Most of the participants work in a unit (K-12) or high school district (9-12) with multiple high schools. On some things the districts' schools appeared clearly aligned, yet on many aspects of the participant's roles the districts' schools were not also closely aligned. This required navigating the district context in order to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. In addition, the participants also had to navigate the culture of the individual schools in which they worked. Sometimes this was due to previous leadership that had been in place, frequent administrative turnover, or perceived lack of a cohesive vision or collaboration amongst school leaders.

One of the common themes that participants spoke about was navigating their role as a middle manager or needing to both lead down to the teachers and lead up(to the assistant principal/principal or superintendent levels. Isabelle summed this feeling up when she said, "I

will say the transition from classroom to division head is definitely a step into middle management." Alden also highlighted the middle management aspect of his role. He said,

> I've been an outsider, I'm probably one of the few people that stayed in a middle management role in [county name redacted] this long. And almost like, in the middle management role, we're trying to get these people up and below that these are the things we really need to do.

Beth also spoke of her role being in the middle. Specifically, she noted the need to always find a balance between what the district wants and what she wants to do as a leader. She said, "I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance." She went on to say how this need to find balance manifests itself with her teachers. She said, "And I guess one thing that I try to do is make sure that I really believe it, and can stand behind it before I ask my teachers to do it."

Some of the participants also had to navigate their school and district culture either being hired into their leadership role from outside the district, or hired in as a result of leadership changes. Glenn described how his role changed due to district administration reorganizing some administrators, and he felt this reorganization had a detrimental impact on his department when it came to grading reforms. He said,

> So when we went from a director... when I went from district director of [department name redacted] to humanities, grading in [department name redacted] went backwards quite a bit. Because the bosses wanted uniformity with English. So things like total points. "Oh, we're gonna do total points." Great. So I had devaluing homework and I was

> pushing [weighted grading] categories and lots of things like that. Then I lost. We lost. We lost a few years of progress.

Similarly, Morgan had to reapply for his job when his district reorganized administrators. They went from a model of a department chair of a single department to a divisional model with a leader in charge of multiple departments. He shared a story from his interview process and he noted that he still does not have an answer to one of the overarching responsibilities of his job. He said,

> And so we interviewed for this position. My question was "Okay, so if I find the successful candidate here and I become a division leader, is my job to help teachers to improve or to decide if they have?" And I still don't have an answer to that question.

Henry joined his current district having spent many years in different roles in other districts. He explained how he tailors his leadership style based on the culture of the district. He said, “[My leadership style] has certainly been different in the different districts that I've been in based on the attitude of the teachers, based on the district's culture, and certainly based on experiences I have had along the way.” He went on to explain that coming in from an outside district also brings another layer of challenges and that it took time to make significant changes. Here, he noted, “It took me six years of working and planting ideas for that to become rooted in their normal thoughts and processes.”

All the participants in this study exhibited leadership attributes as they transitioned from a classroom teacher to a leadership role within their buildings. Some of the participants had vivid experiences of their transition to becoming a leader that informed their leadership styles. The participants described how their personal philosophies impact their interactions with their staff, and they described different scenarios of how they lead by example to influence their teachers.

Many of the participants also described how they reflect on their experiences and cope with difficult emotions. Lastly, participants described navigating their district culture as another key attribute of their leadership roles. Additional quotes and excerpts related to the theme of exhibiting leadership attributes can be read in Appendix I.

Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors

All the participants in this study completed a pre-interview questionnaire, which in part asked them to rate themselves on the seven behaviors of servant leadership identified in Northouse (2019). All of the participants rated themselves in the moderate or high range on each of the behaviors. One participant rated themself in the high range on all the behaviors, with the rest of the participants reporting a mix of moderate and high ranges on the behaviors. The score interpretations for each behavior for each participant can be viewed in the previous chapter (Table 3.1). Below, Table 4.1 shows the average score for each behavior across all participants.

Table 4.1

Average Scores of Servant Leadership Behaviors (n=13)

Servant leadership behavior	Average score
Emotional healing	24.77
Creating value for the community	20.85
Conceptual skills (conceptualizing)	24.38
Empowering	21.46
Helping followers grow and succeed	24.85
Putting followers first	23.46
Behaving ethically	25.92

Note: Score ranges in each behavior are 0-28, with a score between 23-28 interpreted as strongly exhibiting this servant leadership behavior (Northouse, 2019).

According to the scores in Table 4.1, the participants in this study averaged a high rating on the following servant leadership behaviors: emotional healing, conceptual skills

(conceptualizing), helping followers grow and succeed, putting followers first, and behaving ethically. However, after thematizing the interview transcripts and creating textural-structural descriptions, the following beneficial servant leadership behaviors emerged as themes related to the SRQ: conceptualizing, emotional healing, empowering, and helping followers grow and succeed. Furthermore, in the conceptualizing behavior, sub-themes emerged around the focus of personal goals, school/district goals, and future goals.

Conceptualizing

The servant leadership behavior of conceptualizing is described as a leader's ability to use a mission and vision to make decisions that benefit the organization (Northouse, 2019). Several of the participants spoke in general terms about their mission or vision related to their leadership within their departments. As discussed earlier, Carl and Eugene spoke about their personal philosophies as it related to their attributes as leaders. Carl mentioned that he wanted to "direct a vision" and help teachers by "overcoming some of those roadblocks." Similarly, Eugene spoke of his vision of "crafting an experience [in grades] 9-10 that enables every student to have access to the most rigorous curriculum."

When asked about how to use a vision for moving a school to standards-based grading, Kent reflected on his experiences at his school and said,

> To develop a collective of you know, whether that's 10 or 15 or 20 teachers. We're going to develop some collective understandings and we're driving our boat this way, even if the whole school isn't, and I think that's much harder. But I think it can be done. And again, I think when you have a, when you have a leader and then then you're doing some, you know, upstream leadership too.

He also went on to say that some initiatives were put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are returning to those now. One vision they have as a school is to “get rid of weighted grades. They would have probably been gone by now. But COVID put it on pause.”

Lori spoke about conceptualizing what competency looks like in her department, especially since her district is moving to a system of competency-based education. She said,

> I would say I'm interested in competency. I feel like there are a ton of different definitions and examples of competency in the classroom. My understanding is students are basically progressing at their own pace as they master skills throughout the unit or throughout the course. I noticed that's not what's happening in some of our departments that are [competency.] But like I do not know what that looks like in [department name redacted] so I feel like over the next couple of years as we transition to SBG [standards-based grading] and start thinking about competency, I'm going to have to do some like real digging and figure out what this looks like in our classrooms. And maybe like another working definition of what competency looks like in high school.

Personal. Several of the participants described their conceptual skills in terms of a personal mission or vision they had for themselves or the departments they lead. In some instances, the personal conceptualization was described as a non-negotiable directive to teachers, and in others it was a decision to move in a direction based on their personal convictions. The participants that mentioned the personal conceptualization explained how it related to their work with teachers.

For example, Morgan spoke about the need to have a clear conceptualization worked out in your own head to be an effective leader. He explained how he would then use this conceptualization to help move teachers forward. Morgan said,

> I would start by deciding what is most important to you. What is it that you think? Because when you can get that defined for yourself, and I'm not saying you need to trumpet it to the mountaintop for everybody else to hear. That doesn't need to happen. But when you can define it for yourself, so that when [teachers] come and they ask you questions like "Well, what do you think?" You can answer with your opinion. And you can try to ask them questions to help them understand why that makes sense.

In another example, Beth explained her desire to see students having discourse with other students when she visited classrooms. In her conceptualization, this is non-negotiable. She said,

> So, I think they know where I stand and I think they know some of the non-negotiables and I'm getting better at telling them some of the non-negotiables, things like you know when I walk in your classroom, I want to see kids talking to kids, you know.

Lori explained how she and her counterparts at other schools in her district conceptualized their plan to move teachers to standards-based grading. She said,

> So, me and my counterparts again at [school names redacted], we decided from year one, like two of us started the same year together. We were like, we want our teachers to be SBG [standards-based grading] or to you know, have an SBG gradebook. We want them to transition there philosophically. So here we developed this five-year plan.

As she said, this conceptualization of her vision to move to standards-based grading led to the development of a five-year plan for her department. She did this even though there was not a clear directive or timeline from the upper administration in her district to make that move.

School/District. Many of the participants described their conceptualization of a mission or vision as it related to the mission or vision of their school or district. Participant responses varied considerably when asked about the vision or mission in their respective districts. Based on

the participants' responses, some of the schools/districts represented could be described as having a strong mission or vision whereas other schools could not.

As an example of a school/district with a strong vision, Kent described how the vision of their superintendent played a key role in moving their district to standards-based grading. About the initial formation of this vision, he said,

> I would say that our superintendent has had a vision for a while. He's been in his role since 2007. And I remember talking to him back in 2007-2008, about fundamental errors in grading, like the use of zeros and averaging and things that just don't make a lot of sense when you really get back and look at them. He was very convinced of that, but I think that it took a little bit of time for that vision to emerge for how that would happen.

Kent went on to describe how this vision was further developed. He said,

> [Our district vision] is a critical component of our work. I can't imagine not having our work directly connected to our mission, vision, and values; explicit, written collective commitments that specifically lay out how we will act and move forward on initiatives. I find these elements to be most important when moving resistors forward on new practices.

Kent then described how this mission and vision continues to influence the ongoing work in his school and district. He said,

> In addition to what is noted before, we intentionally and routinely revisit our mission, vision, and values. We connect those to the "why" we are doing things. Finally, when folks are resistant, it's important to know if they are struggling with the why, the what, or the how of the change. That will then guide our response to move them along in their thinking.

Lori also described how the mission and vision of her school drives her work. She said, “Having a vision is of utmost importance to our district,” and she followed up on this later in the interview when she said, “I feel like I have totally melded with the district's vision.” She explained that the vision of her district related directly to her goals as a leader. She said,

> Several years ago, the district established our five focus areas and each of our professional development offerings link back to it. As a department chair, the three goals I set for myself annually have to be tied back to one of the five focus areas. Each of these goals are communicated to my department members.

Lori also pointed out that leaders are held to a high standard related to the vision. She said,

> And so I feel like from a 12 month admin perspective and a district office perspective, there's definitely a high expectation to make sure that we have a full understanding of how [the vision] translates to the work that we do with our teachers.

Morgan’s school might be an example of a school that has a mission or vision, but does not necessarily permeate every leadership decision. Even though the school has a mission or vision statement, it is not regularly referenced. He explained,

> Well, we're working on how "kids entering with promise leaving with purpose," that kind of thing. That's our that's really the big one…Well, is this helping kids enter with promise and leave with purpose, and that. No, but like, but it's in like, I think everything that we do, that's inherently what we're trying to do. We're believing in the kids that come in and trying to make sure that they're, that what they leave our building with is better than where they entered, right? That kind of thing. And so I do think that is in the back of our minds with everything that we do, but do we stop and go "Alright, well, how does this..." No, not not really, no.

Similarly, Henry explained the lack of a strong mission or vision in his district. In a follow-up interview, He described the current state of affairs around his school/district vision and the importance of involving teachers in the development of a vision. He said,

> You know, my gut when I come back, and I look at that vision. What's interesting since the time we originally talked and now that has become a theme in the district, among the leadership teams, and among our district, Assistant supt. for the curriculum director meeting that we had. We've not had curriculum director meetings for a while. So that came back up looking at the vision and what did it mean? And for her and a couple other people were heavily involved, it was very much the realization that they were deeply involved in the process, but other people didn't feel like they were involved. And so the lesson for me, really, has been that very same thing. If my staff isn't involved in the vision and developing of anything, there's not going to be buy in, there is not going to be a sense of belonging.

When asked if he thought his district could benefit from having a strong vision, he answered,

> Much, much. And I... because we're halfway through that five year cycle. I don't see anything dramatically changing even though we've got a new superintendent on board. But I think just in some of the things I've seen from him, he's going to push some things and push some initiatives that will fall under that vision. But I think, to me, when you start a whole vision process that's centered around some sort of an idea that gets people excited. You have a much better chance of making something happen, and I don't see people being excited about anything right now.

Jerry had experiences in different districts before arriving at his current school. When asked is his current district has a strong vision, he answered,

> Not at all. But I think part of that is coming out of COVID. I mean, I know our admin is just exhausted and I think even for them, they were like, "I don't know why I'm doing this. I went into it for like, teaching and learning."

He contrasted this with how the strong vision of the superintendent carried influence in his previous district. He said,

> And [previous school district name redacted] was not awesome in every way. And one of the ways that was hard about it is that it's, it's very much someone at the top has an idea, and it's going to happen. Come hell or high water. We are doing a new math thing. And so get on board or leave the district. That would never happen at [current school name redacted] and I don't think that's best at [previous school district name redacted] but that was the culture. Like "Oh, my boss told me to do it. I'll do it."

In his current district, Jerry described how he operates in his current district that does not have a strong vision. He explained,

> Or when I asked [teachers] to engage in something, they go all in on engagement. They may not adopt it in the end. But that's not for lack of trying. I mean, I should've said it's not for lack of seriously considering it. They may not do it in the classroom, but if I say "Let's think about this," they'll do it. I really appreciate that about them. But at [previous school name redacted], it was, I'd just say, "Here's what we're doing. Here's why we're doing it."

In the interview, though, Jerry said, “I really appreciate it when a superintendent or principal has a strong vision.”

Future Goals. Several of the participant’s responses were interpreted under the theme of conceptual skills related to the goals they were setting for themselves or goals related to the

direction of their departments. Some of these goals were very specific to an initiative to move their department forward in terms of curriculum, grading, and/or assessment, and other future goals were more general in terms of bettering the education of the students they serve. Some goals also connected to professional development for teachers.

Beth spoke about her goal to increase her teacher's understanding of rubrics and how to use them with fidelity in the classroom. She said,

> I would like all of my teachers to have a common understanding of our goals, of our [course] sequence, and [course name redacted]. I want them to feel confident in what it means to earn a 4, 3, 2, or 0 on a standard and how to create assessment opportunities that can capture that understanding. I would like them to incorporate conceptual understanding and reasoning equally with fluency.

She also noted that understands this is a big change for her department, and part of her goal is to ease this transition for teachers. She explained, "This is a shift in [curriculum]. I want them to feel good about the changes that we are making."

As described earlier in the section on having a strong personal philosophy, Henry has set a goal of transitioning his department to standards-based grading within the next three years. He said,

> No, I really would like to have the conditions set. Even if everybody's not 100% on board. We are significantly closer to being a standards based curriculum and a standards based grading system. That we're really looking for student… we're really measuring what students can do, rather than having them just jump through artificial hoops

Similar to Beth, He also understands that this is a big shift and he understands this shift takes time and he may not have full consensus yet, but he is still moving in that direction.

Lori also described her goal of moving to a standards-based grading system of assessment. She described how she and her counterparts at other schools in the district created a plan to get there. She said,

> We created a "5 year transition to SBG [standards-based grading]" plan that also laid out what support would look like. While some teachers were resistant and hesitant to the change, I think they were comforted knowing there would be a number of "contract hours" dedicated to both the philosophical and pedagogical transition.

She also noted how part of the goal of this plain is to provide support for teachers along the way.

Jerry relayed that his goal is to move his department towards common learning objectives. He said,

> [My] goal is that we move more and more the direction of discussing and coming to an understanding of some things that we think all kids should know. Call them learning objectives. And hopefully for the whole course, we've got these common learning objectives, common assessment questions on those learning objectives.

Part of his goal is to also examine data as part of the move to true course team collaboration. He elaborated,

> And then most importantly, on the backside of that, looking at student data, and then talking about why do your kids get it and mine don't. So that I can, if you're doing something great, I want to do that too. So I really want to have true collaboration where they are seeing all [course name redacted] students as their students.

Emotional Healing

Emotional healing is defined as the leader's ability to be empathic and show true concern for the well-being of their followers (Northouse, 2019). The behavior of emotional healing

emerged as a theme in nine of the thirteen participants in this study. The emotional healing they described showed how they used their leadership position to understand and support their teachers. Another common response that emerged in this theme was how emotional healing helped build strong relationships with their teachers.

One of the ways that the participants provided emotional healing was by listening to and meeting with their teachers on a regular basis. Beth explained her thought process behind this strategy. She said, “I think it's just, it's listening and it's non-evaluative, does that make sense? So they have to know that they can come and have a conversation about the hard stuff.” As mentioned earlier, Lori also described how she maintains this non-evaluative nature in her conversations with teachers. She said, “I have a ton of one-on-one conversations with teachers…It was a good opportunity for me to know how I could support them and coach them in a non evaluative manner.” Similarly, Carl explained his goal behind meeting with teachers regularly is to get to know them better. He said, “And then the other way is more of meeting with teachers one-on-one and talking about their projects, you know, what they're interested in?”

Several of the participants described how they engaged in one-on-one conversations as a way to work through difficult topics. As mentioned earlier in the theme of building trust and fostering relationships, Carl explained how he helped manage difficult conversations with his staff. He said , “Sometimes you have to, sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it.” He felt that teachers respected this approach. Similarly, Daryl explained how he leveraged his relationship with his staff to help teachers manage difficult situations. Daryl said,

> Yeah, yeah, it's just individual, you know, just go to them and talk with them. And as a group, I mean, and that's the thing, I think my my relationship with them is, is fine, where

> we can be candid with one another and just look like, you know, this is I know you're trying to do with this part of it, but come on, that's not that's outside of the scope of that policy. And I get it too, I'm pretty straight up with them, too.

As discussed earlier in the section on building trust and fostering relationships, Henry explained that he now uses a softer approach with his teachers. In that same portion of his interview, he further related an example of how he used emotional healing as a way to help his staff forward from past practices. Henry said,

> For example, when I came to my current position they were very much mired in the past practices in education. Their previous leader was very much a traditionalist. They weren't in line with national standards. They were unaware of current trends for the most part.

Henry continued, “I try to find ways for people to feel valued and belong and feel like their voices [are] being heard.

Jerry described how he entered difficult conversations. He used a “a case by case” approach in most scenarios. He said,

> So I think it'll be mostly just helping them work through how do I how do they discuss these things? In fact, I get, now you say that I need to give them some ideas for how they start this work, you know, that we're gonna do this year on some of this stuff.

Jerry added that when his teachers approach him with difficult questions, he responds by listening and following up with questions of his own. He said,

> But I think some will come into my office and say probably privately, like, "Our course committee talked about this. I don't like it. What do you think?" And you can talk through things, like what is a good assessment question.

Morgan described that one of the most important jobs as a leader is getting to know your staff. He explained,

> I think everybody, I think that the most important thing you can do as a leader is get to know the people that you're trying to lead. And because if you don't know him, it doesn't matter what you say. They're not gonna listen to it, it's not gonna connect and it's not going to go where you're hoping it's gonna go. And so I worked really hard, like in the classroom, to get to know your kids, and kids get to know you.

He said this helps him move forward in his department. He ended this portion of the conversation when he said, “They start to believe this shtick that you're trying to sell them and off you go.”

Kent explained a similar desire to get to know his staff, and he explained how this is shared amongst the administrative team so they can support teachers as a team. He said,

> We know some of the personal stuff that's going on across the building because our administrative team meets every single day. We meet for an hour and a half of PD [professional development] on Mondays and then Tuesday through Friday Fridays, like an informational so you kind of know what's going on in the other divisions. But then just even in our division, like you realize, wow, when you have 50 teachers and you have a whole bunch of spouses and kids, almost always somebody's in pseudo crisis mode.

Kent went on to say how he feels a personal responsibility to his teachers when it comes to their well-being. His inflection in this portion of the conversation showed that he physically feels this weight. He said,

> So all the goal setting classroom observations, the relationship building, ultimately, I feel, you know, I feel the most responsibility for the well-being of our teachers and I pretty

much know things that are going on like one teacher whose father is dying right now and you know, like all those things that are happening.

Growing and Empowering Followers

The servant leadership behaviors of helping followers grow and empowering followers are closely linked. Leaders in this study helped their teachers grow through a variety of methods, from coaching conversations, evaluations, and individualized support. The leaders in this study empowered teachers in their departments to make decisions as a team, usually within some defined parameters, either from them or from the district level.

Many of the participants shared stories of how they helped their teachers grow professionally. For example, Carl shared a story about how he helped coach a teacher to move past some traditional practices that were not serving students well. Carl said,

> And the teacher spoke about what his belief was that they should be applying, you know, doing these great things, but taught very traditionally. So there's a matter of talking with that individual that well, there's a couple individuals. Kind of talking with them and saying, "Well, what about, what is it about this that's challenging to you? Is it philosophical? Is it pragmatic? You know, is it that you're not sure what it looks like?"

He eventually connected this teacher with a literacy coach to help them grow professionally. Carl then shared how the teacher's practice improved. He said,

> And he completely changed the way he was talking about it, because he's...we're talking about, "Okay, so we're going to use this assessment." He goes, "Well, this is gonna take a couple of days, because the first day, I'm going to have to explain how the assessment works." And, you know, make sure you talk it through and obviously, something he would never have done, he would have just said, "Here's the assessment, go." And so it's

> been wonderful, because he didn't mean, he was not malicious, we just didn't understand and [he] was frustrated.

Isabelle explained how she helps her teachers grow. She supports them by having philosophical conversations and having teachers share best practices. She said, “So, even having the conversation, some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are unique.”

Similarly, Jerry shared that he helps his teachers grow and develop by being a resource for teachers. He said,

> [I help teachers grow and develop by] Sharing research, creating a forum for teachers to share personal stories of success on an initiative, challenging all teachers to try something new but make it low stakes, providing meaningful and actionable feedback to individual teachers.

Providing feedback was a trait shared by Eugene. As mentioned earlier, Eugene relies on his instructional coaching background to be more of a coach than evaluator to his teachers. On being a coach, he said, “And so that relies on me to be actually a lot, a lot more thorough in the qualitative feedback that I give teachers to coach them to be better.”

Many of the participants in this study mentioned how they empower their teachers by letting individuals or teams make their own decisions, usually with some parameters set forth. Two participants, Jerry and Kent, lead large departments and they have both developed internal leadership structures within their teams. Jerry uses a department steering committee to make decisions and Kent uses a team of core leaders and team leaders. Jerry explained how he has reimagined his steering committee to lead the department. He said,

> When I first got there the department steering committee was like making decisions about how to spend the party money. And I found that that was sort of a waste of everyone's time. So I've transitioned to be more of a, we are a leadership team. We are going to be leaders in our department, which means you've given me helpful feedback. I'm going to tell you what I think I want to do in the department, you tell me about that. And then also I'm expecting you to, on some level, lead.

Kent elaborated on the leadership structure that he has implemented in his department to empower his teachers to become leaders in their own right. He said,

> Well, I firmly believe that our model, like the professional learning community model, I tell our team leaders our teacher leaders... So that, the way we're structured, just so you know, the general structure in [department name redacted] we have basically 50 people. So there's me and then recently over the last five or seven years, we brought on an assistant director. So we had one that retired two years ago. Now we have one, another assistant director, he's an administrator, he teaches one class and then he's an administrator. So there's two administrators in our division, right? A little crazy. But then we have four core leaders. And then we have 14 team leaders. And I'm convinced that the best leadership that we do around standards based grading, curriculum, instruction, assessment, all of that... the best leadership comes from those teacher leaders. So the most important thing that I do is develop those teacher leaders for how they lead their team meetings, and how do the core leaders support the work of the team leaders.

Kent summarized how this structure uses consensus to empower his team. He said, “Finally, we empower our teams to make many decisions for curriculum, instruction and assessment. As such, the team must come together on those items to gain consensus”

Of the seven servant leadership behaviors identified by Northouse (2019), the ones that emerged as themes most beneficial to the leaders in this study were conceptualizing, emotional healing, helping followers grow and succeed, and empowering. The participants described conceptualizing in terms of personal goals, aligning with their district vision and/or mission, and setting future goals for their departments. They used listening and empathy as a means to create emotional healing with their teachers. They described examples of how they helped their followers grow through coaching conversations and how they empowered teachers to make decisions or put leadership structures in place to help teams make decisions. Additional quotes related to the theme of displaying servant leadership behaviors can be read in Appendix I.

Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading

Another key theme that emerged from this study is how the participants lead both their department members and the leaders above them in revising practices on instruction, assessment and grading. All of the participants in this study worked in some capacity to change past practices in these areas that could be considered more traditional, to move to more progressive or equitable practices. The commonalities that emerged among the participants were developing a philosophy; aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment; identifying problems with traditional grading; and reforming assessment and grading practices.

Developing a Philosophy

The theme of developing a philosophy around revising practices on instruction, assessment and grading is closely related to the theme of conceptualizing in displaying servant leadership behaviors. One of the threads that tied participants together in this area was improving outcomes for students. Some of the drive behind this emerged as a result of the pandemic,

whereas other participants had been deeply involved in this quite some time prior to the pandemic.

Kent is one of the participants that had been at this work the longest. His school started the process of revising practices well over a decade ago. He noted that his own personal philosophy had changed over time as his school and district made moves in the direction of standards-based grading to make things better for students. He said,

> So if a teacher you know, if a teacher said like, well, eight years ago, you said this, and now you're telling me to do something different. And I would tell him, you're right. I did. I know better. Now we will do better.

He went on to say that humility is an important aspect of being a leader when implementing change. He said, “I think being humble enough to realize, or if a teacher says, ‘Well, you never did standards-based grading in the classroom, and now you're telling me I have to do it?’ Like, ‘Yep, I never did it. Sorry.’"

Alden described his philosophy on improving outcomes for students. He said, “But if we can make an argument of why we're doing it, how it’s better for students, or how it's going to better our cause or how we're gonna have a better learning environment.” He went on to describe a push and pull between doing what is right for students, pushing upper administration to commit to making some moves, and pulling teachers along. He said

> Whatever example we'll use, it's hard to say no, or are you against it, unless we've done a really poor job selling or making a claim. I think more often than not, we don't put all the information out there, you don't put a solid data pool together. Say we need to do this, this, and this, it's going to cost this much. But one it's either part of the cost of operations, or we need to see how we're going to redo things or how to make things better in the long

> run. I'm not willing to go with my gut, but my gut usually tells me I'm right on many things. And over the years, people like we talked about this eight years ago, when he told us years ago, and now we're doing it. So 95% of the time it's just listening, not the other 5%. Just listen to the 95%.

He continued this portion of the interview describing the need for his own conviction on a philosophy to improve outcomes for students. He said, "[Y]ou have to have conviction in the role, you have to know what you believe in. And you also I think you have to know what you're gonna fall for." Lastly, in this part of the interview, he noted the balance of supporting his teachers through the changes. He said, "[Teachers are] not willing to go the extra yard unless they know you're either in front of them, or you're going to be behind them."

Finn described his desire to improve outcomes for students, sometimes even in the midst of resistance from his teachers. He focused on the students when interpreting contract language that gives teachers academic freedom: "You're trying to make things better for kids, for students, for learning. I'm concerned that if we, you know, interpret [contract language] a certain way, it's actually going to not help kids." He went on to note that he keeps these conversations focused on students. He said, "keep re-centering [the conversation] on kids. What's best for students? What are we trying to teach? How are we trying to teach it? What's happening with our students?"

Similarly, Isabelle noted that she focused her philosophy on what's best for students. When she discussed with her teachers a minimum score of 50% instead of a zero for missing work. She said,

> My team is a little traditional in their practices. And so some of the things I've brought up, they've not really even understood sometimes so I've had to, which is good, so they've asked questions. Like, "Why would you ever do a 50% minimum because isn't that unfair

> to the kids who got a 50 versus the kids that got a 10?" So like, even having a conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are unique.

She noted the importance of having the conversation and keeping it focused on fair practices.

Similarly, Henry explained that equity was at the root of some of the conversations that were happening in his district around changing past practices. He noted that these conversations came up as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and some of the inequities in current practices that became more visible as a result. He said,

> In the pandemic, as we were really looking at what was essential, and what was moving forward, and what was grading for equity, the teachers began to embrace conversations. Within the whole district we were having conversations just about equity in general. And what did that look like?

Although Henry's district is not making a strong push towards standards-based grading, his own personal philosophy on creating more equitable outcomes is connected to his goal of moving his department to standards-based grading in the next few years before he retires.

Identifying Problems with Traditional Grading and Assessment Practices

Nearly all the participants identified at least some aspects of traditional grading practices that could be considered problematic. Most of these issues they identified around traditional practices fell into one of these categories: assigning zeros for missing work; averaging grades over a semester; including other nonacademic factors in a grade; penalizing late work; students playing the game of grades; using electronic gradebooks that do not match philosophy; using the 100-point grading scale. Many of the participants noted that these practices often have a negative impact on not just the students' grades, but their overall well-being.

Assigning zeros for missing work and using the 100-point grading scale were common traditional practices that participants cited as having a negative impact on students. Many participants described how assigning zeros is not mathematically accurate when using the 100-point grading scale. For example, Daryl summarized how zeros have a disproportionate impact on a student's overall grade. He said,

> So when you have a combination of like massive late deduction penalties, and also the super F's and 10 percents and 20 percents, the numbers just simply get to a point where a kid could mathematically be failing by midterm, and we, if they straight A's from there on out, they still would not pass the course simply because of the numbers. So it just seems broken.

Morgan shared an anecdote about a hypothetical conversation he would have with a teacher to explain how the zero impacts an overall grade. He said,

> We talked about the best example that I've come up with to get [teachers] to listen is "Here's what I'm going to do on your evaluation. When I do this, I'm gonna give you a low enough score, so that you're screwed on the next evaluation, too. How would you take that?" Well, it's not fair. Okay. Well you just gave a kid a 36% on this test. And you're gonna let that kid have a 36% on the test even though 60% is passing. And we got 10% for A and 10% for B. So effectively what you just said is you just took 14 extra percent off of the kid's next test before the kid even started to try to get that grade to passing. Does that sound fair to you? Well no, correct?

Alden summarized the issue of averaging grades and using the 100-point grading scale. He said, "I don't believe in averaging points. I don't believe in percentile…[To] think that you only have 10% to be excellent, but you have 60% to fail. There's fundamental flaws here, but

also, grading comes down to teacher power." Following similar themes noted by Morgan and Alden, Carl noted how the use of zeros and averaging grades on the 100-point scale distorts a student's overall performance. Carl said,

> And so that the discussion around [the use of zeros] was, if you get a couple of zeros but perform very well... And let's say you get two zeros, and then on the other five assessments you do really well. You still might get a D. Just because zero is so hard [to recover from mathematically].

Glenn described another issue with the use of the 100-point scale. He noted that it often leads to inconsistency across a number of teachers or classrooms. He said,

> If you give a [bunch of] teachers and say, grade these, you can grade these from A to D. Right? You're gonna get a lot more consistency than if you have given this a number score out of 100. Right? Then they will be all over the map. I kind of think we pretend math is more fair than that. But I'm not sure.

Isabelle noted how electronic gradebooks influence teacher practices, sometimes in negative ways. She said,

> And then, just in terms of communication purposes, I think it's really important to have teachers realize what parents see when they log in. And like how confusing a gradebook is. If you have 57 assignments and you have things entered that aren't in Schoology, or that are named slightly different in Schoology and then figuring out what the kid's missing work is. You know, it's really hard to see and a lot of times they're seeing it on their phone, which makes it even harder because they're not even seeing a grade printout. It's just, click here to see the expanded category.

She also noted that gradebooks are not set up consistently in her department or school. She said "So helping [teachers] see that if we were more consistent…I've even thought of it to the point, where could all freshmen teachers do the same thing?"

Glenn and Lori noted in their conversations how grades often include other nonacademic factors that lead to inconsistent reporting of grades. Glenn pointed out that prior to the pandemic, teacher grade calculations often include penalties for late work. Now, he said, "all my teachers decided to... Nobody really takes off for late [work], anymore. We either accept it or we don't. And everybody accepts it." Lori explained how including late penalties and other factors lead to "loaded" grades. She said,

> For decades, grades have been loaded. They have been an accumulation of points that speak to a student's behavior, timeliness, participation, engagement, compliance, and... at some point their knowledge of the content.

She also mentioned but did not expand on the role that implicit bias plays. She said, "Not to mention the role that bias plays in [a student's grade]."

Alden noted the role that factors outside of school play in a student's grade. He said,

> It should be an assessment of learning, not an assessment of how well your family life is because you have a table with a light, and it's quiet and no distractions so you can actually do your work, or you have to go to work.

He also noted how students play the game of grades. Sometimes this is students completing just enough work to pass a class. For example, he said,

> So you're up to two o'clock to fill out some BS assignment, because you need to get 10 points in order to make sure you get a D to still graduate even though you're fully capable of doing more than that.

Other times, the use of the 100-point scale and rounding grades leads to students or parents complaining about just missing the next highest grade. Alden said about this,

> Got this report card. You gotta "B", and your mom is gonna come in [saying you're] an "A" student. There's three things here that he got a 62 on, and that brings his numbers down. So he's lowered that an 89.4. Well, 88.9 Because I don't round up because I've never made a mistake here. So we do that. That average has to be a B.

Alden summarized some of the problems with traditional grading practices when he said, "I mean, to think that you only have 10% to be excellent, but you have 60% to fail."

Revising Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices

In their separate interviews, all of the participants mentioned at least some efforts they or their districts have taken to implement reforms around grading and assessment practices. These reforms include minimum scores of 40% or 50% instead of zeros; offering reassessment opportunities; excluding nonacademic factors; devaluing homework; moving to standards-based grading; and aligning instruction, assessment, and grading. These practices are attempts to remove or lessen some of the harmful impacts that traditional practices have on students.

Several of the participants identified that moving to a minimum score of 40% or 50% is an attempt at equalizing the 100-point grading scale so the increments between each letter grade are 10%. Daryl noted that 50% is now the lowest grade he and teachers in his district can input for a grade per a district policy. He explained,

> So I think it starts there with, you know, having policies where kids are not, you know, doomed to failure really early on or, or unnecessarily at any point in the semester. So, I don't score below 50. That's the lowest I'll give even if the kid doesn't turn something in.

Similarly, Morgan explained that moving to a 50% floor for a grade sends a different message to students. He said,

> The 50 is an important thing I think. The 50% I think is a big deal. I think that people underestimate the difference between giving a kid an F on a test and giving the kid an FU on a test, right, that you know that. I think that's a big one.

Lessing the impact of nonacademic factors and devaluing work, like homework, done outside of class, was mentioned by several participants. Glenn noted that he felt successful in devaluing homework with his teachers. He said,

> But devaluing homework, I think, successful with I don't know, what do you call them...ungraded grades, check ins, worksheets that nobody reads what they actually wrote on it. And giving points for that. So points for ungraded stuff or unread stuff. I think I've been successful in kind of lowering those impacts on grades in my department.

Similarly, Daryl noted the reduction of homework in his own practice. He said, “I haven't been a big homework teacher in probably a decade. So just eliminating one more thing that a kid would be late on or that would pile up that would become an academic hurdle for the kiddo.” Beth explained that homework is still an area for study at her school. She said,

> So I guess where I am struggling, right now with what I believe is I don't think kids should go home and do an hour or two hours of homework. I have children, I hate homework. However, you have to practice to get good at anything you have to practice.

She also discussed that nonacademic factors are another area of study. She said, “And so I do think there should be some place where we report on habits of work and I'm actually okay with it being a part of their grade.”

Offering reassessments was another area of reform that several of the participants mentioned. This was also an area where there was some disagreement between participants and their districts on how to best implement reassessments. Beth said, “the next layer in my district, is everybody can retake everything.” When asked about limits on student retakes, she responded,

> Well, we are pushing the envelope at [school name redacted] this year on that, we're trying to change it. But, no. I mean, like, there isn't like you ever. If our guiding principles say that every student has an opportunity for a retake. So we're working on defining what that means. And then another thing because you're not requiring homework. And yet you're not making the task important to the students. So it's just another layer of problems that we have introduced. That further showed that the grade is not a predictor of how well a kid's gonna do in college, you know, cuz I don't know. I haven't called and asked. I don't think colleges let everybody retake all their tests.

Daryl also described some issues with implementing reassessments in his school, specifically on determining what kinds of assessments are eligible for a reassessment opportunity. In discussing reassessments with his teachers, he said, “But I was okay with just leaving it that anytime a kid is assessed for a grade that grade should, that assessment should be retake-able.” However, he had to work with some of his course teams on implementation. He explained how he worked through some disagreement with this team. He said,

> So they tried to kind of write their language where quizzes were exempt from this retake policy, but tests of course, they could retake tests. So that comes down to about three unit tests or so roughly a semester, but there's a whole bunch of quizzes in there that can very quickly, to this to the situation where some to some of the... I just knew that one of the

> teachers was planning on not having a unit test and one of the units and just only stacking it full of quizzes, just because he knew that those would not be retake-able. So, that was my push back to that group, where any time there's... whatever semantics you want to say, if it's a quiz or a test, that's an assessment you've taken for a grade, therefore, that has to be retake-able by nature of the policy.

Carl noted that retakes and reassessments in his area are more like revisions and resubmissions of work. He said,

> And they have to make corrections along the way. Because their evidence has to be good in order to make their plan and use their evidence and reasoning. So you have to ensure that they have great evidence. And so philosophically, it's kind of a difficult one for some of them to understand that you can reassess them along the way and guide them, they'll give them a grade and say, "Okay, with help, they're able to come up with their evidence, and then make a claim that using the evidence and reasoning."

Lori explained that due to the nature of the curriculum in her content area, retakes become more of a resubmission after revision. She explained,

> I feel like the area where there's maybe there isn't a ton of overlap, or there's a bit of a disconnect or inconsistency is just with retakes. And who gets a retake and how long you have to retake it and what the format of the retake looks like. I would say I don't have as many of those conversations in our project based classes. I think largely because the nature of the project is more student driven. At the end of the day, the retake is basically like "Go back and just redo this and resubmit it. Or try this stage of the process again."

She went on to explain how a shift to standards-based grading plays an important role in the reassessment process. She said,

> And that's that that's where I think SBG [standards-based grading] can really come into play where it's like, you need to make sure that your assessment questions are aligning with the standard. And if they're not aligning with a standard or what you've taught throughout the course of the unit, then why are you assessing it?

Moving to standards-based grading and competency-based education arose as a systemic means to reforming instruction, grading, and assessment. Alden described his school and district's steps in moving in this direction. The initial move is implementing a four point rubric. He explained,

> Look and so with respect to assessments and those conversations, with my two counterparts, and we're all agreed so we're all having these conversations, with different departments, too, so they started seeing like health and wellness they're looking to go to a four point grading rubric.

He also noted the need to align the rubric with clear standards and targets:

> If we have that standards, and we have good targets, and we're using best practices instruction with there's a lot of ifs within that. And we understand what we're doing within these targets to really assess what we should be teaching and essentially learning, that might give us the most fair assessment with students learning over the confines, whatever we want to call unit semester or whatnot.

Eugene described that standards-based grading and aligning rubrics is still a work in progress for his school and district. He said,

> And so we've had rubrics and interrater reliability and all this stuff for a long time. But we haven't aligned it 9-12 on a rubric that is continuous and with performance indicators that are across the district and now we do have that. So that's what we've been working

> on, in turn though, was long as we're putting them into place we are revamping our assessment process to to shift a bit more towards whatever gaps we see happening. Like I said, there's probably about 20 different little criteria and some of which were nailing and some of which were not. That's what I will be in workshops with teachers directly going over that and as they build their units of instruction out.

However, he was optimistic in the direction they are going. He said, "'ll be sitting with them and working with them on it. So it's a pretty ideal place to be for legacy project."

Kent, whose school and district have been making a decade plus long shift to standards-based grading, described their transition. He told the evolution of standards-based grading in his district this way:

> [S]o historically, big history, like it was probably 2007 or 2008. We took all of our team leaders schoolwide. So that's probably, I don't know, 100? 150? 150 teacher leaders, and we went off site and that's when people were just first starting to talk about learning targets. Right, which seems like we've been talking about learning targets forever. But really, that was the late 2000s. And [the presenter] talked about clarity, matching learning targets to assessments. So we did that work. We had some teachers that came back. I still remember one of the teacher leaders, on the way out she's like, "Are we going, does this kind of walk us towards standards-based grading?" And I said like, at that point, truthfully, "I don't even know what standards-based grading is, so I don't think so. I haven't heard, like I don't know that that's true." But it was really just around how the targets drive the instruction, the assessment. And then we had a couple of [teachers] out of that that tried to pilot some flavor of standards-based grading. And that, I would say they had mixed results, and then they kind of abandoned that. And then there were some

> people that started getting a vision for standards-based grading that was focused on skills. And that was probably like 2011-2012, and Driver's Ed. was one of the classes that piloted it. And so they started getting a sense, then they just started inviting some early adopters to come into that process. And then if you remember that whole window that was then from 2011 to 2015, the window of Common Core, NGSS and then the social studies framework. So we used that time to really take a deep look at our curriculum. SLOs [student learning objectives] were also going on at that time. So we tried to roll all those things together, where SLOs were skills based. Just like we wanted our grading system to be based. So we wanted the SLO to be focused on a skill to monitor growth. Then that naturally progressed into let's just do our whole course that way. So that was that, and I think probably by 2020... 2020 was probably the year I'm guessing 2019... Probably 2020, Fall of 2020, because I think it was COVID year like of all years. That was the last year, so those who were the resistors, the last adopters, like all teams must be standards based grading by 2020.

Beth mentioned one of the key criticisms against standards-based grading and how her district is still working through this issue. She said,

> The problem we have right now is standards based grading reporting works in middle school and grade school because nobody cares about those report cards. But in high school, colleges want a grade. They don't want 60 or five or three different grades. If you report “Oh, here's their standards, and here's our habits of work, who's looking at that? They're not looking at it. Everybody knows that. Nobody cares if you were to give them that grade. You know, parents of students only care about what that final grade is, unfortunately. And so they're left to me, therein lies the problem. We're trying to learn

> standards and letting them know what they really know, but the rest of the world hasn't caught up to that yet. And so at my school, we're then forced to take all these standards and come up with one grade. And then that makes all the work that we're doing rather meaningless, actually, because the gaming still happens and the homework isn't happening because it's not a part of the grade.

Participants described that revising practices around instruction, grading, and assessment involved developing a philosophy, identifying problems with existing and traditional practices, and then implementing reforms. Developing a philosophy connected with the servant leadership behavior of conceptualizing a mission or vision around this work. Some of the problems with grading the participants identified with traditional practices were averaging grades, assigning zeros on the 100-point scale, and including nonacademic factors in the grade. The reforms participants cited included assigning a floor of 40-50% instead of a zero, offering reassessments, moving to standards-based grading, and aligning curricular, assessment, and grading practices. Additional quotes and excerpts about revising practices on instruction, assessment, and grading can be viewed in Appendix I.

Encountering Barriers to Change

Each of the participants in this study encountered some barriers to the reforms they and their districts were attempting to implement. Some of the barriers came in the form of pushback and resistance from key stakeholders in the school community, usually teachers in their departments or parents in the community. Some also mentioned a perception of pushback because of the need to prepare students for post-secondary experiences, and the expectations of those environments. The realm of teacher resistance and pushback also required participants to operate within the scope of teacher autonomy or academic freedom clauses present in the teacher

contract negotiated by the union. The participants also had to interpret and respond to district leadership or lack thereof leadership in some instances.

Meeting with Resistance and Pushback from Stakeholders

The leaders in this study encountered resistance and pushback from key stakeholders, mostly teachers and parents. Since the participants interacted most often with the teachers in their departments, this was the primary source of resistance and pushback. Some resistance came from individual teachers, and some from groups of teachers or the entire department.

Eugene described some of the pushback he gets when implementing reforms, usually from teachers of "singleton" courses, or courses where there is only one teacher. He explained,

> [Discussing practices among singleton and elective teachers]. There's a few, like a few stubborn practices that are still in place. And what's tricky is that doesn't usually happen in the larger teams. We have [large course team family, name redacted]. And then we have electives. Right? So if somebody's teaching an elective solo, they're [on an island]. It's also a place where they're not going to have the cross pollination of different assessment practices going on…We still see it a little bit in some of the electives are you know, it's like content, content driven, not skill driven where it's like you know, we covered this and gave a test on it, you know, that that if it exists, it's more in the veteran staff and it is more in the electives. classes, but it's not that widespread either. But that's where it is, hard to get at areas.

Finn described the resistance in his content area to moving to standards-based grading. For his teachers, the resistance is due to more philosophical disagreements. He said,

> And this is one of the reasons that people are resistant to [standards-based grading], at least particularly in [department name redacted] from my standpoint is like, you know,

> standards-based grading, as an idea basically calls out people's entire conceptions of what it means to do [content]. Right. If your conception of [content] is doing [work] to get points that you know, standards-based grading, asks you to rethink that. And so, rethinking how you grade people means rethinking what it means to do [content], which is something that you know, is, it's a big ask of people it shouldn't be but you know, it is a lot of psychology and everything goes into that.

He then said, “So yeah, system change is not easy.”

Henry described some of the negative and visceral pushback he has received in the past over moving to standards-based grading due to lack of buy-in. He said,

> You know, one thing that I have experienced since we talked the last time has been pushback from people because they didn't feel like there was buy in. They... they... and it really kind of sharpened the knife for me of where I stand. You know, am I going to where am I gonna fall? How am I going to do that and that acknowledgement that I need to work on that still, even after all these years. Because it felt really horrible.

He described that feeling further when he said, “It felt like they were ready to guillotine me.”

Kent explained that teacher resistance is expected, and full consensus may never be achieved. He said,

> And I think just from a leadership standpoint, realizing that you might not you might not win over everybody, you might not change everyone's mind. But ultimately, it's not about building universal consensus. But it's about making decisions that are based on better practices and better ways of doing things.

He continued, pointing out that some changes need to be pushed by upper administration. He said, “So in some ways, the determination that we are doing this, like yeah, that's probably a little bit top down a little bit bottom up, but eventually it came for those folks as top down.”

Lori thought that sometimes resistance is due to lack of knowledge or exposure from the teacher’s perspective. In moving teachers to standards-based grading, she said, “I think where I'm seeing pushback right now. And I don't know if it's as much pushback as it is just like, teachers need more information about the philosophy.” Later in this portion of the interview, she noted, “So I think the pushback is more like the grappling with those [practices] and the self-examination of their practice and just thinking about what that change might look like in their classrooms.”

Some of the participants also described pushback from parents in the community. Alden described the problems they identified with final exams He said,

> I mean, prime example, final exams. Why are we using this assessment as a terminal data point? It's usually a low Bloom's process in the first place that kids are going to manipulate based on what final grade they need, since we're still doing percentiles, or total points. Why are we doing this? Because we don't have to battle with parents, because parents will think there's value to it in preparation for the real world, and for years, and saying, we shouldn't be doing this. And hopefully, we'll get away from this concept soon. But we haven't done it yet.

Similarly, Jerry described how the community at his school influences and prevents changes. He said,

> And part of it is the pressure of the community too. The community wants, so many of them went to [school name redacted], they want it to be exactly like their kid experienced

> it. So if you were to propose a course that had no homework, they'd be like "No, no, no. At [school name redacted] you have homework, because that's what I had."

Operating within Teacher Autonomy, Contracts, and Unions

Along with individual and group pushback, several of the participants mentioned the resistance and pushback they get from the larger group of teachers in their respective districts. This pushback is often due to teacher autonomy and/or academic freedom clauses in the union contracts or the presence of ranking union members in their departments. They described the resistance they encountered and how they responded.

Finn mentioned that he works in a district with a strong teachers' union, and he has some higher ranking union members within his department. He explained the presence of the academic freedom clause limits what he can and can't require his teachers to do. He said, "That doesn't mean that teachers are doing wildly different things in terms of grading, but you know, they're, you're limited by the contract in terms of what you can have people do." He described these limitations further. He said,

> Anything that has to do with the classroom again, that classroom space is just kind of off limits. Like I can't even say, you know, to even try to say like, "Hey, this is what we're going to do now." Like that's not even a thing that I can say.

Daryl described how the autonomy clause in the teacher contract in his district is also limiting. However he described there are limits, and the autonomy is open to interpretation. He said, "You know, there's an autonomy clause in our teachers' contract. I don't know how much of that they would interpret falls under autonomy." He went on to say how district policy can usurp teacher autonomy, in his case around district mandated reassessments. He said, "So it hasn't gone

there because at this point, there is just no... because the policy that was written in this district with the blessing of the school board says you have to have a retake policy."

Isabelle described how the teacher's contract in her district limits when she can and can't hold a department meeting, limiting teacher collaboration. She said,

> I'm limited in that I can't call a department meeting. Ever. So our teachers' union rule, it's a union thing. So we're given like six building meetings a year. But some of those are like the day before or the week before the SATs, talking about the proctoring. The school pulls them, so I end up having like three division meetings a year, which is challenging.

She also noted that the union president is a teacher in her building.

Jerry explained that the culture of teacher autonomy in his school has limited the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) or teams. He said,

> I don't know the whole history but it sounds like at some point in [school name redacted]'s past, this was an idea or proposal or something to the [department name redacted] and the department rejected it flat out, "We are not doing course teams. We will not have common assessment anything. We will not meet together to talk about what's in common at all." And I feel like it's a massive detriment to our students.

He noted, however, that he is working with the steering committee in his department to make some moves towards implementing PLCs. He said, "And I think actually, it's more work for teachers to try to do everything on their own and never learn from one another. So we're trying that this year."

Lori, however, noted that teacher autonomy is not always negative in terms of resistance or pushback. She explained, "I mean, at the end of the day, like I want, I want teachers to have

autonomy in the classroom." She feels that some level of autonomy gives teachers the ability to "respond to their students' needs."

Morgan also described how giving teachers some flexibility in response to teacher autonomy is important. He said,

> Well, and on how about we factor in everybody's favorite lesson that they want to teach and I don't want to give this up and that sort of thing? Hey, here's what we got. Our curriculum used to be this wide, and I symbolically have my hands off screen because it was infinitely wide. And so okay, if this is how many of the infinite number of topics that are in [course], and that's what we chose, whoever, wherever long ago, then is it really a tragedy if we only do this many instead? And we got an 18 week semester. What if we plan for 14 weeks worth of stuff and the other four weeks can be for what you think they should be? Or they can be for remediation, or they can be for taking your time, or they can be for making what we're doing experiential and meaningful for kids as opposed to, I can't get to everything.

Interpreting and Responding to District Leadership

Another theme that emerged in encountering barriers was how the participants had to interpret and respond to district leadership, sometimes when the district leadership was considered dysfunctional. Some of the issues with district leadership revolved around constant turnover in upper administration or the perception that the district was constantly shifting from one new initiative to another. Other times participants pointed out that they were responsible for implementing initiatives in a top down fashion, sometimes with or without clear directives or parameters on how to do so.

Administrative churn or lack of strong leadership at the upper levels was a common theme in a few of the participants' experiences. Alden explained the churn in his district caused a void of leadership. He said,

> On the leadership side, we went with a five year period, this would have been probably, 12, maybe 10 to 15 years ago. We had a principal, nice guy, just not a building leader, overwhelmed. And then we had three years of an interim, the principal he hired was the ex-[superintendent]. And he reneged on his contract. So we had to go to an interim. And then we went two years with interim, so we had five years without an effective principal.

This lack of leadership at the top left "a lot of gaps that need to be filled" according to Alden.

Similarly, Morgan described how an "insecure leader" at the top created policies that were not well received. He explained,

> But if I were writing a policy, for our teachers, I'm tired of crawling up people's tail about grades. I don't agree with it. I think it's wrong but what that comes from isn't an insecure, an insecure principal…But it comes from an insecure leader who's worried about, who somebody said, "You have too high a percentage of kids failing." So then you go to your leaders in the building and you say you need to talk to so and so about how many D's and F's they had, and you talk to so and so about how many D's and F's.

This lack of good policy lead to disaffected teachers. According to Morgan, "So because that happened so many times, our people are so... looking for whatever."

Henry described two scenarios with how he had to respond to and interpret district leadership. In the first, he explained how he was on the receiving end of teacher pushback when there was a district initiative to implement a new course. He said,

> And that's kind of happening currently with some, a new [course] we're bringing on board, that has the endorsement of the superintendent and it's going to have the endorsement of the board and the people are not necessarily as thrilled about it. My job is going to be to make sure that it happens, and that we create the best program we can. And boy, did I get pushback from that a couple weeks ago.

In the other scenario, he described how the principals' different styles of leadership in his district lead to mixed messages. He said,

> Other departments are moving in that similar direction. So I don't know that necessarily we'll be a model. I think the way I've done the grading piece may be used a little bit more. But across the board we've all been talking about grading since the pandemic kind of came on board. What's a little bit different now in [school name redacted] is that we've become much more building based and less district driven. District leadership has taken a smaller step back. So for example last year we had one curriculum director meeting all year. And it used to be twice a month.

When asked if he felt this was a positive change, Henry responded, “No. Because it's left us as [administrators], not knowing as much and since I sit in [multiple] leadership meetings, I hear it through [multiple] lenses. And so the message wasn't the same.”

The participants in this study encountered barriers to change from a variety of sources: teachers, parents, unions and union contracts, and their districts’ leadership. The resistance and pushback that they encountered shaped the conversations they had with their teachers and in some cases, shaped the relationships they had with their teachers. Some participants were limited in the leadership moves they could make within their departments to move them forward on

implementing new practices. Additional quotes and excerpts on encountering barriers to change can be read in Appendix I.

Building Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy refers to "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (Bandura as cited in Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018). The theme of building collective efficacy emerged as the major theme in how the participants in this study moved their teams of teachers forward in implementing change. The participants in this study encouraged innovation, supported and coached teachers, sought new perspectives, managed change, and were okay with imperfection. Together, these experiences within these themes built the capacity within their teachers to have the courage and support to make changes to their practice. A common experience in building collective efficacy was organizing their teachers into collaborative teams.

Organizing Teams of Teachers

Beth explained how all teachers in their district are trained in the same practices. She explained, "we train every single person on assessment practices." Additional training that all teachers in her district complete include cooperative learning, equity, and inclusion.

Similarly, Eugene described the same training that all of his teachers go through. He said, "Okay, so they've gone through like a new teacher training cohort that the district has, but they've also gone through my own boot camp." In addition, his teachers are also trained in effective assessment practices. He said, "They went through a rigorous Ainsworth 14 Step assessment writing process while back right when I got here, and so that was something, they generally like each other and like to learn from each other."

Other participants described similar, but less formal training that their teachers have participated in. For example, Henry described some conversations teachers started having via virtual meetings during the pandemic to discuss equity. He said, “They met every Thursday evening at like 8:30 at night, so that people could put their kids to bed and then participate. And that kind of led into the department beginning discussions.”

In another example of less formal learning opportunities, Isabelle described how she encourages collaboration in professional development sessions. Since she cannot require participation, she offers and invites teachers on an optional basis. She said,

> But I've started to lean into the like, "Hey, I'm having an optional meeting to discuss what the zero does versus what the 50 does, and I'm gonna do it this Wednesday and next Wednesday. Come if you're interested.” I'm a little disappointed when I'm like oh, only six people came out of 36. But then I'm like, but who cares? Six, that's six. That's great. You know, and hopefully they'll go back and it'll spread, or they're thinking about it enough.

Similarly, Jerry described how he is pushing his team to move towards a more collaborative, team organization. He explained how many of his teachers currently view collaboration. He said,

> And it, what we, what many teachers call collaboration is, "Hey, you're the new [course name redacted] guy. Here's my binder. Let me know if you have any questions." That's what they call collaboration or like, over lunch. "Hey, I tried this [activity] today and you should try it too." That's really good. I hope that continues.

As described earlier, he is making moves to implement professional learning communities in the currency culture of autonomy. Jerry explained that his goal is “more purposeful collaboration.” He said,

> [W]e're going to do professional learning teams light. We will never go to a common assessment, 100% common assessment. That's not going to happen. We will never go to 100% common curriculum, we wouldn't even get to, well I couldn't even say at 80% [common]/20% [unique] on paper, right? It might again be that way, but I could never mandate that. So I, my goal is that we move more and more the direction of discussing and coming to an understanding of some things that we think all kids should know.

Kent explained that his teachers are organized into true professional learning communities [PLCs] and that they analyze student data using the four critical questions of a PLC to support student learning. He explained,

> There's four critical questions of a PLC: what do all students need to know and be able to do? How will one know they learned it? And then Question three is like RTI, what do we do for students who have not yet learned? And then Question four is what do we do for students who are already proficient? So question three would be like if kids are continually scoring around one or two, what scaffolds and supports will we use to bring them up? We've spent a lot of time on that, lots of time, right? Your kids that are not yet proficient? How do you support them?

He continued and explained that their current area of focus is how to extend learning for students. He said,

> How do we extend their thinking and say, "No, we want all of our students growing and deepening their skills." So that would be something that we're really intentionally

> thinking about right now. Especially because we're making a pretty intentional push, either for next year or for the next year to do some deleveling of courses, where we're bringing kids into common experiences.

Lori also explained how her department is organized into professional learning teams [PLTs] to support student learning. She said,

> So I want them to be able to… that's why, like with the PLTs [professional learning teams] are trying to get PLTs to move from this day to day planning of like, "What are you doing today? What are you doing this week?" It's like true collaboration, like looking at student work. Norming rubrics. Like designing learning activities or assessments that are going to tie in more of that student inquiry.

She explained how some degree of teacher autonomy should be reflected in this as well. She continued,

> I want the autonomy to be more to be more of that, but I feel like what it's going to take to get there is more of that, just more support, both from myself, from district training and resources, and from their colleagues. And also a desire and a belief that this is important for students. And what's going to make a super meaningful learning experience for them.

Encouraging Innovation

The experience and theme of encouraging innovation is linked to the servant leadership behavior of empowerment discussed earlier. The participants in this study encouraged their teachers to try new practices, not all of which were successful at first. However, their willingness to let teachers or teams make their own decisions, sometimes within parameters, was a key component of this theme.

Beth described how she encouraged her team to adapt a newly revised curriculum to best meet their needs. She said,

> So we adapted the curriculum and I kind of just set them free to figure out how to teach it. So the tasks were there. We selected a curriculum that had some really good rich tasks, and so I'm offering support, allowing time during PLT [professional learning team] time.

One of the key components of the PLT time, she mentioned, was regular collaboration. She said, "We got two days a week to meet. So that's another thing I did is make sure that [course name redacted] team meets twice a week in their first year."

Carl described how teams in his building are experimenting with a shift to standards-based grading. Although it could still be considered a work in progress, the "pioneers" at his school are trying new things. Carl explained,

> The [name redacted] department is trying five different rubrics for doing [standards-based grading] and saying, Well, if you get two twos, and five... they're doing all sorts of different things. And they still didn't settle on anything. And that's just the [name redacted] department and that's not including the [other departments]. So we have a bunch of pioneers that went out and started trying, and trying to make it, they're having a hard time doing their own, let alone across the board.

Finn relayed a story about how he is encouraging innovation in his department and also participating in the innovation. He said,

> So today, actually, we were meeting and they were like, the couple of teachers that were interested in, we're talking about the [course content] unit, and I'm like, "Okay, so I'm going to think about, you know, the individual lessons and like, what those could look like, and you all are going to talk, think about assessment for the end of the unit." And

> they're like, “Yeah,” and they were and then one of the teachers was like, “Well, actually, I'm also thinking about doing a non-traditional assessment for the unit that we're on right now. Because we got some teachers going to [a national conference] you know, in two weeks, it's at the end of the month, that you know, we're all going to be out. I'm going, a couple other people are going, you know, you're gonna miss two or three days of school and as teachers like so I thought, you know, they could do collaborative, you know, take home or open ended assessment during those days. Because I'm already not going to be here anyway.” And I'm like, “Yes, great idea.” You know, and when one of the other teachers was just like, “Well, what were you thinking?” They start describing it. I'm like, “Yeah, that makes perfect sense, I have some kind of things like that, you know, I'll shoot, I'll send over to you, like, you know, think that's a really good idea, that's a great way to assess them, I'll send you a couple ideas, you know, problems that I've given like that, you know, maybe you don't want to give, but at least are in that vein, you know, and you can modify them however you want.” And just trying to constantly, constantly, reaffirm and say yes to people.

This automatic yes is “one of the biggest keys” in Finn’s toolbox to encourage innovation.

Henry described a scenario where he encouraged innovation by making sure he had the right people on the team. He explained,

> My [course name redacted] team for example, I had someone who was hired in the same year that I hired in and you know, she answered questions interview-wise, in a way that let me know she was very much a progressive, progressive person. The long term teacher who had been here forever and ever and ever was one of the movers and shakers that began to move towards proficiency, particularly with the influence of the new teacher.

> And then as we've hired part time people coming in, we've made sure that they have that same philosophy. And so then the [course name redacted] team has become this model for everybody else about how to transform curriculum, how to transform practices, how to transform grading. And I have given them whatever they want, or they need in order to make them successful.

Through this combination of hiring the people with a similar philosophy and placing them on the same course team, and giving them the freedom and the resources they need, they became a model for his department and school.

Supporting and Coaching Teachers

The theme of supporting and coaching teachers is closely linked to the servant leadership behavior of helping followers grow and succeed. Two ways that the participants in this study helped their followers grow was through coaching and supporting them. This happened through a variety of scenarios, such as one-one-one sessions with teachers, working with teams of teachers, or bringing in support from outside the department.

Beth described how she supports and coaches teachers through feedback and individual conversations. She coached teachers through consistent feedback. She said,

> I think they're pretty used to my feedback, it's pretty consistent all the time. It's how much are the kids talking versus how much are you talking? And then when it comes to grading practices, so that's like teaching practices when it comes to grading practices.

She also supported teachers through individual conversations. She explained how she supported a teacher that was struggling with the use of a standards-based rubric. She said,

> Just bring the test to me and actually talk about it. So if you're like wondering, would I give this a two or three on our rubric, let's talk about it. And those are some of our best

> conversations because then we can really be like, “What was the standard? You know, how much does this little mistake matter in the standard?”

Beth also pointed out that these conversations are a learning experience for her, too. She said, “And we talk about it, and then I'm learning to try to do more listening.”

Eugene described how he coaches new teachers that he hires. In addition to the district training and department training that is provided, he explained that he works with individual teachers on what they need. He said,

> So there was this as needed basis on a couple of teachers' cases, it was like we're doing daily lesson plans with other ones. It was like, “Great, you're learning enough year to year.” And this is a little bit more broad strokes depending what they came in with. And that has been pretty satisfying. The four teachers that came on with me, I think, maybe it's like, you see what you want to see, you know, it's like they're doing what I want.

Kent explained how he worked to support individual teachers that were more resistant to some of the changes that were being implemented. He shared that he has empathy for these teachers and understands what they are going through. He said,

> So I think some of the laggards or some of the later adopters, it was all of those things, trying to bring you up to speed, trying to support them, acknowledging that that change brings a sense of loss. They're going to lose some confidence and proficiency.

Instead of forcing change upon them and ignoring them after, he supported them. Kent said, “we're gonna help you get there.”

Several of the participants also described how they supported and coached teams of teachers. Isabelle shared a plan she has for an upcoming professional development day to analyze how zeros have an overall impact on students’ grades. She said,

> But I think what we have planned to do at an upcoming Institute Day is share some grade books and have them actually calculate the different grades based on how teachers input things. Like showing, for example, like having them walk through it and see okay, so if these are all zero, the student ends up with a grade of 38%, and if these are all 50, the student ends up with a grade of 53%. You know, I mean, you're not giving away grades to the kids that aren't doing it. But the kids that have a lot of the work up here, looking at the detriment of this few zeros versus the 50. So having them actually work through it and calculate it by hand. Instead of, "Oh, well, the Infinite Campus spits out their grade, I don't determine their grade." You know, having them kind of think through some of that.

Eugene also described how he worked with his entire department on professional development related to differentiation. He shared, "We had a workshop this morning for the department that I led, but they all participated. And we began talking about that. So I think in short, there has to be a lot more of that." He explained that this is just one of the first steps they are taking on the journey of more differentiated classrooms. He continued,

> So I'm so trepidatious about it, honestly, trepidatious. But like, I realized it's such a big shift, that we're starting with discussion first, just getting the kids talking, getting them, getting them to carry the cognitive load. And then to do that, we're going to have to differentiate some of our preps for them. And so that's a way of bringing that in and also a way of like working on some of the classroom culture stuff that you do. And then, and then really hit differentiation a lot harder.

Daryl explained how he utilized the instructional coaches in his school to provide professional development for his department. He explained,

> We have five instructional coaches, and two of them are on the student services side of things, one is a social worker and the other one is…she's a speech pathologist I think. So they kind of help the classroom teachers, that instructional instructional coaches design some of their internal PD through the lens of social emotional learning or cultural responsiveness, and then those instructional coaches do a couple things. We have lunch and learns, we call them. The district provides a lunch, teachers come in during their lunch hour to learn or engage in a presentation put on by the instructional coaches that addresses one or more of these topics, like once a month or twice a month like that…There's been a couple of different rounds of books studies.

Seeking New Perspectives

Several of the participants described how they bring in outside perspectives to their schools to increase teachers' knowledge and improve professional practices. The outside perspectives included bringing in expert authors and scholars, studying best practices through book studies, and conducting site visits. A commonality through these strategies was the leader's understanding that they did not have all the answers and a willingness to consult the experts.

Bringing in authors or experts in person or using their texts as a book study was a common way to seek out new perspectives. Beth mentioned that they brought in curriculum experts to provide professional development for teachers after they completed a major curricular overhaul. She said, "[W]hen we switched to our curriculum, we brought in the authors of our integrated curriculum, to come in and train us and show us how they envision this curriculum being taught." She also described a scenario where they used research based practices to make a change to homework policies, but are still working through some of the additional consequences of that change. She explained,

> You're gonna hear that the research says the homework shouldn't be a part of the grade. We shouldn't grade behavior, the grade should reflect what students know. And I agree with all of that. However, what I am seeing now, in year four is students aren't practicing. There's not enough time in a class for students to be exposed to all of the wonderful problems that we need them to be exposed to. We think we can, we just can't, and so we're losing some of that. So we're losing some skills, which maybe is okay. But what we can't do, we can't have it all right, so we can't not have homework, have students doing less problems, and then still expect us to move at the same pace and rigor that we have for the last eternity. And that's just what we're noticing.

Daryl described some of the resources they are using in his school and district to bring in some new perspectives, including books on culturally responsive teaching and grading for equity. He further explained,

> Yeah, I mean, it is in this kind of fear of, and it really comes down to I think, like having a culturally responsive pedagogy or culturally responsive practices as Admin's kind of saying that phrase. Like having, I'd like to have a way where teachers reflect on their own course policies, under, through a lens of, of equity and, and diversity.

Similarly, Carl explained that his district has started book studies, including a "variety of resources…four or five books that were book talks in the administration."

As discussed earlier, Eugene explained that his teachers have participated in professional development on the Ainsworth 14 Step assessment writing process. He also wants to implement more Universal Design for Learning. He explained,

> I do believe it's a process that begins with direct instruction, guided practice, multiple chances to see how students are doing and then a chance for them to show what they

> know. But I'm I want to move more towards UDL [Universal Design for Learning] which is like giving the students more of a voice and how they pick what they want to be assessed on.

Henry also highlighted the importance of staying current in the research and best educational practices. He said, “And for many people, unless they're out there and they're involved and they're reading, they don't necessarily have those same ideas. And so they need to figure out where they're going.” He pointed out that not staying current leads to stagnation. He continued, “And if somebody doesn't show them that, you know, Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem on the hill, they're gonna think that they live in the New Jerusalem.”

Morgan explained how bringing in an author led to changes in the parameters set forth by the district. He said,

> We brought in Rick Wormeli…I think he's awesome. I think that guy's awesome. I don't think I necessarily agree with everything he says but I agree with a lot of what he says you know. The end, we then went formative/summative, so all our grading categories are formative/summative now. And so our classes have to be at least 70% summative, 30% formative is the most it can be but it can be less than that if you want it to.

This has led to more consistent grading practices across the building. He further explained, “Our category weights, our grade weights are consistent across your building, your course learning team within your building, knowing that they're within those parameters.”

Kent described how conducting site visits brought in new perspectives that helped his school and district shift to standards-based grading. He explained,

> But those kinds of things, though, when we did site visits for people that were doing it, that gave us some new ideas, you know. Even if we took a trip and we came back like we

> got one idea from them. When we went to Solon, Iowa, I remember the idea we got from them. And we went to Vermont, I remember the idea we came back with. We went to Maine, I remember what we came back with. And then we built that together and said, like, this is our thing.

Kent went on to describe one of the common criticisms they received in the transition to standards-based grading was that it may work well in some departments or content areas but not others. As a result of this feedback, the leaders in his district put together their own resource, with each department chair writing a chapter in a book on how standards-based grading works in their department. He explained how this process of site visits and writing the book transformed their work:

> It's amazing how powerful that is. When you get job-alike people together to see a model for how it works. I just need a taste of what it could look like. And then I could pull it off, and I can replicate it and then I can tweak it to make our own. So that's huge to me. I think that's a huge leadership skill for people to get a pretty clear vision of somebody that's doing something like that, or working with students, “Like you don't understand. We have more black and brown students. We couldn't do it.” Like, "Oh, no, look at this school. They're doing it. Come over here. It's working." But people really value seeing something that looks like them being successful.

Managing Change

Managing change emerged as a common theme in many of the participants’ experiences. To build collective efficacy in an era of change required helping teachers believe they could be successful. This was manifested in how they worked with their teachers to make change more palatable, how they balanced a district directive with the needs of their department members, and

how they maintained flexibility in light of new parameters. The work that the participants did in this area is connected to their servant leadership behavior of emotional healing. Much of the work of managing change came down to managing their own emotions and helping their teachers manage their emotions. Sometimes managing change also meant being okay with imperfection.

Morgan explained that managing change sometimes requires massaging new ideas into "whatever you need it to be." He explained further,

> And so that's why I said you figure out what your stuff is. And then you can kind of start using that to help provide some consistency to your people who are clamoring for it. Because this is everything. We're always going to do this.

To Morgan, this means always keeping the focus on the students. He said, "What would I want if it were me? What would I want if it were you learning?"

Lori explained that shifting to standards-based grading over time helped ease the transition for teachers. She asked them to do it for one course at a time over a period of a couple years. She noted,

> And teachers are basically saying, like once, once they've taught one year of a standards based class are like, well, it's actually not that bad transitioning the others. And then we can also way easier to just have the same assessment practice across all five of my courses instead of trying to balance like a traditional gradebook in one and an [standards-based] gradebook in another.

For Kent, the long period of time it took to move his school and district to standards-based grading helped ease the change. He said,

> So I think in terms of [strategies] that lead to relative success, because anytime you have a big paradigm shift, or you're leading a massive you know, transformational kind of a

> change, you know, adaptive change where you're changing mindsets, not just fixing the bus routes, but you're like fundamentally changing people's mindset, I think we did it over a long period of time helped people come up to speed.

He noted that eventually, everyone had to be on board with this change, and there was an eventual deadline. He said,

> Eventually get to this inevitable, "Yeah, in the next four years, every team has to get there," and we lined them up, like you might be four years out, but it's coming and it's not going away. So I think that helped people to realize, that they almost resigned themselves to the fact that it has to happen. And I think by that time, some of those late adopters or laggards depending on you know, you know what leadership research you read, but those late adopters saw models of it working and people that they work with that they trust, other teachers, that said like. "Oh my gosh, I'll be darned. It actually worked." So that helped.

Managing change wasn't easy for any of the participants. Beth described a particularly difficult curriculum change and some of the lessons learned from that experience. She shared how she managed this with her team in the moment. She said,

> So there was definitely stress and anger [over curriculum revision]. But everybody was going to do their best. And there was really no time to complain. So this is what I would say to them. It's funny as I ramble, I remember things so I would always say to them, be consistent in your class. Then you can worry about the PLC/PLT [professional learning community/professional learning team]. And then we could talk about the district but right now, you gotta figure this out for you and who you are and how you're teaching in your class.

Here is what she said later in the interview about what she learned from this experience:

> I think what I did from a leadership perspective is I really went back to the greater team and then tried to push for a little bit more. I can't think of the word flexibility is what I'm saying right now. Autonomy that's within the district to be able to make some decisions that I feel my department needs.

Beth shared another lesson that she learned through her experiences. She said, “You will never have full buy in. You have to get started and learn along the way. The learning never stops.”

Building collective efficacy emerged as a theme as the leaders in this study implemented changes around instruction, grading, and assessment. Building collective efficacy included organizing teams of teachers, encouraging innovation, supporting and coaching teachers, seeking new perspectives, and managing change. More quotes and excerpts related to the theme of building collective efficacy can be found in Appendix I.

Summary

The goal of this study was to use transcendental phenomenology to better understand the lived experience of high school department chairs as they related to implementing reforms around grading and assessment. The PRQ sought to understand what overall themes emerged from their experiences and the SRQ sought out what specific themes emerged around leadership practices from their experience. Thirteen participants representing nine different school districts participated in this study. The main themes that emerged from this study were exhibiting leadership attributes; displaying servant leadership behaviors; revising practices on instruction, grading, and assessment; encountering barriers to change; and building collective efficacy. The next chapter will provide a discussion and summary of these themes and what answers emerged to the research questions. Additionally, chapter five will include recommendations and

implications for practice and theory, as well as areas for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Reforming grading and assessment practices in high schools is a difficult problem for many schools to tackle because changing grading and assessment practices often involves overcoming the institutional inertia that keeps traditional practices in place (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019.) Additionally, in many schools and districts, the decision makers in upper administration and boards of education that determine new policies and procedures are not the ones that will be directly responsible for implementing changes at the classroom level. Teachers and their direct supervisors will be responsible for implementing changes with fidelity. This means that the direct supervisors' leadership practices (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019) and influence over their teachers' practices will be two of the primary determinants in how new policies and procedures are enacted.

The purpose of this study was to understand which leadership practices emerged as most beneficial in the lived experiences of educational leaders, specifically department chairs at the high school level, as they sought to revise and reform grading and assessment practices in their school. A transcendental phenomenological approach was used in this study to answer the Primary Research Question (PRQ) and the Secondary Research Question (SRQ):

- PRQ: What themes emerge as being beneficial to department chairs as they lead and supervise teachers as they relate to the implementation of grading and assessment practices and reforms?
- SRQ: What servant leadership behaviors emerge as being beneficial for department chairs as they work with teachers in their departments to develop and/or reform individual and departmental grading and assessment practices?

The participant sample in this study was thirteen department chairs which represented a variety of high school departments and nine different school districts. Department chairs in this study included the following titles and positions: department chairs or directors of a single department (i.e. English) and divisional chairs of multiple departments (i.e. Math/Science Divisional Chair.) For the purposes of this study, all participants were referred to as department chairs. The department chairs participated in interviews, either in-person or via video conferencing. The interviews were transcribed and coded using in vivo, descriptive, and process coding (Saldaña, 2021) and the data was analyzed in Delve using the modified van Kaam (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) method. This method included the steps of horizonalization; reduction and elimination; thematizing the invariant constituents; identifying themes; creating textural and structural descriptions; creating textural-structural descriptions; and developing composite textural-structural descriptions.

The following five themes emerged from this study: exhibiting leadership attributes; displaying servant leadership behaviors; revising practices on instruction, assessment, and grading; encountering barriers to change; and building collective efficacy. The PRQ sought to answer the question of which leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to the department chairs as they led efforts to implement reforms around grading and assessment. Within the theme of exhibiting leadership attributes, those behaviors that emerged as being most beneficial included: becoming a leader; having a strong personal philosophy; leading by example and influencing teachers; building trust and fostering relationships; being reflective; coping with difficult emotions; and navigating district context and culture. The SRQ sought to answer the question of which servant leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to department chairs. Within the theme of displaying servant leadership behaviors, the servant leadership

behaviors that emerged as being most beneficial to implementing grading reforms were: conceptualizing, emotional healing, empowering and the related behavior of helping followers grow and succeed.

Summary of the Study

This study addressed which leadership behaviors and which servant leadership emerged as being beneficial to department chairs as they sought to implement reforms to teachers' grading and assessment practices. All the participants in this study had been in their current roles for at least two years and displayed at least some of the servant leadership behaviors identified by Northouse (2019). Also, the participants represented the major high school academic departments of career/technical education, English, math, science, social studies, and world languages.

Exhibiting Leadership Attributes and Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors

All the participants experienced the theme of exhibiting leadership attributes. These attributes included the transition to becoming a leader, having a personal philosophy, leading by example, influencing teachers, building trust, fostering relationships, being reflective, coping with difficult emotions, and navigating district context and culture. The servant leadership behaviors that emerged as being most beneficial to the department chairs in this study were conceptualizing, emotional healing, helping followers grow and succeed, and empowering followers. Many of these themes were referenced in the literature review in this study.

Exhibiting Leadership Attributes

The PRQ in this study sought to identify which leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to department chairs in implementing grading and assessment reforms. Many of the department chairs in this study discussed their experiences of making the jobs of their

teachers easier. This sentiment is especially reflected in the leadership behaviors of leading by example; building trust and fostering relationships; and navigating district context and culture. Nearly all of the chairs discussed how one or more of these themes influenced their work with their teachers.

Leading By Example. The leadership behavior of leading by example emerged as a theme from twelve of the thirteen participants. Several prior studies and articles indicated the need for teacher leadership in implementing grading and assessment reforms (Cox, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Huggins, Schurich, & Morgan, 2011; Proulx, 2012). In this study, the department chairs were able to provide leadership by example because nearly all of them taught at least one class as part of their department chair responsibilities, or they collaboratively worked with their teachers on curriculum writing or professional development activities. Their proximity to the classroom and to the teachers served gave them an opportunity to lead in a way that was not as readily available to upper administrators at the building or district level.

None of the participants mentioned that they had great success with implementing reforms by issuing strong directives to teachers that had to be followed. Rather, several of the chairs mentioned their experience of leading by example as "being in it with them," as in teaching, working with students, curriculum writing, and/or leading professional development. Beth and Daryl both used the phrase "in it with them" when discussing curriculum writing and teaching. Eugene described his experience of "sitting with them" when writing curriculum with his teachers. When Kent explained how his school and district developed a vision for standards-based grading, he said his role was "working with them." Isabelle shared her experience of leading by example when she said she "leads from experience" and "I share my own teaching experiences with them more frequently."

Building Trust and Fostering Relationships. All the participants in this study mentioned the behaviors of building trust and fostering relationships with their teachers. On the importance of fostering relationships as a servant leader, Northouse (2019) explained, "Servant leaders make it a priority to listen to their followers and develop strong long-term relationships with them" (p. 240). Northouse also described the importance of the servant leader to value the community and for the followers to "experience interdependence, respect, trust, and individual growth" (Greenleaf as cited in Northouse, 2019). The participants in this study both built trust and fostered relationships by valuing their teachers and their strengths.

One of the most common ways that the department chairs in this study built trust and fostered relationships was by listening to their teachers and taking action whenever possible. Beth did this by being available to teachers after school and being ready to discuss grading and asking question to teachers. Lori made it a point to seek feedback from her teachers and to take actions based on their recommendations. Morgan built trust by being visible and being in teachers' classrooms so he knew what it felt like to be in their position. Henry explained that he softened his approach to reforms over time, and that he now uses "more honey for the flies than vinegar these days."

Navigating District Context and Culture. Another common experience among the department chairs that emerged as a theme was navigating district context and culture. Northouse (2019) described that the context and culture of an organization influences the way a leader carries themself. In particular, schools in the United States often operate in a performance-oriented culture with the goal of improving standardized test scores and other outcomes for students (Northouse, 2019). While not directly focused on improving standardized test scores, the grading and assessment reforms discussed in this study were an effort to improve other

outcomes, such as decreasing failure rates, increasing graduation rates, improving students' learning experiences, and improving students' well-being. Most grading and assessment reforms are issued from upper building and district administration, and it is then up to the teachers or middle managers, if their role exists, to implement. As mentioned previously, prior studies on large scale grading and assessment reforms (Cox, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Huggins, Schurich, & Morgan, 2011; Proulx, 2012) looked at how building or district leadership implemented reforms with teachers, but none could be located that focused on the leadership role of the middle managers. All the participants in this study could be described as middle managers. They supervised and led their departments full of teachers, yet they had to meet the needs of and follow the directives of the building and district administrators above them.

The thirteen department chairs in this study represented nine different school districts in the study area. Some of the districts could be described as deep in the work of implementing reforms on grading and assessment with a clear vision and mission in place to support that work. Other districts represented in this study could be described as beginning the work or in the early stages of reforming grading and assessment. The rest of the districts in this study may have had individual teachers or department chairs, such as the ones in this study, working in silos on grading and assessment reforms with no clear direction or focus from the district making this work a priority.

In the districts, such as Kent's, that had a clear vision and mission for grading and assessment, clear leadership teams and structures were developed to support teachers. Kent had a leadership team of teachers within his department, and he was part of the larger school administrative team. He described how professional development was delivered in these teams to support their work. There was a culture of tightness and looseness to their work, meaning the

district parameters were clearly defined and it was up to the department chair and their teachers to make decisions on implementation.

Districts that were at the other end of the spectrum on implementing grading and assessment reforms had no district focus and that is where the department chairs in this study picked up the challenge, implementing reforms where they could. Henry, for example, was working with teachers in his department on his goal of implementing standards-based grading, often navigating around the voices of naysayers within his school to achieve his goal. Similarly, other participants in this study like Daryl, Jerry, and Isabelle were navigating their district context making reforms and issuing challenges where they could. Ultimately, the chairs in this study were using their position of leadership as middle managers to make the lives of their teachers easier. Lori may have summarized this the best when she said she feels responsible for "mitigating the information that I'm getting from the central office and making it digestible and attainable for the teachers that I work with."

Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors

The SRQ in this study sought to identify which servant leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to department chairs on reforms related to grading and assessment. Prior to the interview portion of the study, the participants self-reported their servant leadership behaviors using a questionnaire developed by Northouse (2019). All the participants reported at least moderate or high level of each behavior according to the scoring on the questionnaire. During the interview portion of the study, the servant leadership behaviors of conceptualizing, emotional healing, helping followers grow and succeed, and empowering followers emerged as themes. Therefore, the style of leadership that the participants expressed, and the behaviors experienced in this study can be described using Northouse's (2019) definition of servant

leadership. As shown in the previous chapter, Table 4.1 displayed the average scores of the participants' ratings on the servant leadership questionnaire. Comparing the average scores in Table 4.1 with the behaviors identified as the textural-structural descriptions of themes shows that leaders do not necessarily need to report the highest range of the behavior for it to be a beneficial leadership behavior. Northouse (2019) noted that servant leadership can improve the performance of followers, improve the performance of the organization, and have a positive impact on society. Additionally, as noted by Neuser et al. (in as cited in Northouse, 2019), servant leadership improves the followers' abilities to do their jobs if they are receptive to the leadership of the leader. The findings in this study confirmed these assertions.

Conceptualizing. The themes of having a strong personal philosophy and conceptualizing are closely linked. Conceptualizing, according to Northouse (2019), is the leader's ability to understand the purpose and the mission of the organization and resolve issues in a creative way that fits within the mission of the organization. This theme of conceptualizing also manifested in the experiences of the department chairs as they described their personal philosophies of leadership and grading and assessment reform. When discussing their personal philosophies, several of the participants mentioned how their philosophies connected with the philosophy or mission/vision of their school.

In describing his philosophy on education, Alden grounded his philosophy in the fundamental goal of his school--to improve the lives of the children they serve. Another participant, Lori, mentioned how her personal philosophy completely "melded" with that of her district. Participants, like Beth, described how she used her position of leadership and autonomy to creatively work with her team to craft a completely new curriculum for her department. These findings highlight the importance of leadership that knows what they believe in and knows their

role in implementing the mission or vision of the school and district. Although previous studies focused mostly on principal or district leadership, these studies highlighted the importance of leadership in implementing grading reforms (Cox, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Hochbein & Polio, 2016; Huggins et al., 2011).

Emotional Healing. Emotional healing emerged as an important component of the theme of exhibiting servant leadership behaviors. In the introduction to their book on grading, Guskey and Brookhart (2019) noted that "Grading is one of the most hotly debated topics in education today" (p. 1). It makes sense, then, that the department chairs in this study displayed emotional healing with teachers as part of their experience in implementing grading and assessment reforms. Emotional healing is summarized as the leader's focus on the well-being of their followers (Northouse, 2019). The participants in this study focused on the well-being of their followers by having individual conversations with teachers to help them cope with the emotions involved in change, and as Kent described it, a loss of "some confidence and proficiency" as they implemented new practices.

Several of the participants described their experiences of how they took part in one-on-one conversations with individual teachers or small groups of teachers to engage in emotional healing. Beth described these conversations as listening sessions or non-evaluative conversations to help her teachers discuss the "hard stuff" with grading and assessment. Lori described her methodical approach to these conversations to get to know her teachers as individuals. She went on to explain that once she knows them, she can push back in these conversations when it comes to grading and assessment, and she used the example of pushing back against group grades for students. She had the relationship and the rapport developed first with her teachers and was then able to engage in a more difficult conversation. Carl also described his experience with

emotional healing and how he used his conversations with a teacher to engage in philosophical conversations in an effort to better understand where the teacher was coming from. He shared the story of how having the relationship and understanding with the teacher first as an individual helped him connect the teacher with an instructional coach to change practice.

Another common experience within the behavior of emotional healing was not harboring negative feelings towards their teachers. At least three participants mentioned this explicitly in their conversations. In connecting his teacher with the instructional coach, Carl explained that he understood the teacher was not being "malicious" in his initial reluctance to embrace the new practices. Jerry described that one of his key takeaways from a conference on grading and assessment was to not "demonize the late adopters." Finally, Kent explained that it was important to bring the "laggards," as he described them, up to speed and to support them.

There was little mention in the literature of the importance of emotional healing as it related to implementing reforms around grading and assessment. In their phenomenological study on teacher perceptions of standards-based grading, Knight and Cooper (2019) recommended that "If administrators address teachers' hesitations, create school-wide systems of support, develop consistent expectations, and provide appropriate professional development, then teachers are more likely to feel supported and implement grading practices with fidelity" (p. 87). The teacher hesitation they described in their study was an emotion that the participants in this study experienced with their teachers. The participants in this study used emotional healing as one component to address the hesitation they encountered.

Growing and Empowering Followers. The servant leadership behaviors of helping followers grow and succeed and empowering followers emerged as closely linked behaviors in this study. One of the ways that the department chairs helped their followers find success in

implementing grading and assessment reforms was by empowering them to make some of the decisions on how they would implement a policy. This was mentioned by several of the participants in different ways.

Alden, Eugene, Henry, Isabelle, and Lori explained how they or their district employed "pilots" as one way to help empower their teachers. For Alden, his district often used pilots as a way for teachers to engage in a "rogue operation" to bring about change. Eugene's district used a more formal, district-wide pilot on competency-based education. Henry and Lori allowed teachers to pilot practices in their departments as they both sought to shift their teachers to standards-based models of grading and assessment. Although she didn't mention the word pilot, Isabelle described that she let some teachers "go rogue" in their professional learning communities to try out new practices and conduct "action research."

One of the studies (Swan, Guskey, & Jung, 2014) in the literature review examined a pilot study on standards-based report cards. The researchers in that study noted that the teachers that agreed to participate in the pilot were more likely predisposed to have positive attitudes towards the standards-based report cards. Several of the department chairs in this study mentioned a similar theme of early adopters and innovators willing to try new practices in their classrooms, and that they leveraged that willingness and openness to experiment to influence the rest of the teachers in their departments. Kent, for example, explained that they recruited "the people who are kind of on the bleeding edge of innovation" to start the conversation and create a vision for standards-based grading that became the model for the school. Finn said that his answer is always an "automatic yes" when teachers ask if they can try something new.

Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading

The experience of revising practices on instruction, assessment, and grading emerged as a theme from the experiences of the department chairs in this study. Within this theme, the department chairs experienced developing a philosophy for the reforms; identifying problems with traditional grading and assessment practices; and reforming instructional, assessment and grading practices. While most of the participants shared their stories with the first two experiences of developing a philosophy and identifying problems, all of the department chairs experienced some aspect of the reforms.

The literature was clear on which reforms were most impactful on grading and assessment. Assessment practices should include both formative and summative assessments (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Popham, 2017; Shepard, 2019; Shute, 2008) with students taking ownership over their learning (Panadero, Andrade, & Brookhart, 2018). Standards-based grading is a system of using rubrics to match student performance or understanding against a standard (Brookhart, 2013; Marzano, 2010; McTighe & Wiggins, 2013; O'Connor, 2017) and removes nonacademic factors that often influence a grade. Revisions to report cards are needed to reflect the changes in grading and assessment (Guskey, 2004; Melograno, 2007; Mohnsen, 2013; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; Shippy, Washer, & Perrin, 2013). These reforms are considered large scale reforms since they required wholesale changes to grading and assessment school-wide. Other, more granular practices were also recommended by various scholars, many of which could be implemented in addition to or in the absence of the large scale reforms: avoiding averaging grades (O'Connor, 2010, 2017; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011); avoiding the use of zeros on the 100-point scale (O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Wormeli, 2011; Reeves, 2004); grading only summative assessments and not formative assessments (O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor

& Wormeli, 2011; Shepard et al., 2018); and allowing redos and retakes on assessments (Wormeli, 2011, 2017).

Many of these practices were discussed by the chairs in this study, and the practices that were discussed most often included implementing standards-based grading, allowing reassessments, and assigning a grade of 40% or 50% as a floor on the 100-point scale. Implementing standards-based grading school-wide or district-wide emerged as a theme from several of the participants, including Beth, Eugene, Kent, and Lori. For these department chairs. Although it was not a school or district focus, Henry made great progress in implementing standards-based grading within his department. In some of the other districts where standards-based grading was not a focus, implementing reassessment practices and assigning a grade of 40% or 50% as the lowest possible score on an assignment or assessment became school became the primary means of achieving more equity in the grading and assessment practices. Most often, these two practices were directives from school or district leadership and left the chairs some flexibility in how these were implemented with their teachers.

Additional Findings

In addition to answers to the PRQ and SRQ, two additional themes emerged from the participants in this study: encountering barriers to change and building collective efficacy. The barriers to change included getting pushback from various stakeholders in the school or district, usually teachers and parents; responding to district leadership, and sometimes less than optimal leadership; and operating within the teacher and/or union contract, or when there is a culture of teacher autonomy or academic freedom in the school and district. Building collective efficacy emerged as one of the key themes that department chairs experienced as they sought to effectively implement and manage the change process.

Encountering Barriers to Change

Twelve of the thirteen participants in this study described receiving pushback from various stakeholders. The stakeholders usually included parties directly connected to their schools, such as teachers or parents. Although some research in the review of literature described resistance from students (Peters, Kruse, Buckmiller, & Townsley, 2017), few of the participants in this study mentioned pushback from students. In some instances, the participants mentioned their perceptions of pushback from post-secondary institutions even though the resistance may not have been actualized. For instance, there were some participants that held the general perception that colleges and universities would be resistant to grading and assessment reforms that significantly changed how student progress is reported in a single letter grade on the students' transcripts.

Some of the resistance that participants in this study described came from teachers within their departments. This resistance was usually received in response to district initiatives or parameters. For instance, Daryl described how he navigated pushback on the district move to reassessment procedures. Lori described the pushback she received from her move and her district's move to standards-based grading. The pushback they both described could be summarized as a lack of information regarding specifics. Both Daryl's team and Lori's team were looking for specifics in how to enact a district directive. Similarly, Henry described the pushback and conflict he received in his department and how he helped teachers by "providing them with more information, providing them with more experiences, providing them with sources from different places in order to keep that moving forward."

The department chairs in this study also mentioned the resistance they received from the teachers' unions in their district, academic freedom clauses in the teachers' contracts, and the

high value placed on teacher autonomy in their districts. On the subject of teacher autonomy, several of the participants described the need for striking a balance between consistency and teacher autonomy. For instance, Morgan described the need for teachers to agree on a common pacing for a semester's worth of curriculum. To find that balance, he rhetorically asked, "What if we plan for 14 weeks' worth of stuff and the other four weeks can be for what you think they should be?" Jerry struck a similar chord in his interview and described that he challenged his teams to come to a common understanding and "figure that stuff out." Lori summarized her overall feeling on teacher autonomy and said, "I mean, at the end of the day…I want teachers to have autonomy in the classroom."

Another source of pushback and/or resistance the participants in this study mentioned was their school or district leadership. This was most often manifested by leadership that did not have a clear mission, vision, or focus on reforming grading and assessment practices. Eleven of the thirteen participants mentioned some kind of resistance they felt from upper administration. Some of this resistance was due to the general administrative structure and turnover in roles. Alden and Morgan both described the administrative churn in their districts. Other participants, like Beth and Daryl, described how they led their departments in interpreting and implementing district directives. Ultimately, Daryl appreciated the existence of a district directive on reassessments to help move his teams forward in the reforms. He said, "But in the end, I mean, I think if there was not a district requirement, then you would have groups that are like, 'No, I'm, you know, I'm not changing.'"

Building Collective Efficacy

Building collective efficacy also emerged as an important theme in grading and assessment reforms. Within this theme, the participants in this study experienced organizing

teams of teachers; encouraging innovation; supporting and coaching teachers; seeking new perspectives; and managing change. Although many of these experiences are connected to the themes of exhibiting leadership attributes and displaying servant leadership, these experiences emerged as a separate theme because they are separate activities from the leadership responsibilities within their roles. Many of the department chairs mentioned they were experiencing these activities because of their leadership of their respective departments. These activities helped build the collective efficacy of their teachers, which Bandura (as cited in Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018) defined as collaborative groups of teachers that believe in their ability to improve student outcomes. One method that several of the participants in this study mentioned was teacher collaboration, often engaging in the work of formal professional learning communities described by DuFour (2007).

The department chairs interviewed in this study described how they organized teams of teachers through collaboration and professional learning communities. Beth explained the training that all new teachers in her district are required to complete, and that teachers are organized into professional learning teams with common practices. Eugene mentioned that his teachers are similarly organized into professional learning teams and have implemented common assessments. Kent described the formal work that his department used around the four critical questions of a professional learning community. In some of the schools and districts represented in this study that did not have formal professional learning communities in place, the chairs were making moves towards implementing them. Jerry, for example, placed a high value on teacher collaboration and implemented “professional learning teams light” to begin engaging his department in the collaborative work and start moving them to more common practices.

Some of the other experiences within the theme of building collective efficacy connected to some of the leadership behaviors discussed earlier. For example, many of the department chairs shared that they encouraged innovation to build teachers' confidence and explore new practices. This is similar to the servant leadership behavior of empowering teams of teachers to make decisions. Finn, for example, encouraged one of his teachers to experiment with a different kind of assessment and shared some of his own experience and materials with a similar assessment. He empowered his teacher to try something new.

Implications for Practice

The PRQ and SRQ in this study sought to understand which leadership practices and servant leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to department chairs interested in implementing grading and assessment reforms in their departments. Although the findings in this study may be useful to department chairs and other school-based leaders, Creswell and Poth (2018) also described that phenomenological studies can be used to develop practices and policies for organizations. Prior studies (Cox, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Huggins, Schurich, & Morgan, 2011; Proulx, 2012) that shed light on large scale reforms did not fully describe the best practices for working with individual teachers and groups of teachers to implement the reforms with fidelity. The findings in this study added to the literature on which leadership practices are most beneficial to individual school leaders and provided some insight on how districts can set their teachers and leaders up for successful reforms.

Conceptualizing a Mission and Vision for Grading and Assessment Reforms

Key themes and experiences that emerged in this study included having a strong personal philosophy, conceptualizing, and developing a philosophy for revising grading and assessment practices. These themes indicate the need for schools and districts to develop a clear mission and

vision around grading and assessment practices at the district level. There were schools and districts represented in this study that already had these in place. Department chairs in those schools reported that their teams generally worked collaboratively, and they described experiencing less resistance from teachers than some of the other chairs in this study. It would also be beneficial to involve as many stakeholder groups as possible in the development of the mission and vision to ensure that all voices are heard, including teachers, department chairs, other school leaders, union representatives, and parents and students. Including more voices in the plan may lessen some of the resistance to reforms and help educate the community on the need for the reforms.

As part of developing the mission and vision, it would make sense to create a multi-year timeline for implementation. Several of the chairs in this study described the need to: educate their teachers, empower early adopters to start right away, and allow the late adopters time to adjust to the changes and see the successes of the early adopters. Although one chair mentioned their district's more than ten year transition to standards-based grading, a more concise timeline of three to five years would be appropriate for most schools and districts. The first year of the plan would allow space to create the mission and vision and allow for educating all stakeholders on the reforms that are coming. The next one or two years allows early adopters time to experiment and innovate new practices, with the final year of the plan being full implementation.

Growing and Empowering Teachers

The vision and mission for grading and assessment should clearly outline the professional development that is needed to specifically support each part of the plan. The well-being of teachers is taken into account if they know that the reforms are coming through a multi-year

plan. The initial years give time for a slower initial rollout with early adopters, focus groups, and pilots, leading to non-negotiable full implementation. School and district leaders can support teachers throughout the process by providing time for collaboration, ongoing professional development around assessment practices, equity, and best instructional practices. Several of the chairs in this study mentioned the presence of instructional coaches and teacher leaders in their schools and departments. These roles should be developed and utilized where available. School and district leaders can also empower their teachers by developing tight parameters of the non-negotiables of grading and assessment reforms and allow collaborative teams of teachers to determine how they will implement them in their courses.

Building Collective Efficacy

School and district leaders should focus on building the collective efficacy of their teachers. This can be accomplished through implementation of true professional learning communities and creating time during the school day for frequent collaboration among teams of teachers. It would also be beneficial for department chairs and other school-based leaders to be part of the collaborative teams. This can be accomplished by being visible in classrooms on a regular basis, teaching a class where possible, and by taking part in the activities of the professional learning communities such as examining data and developing curriculum and assessments. This gives the leaders an opportunity to lead by example and "lead up" to the district level administration.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study sought to examine the lived experience of high school department chairs to understand which leadership attributes and servant leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to implementing grading and assessment reforms. Thirteen department chairs

representing nine different districts in the study area participated in this study. Since this study focused solely on the lived experiences of the department chairs, it would be beneficial to explore how other stakeholders experienced leadership actions and grading and assessment reforms. Specifically, future researchers may explore the following questions:

- How and why do teachers change their practices around instruction, assessment, grading?
- How do teachers perceive the impact of the leadership of their supervisor?
- How do students experience grading and assessment reforms?
- What leadership behaviors of principals and assistant principals emerge as being most beneficial to working with middle managers (department chairs) and/or teachers on implementing grading and assessment reforms?

Since all stakeholders are impacted by grading and assessment reforms, future researchers might consider employing an alternative research method, such as a case study of a school or district that implemented a large-scale reform to grading and assessment practices.

Limitations

The literature recommends that the number of participants in transcendental phenomenological studies limit the study to fifteen participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Daniel, 2012). This study included thirteen participants. Due to the sample size, the findings in this study are generalizable only to high schools in the study area, and only those high schools with department chairs that have supervisory duties over teachers in their departments. This administrative structure is unique and not present in all high schools. To minimize the sample size limitation, multiple interviews were conducted with as many of the participants as possible.

Additionally, this study is limited to high schools with similar structures and demographics. This study area was the suburbs of a large, Midwestern city. As such, the

participants in this study worked in high schools associated with high school districts. There were no high schools represented in this study from K-12 districts. However, the participants in this study represented nine different school districts, and a table of the enrollment, racial/ethnic diversity, and percent of low-income students is shown in Appendix H. There was a range of schools represented in this study on each of these components.

This study was also limited because some school websites did not readily list or make easily accessible the names and contact information for their staff on their websites. Invitations to participate in this study were sent to department chairs at high schools in which their position and contact information was available on the school website. To maximize the number of respondents to this invitation, I searched the websites of as many high schools as I could in the study area for which names, positions, and email addresses of department chairs were viewable. There may have been other high schools in the study area in which the department chair position exists, but they were not invited because I could not locate contact information on the school website. Overall, the thirteen participants in this study represented nine different school districts.

Delimitations

The study area and the selection process were sources of delimitations in this study. The study area of the suburbs of a large, Midwestern city was selected so the participants would be in proximity and available for in-person interviews. The location was also selected because the study area generally has the department chair position as part of the administrative structure of the high schools. This was important to the study because the role that middle level managers play in revising the grading and assessment practices is not well studied in the literature.

The total population size of high school department chairs could not readily be determined without examining the website of each high school in the study area or contacting

each high school individually to inquire further. However, it was not necessary to know this number because the sample size for this phenomenological study was within the range of three to fifteen participants as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Daniel (2012). Fourteen department chairs responded to the initial invitation, and thirteen participants followed through to the in-person interview portion of the study.

Selection criteria was also a source of delimitations. To ensure that participants had knowledge of and ability to influence the grading and assessment practices of their teachers, participants needed to have two or more years of experience in their current role and self-report at least a low level of influence over their teachers. To ensure that this study could shed light on the secondary research question of which servant leadership behaviors emerged as beneficial, participants also had to self-report exhibiting at least some of the behaviors of servant leadership. Overall, the thirteen participants represented a cross-section of different levels of experience, influence, and servant leadership behaviors.

Conclusions

There is a problem with the grading and assessment practices in many high schools across the country. Inconsistent practices exist within departments, schools, and districts leading to inconsistent final grades. Often, final grades include a mix of academic and nonacademic components (Bowers, 2009, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2016; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Llosa, 2008; Thorsen, 2014) further compounding the inconsistency and creating confusion over what a grade actually means (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). Although several large-scale reforms (Cox, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Huggins, Schurich, & Morgan, 2011; Proulx, 2012) have been implemented to change grading and assessment practices and are well studied in the literature, little attention has been paid in the literature to how these reforms actually get implemented in the classroom by

teachers, and the role school leaders other than the principal play in influencing the implementation. High school department chairs were selected as the population for this study because this position was prevalent in many high schools in the study area, and as the direct supervisor of classroom teachers, the department chair is more likely to influence their teachers' practices on grading and assessment than other leadership positions in the school or district.

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of department chairs at the high school level to determine which leadership attributes and servant leadership behaviors emerged as being most beneficial to implementing grading and assessment reforms. Thirteen department chairs participated in this study and the following major leadership attributes emerged as themes after coding the interviews using a modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994): becoming a leader; having a strong personal philosophy; leading by example and influencing teachers; building trust and fostering relationships; being reflective; coping with difficult emotion; and navigating district context and culture. The following servant leadership behaviors emerged as themes: conceptualizing; emotional healing; helping followers grow and succeed; and empowering followers. The additional themes of revising practices in instruction, assessment, and grading; encountering barriers to change; and building collective efficacy also emerged as additional major themes in this study.

These findings have implications for schools and districts looking to implement grading and assessment reforms. Based on the districts represented in this study that have had success with these reforms, school and district leaders should consider developing a multi-year plan on grading and assessment centered around a clear vision and mission. Teachers should be included in the development of the vision and mission, and professional development should be

implemented to train teachers in best practices on grading and assessment. Teams of teachers should be empowered to make some of the decisions on how to implement grading and assessment reforms in their content areas. The findings in this study contributed to the overall literature on grading and assessment reforms and may provide a road map that school and district leaders can look to for beneficial leadership practices to implement reforms with fidelity.

Summary

The goal of this study was to understand what leadership attributes and what servant leadership behaviors were most beneficial to high school department chairs in leading their teachers through reforms to grading and assessment practices. Transcendental phenomenology was selected as the most appropriate approach because of its ability to understand the lived experience of the participants. After interviewing the thirteen department chairs in this study, several leadership attributes and servant leadership behaviors emerged as being beneficial themes. Additional themes emerged in the areas of revising practices, encountering barriers to change, and building collective efficacy. The themes that emerged as having the most implications for school leaders in developing policies and procedures around grading and assessment were conceptualizing a vision and mission; growing and empowering teachers; and building collective efficacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pre-interview Survey

1. Grade levels at your school: (checkbox)
    a. 5
    b. 6
    c. 8
    d. 9
    e. 10
    f. 11
    g. 12
2. Subject area(s) you supervise as department chair: (checkbox)
    a. Applied Arts / Career Technical Education
    b. English
    c. Fine Arts / Performing Arts
    d. Math
    e. Physical Education
    f. Science
    g. Social Studies
    h. World Languages / Foreign Languages
    i. Other
3. How many years of experience do you have in your current role: (select one)
    a. Less than 2 years
    b. 2-5 years
    c. 6-10 years
    d. More than 10 years
4. How would you describe the amount of influence you have on the grading and assessment practices of the teachers that you supervise? (select one)
    a. None
    b. Low
    c. Medium
    d. High

Appendix B: Leadership Self-Analysis Pre-interview Survey Questions

The following survey is adapted from Northouse (2019) for self-analysis.

Instructions: Using the following 7-point scale, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they pertain to your leadership.

Key: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree somewhat; 4 = Undecided; 5 = Agree somewhat; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly agree

1. Others would seek help from me if they had a personal problem.
2. I emphasize the importance of giving back to the community.
3. I can tell if something work related is going wrong.
4. I give others the responsibility to make important decisions about their own jobs.
5. I make others' career development a priority.
6. I care more about others' success than my own.
7. I hold high ethical standards.
8. I care about others' personal well-being.
9. I am always interested in helping people in the community.
10. I am able to think through complex problems.
11. I encourage others to handle important work decisions on their own.
12. I am interested in making sure others reach their career goals.
13. I put others' best interests above my own.
14. I am always honest.
15. I take time to talk to others on a personal level.
16. I am involved in community activities.
17. I have a thorough understanding of the organization and its goals.
18. I give others the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way they feel is best.
19. I provide others with work experiences that enable them to develop new skills.
20. I sacrifice my own interests to meet others' needs.
21. I would not compromise ethical principles in order to meet success.
22. I can recognize when others are feeling down without asking them.
23. I encourage others to volunteer in the community.
24. I can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.
25. If others need to make important decisions at work, they do not need to consult me.
26. I want to know about others' career goals.
27. I do what I can to make others' jobs easier.
28. I value honesty more than profits.

Scoring: Use the following steps to complete the scoring of the questionnaire:

- Add up the scores for 1, 8, 15, and 22. This is your score for emotional healing.
- Add up the scores for 2, 9, 16, and 23. This is your score for creating value for the community.
- Add up the scores for 3, 10, 17, and 24. This is your score for conceptual skills.
- Add up the scores for 4, 11, 18, and 25. This is your score for empowering.
- Add up the scores for 5, 12, 19, and 26. This is your score for helping followers grow and succeed.
- Add up the scores for 6, 13, 20, and 27. This is your score for putting followers first.
- Add up the scores for 7, 14, 21, and 28. This is your score for behaving ethically.

Scoring Interpretation:

- High range: A score between 23 and 28 means you strongly exhibit this servant leadership behavior.
- Moderate range: A score between 14 and 22 means you tend to exhibit this behavior in an average way.
- Low range: A score between 8 and 13 means you exhibit this leadership behavior below the average or expected degree.
- Extremely low range: A score between 0 and 7 means you are not inclined to exhibit this leadership behavior at all.

Appendix C: In-person Interview Questions

Opening Segment

1. Please tell me about your school and why you chose to become an educational leader.
2. What does it mean to be a leader? What leadership behaviors do you use most often?
3. How do you think your teachers experience your leadership style or behaviors?

Middle Segment

4. What is your philosophy on grading and assessing student achievement?
    a. Potential probing follow-up question: Why do you choose to include/exclude academic/nonacademic behaviors in your grading and assessment practices or philosophy?
    b. Potential probing follow-up question: Why and how do you choose to influence teachers' grading and assessment practices?
5. How do you use your position of leadership when developing, revising, and/or transforming grading and assessment practices?
    a. Potential probing follow-up question: Why do you think you are successful or not successful as a leader in these areas?
6. How do you work with your teachers on a department level to develop, revise, and/or transform department-wide grading and assessment practices?
    a. Potential probing follow-up question: What role do behaviors such as empowering others, putting your teachers first, and/or behaving ethically play in this work?
7. How do you work with individual teachers to develop, revise, and/or transform their grading and assessment practices?
    a. Potential probing follow-up question: What role do behaviors such as empowering others, putting your teachers first, and/or behaving ethically play in this work?

Concluding Segment

8. Research has shown that school leadership might play an important role in student achievement, especially in terms of grading and assessment, and reforms to these areas.
    a. What are your short-term goals for your department leadership in the areas of grading and assessment practices?
    b. What are your long-term goals for your department leadership in the areas of grading and assessment practices?
    c. How might you achieve both your short-term and long-term goals?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share on leadership, grading, or assessment that I didn't ask you about?
10. What questions do you have for me?

Appendix D: Field Notes Template

Date:		**Time**:		**Location**:	
Participant:			**Setting**:		
Descriptive Notes (portraits of the participants, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting, accounts of events, or activities)			**Reflexive Notes** (personal thoughts, such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices)		

Adapted from Bogdan and Biklen (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Appendix E: CITI Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 03-Feb-2022
Expiration Date 02-Feb-2025
Record ID 46806039

This is to certify that:

Daniel Kleinschrodt

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
(Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Concordia University Irvine

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wbf2dc2d3-0f91-4535-858e-9bb9ad71a4ef-46806039

Appendix F: Institutional Review Board Decision

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) DECISION FORM

Review Date July 26, 2022

Reviewer ID# **Reviewer 162506**

Category ☒ Expedited Review 45 CFR 46.110

☐ Full Board Review 45 CFR 46

IRB Application #	**6253**
Title of Project	Transforming secondary grading and assessment Practices: A qualitative Phenomenological Study on Department chairs' Leadership
Principal Investigator Name (PI)	Daniel Kleinschrodt
PI Email (use CUI email, if applicable)	daniel.kleinschrodt@eagles.cui.edu

DECISION

☒ **Approved**

Effective duration of the IRB Approval: _7/26/2022__ to _7/26/2023__

For Expedited and Full Board Approved, Please Note:

a. *The IRB's approval is only for the project protocol named above. Any changes are subject to review and approval by the IRB.*
b. *Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB.*
c. *An annual report or report upon completion is required for each project. If the project is to continue beyond the twelve month period, a request for continuation of approval should be made in writing. Any deviations from the approved protocol should be noted.*

☐ **Needs revision and resubmission**

☐ **Not approved**

COMMENTS

Required Changes:

Suggested Changes:

(*Recommendations stated below are **not** required in order for the application to be approved*)

Appendix G: Informed Consent

TRANSFORMING SECONDARY GRADING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON DEPARTMENT CHAIRS' LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate (place your information in the context of what you are investigating). This study is being conducted by Daniel J. Kleinschrodt under the supervision of Kelly Skon, Ph.D., Concordia University Irvine. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Concordia University Irvine, in Irvine, CA.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of department chairs to understand what leadership practices are most effective in influencing teachers' grading and assessment practices.

DESCRIPTION: The research question proposed in this study will be examined using a transcendental phenomenological approach. The participants in this study will be a sample of secondary department chairs that meet selection criteria and the phenomena under study will be their leadership experiences and with servant leadership behaviors as they seek to influence the assessment and grading practices of the teachers they serve. Transcripts of in-person interviews will be analyzed and coded using descriptive coding techniques. Department chairs that participate in this study have an opportunity to share the phenomena of how they have experienced leadership, and specifically servant leadership behaviors, which has the potential to inform other leaders which behaviors are most successful at influencing teacher practices around assessment and grading.

PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. A participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Participants will be provided confidentiality throughout the pre-interview, in-person/telephone/videoconference interviews, analysis, and reporting phases of the study in several ways. The study setting will be identified as the suburbs of a large Midwestern city; no school or district names will be used; and pseudonyms for the participants will be utilized when necessary. Several steps will be taken to secure the data collected in this study. Data (including pre-interview and in-person interview data) and any contact information (e.g. participant email addresses, phone numbers, and/or addresses) will be stored on a password protected laptop computer. Two-factor authentication is required to gain access to the computer. Recordings of the interviews will be permanently deleted after the transcription and member checking steps have been performed. Any other data will be stored for five years and then discarded as recommended by the American Psychological Association.

DURATION: Participants will engage in a pre-interview survey that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The next phase of the study includes two to three interviews lasting approximately one hour each. The interviews will be scheduled in-person, via videoconference, or via telephone at a place and time convenient to the participant.

RISKS: The risks to participants may include psychological discomfort in disclosing closely held beliefs about their own leadership practices, and their views on grading and assessment practices. There are no other foreseeable risks.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to the participant by taking part in this study. However, the results of this study will contribute to the literature and research on leadership behaviors that are beneficial to enacting grading and assessment reforms.

VIDEO/AUDIO: The interviews in this study will be video recorded if conducted via web videoconferencing (e.g. Zoom or Google Meet); or recorded via audio if the interview is conducted via telephone or in-person.

I understand this research will be video recorded if conducted via web videoconferencing: (Initials ____)

I understand this research will be audio recorded if conducted via telephone or in-person: (Initials ____)

CONTACT: For answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject: Kelly Skon, Ph.D.; Faculty Chair; XXX-XXX-XXXX; kelly.skon@cui.edu.

RESULTS: (Include an explanation as to where the results can be obtained after you have completed your study and disseminate the results for publishing. This should not include your name or phone number, but a place and exact location where the results can be obtained).

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I have read the information above and agree to participate in your study.

SIGNATURE:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix H: Demographic Data of the Schools Represented in the Study

School	Enrollment (number of students)	Racial/ethnic diversity	Low-income students
1	1500-2000	35-40% White 40-45% Hispanic 0-5% Black 10-15% Asian	30-35%
2	1500-2000	55-60% White 25-30% Hispanic 0-5 % Black 0-5% Asian	36-40%
3	2000-2500	80-85% White 10-15% Hispanic 0-5% Black 0-5% Asian	5-10%
4	2500+	75-80% White 5-10% Hispanic 0-5% Black 5-10% Asian	0-5%
5	2000-2500	35-40% White 45-50% Hispanic 0-5% Black 0-5% Asian	20-25%
6	1000-1500	55-60% White 15-20% Hispanic 0-5% Black 20-25% Asian	10-15%
7	2000-2500	80-85% White 10-15% Hispanic 0-5% Black 0-5% Asian	5-10%
8	1500-2000	35-40% White 15-20% Hispanic 5-10% Black 30-35% Asian	30-35%

School	Enrollment (number of students)	Racial/ethnic diversity	Low-income students
9	1000-1500	65-70% White 35-30% Hispanic 0-5% Black 0-5% Asian	20-25%
10	1500-2000	35-40% White 15-20% Hispanic 5-10% Black 30-35% Asian	30-35%
11	2000-2500	40-45% White 10-15% Hispanic 5-10% Black 30-35% Asian	25-30%
12	2500+	45-50% White 5-10% Hispanic 0-5% Black 35-40% Asian	0-5%
13	1500-2000	35-40% White 45-50% Hispanic 0-5% Black 5-10% Asian	40-45%

Note: Data are shown as ranges to provide confidentiality to the participants and are taken from the state report card for the 2021-22 school year.

Appendix I: Composite Textural-structural Descriptions of Themes

Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Becoming a Leader

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	…and then I remember saying we need to get a master's degree in something, start moving forward on the pay scale. [University name redacted] had just gone to the model, and we were the first [University name redacted] Master of Arts [Educational Leadership] cohort. Our ex superintendent had started working with them. And we knew our bosses would retire in a couple years, so a bunch of us in high schools are working with a couple teachers in feeder school districts. Before I knew it, Masters was done and [I] had my type 75 and our supervisor was retiring. And we all said we didn't want an outsider coming in and taking over, someone said put their head in. Alright, I'll go for it and [I had] no idea what I was getting into.
Beth	I knew from when I went into teaching that I wanted to be an administrator. Well, I'm on every committee possible, or discussion of grading, I feel like in our role, we actually can impact more students now by working with teachers who work with students, and so I find that to be rewarding and also really stressful because I am impacting a lot of kids' lives with some of the decisions that I help make as a as a larger district. So I've been at the ground floor, planning, writing, assessment, writing curriculum, doing the grading, working with the kids through this whole thing, I think.
Carl	And so and I like to work with people with their ideas, and soundboard it and talk them through and give ideas and like some of the changes, you know, when we first had phenomenon based, you know, that people didn't know what that meant.
Daryl	I think I was exposed to some leadership roles really early on in my career and I'd never anticipated really anything. Perhaps like many new teachers, you know, I never anticipated any kind of role or interest in anything administratively or leadership role, but then about my third year teaching. I was a team leader at the middle school where I first started working at and then I was like a close right hand aide to that middle school version of a department chair, kind of more of a curriculum coordinator. And I like kind of, you know, being the one to adjust meetings when we didn't need to have them and kind of make some decisions and make things more efficient for people. And so I kind of liked having that ability to have input. So

Participant	Participant Quotes
	this role, I think, is the perfect blend, because it's that first still connection to the to the classroom where I still have to walk my talk, so to speak, but then at the same time, I do have at least some level of say, to the, to certain degree, with leadership and with it with adults in the building. And I think that my day is not consumed with all adults, like upper levels of management would be, you know, like leading [inaudible.] I think that balance is what I enjoy the most.
Eugene	And so we do have our feet on the ground at the department level. It's gonna lean on my instructional coach background more than my formal evaluator background. And I was, I love the classroom first and foremost, but I was never really fully satisfied with just not being in leadership. So I'm not the most enormous personality in this role.
Finn	I'm trying to make things better.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	And then I moved to Illinois, in [the] Chicago area, and really saw what leadership potential there was, and decided that I wanted to be able to have greater influence on the classroom teacher and help to move conversations about curriculum and teaching and learning to a different level, particularly moving them forward in a more progressive way.
Isabelle	And I think I was just ready for the next challenge. And I try to model as much as I can, which I think is something I learned from being a classroom teacher for so long, that kids need that and adults need that. But yeah, I felt as if I could have a lot of impact on students, supporting the teachers and looking at more overall practices within the classroom, and less, you know, my individual impact on my students.
Jerry	I'm looking at like, I want to get a broader impact. More students. And I just kind of realized, I think I can make a bigger impact. And I was loving mentoring young teachers.
Kent	I'm not sure if I want to be an administrator, but like, okay, let's talk," and then I kind of was a reluctant administrator.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	He said, Well, what if we do this because right at that point, I was a teacher leader and teaching four classes. He said, What if we make you're not a core leader, but a super core leader? You teach three classes and take a little more time and you joined some of the administrative conversations. So I went from four classes to three, to then two, to one, to zero over the course of years. Metaphor, you know, almost like a frog in boiling water or whatever. I thought it'd be a challenge and I'm going to tackle that.
Lori	I realized that I really enjoyed working on instructional design. I was like, oh, like, I love having conversations about how to support student learning and teaching like this. And it just brought me a lot of joy to have conversations about teaching and learning and assessment. I was like, this is more of the direction I'd like to go, I love working with students in the classroom, but I really enjoy working with adults and I just liked having conversation about practice. I loved designing new learning activities and sharing them with other teachers in our department or other teachers that I worked with. And then as time went on, I got more opportunities to learn and present about what I learned and participate in like [name redacted] collaboration and those things and just work with teachers. So when it when it came, when I got the opportunity to become an instructional coach.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Morgan	And so that was kind of a direction that I kind of got pulled in to some extent like I always got really excited about the technology, always got excited about the way to do things better and started looking at things. And then before I became department chair, I was an instructional technology leader for two or three years trying to manage some of the up and coming things including the the online gradebook and how that was going to work. There was everybody, so the teachers in [content area], I mean, I'd been helping them figure stuff out for years largely. And so I've always connected really well with kids, in my opinion. I've always loved it. It's always been what I've been most passionate about, and I think I've been [at] least somewhat effective at…and my belief going into this position was that it was an opportunity to have more effect on more kids because you were having an effect on the adults. And the people who can teach others, people who can teach adults, can do just about anything.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Having a Strong Personal Philosophy

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	I have a fundamental belief that public education is the avenue for self development, and the avenue out of poverty. I politically lean probably more to the left, it's more of the left, and know that the only way you can stop the tree of trauma or all the tree of difficulties that families sustained from the parents and damage that they do to the children, that public education is the option for people to better their future. With that, as a fundamental goal, we have to provide opportunities for students, we have to give them the best that we can provide here. And it's not a content based instruction. I think that the comprehensive opportunities for all students to be able to be successful, and achieve, maximize that they can and want to, at this level with a non fully developed brain. And more males and females at the time they got high school, we have to provide every opportunity we can.
Beth	So giving them enough time to talk but then when it came to grading and assessment, trying to just always be the person that would hold up the philosophy behind the changes that we were making and really just listening. Them bringing examples like what would you do here and this grading situation? And I mean, it's really that's all I could do was teaching on the fly. Things I learned in year one. We tried so hard to make it a district effort. And what that did for us was bad. Changes couldn't be made in the moment to adapt to the needs of the building. So like if a teacher would come to me and they would have a concern. I'd be like, Okay, well, we gotta go bring it back to the team. And what ended up happening is, you know, there was a lot of anger, resentment, there was a lot of not all of it teacher, because they couldn't adjust, which I mean, if you think about teaching, I mean, I don't know, I went into teaching because my room is I'm in control, you know, give me some guidelines and then I'm gonna teach the kid. And many teachers, they were used to that and then here we like pull the rug underneath them and be like, No, you're gonna do this, this this, this thing exactly like this. And you have very little time to plan plus you have to create. So I think that was a so I think what I did from a leadership perspective is I really went back to the greater team and then tried to push for a little bit more. I can't think of the word flexibility is what I'm saying right now. Autonomy that's within the district to be able to make some decisions that I feel my department needs. And my counterpart at [school name redacted], we kind of felt the same way. And I think we have slowly gotten there now where we don't have to bring everything back to the team and then we just reevaluate at the end of the year. So I mean, I really just think being a part of the team was the best leadership move that I could make. Fast forward to now, I'm in year five. I've learned a lot so I started this school year out on like the back to school days, you know, before the kids come with, like our department meeting was all about like resetting the purpose of what our competencies are and how we grade and making sure that everybody understands the philosophy behind it. And offering some examples, giving them a little bit

Participant	Participant Quotes
	more freedom. Does that make sense? So I've really shifted from being like really hands on to starting to try to pull away a little bit and trust that they can take the guiding principles and do what they feel is best.
Carl	I think one of the things that I was looking forward to when I was starting out was being able to direct a vision and help the department head in a certain way and, and also help teachers reach their goals because a lot of teachers have some great ideas, but, you know, they felt like there were some roadblocks in the way and I felt like maybe I'd be able to help them overcome some of those roadblocks. Whether it be administrative or logistical things like that to help them and, or just feedback along the way saying, hey, come [inaudible] instructional style. So that was kind of where I was going. And so and I like to work with people with their ideas, and soundboard it and talk them through and give ideas and like some of the changes, you know, when we first had phenomenon based, you know, that people didn't know what that meant. I would give them examples. So you know, and they'd be like, Oh, that's really cool. I understand it now. So, I guess you'd say some opportunities to do some professional development. But then with time, I became more of the middle management type of person who had to link between the building and district administration with the faculty. And it became less of my vision and more of leaning towards the building's direction. So, which is rewarding, but not as rewarding.
Daryl	I mean, I think that there are, there should be not necessarily a point when a semester, I think it started with numbers that were there's not a point during a semester when a kid is mathematically doomed to failure. And so I will just kind of leave that as an umbrella term, because what does, it falls under that is are things like, you know, policies where it's one day late half credit, or, you know, so then therefore, very quickly, things are 50%. I think also things that go into that are giving the super F. How there's basically one way to get four other grades, but then there's five ways to have an F when you when you go from zero to that when you go from a zero to 100 scale. So when you have a combination of of like massive late deduction penalties, and also the super F's and 10 percents and 20 percents, the numbers just simply get to a point where a kid could mathematically be failing by midterm, and we, if they straight A'd from there on out, they still would not pass the course simply because of the numbers. So it just seems broken. And that's the side of the standards based grading philosophy that I think I lean towards where, you know, a kid could demonstrate mastery of a standard, but then there's some hang ups I have kind of with just how the system get converted, and what happens, stuff around it for college applications and things like that. So some of that gets a little nitpicky, if and then for logistics, it's a little bit subjective, perhaps for me. So I think it starts there with you know, having policies where kids are not, you know, doomed to failure really early on or, or unnecessarily at any point in the semester. So, I don't score below 50. That's the lowest I'll give even if the kid doesn't turn something in. Which, instead of putting

Participant	Participant Quotes
	a zero in the gradebook; you know, late deductions are minor, if they are at all it depends on kind of what's going on with the kid's life or how late how late it really is. And also means that to be cognizant about, you know, homework, and what are some things that kids would be up late turning in, and if it's in class stuff, that's different, because maybe they're not able to finish in time. But if it's homework, then I also, I also really reduce how much homework I give. I am not a big homework teacher, I haven't been a big homework teacher in probably a decade. So just eliminating one more thing that a kid would be late on or that would pile up that would become an academic hurdle for the kiddo.
Eugene	Right, so the short short term goal is to hand the baton back to the kids in discussion and try to get them to emerge back and take the lead in discussion and to cultivate cultures of, of intellectual risk in speaking across differences politically, racially, culturally. That's a core value of our new CBE [competency-based education]. Because now we're assessing speaking and listening which we hadn't assessed before. Even though it's part of the Common Core, it wasn't part of the Common Core at our school. So that's really important to me. Developing a strong, heterogeneous grade 9 and 10 experience that uses let's call it progressive assessment, with such practices as portfolios, micro-summatives, gives more authentic assessment. Those are all things that are pretty close. A reach would be giving them a menu of assessment choices, à la UDL [universal design for learning], and I'd love to get to that spot, too. So that's a little bit of a longer term goal, but crafting an experience 9-10 that enables every student to have access to the most rigorous curriculum, but a common one at that that's differentiated that allows any of them to take AP in the future or be successful longer term and to know that that thing that we created, isn't what people what some people were afraid of as a lowering of standards, but it was more of a raising of of standards for all the kids and doing that through differentiation. So the biggest hurdle is short term and long. So I'd say November 1 and onward of this year, all the way through till the next few years is to really get comfortable with differentiation
Finn	Anything you'd want to talk about, constantly frame it in terms of students. Because that is what the whole thing, like that's the one benefit, I think of education is that like, ultimately 98% of people are here to help kids. And if we're having the conversations from the framework of like, this, we I think this is going to help children I think this is gonna help students. And then you have the conversation, then it's at least like clear what we're trying to do as opposed to like, let's talk about this clause in the contract because I think it's ridiculous and I think that you're a bunch of entitled adults like yeah, then we're fighting but if we're trying to make things better. I'm trying to make things better. You're trying to make things better for kids, for students, for learning. I'm concerned that if we, you know, interpret this a certain way, it's actually going to not help kids. Can we talk about that? You know, you can get a little bit further and maybe the conversation gets shut down anyway, and then just to not take that personally. Be

Participant	Participant Quotes
	like, okay, like, I think this is not helpful. You think it is helpful. It's the contract. I'm not going to win this argument. I'm just telling you, I don't think it's helpful. And just kind of leave it at that and like, but keeps keep re-centering it on kids. What's best for students? What are we trying to teach? How are we trying to teach it? What's happening with our students? And I think, I think this about every, you know. The racism conversation, right? Like that's a tough conversation for people to have right now. Like, how does that not become political? Well it becomes political when you talk about it as our kids. Like, our students are growing up in the United States. The United States has a history of racism. Those are not controversial statements. The history of racism in the United States impacts our students. So, because they live in our society, so we need to be aware of it and be thinking about it because that's going to help us teach our students better. Not because of a political agenda, but because we're in a school, we're trying to help kids and this is the reality that they live in. So, you know, we're trying to be aware of that. And I think that again, just like we'll bring out you know, that's like the angle that I constantly try to recenter everybody on is like this is about kids.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	So I'm an extraordinary huge believer in standards-based grading and a standards-based curriculum that focuses on student success. I'm not going to get the department to standards based grading. I'm not going to get the department or even the district to that point, even though in my opinion, progressive schools moved there 10, 15, 20 years ago. What I am going to be able to do, and what we have is an explicit goal, is that we will do it within the next three years. So even though I'm going to retire, I'm going to have conditions set up that a predecessor or pardon me, a successor can step in and begin to continue to push that towards standards based grading.
Isabelle	I think that the grade the kid gets should be based on what this kid knows. And I think that that is a little different, [in one content area versus another]. I think as a department, there should be consistency among grading. I always call it like the luck of the teacher, I always hope to avoid, you know, as a parent that has high school kids, I often look at teachers and I think, “I would prefer my son have you than you.” And I know why, you know, and so, but that shouldn't really exist. If there's two teachers on the same team, I feel like a kid should be able to move from one teacher to another without a drastic change occurring to their grade because they're grading differently. I have definitely moved away from more points is better. And I have way fewer graded things in my recorded Gradebook, but I have, but I still provide feedback all the time. I still theoretically, they grade and return things. It just doesn't get recorded. Because my goal is like learning, learning, learning, learning. I'm teaching you this so that at the end, you know how. I think that works really well. I think kids buy into it and feel less threatened than worrying if it's going to count for points and I have not seen a decline in their

Participant	Participant Quotes
	willingness to do work. If it's not graded, if they see a correlation at the end between like, "Oh, I've done this and I did well." So I mean, I have the benefit of having a single class, I realize that, but I also, I don't necessarily believe that there should be a firm deadline for learning. I think that standard based models can be very good and allow kids to continually grow and then their final grade as a result of what they know, at the end or overall or have demonstrated most often, instead of well, a few months ago you were here and that still counts in your grade because we had to report it. So I've really tried to move away from that in my own grading practices and model that with my colleagues here. I am still of course, slightly, a slave to the SAT. So we do have math. And that is a barrier for college and dual credit classes that have SAT requirements. So I hope that our courses in general align to what the state and national standards are so that kids that do well in our classes also do well in those other areas. Instead of like an either or.
Jerry	How can we move some teachers from doing some of the things that they're doing and they don't even realize that it's hurting kids or it's... It's impacting, maybe that's what it is. It's impacting kids and they don't realize that. How can I help them see that and then move them to a different spot? So last year, we so I've done different things over the years, but last year, we really embarked on, what are best practices, and grading practices, and then kind of went from there. So I'm tackling more this year actually.
Kent	Yes, yes, I think I think a lot of it [transitioning the district to standards-based grading] was finding a balance between leading them to learning and discovery and things like readings and site visits. So we visited lots of schools. We went to Iowa, we went to Maine, we went to Vermont, we visited schools, anybody who was doing something that was sort of in line with where we were going. We tried to get our thought leaders, the people who are kind of on the bleeding edge of innovation. We took them out to find people just to start the conversation. Think about the pros and cons, and upside and downside. Then we had a small group of teachers, there were two courses that went the first year and they caught a vision for how it worked. So I guess my job was working with them as they were developing that to determine what we were going to be loose and tight on. So some of the tights that we defined and we knew, we're going to, it's going to be a four point scale. You know, exceeds, meets, approaching, developing. The three is the proficient level, right? These are some school wide tights. Another tight that we defined was that it was going to be around the [department] practices. We said like we're going to, everybody's going to drive their grading through the [department] practices. I think another tight was that the scale, the language in the four point scale, we said we're going to define that and we're just going to use the same thing. But teams will then determine the success criteria, what goes into [course] analyzing and interpreting data, what are the success criteria in [course]? … So my role, I think, was to shape some of the learning and to provide some boundaries of where you could go, you know, where you could play in the

Participant	Participant Quotes
	sandbox, and then just to provide them the resources and the time and the ability to do that together.
Lori	In CTE classes, I think I feel like the only in the vast majority of cases students are in our classes because they want to be there. They're really interested in the topic and they want those authentic learning experiences. I think any kind of assessment and especially the summative assessments that we give students and the learning activities that are structured around those summative should be as authentic and as experiential as possible. So like if there's an opportunity for a student to do independent research on, let's take a class like financial literacy. Like we're trying to invent this in this class, if they could basically create like, a whole personal profile of like, where they're personally at financially, what their goals are, what they want to do, look at their return on investment and what that means for their college decisions, their student loans and like what that payout is going to be in the future. Like that's all directly applicable to them and super useful information in a way that's a little bit more meaningful than like, here's a worksheet on like, comparing college tuitions. I want students to solve like big juicy real world problems. And I want our students, I want teachers to get the practice of actually posing those questions and putting more of the thinking back on the students. So when it comes to actual assessment I think we have to be really... I would love for grades to just go away and really focus on like, how can we create classroom environments that just like ignite students' thinking of like, having them to like get super curious and do these projects that are allowing them to explore and that would be like my ideal situation. Our teachers are phenomenal question askers rather than like phenomenal worksheet creators, if that makes sense. I feel like I have a lot of conversations with teachers about grading and what students can or can't do, or what students should be expected to do at a high school level in their class versus what they shouldn't and I feel like it just gets into like this really these like sticky conversations about filled with like a lot of othering language, if you will. That I don't think really set students up for success. So, you know, in my ideal world, you know, I'd say the vast majority, if not every student in class, would be working on something different that relates to an overall like learning goal, and they basically choose your own adventure to learn it. And teachers provide the scaffolds and support and the structure if needed to help them get there. I feel like I kind of strayed away from the question, but I did I eventually get back around to it.
Morgan	I would start by deciding what is most important to you. What is it that you think? Because when you can get that defined for yourself, and I'm not saying you need to trumpet it to the to the mountaintop for everybody else to hear. That doesn't need to happen. But when you can define it for yourself, so that when they come and they ask you questions like well, what's what do you think you can answer with your opinion. And you can try to ask questions of them to help them understand why that makes sense. Now, the reason I asked you what there are, if

Participant	Participant Quotes
	they're frustrated, what they're most frustrated with is because when you look at things like that, I totally feel your pain. I completely understand where you are in and it's a lonely place to be right and because you can't please anybody you got the people above you that you're supposed to do this shit for and you're not sure what its gonna be tomorrow. And then you got the people that you're supposed to be serving in your division. And they don't know what you're supposed to, what they're being held to do, right. That's really difficult. So what I would advise you to do is figure out what's most important to you figure out what you believe. So that once that's set, no matter what comes down from the district, no matter what comes up from the teachers, that's your barometer of everything that you're doing. And that's the thing that you can then say to your teachers, "Guys, this is what I believe. And I'm not necessarily asking you to completely agree, nor to laugh, but this is what I believe and this is what I'm going to make decisions around because this is fundamentally what I think is most important in education." And now okay, the district says we got to do this. Okay, well, that gives you you know, what's most important to you. Now what comes downhill... And you got to look at and interpret and figure out. There aren't too many things in this education that are going to be new, it's all come around and around and around, right. But every one of them so can be massaged into whatever you need it to be. And so that's why I said you figure out what your stuff is. And then you can kind of start using that to help provide some consistency to your people who are clamoring for it. Because this is everything. We're always going to do this. "Guys, I'm willing to err on the side of believing that the kids are the ones that have to do the learning, that have to do it right. This is all about the kids. This is all about the kids. This is all about the kids. What would I want if it were my kids? What would I want if it were me? What would I want if it were you learning?"

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Leading By Example and Influencing Teachers

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	[A former curriculum director] then he ran a sort of like an assessment club, select people he really liked to work with. We never got feedback, or heard anything from him. So he had them doing these pilots. So he had five teachers doing five pilots, five different ways, what it was going to look like, and then he retires. We had this rogue operation going on. Other teachers, myself, with the book, was talking about it. I think we went to one or two, the first institutes/conference, they had up in West Aurora conversations and presenters, and that, we need to start looking at this start moving this way. So that was basically [inaudible]. This is district, let's do it on our our PLCs, we'll do it on the side, we can run like one teachers running a parallel Gradebook, just to see how they're scored out, versus our standard bad practice of points and totals and about weighted grades and such. So let's start aligning. A lot of it is going to come down to the relationship I have with people and people's perspective, me having the ability to influence or not influence. Some people think I have a greater influence than I do. And others have a solid understanding, say, of where I fall within middle management and the top principals superintendent has to be the teacher.
Beth	On the other thing that I've done is I've, I'm in it with them. And then being vulnerable, I would say because I'm teaching it with them. I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs [professional learning teams] at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them. I think it gives me [inaudible] my teachers because they know that I'm in the trenches with them struggling because [curriculum development] has been, it's been a lot of work and a lot of struggle. I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them. I think that for me, I will always go back to what's our why. And the hardest part of me being an administrator for the last four years is I feel like that's often missing. I truly believe that in order for there to be success, that hard work, as much of it, as you can, needs to be established in the beginning and everybody needs to understand it. So where I went wrong, and where our district went wrong

Participant	Participant Quotes
	is we didn't spend enough time with our teachers really making sure that they understood the why and giving them a voice in the why and then letting them go.
Carl	So many, many, many, many years ago, when we were introducing their assessment system, you know, they go, here's a level three, DOK [depth of knowledge], 1-2-1-2-1-2. Then I'd say, “Well, what'll make it a three?” And then they say, "Oh, this is how we would do it." And then they go, "Ah, that's so much better." Then, they realize the value of a higher level question. So you know, giving them some examples to help them see what we're talking about. Really helpful.
Daryl	I definitely think if you were talking to my group, they know that, like, I'm in it with them, you know. I mean, I think that it's, you know, like servant leadership, maybe might be one that I would I would gravitate towards, you know. I definitely think if you were talking to my group, they know that I'm in it with them, you know…You know, so I think that I try to be as like, put myself in their shoes as much as possible to just really, you know, you know, and seek them out in terms of like, "What would make your job easier? You know, what are some things I can do to either order for you set up for you or arrange for you that would be that just literally makes your ability to concentrate on the classroom easier, stronger or clearer?"
Eugene	I'll be sitting with them and working with them on [curriculum]. So, but on a day to day, day to day, I belong to several a third, a quarter, maybe like 40, let's say a third of people's Google Classroom, so I see what goes out. So in those cases, it's through dialogue that I can talk to the teachers, but a lot of times assessment is, so that's [how I] can influence their kind of their practices along the way. And so operationalizing it and just making sure it really happens is what we what we've got to do. We are on year three of four of a pre-competency based education pilot, which we're going to detrack and unweight English credit for grade nine and then the following year will be grade 10. So we've been at it for a while. One of the things that you and I might want to talk about is we have a matrix of different beliefs about assessment. And I just recently did a kind of an analysis of which of these beliefs are we have locked in which ones are we'll have to work on a little and which ones are going to take significant work.
Finn	During I'm trying to figure you know, you got to, you really got to figure out ways, from my perspective, I really have to figure out ways to get myself into the course, you get yourself into a course team on a functional level, right?

Participant	Participant Quotes
	And all the admin here do a ninth grade study hall.
	'm teaching the extension course. So we have like a support class. That goes along with algebra one, there's an algebra one extension, a geometry, extension and Algebra Two extension. So I taught regular, I taught the actual class like, three years ago. And then the last the last year, and this year, I've been teaching the extension class, it's just easier for my job to, like, you know, we get called into meetings and stuff like that, like, there's certain parts of our schedule that we don't control. So teaching extension is actually really nice, because when I need to be gone, it's not as big of a deal, I have a para in that class with me as well. So it's, you know, it's just an easier class to miss. And it also is helpful in terms of like, what are the real on the ground problems that students have with the [content area], like what, you know, as extension, theoretically is populated by students who we're worried are going to fail the course. So, you know, I'm getting the kids who, you know, in theory, are going to struggle to be successful are going to struggle to complete homework and those types of things. So it helps me kind of get a feel for what the course you know, what, what some of the issues of the course might be.
	But anytime there's an opening, anytime anybody suggests anything, the answer, like, especially about assessment, it's, you have to give an automatic "Yes." Even if it's not, what I would do, even if it's not something that I think is the best, non traditional way to assess a student, I'm gonna say yes, immediately to every idea. Because you're trying to open up that space, you're trying to open up that thought process for people. And so, as an as an administrator, as a leader, like whatever spin you want to put on it, the answer is yes.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	I worked in both buildings and had to teach a course.
	But [the teachers] really shaped the beginning of conversations and I began to codify that so that when we returned back to school in the fall of 21, we began to put things together and in writing and surveying, I gave lots and lots of freedom that year for people to experiment. They actually put some formal pilots together and kind of played some of the traditional structure to their traditional ways. But a lot of the progressives continued to shape things. And so that's how we ended up with discussions all last second semester. And then over the summer, I created this document that I thought everybody could buy into and that there was still freedom for people to exercise their own beliefs within, pardon me their own practices within a belief structure. And that's what that's what we came up and that's what we have as a document.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	I think the probably the most influential piece that I have is in helping people see outside of their current situations as teachers and try to help them grasp a wider amount of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. And for many people, unless they're out there and they're involved and they're reading, they don't necessarily have those same ideas. And so they need to figure out where they're going. And if somebody doesn't show them that, you know, Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem on the hill, they're gonna think that they live in the New Jerusalem. So much of what I would say, you know, kind of looking back over my time here is and even in other districts where I you know, I was, and have left, it's been planting the seeds, it's been having the conversations, it's having them think towards the future. Instead you have to figure out how they're going to, you know, be pulled in and accept something. So for example, there was a big discussions about zeros and what does zero mean and all those different sorts of things. And rather than saying to people, no, you can't give a zero, we took a more positive approach and the statement in our practices, the belief is that we put, students must have the opportunity to continuously improve their skills as they move through language acquisition steps, okay? And then the actual practice is: retakes must be available for summatives for students to demonstrate, demonstrate growth. And late work should be accepted, but only until the end of the unit. So that allows somebody who really wants to still give that zero and feels like that's the only way kids will do their work. But it forces them to have a longer period of time for the kid to demonstrate. And I think that that's, that was something they all agreed that they could live with that. But I think a lot of that has been based on selecting some individuals who are going to keep doing that. My French team for example, I had someone who hired in the same year that I hired in and you know, she answered questions interview wise, that I in a way that let me know she was very much a progressive, progressive person. The long term teacher who had been here forever and ever and ever was one of the movers and shakers that began to move towards proficiency, particularly with the influence of the new teacher. And then as we've hired part time people coming in, we've made sure that they have that same philosophy. And so then the French team has become this model for everybody else about how to transform curriculum, how to transform practices, how to transform grading. And I have given them whatever they want, or they need in order to make them successful.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Isabelle	I do think I tailor it differently. I lead from experience much more with the [department name redacted], and I share my own teaching experiences with them more frequently, I would say, than I do with the [department name redacted]. And I try to model as much as I can, which I think is something I learned from being a classroom teacher for so long, that kids need that and adults need that. So I've taught, the teaching here is the first time I didn't teach [course name]. So I actually taught an [content area] class, which is not in my wheelhouse, until last year and the year before. And I do think there is something to teaching especially in the pandemic, to kind of being right there with the teaching staff and talking through the challenges that I also had with kids on Zoom and all of the challenges that went with that. I do think I tried to give the opportunity of leading or co-leading to a teacher. I think I get some buy in sometimes. So I've really tried to move away from that [traditional grading practices] in my own grading practices and model that with my colleagues here. Right now, I'm trying to, with my [course] team, kind of demonstrate a willingness to try something new without knowing how it will work. My team is a little traditional in their practices. And so some of the things I've brought up, they've not really even understood sometimes so I've had to, which is good, so they've asked questions. “Why would you ever do a 50% minimum because isn't that unfair to the kids who got a 50 versus the kids that got a 10?” So like, even having like the conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are that are unique, so I have been willing to allow some PLCs to go have some people go a little rogue on their PLC like to try something new with the intention of like action research, like they want to try it, they have a good reason why, they want to share out, which is good. But I've started to lean into the like, "Hey, I'm having an optional meeting to discuss the "what the zero does, if versus what the 50 does," and I'm gonna do it this Wednesday and next Wednesday. Come if you're interested. I'm a little disappointed when I'm like oh, only six people came out of 36. But then I'm like, but who cares? Six, that's six. That's great. You know, and hopefully they'll go back and it'll spread or they're thinking about it enough. I do think I tried to give the opportunity of leading or co-leading to a teacher I think I get some buy in sometimes. And I have a few teachers that like are very

Participant	Participant Quotes
	aware of like my limitations as a department head. So they'll be like, do you want me to send the email? And I'm like, "Yeah, that would be great." And so they're like, I'll send it and say you and I are hosting but it's coming in. So like, I do think that that helps. It does not sound like [name redacted]'s asking you to do this. And hey, "I believe it too." And so she and I together. So that's like that like team building side.
Jerry	So I have the opportunity to teach in the summer, and it's not the same, but there's enough there that it can keep me grounded. I'm going to try as much as possible to figure out every angle I can to understand that piece as opposed to “Hey, guys, I read this, I have a brainstorm.” Let's figure it out together. I'm not married to an idea, but I want to go in sort of having done my homework, I guess. So last year, I challenged them before the school year started, “I want you to do one significant change for the second quarter or maybe it's all of the first semester.” And then at the end of the year, I challenged the whole department. Again, because of the autonomy piece, they're not gonna listen or hear well, like you must do this, but a challenge, and that's optional, and we're good with that. And so that really led to a lot of great changes. I was really surprised in the spring how many teachers said, "I will accept that challenge. I can try something new," and they tried different things. So now this year with course teams, getting into each team and we are for the first time going to have some common assessment questions in the hopes that they can start to see, first of all that they're really similar for the most part, and secondly, to learn from one another. And I think as part of that it's going to come out like well, how do you, what is a good question, or how do you, how do you grade this to get to really assess student learning well? And then how do you assign a grade to that? So I'm hoping that those conversations come out almost through the task that I'm having them do, like, almost subversive but like the hidden curriculum is hoping they bring through the grading practices and discussion. I told you a little bit advocate up, advocate down, so I'm going to... whatever admin is saying I'm going to try to advocate for them with my teachers and whatever teachers are saying I'm trying to advocate upward to admin. I'd like to get my hands dirty in the thing, whatever it is.
Kent	Yeah, so like when we have staff development, certainly I'm, I'm leading that staff development, but that planning, the planning and leadership is done with that core leadership team. So it's myself and I, and then our four core leaders. So there's six of us, we meet twice a week typically. So we're moving them around a whole host of things and we structure in all the same things that we would ask for a team

Participant	Participant Quotes
	within the PLC model to do, we do, other than building curriculum, I guess, although the staff development is our curriculum, but we look at data. And then we had a couple of, that we have to [inaudible] out of that that tried to pilot some flavor of standards based grading. And that, I would say they had mixed results, and then they kind of abandoned that. And then there were some people that started getting a vision for standards based grading that was focused on skills. And that was probably like 2011, 2012 and like Driver's Ed was one of the classes that piloted it. And so they started getting a sense, then they just started inviting some early adopters to come in to that process. And then if you remember that whole window that was then from like, 2011 to 2015 was the window of Common Core, Common Core, NGSS and then the, the social studies framework. So we used that time to really take a deep look at our curriculum. SLOs were also going on at that time. So we tried to roll all those things together, where SLOs were skills based. Just like we wanted our grading system to be based. So we wanted the SLO to be focused on a skill to monitor growth. Then that naturally progressed into let's just do our whole course that way. So that was that and I think probably by 2020... 2020 was probably the year I'm guessing 2019... Probably 2020, Fall of 2020, because I think it was COVID year like of all years. That was the last year, so those who were the resistors the last adopters, like all teams must be standards based grading by 2020. It's called "in praise of top down leadership" and DuFour wrote in 2007. And specifically, he was talking around leadership around professional learning community adoption, but I think it also speaks to when you caught a vision for a way to do things better. Like I now know better. And I'm going to work to build consensus. I'm going to work to bring you alongside I'm going to work to include you in that like the servant leadership kinds of things. But at some point, we're like we're doing this, we're doing this and I'm gonna ask you questions like, you know, where, where have you found support for what you're proposing? Because it's not okay to stick with practices that we know are no longer as effective. We found better ways to do it. Or rather, we started letting teams innovate and try it and they started going and then you start realizing like, oh, that's better, that's better. And then it's almost like one of those things that once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. And there's no way you could go back.
Lori	I also share things with teachers I'm working on, like a lot of stuff with [standards-based grading.] I make sure to ask teachers a lot of questions about their experience, opinions, and what they would like to see happen in the school or department. When I first started the job I was surprised to learn that many teachers had not be given an

Participant	Participant Quotes
	opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions or ideas. This was a great trust builder, especially when I was able to act on a recommendation they made or follow up about a topic that gave them closure. As teachers talked with one another about their experiences, I noticed more teachers being vulnerable and sharing what was on their mind. I often reiterate to teachers that I have their best interest in mind and that I'm on their team. I am transparent about my decision making and always give the "why" (when I can) behind decisions that they are impacted by. You know, both during evaluation like post-observation conversations and like chats in the hallway, and ask them to work back backwards from there. I feel like that is one of the few opportunities that I get to have more of those like big picture, dreamy conversations. Some teachers who are like “Oh, yeah,” like, "Yes, and…" people, like “Let me give that a shot.” Or like, “That's really interesting. I haven't thought about that. Let me do some digging.” They're the ones who are already starting to try some pieces of it. Teachers. I've also found that there are teachers who are just really comfortable doing things the way that they've been doing it for years. But they're also the same people who are saying like oh, yeah, like I know, things are changing. And I know you want us to go in this this particular direction. I just haven't convinced myself to do it yet. So you know, that eventually goes back to like, the support site in place to help them embrace the change. But I think it's like a fear of the unknown right now. I use my favorite strategy ever. Of like the five why's or the nine why's to like get them get back to like what is the core reason for why you feel like you're not ready or you don't want to do it. And that's different for different teachers that I work with. But I feel like once I understand what the what the what the barrier is. That's where I can provide the provide the support, and I would say a lot of the support comes through just continued conversations, or me giving examples or us like co-creating things together to help them like take that next step. I guess it's not as much of like vulnerability as it is like, I just am willing to open I want to give you examples, but I tried to show as much of like my human side as I possibly can.
Morgan	I believe that you build trust with people who you're evaluating by making sure that you know what it feels like when they're doing their job. But I think you have to work really hard to make sure that they understand that you're willing to be where they are. Well, I think if you can, if your teachers will see that you're willing to "Hey, I'm gonna give you some tools to be able to work the gray area, to figure out how to make this work. So that nobody's crawling up your tail about grades. But if a kid

Participant	Participant Quotes
	ain't doing it, I'm also going to support you there, too. And I'm fully aware of that and fully willing to fail that kid and live with the consequences that go along with that." But I think any tool can be useful to move teachers' practices forward if the evaluatee and the evaluator are setting that as a goal.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Building Trust and Fostering Relationships

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	And you also I think you have to know what you're gonna fall for. And the people around you have to know too. That they're not willing to go the extra yard unless they know you're either in front of them, or you're going to be behind them. But if we go, if we're honest with people, and we share the facts, most of the things we do should be very easy. And we have to get people to play nice. So do I put time energy into people I know I could move and get other or use other people to help move other people? That's usually, I wouldn't say say it's a manipulation, but it's a getting together like minds to help? Hey, we're all doing it, you should do it too. Or have you looked at this way and get a couple different approaches versus my boss telling me, is other ways I've worked. Have I turned a couple over teachers over time we get to the set to relationship and say, “Well, here's the best practice. If you, have you ever given a retake?” Well, if they can put things in a retake. Some have taken it, some have not. And some like, well, it's just more work for me, and not knowing.
Beth	But I think they see that I'm pretty transparent. Yeah, a lot of talking. A lot of listening. Some of that definitely happens after 3:30, it’s sometimes when you have your best conversations. So making sure that I'm around when [teachers] are finally ready to talk because they're not always ready to talk during the day because they're just doing their job. You know, asking questions and listening. And that's so important. And I know that sounds super obvious, but really listening and then trying to follow up. What I'm bad at is I often try to solve the problem right away. And that isn't always what they need. They just need this. So there's that. Grading I mean, they know that I have an open door and my new teachers are better at this than others. So I've really shifted from being like really hands on to starting to try to pull away a little bit and trust that they can take the guiding principles and do what they feel is best. I have made building relationships with my team my top priority. I make sure to be available to them to listen, but to also follow up. My department has a workroom where all of their desks are together. They no longer have their “own” classroom so they have to come to the workroom during their off periods. We also have a lunch area in our work room. Both of these things have led to some

Participant	Participant Quotes
	great collegial relationships. We are the department that has the most people eating lunch together. We have a shared responsibility in our PLTs so that time is used very effectively. Course teams are required to use common assessments and with the new curriculum, they have learned that it is much more effective to work together to create all of the content. We have a really great team of teachers. I would love to take credit for this, but I think they naturally reach out to each other and make all members feel like they belong. I feel very lucky and proud to work with this team.
Carl	I try very hard not to show my frustrations along the way. But there are times when they ask a question and you know, you have to sit there and put on a poker face. And so they realize, I work very hard to represent them at the building level. And then try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf. But they also know that there's some times when I just have to come in and say, this is the way it's going to be. And there are times though, when, if there's a debate going on, in let's say the [course team] group, and that a decision just has to be made. And I say, "Look, guys, we've got to move forward, if you don't make a decision, I'm going to make a decision for you from the options and let's just move forward. We've gotta move forward and get going." And they respect that. Sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it. Well, there's two different ways that I approach it [leadership]. One is, of course, the directive, here's, you know, this is what the district is saying, we're gonna have to do for grading. So this is what our parameters are. Let's talk it through and figure out how does that work as a department? So you know, it's a loose type situation where they give us the parameters, and then I can help them come up with what's comfortable for the department, if that makes sense. So like, you know, the directive is to, we have three different grading styles that they can do have a floor of 40%, if you're using 100%, a 15 point scale, or standards based. And so I can work with them and talk to them and say, Well, which one seems to fit best and things like that? That's not the best example. But our I guess what the earned honors would be another one of saying, "This is what we have to do. How are we going to achieve that?" And so they can pick out three types of assessments. And we say, this is what we ant it to look like in [content area]. So we did a [content area] project. Okay, so that makes everyone feel good about that. So it's kind of taking the district and helping them talk through what [inaudible]. So they still have some buy in, you know, some feedback and input along the way. So that's one way. And then the other way is more of meeting with teachers one on one and talking about their projects, you know, what they're interested in? I think that it's a lot more buy in as far as you know, personal reward for the teachers. So, or PLC group might be interested in a PD day for extend as new modeling curriculum. So enabling them to go and see some professional development about it, and then talking about it and say, "Is this

Participant	Participant Quotes
	something we want to adopt? If we want to adopt how do we roll it out?" And things like that. And, you know, it might be a multi year process. But that's, that's the more fun way of doing it, is when someone has a vision and helping them reach their goal, rather than when it's coming from the district down. Yeah, I think the biggest thing that is most when they buy in and are most likely to make the shift is when you come up with some kind of philosophical reasoning, some kind of research from [professional organizations]. And then the other way is more of meeting with teachers one on one and talking about their projects, you know, what they're interested in? So there's a matter of talking with that individual that well, there's a couple individuals.
Daryl	Yeah, yeah, it's just individual, you know, just go to them and talk with them.
Eugene	Caring and kinda like maybe like servant leader vibe. So there was, with as needed based on a couple of teachers cases, it was like we're doing daily lesson plans with other ones, it was like great, you're learning enough year to year.
Finn	It really comes down to trying to have conversations, trying to encourage people, trying to have people think about assessment differently.
Glenn	Food in the office periodically.
Henry	I react a lot more to personalities now than I did early in my leadership career. Making sure that people are a little more comfortable. A lot more honey for the flies than vinegar these days. Although occasionally I'm given a lot of vinegar back that I tried to sweeten up and try to make it more palatable. It's very much a you know, I almost think sometimes that as a leader in my department that the law of attraction is probably the most important piece to try to create things that will draw people in. For example, when I came to my current position they were very much mired in the past practices in education. Their previous leader was very much a traditionalist. They weren't in line with national standards. They were unaware of current trends for the most part. It took me six years of working and planting ideas for that to become rooted in their normal thoughts and processes. So I've been able to set some goals to bring us in line with practices that have been going on and I think in my 10 years in the district, I'm going to actually achieve a good portion of that.
Isabelle	But I know my people better. So I hope that there's a little bit more about trust thing where they'd be willing to push back or ask questions.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So I do work hard to build relationships that are trusting and where people feel like they can ask me questions and get feedback without being judged. A lot of my leadership style is based on relationships.
Jerry	At this point I feel like I've built up enough trust with teachers that I can push more than I could 4 years ago. It'll be probably a case by case but I think a lot of times in these scenarios, I don't want to be the guy that steps in, because I gotta be the guy that steps in all the time. Right? I want to move to “Oh you are, do you mind cleaning it up by the end of the week.” That's gonna go much better in the long run than having than running to me all the time. So I think it'll be mostly just helping them work through how do I how do they discuss these things? In fact, I get, now you say that I need to give them some ideas for how they start this work, you know, that we're gonna do this year on some of this stuff. But I think some will come into my office and say probably privately, like, "Our course committee talked about this. I don't like it. What do you think?" And you can talk through things, like what is a good assessment question. I've done a number of things through the years from zoom coffee hours during COVID, to celebrating birthdays, to icebreaker questions at department meetings. We are also going on 4 full day department retreats this year. Some are off campus and some are on campus. In either location, getting away together for a good meal, some games, and to engage in deep collaboration as course teams has been really helpful (at least the first retreat was!).
Kent	We know some of the personal stuff that's going on across the building because our administrative team meets every single day. We have fun together. We spend time together eating, in social situations, and in intentional team building and getting to know you experiences in team meetings, staff development, office socials, and outside activities. While not all participate in all of these, it does establish a strong bond. In addition, we are very clear with new hires about our culture and expectations, and that we rely on collaborative relationships. Finally, we empower our teams to make many decisions for curriculum, instruction and assessment. As such, the team must come together on those items to gain consensus.
Lori	When I first started the job I was surprised to learn that many teachers had not been given an opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions or ideas. This was a

Participant	Participant Quotes
	great trust builder, especially when I was able to act on a recommendation they made or follow up about a topic that gave them closure. You know, both during evaluation like post observation conversations and like chats in the hallway, and ask them to work back backwards from there. I feel like that is one of the few opportunities that I get to have more of those like big picture, dreamy conversations. Some teachers who are like oh, yeah, like, like, "Yes, and…" people like, “Let me give that a shot.” Or like, “That's really interesting. I haven't thought about that. Let me do some digging.” They're the ones who are already starting to try some pieces of it. I've also found that there are teachers who are just really comfortable doing things the way that they've been doing it for years. But they're also the same people who are saying like oh, yeah, like I know, things are changing. And I know you want us to go in this this particular direction. I just haven't convinced myself to do it yet. So you know, that eventually goes down goes back to like, the support site in place to help them embrace the change. I have a ton of one on one conversations with teachers. For the first two years I had bi-weekly meetings with teachers in years one and two. Just to make sure they were feeling supported and had everything that they needed. It was a good opportunity for me to know how I could support them and coach them in a non evaluative manner. I also had monthly conversations with more veteran teachers. So in years three plus, again, just to serve as personal and professional check ins to get to know them as humans… What do they love outside of this building? And I feel like that was a really great way to just build good rapport and get to know them on a more personal level.
Morgan	But it also comes, it also helps to have conversations with people about these different things. I think everybody, I think that the most important thing you can do as a leader is get to know the people that you're trying to lead. I believe that you you build trust with people who you're evaluating by making sure that you know what it feels like when they're doing their job…Because if I know what it feels like to be in Miss so and so's or Mr. So and so' class, then when I get a call when, when somebody when principal needs to talk to me about so and so or a parent calls me and says this is how things are. I can say now wait a minute, I've been in the class and I've seen this and this. I think that's interesting that you would have that opinion. Tell me more and that can help some credibility and it also takes some of the edge off when it's time for people to have other evaluators in their class.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Yes, you treat them the same, you communicate. You're open, you're passionate. You tell the truth, and live with consequences. And sometimes I get in trouble for being a little bit too direct. But people always know where they stand and they know I care. At least I hope so anyway, and they act that way. So you have to treat them all the same way. But that said like in your classroom fair isn't always equal. I'm trying really hard to make sure that I meet their needs, knowing that their needs aren't the same. So you try to meet them as you learn what they are. Try to get in there at least two more times each semester with the goal that I want to know what it feels like to be in their classroom. Accidentally bumping into them or purposely bumping into them, "Hey, I'm haven't checked in with you yet this week.

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Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Being Reflective

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	I think I'm still trying to figure that [my role as a leader] out. Because again, I feel like I understand the guiding principle knowing that it's a learning process with [teachers], and really listening to their feedback. You know, like we built that by not, like by going too fast and by not providing those opportunities for like it just needed all slowed down and the teachers needed to be more a part of the change. You have to get started and learn along the way. The learning never stops. If I could go back, however, I would want more full department PD [professional development] to work on breaking down the rubric, coming up with examples of what this looks like on an assessment, but more importantly, what does this look like day to day in the classroom. I think we need to have a LARGE [participant added emphasis] conversation about habits of work. How much we care about them, and how we can get students to care about them. That is something we are seeing greatly lacking in our current classes and because of this, there are many skill deficits.
Carl	So they [teachers] still have some buy in, you know, some feedback and input along the way.
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	N/A
Finn	N/A
Glenn	I think one of the mistakes people make is they choose the hills that they like, and they have, but they don't, they don't consider their own system.
Henry	You know, I think one of the biggest challenges as a leader is how you react to a setback. And setbacks can define you for a long period. I have a very vivid memory of working on curriculum, and having one of my teachers, as she was working with a national consultant, burst into tears and run out of the room crying, because the curriculum work we were doing was so hard from her perspective, and that marked me pretty much in terms of how hard you push people.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Isabelle	I've definitely changed drastically in my 22 years in education.
Jerry	N/A
Kent	Yeah, so a couple come to my mind. One of the, one of the things that I was like, you know, gosh, I would have done that differently when we were doing SLOs [student learning objectives], is kind of like a sliding towards standards-based. So the SLOs, we position those as they need to be skills focused. And we tried to make those content agnostic where it's, it's all about the skill. It's all about analyzing and interpreting data. And so we try to make it all about that and if a kid doesn't understand the [specific content], it's okay, like, that's not what we're, we're not assessing on that. It's only the skill. And what we found is like, that was just silly. It was very forced, and people got frustrated and rolled their eyes because ultimately, you know, so we acknowledged that the success criteria needs to be, you know, can use content specific vocabulary correctly, you know, reasons appropriately using things that we've learned in class, it has to be both and so, not to try to divorce the skill from the practice, kind of like, you know, [national standards] when we compartmentalize those three strands, we're really doing a disservice. So I think that was one thing, that would have been a misstep. One thing that we learned on the global scale that we're still struggling a little bit with, is parents early on, we tried to be very idealistic about where kids are going… we're going to be gathering evidence over the course of a semester. And we don't really give you a grade projection until later. What we found out is there was a little bit of mutiny because parents want to know before six or seven weeks, is my kid doing okay? And so you can say, "Well, don't worry, I'm collecting evidence and they're not proficient yet. But it's okay, because we just started the class." And so we've tried to find the balance between projecting a grade that's going to be on the semester transcript after you've got enough evidence to do that in a meaningful way. I still think we're probably, now we've swung the other way. We're projecting a little bit too much too early. So we've been talking about some ways to maybe delay that a little bit longer, and maybe have a gradual release, like "Hey, the first, the first three weeks or first four weeks, we won't project any grade. Then we'll go another four weeks and it'll be more like, Hey, you're passing or failing, then it'd be a little bit longer. [inaudible.]" That's been something we've tried to balance out. The ideal is, the idealism of not projecting grades too soon, but not keeping parents in the dark. So they're not all of a sudden, you're in November and they're like, Yeah, my kids getting a C, what the heck that might be good for you, that's not okay for us."
Lori	I have asked [teachers] for feedback about that every year that I've been in this position. And their areas of feedback for me are areas that I would also give feedback for myself. I would give feedback for myself on the same things. So I'd say like from

Participant	Participant Quotes
	a human perspective, what I hear is that they see me as being really busy, but I make time for conversation and that my doors always open. I would say like I'm interested in competency. I feel like there are a ton of different definitions and examples of competency in the classroom. My understanding is students are basically progressing at their own pace as they master skills throughout the unit or throughout the course. I noticed that's not what's happening in some of our departments that are [competency.] But like I do not know what that looks like in CTE so I feel like over the next couple of years as we transition to SBG and start thinking about competency, I'm going to have to do some like real digging and figure out what this looks like in our classrooms. And maybe like another working definition of what competency looks like in high school. But I just wanted to throw that out there because right now I don't have a plan for tackling CBE but it's possible that your dissertation might shed some light on what that could potentially look like. You know, there are areas for feedback for me are like, you know, spend more time reaching out to community partners and making those relationships, or continue to have conversations with like 12 month employees like principals, assistant principals, so they don't have to and really being like that communication tool.
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Coping with Emotions

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	Those memories are put away, otherwise I would have probably quit if I festered on that and just couldn't get over certain things. So we don't go out there on a limb frequently. And I'm, I've been accused of charging first in my head, and then trying to see what's left behind. So I… indirectly taking the role of a push on things.
Beth	It has been the greatest roller coaster of my life the last four years so and there have been tears like from everybody. And then being vulnerable, I would say because I'm teaching it with them. I can be vulnerable with having similar struggles. So sometimes we started this conversation where I said to you I often feel like I'm on an island because me and my associate principal, I often felt like we were the only ones that understood the why. And so we were the only one driving the ship. We were [pause] you know what I mean? And so it's very lonely. And that's only [pause] it's our fault. You know, like we built that by not, like by going too fast and by not providing those opportunities for like it just needed all slowed down and the teachers needed to be more a part of the change. I just, that [curriculum revision] was my life. [That's] why, for the first time ever, I'm teaching the same class because I was going to have a nervous breakdown. I do not recommend that. Sometimes like if you wait too long and trying to get too many people on board, then the change doesn't happen. Because sometimes people will never be ready to kind of have to have some discomfort and rip the band aid off. So it's finding the balance when it's time but then also making sure that you have a team behind you. So, yeah, so leadership moves is you know, you need a team. You can't do it alone. I think I tried to do too much. So, you know, I'm happy to work for a team that is completely willing to go against what everybody else is doing and try things, but then with that, just comes a little bit of stress and anxiety and uncertainty. It's just kind of scary because we are making really, really big shifts.
Carl	I try very hard not to show my frustrations along the way. But there are times when they ask a question and you know, you have to sit there and put on a poker face. And so they realize, I work very hard to represent them at the building level. And then try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	I honestly think I'm, I'm put more in the role of coach. It's gonna lean on my instructional coach background more than my formal evaluator background. So we went through a spate of time where we were really hitting that really pretty hard. You can't do both at the same time. It's really hard to do both, to really be an evaluator and a coach in the same position. You can do both in the same human, but it's hard to do both in the same conversation.
Finn	And you have to really get into that classroom levels, and have patience with the right perspective.
Glenn	Right, one of my teachers said, "Oh, you like to go into a department meeting, let off a hand grenade, and then end the meeting and leave."
Henry	N/A
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	And I… [pause] there are days, but I mostly enjoy it.
Kent	N/A
Lori	I feel a great deal of pressure to make sure that my teachers live up to that expectation, but also kind of like mitigating the information that I'm getting from the central office and making it digestible and attainable for the teachers that I work with.
Morgan	I will tell you that the one of the most difficult, the most difficult thing I've done professionally in my life was to go from being what you are right now as a as a department chair who sat in the middle of everybody, desk was in the middle of the group, part of the group part of everything else, and then become the guy who's now evaluating all of those people. And this, you know, that was a in that was, in my own opinion, a very lonely time, the first year or two and then you felt like he walked into the room and everybody stopped talking because the boss was here. And I guess that's when I knew I had kind of arrived because I was different, but I hated it. And to this day, I still hate it.

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Theme - Exhibiting Leadership Attributes: Navigating School/District Context and Culture

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	On the leadership side, we went with a five year period, this would have been probably, oh 12, maybe 10 to 15 years ago. We had a principal nice guy, just not a building leader, overwhelmed. And then we had three years of an interim, the principal he hired was the ex supe. And he reneged on his contract. So we had to go to an interim. And then we went two years with interim, so we had five years without an effective principal. So there was a lot of gaps that need to be filled. Either curricular issues, assessment issues, we started looking at the ideas of actually validated assessments. I've been an outsider, I'm probably one of the few people that stayed in a middle management role in [county name redacted] this long. And almost like, in the middle management role, we're trying to get these people up and below that these are the things we really need to do. And others have a solid understanding, say, of where I fall within middle management and the top, principals [and] superintendents, has to be the teacher. And for six years, we didn't talk about instruction. We're looking at the whole, going from gradual release to formative assessment, come out with purpose. We stopped at purpose and never moved. And that was a perfect example where middle management, if you don't have the ear, you're not getting anything done. Because you've got to win hearts and minds above you.
Beth	I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance. The other balance that I would say, I'm trying to be politically correct. Don't quote me on that, is research versus implementation. Right. So there's a lot of really great research and theories out there. A lot of textbooks. That doesn't always look the way you want it to look when you're implementing. And so that's the struggle. And then the other big struggle is supporting your teachers, right. And I guess one thing that I try to do is make sure that I really believe it, and can stand behind it before I ask my teachers to do it.
Carl	But then with time, I became more of the middle management type of person who had to link between the building and district administration with the faculty. So giving them philosophical reason, and some practical examples. Because a lot of that is a hard, we're going to do that. Especially if it's a directive from the department, I mean from the district, I have to craft it in a way that makes sense for the department to understand what we're trying to do.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Daryl	So it starts definitely within the last couple years, especially coming off of, during, and coming off of the pandemic, there were edicts, essentially, from the district office. They really just were given to both buildings, or at least parameters. And then after that, the buildings by department were allowed to somewhat customize, or at least, you know, account for differences between either departments or courses. So I do, so that said, No, I don't really have necessarily input on the decision or what the parameters are that that district proposes. I can certainly, and we have, give our feedback at building levels and the building level kind of carries the district. But ultimately, it's the district's decision. But then what comes back down my way is those parameters, I'm able to work within my group on. You know, they kind of know at the end of the day, they can't argue with it, because it's a have to [from] the district. How we manipulate it in our department is to some degree a level of individuality. But in the end, I mean, I think if there was not a district requirement, then you would have groups that are like, "No, I'm, you know, I'm not changing."
Eugene	It was, I erred on the side of the last two years, kind of giving a little more leash because, a little more a little more slack, because it was like, do anything that's going to work you know, we were in a spot with our students were we just the teachers were trying everything and anything so we're less little less organized. But on the whole, the department that I have, in its DNA, is not terribly concerned with being on the same page. They, they're okay with that. So, there's areas where you can flex and do different things. And that's, that's been from before I was here. So I think it's critically important. We did get into a little bit of a problem about let's say, six years ago, where we were teaching this like the PLC meetings were solely about the assessments that were coming up, getting the data from the assessments and kind of like you know, cutting the cutting the harvesting the crops, cutting them, putting them in jars like that. That's really all it was. We were talking about instruction and making [things] interesting and all that. So yeah, a little bit mechanical, but I think the balance is pretty good now. And I think it's important to just decide, have an assessment calendar to decide what is our summative going to be and when what are the formative checks along the way and then teachers do get a lot of latitude on how they craft that with their students. So I don't think having a pacing guide or lesson plan, [a] kind of guidebook, [or] something like that. I think the teachers that we have are well beyond that caliber here.
Finn	The difficulty with summer projects here is it has to be a joint venture between [school names redacted] now. So you have to get people from [school name redacted] to agree to sign on at least to participate in the project. So tried to support it that way, tried to have conversations, again, with the teachers that I know that are more interested in that type of thing, during the evaluation cycle or

Participant	Participant Quotes
	not during the evaluation cycle, about the ways that they're assessing. I had some people ask me for examples, like what would you how would a Problem Set look, what does that look like, shared examples with those people. During I'm trying to figure you know, you got to, you really got to figure out ways, from my perspective, I really have to figure out ways to get myself into the course, you get yourself into a course team on a functional level, right? Like, that's where, that's where things really, really changed.
Glenn	So when we went from a director... when I went from District Director of [department name redacted] to humanities, grading in [department name redacted] went backwards quite a bit. Because the bosses wanted uniformity with English. So things like total points. "Oh, we're gonna do total points." Great. So I had devaluing homework and I was pushing [weighted grading] categories and lots of things like that. Then I lost. We lost. We lost a few years of progress. And I think the same thing in some ways, you know, COVID, we lost a couple [inaudible]... We lost some ground.
Henry	[My leadership style] has certainly been different in the different districts that I've been in based on the attitude of the teachers, based on the district's culture, and certainly based on experiences I have had along the way. For example, when I came to my current position they were very much mired in the past practices in education. Their previous leader was very much a traditionalist. They weren't in line with national standards. They were unaware of current trends for the most part. It took me six years of working and planting ideas for that to become rooted in their normal thoughts and processes. And the principals certainly have different ways of approaching things these days. So that is a major challenge. And you know my teachers regularly will say when people start to balk or whatever, and "Hey, remember he has a boss he has to please too, ok." There is some of that. I've used that as a crutch. It's never successful. Right? They you know, and you know, I've also used the phrase "I work at the pleasure of the board. You have a union. I work at the pleasure of the board. So I do what I'm told." And there, there's always a push back to that. And that's kind of happening currently with [a new course] we're bringing on board, that it has the endorsement of the superintendent and it's going to have the endorsement of the board and the people or the people are not necessarily as thrilled about it. My job is going to be to make sure that it happens, and that we create the best program we can. And boy, did I get pushback from that a couple weeks ago.
Isabelle	So we, so our school is organized by division, not department. And so as a division head, I oversee both [department names redacted.] And all the division

Participant	Participant Quotes
	heads oversee multiple departments. Some are more, mine are the two biggest, broadest core areas and most criticized maybe more than like a social studies world language, no one really gives them any flack for world language, but I do get some for [department names redacted.] And so we have division heads, and then we have two building leadership teams that meet regularly. One is our full administrative team. And then the other is what we call our instructional leadership team. And so the instructional leaders are more the the people that oversee classroom teachers and then the larger building leadership team is everyone including the person who oversees the counselors, athletic directors that have less of a hand and like the classroom instruction, but obviously contribute to like the culture in the building and our goal of helping students to be engaged, engaged in school both academically and in activities. And so these groups here, we meet weekly, both groups meet weekly. I tend to interact on a daily basis, mostly, I would say with my immediate supervisor who's our associate principal for instruction, or the other division heads…And then because we're part of a large district, so this is a little bit outside, but we have six schools so I have five other people in my exact same job within our district, which is really nice because I can bounce ideas. I will say the transition from classroom to division head is definitely a step into middle management.
Jerry	I think it's just, the... it's just the culture. And [school district redacted] was not awesome in every way. And one of the ways that was hard about it is that it's, it's very much someone at the top has an idea, and it's going to happen. Come hell or high water. We are doing a new math thing. And so get on board or leave the district. That would never happen at [school name redacted] and I don't think that's best at [school district redacted] but that was the culture. Like "Oh, my boss told me to do it. I'll do it." Yes. And my principal will not be doing things that I think... like my principal has nothing to do with curriculum and instruction. Zero. She doesn't know what's going on. It's not her job to know what's on in curriculum and instruction. I've never been in a school where the principal doesn't know those things. Her main job is to talk to parents and make them happy. And that's a significant role on [redacted]. Yes. And even when I was at [school name redacted] as the principal didn't know... she wasn't intimately involved in curriculum and instruction, but she had an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction. We reported it to her so yeah, she was aware. Whereas again, my principal at [school name redacted] no one reports to her on curriculum and instruction.
Kent	Yeah, so as a school leadership team, our administrative team, there's probably typically on a normal day, there's probably 20 of us in the room. That's the average size, and that would include everybody from the from the superintendent

Participant	Participant Quotes
	to division directors. So that's superintendent, our assistant, he's the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, but essentially, this is the superintendent for curriculum. So those two from the district office and our HR director is there most of the time. And then the principal, the two assistant principals, the division directors, the person who leads Equity Diversity, Inclusivity, the woman who leads SEL. So we meet and Mondays are intentionally an hour and a half. And those are that's mostly professional learning. So this week, we were talking about feedback, and all facets of feedback and best practices around feedback. And then Tuesday through Friday, we meet in the morning for 30 minutes, and that's much more informational. Although this week, this morning, our principal happened to bring some data from a classroom observation that a teacher was doing. It was around homework and proficiency development that he was, the teacher worked through with his kids. So we we engaged in that and sometimes those meetings are 15 minutes, and he says, anybody else have anything. And you're like nope, let's go. And you know, the meeting breaks up. We meet for an hour and a half of PD on Mondays and then Tuesday through Friday Fridays, like an informational so you kind of know what's going on in the other divisions, but then just even in our division, like you realize, wow, when you have 50 teachers and you have a whole bunch of spouses and kids, almost always somebody's in pseudo crisis mode.
Lori	I think that [district name redacted] requires their leaders to be forward thinking, ahead of the curve, flexible and just real like go getter workhorses. I feel like this district has five major areas of focus. One of them being standards-based grading and competency-based education and equity. And which are two that I feel like I focus most on my role and there's a lot of overlap between those two as well. And so I feel like from a 12 month admin perspective and a district office perspective, there's definitely a high expectation to make sure that we have a full understanding of how that translates to the work that we do with our teachers. how that translates to the classroom and how that translates to students. I feel a great deal of pressure to make sure that my teachers live up to that expectation, but also kind of like mitigating the information that I'm getting from the central office and making it digestible and attainable for the teachers that I work with. So I feel like as a department chair like I am middle management, so I feel like I am a filter of information.
Morgan	No, it's okay. I don't care. But it comes from an insecure leader who's worried about who's somebody said, "You have too high a percentage of kids failing." So then you go to your leaders in the building and you say you need to talk to so and so about how many D's and F's they had, and you talk to so and so about how many D's and F's. [inaudible] So because that happened so many times, our

Participant	Participant Quotes
	people are so... looking for whatever. And my message to them is, "Okay, you got all these D's and F's in your class. Do you have a plan? Do you have a reason why that is? Do you have a... Can you give me a list of the things that you've done to try to intervene? Put your head on the pillow at night and sleep great because you've done all these things that you can do?" And then we also say to them things like, "Well, what is that kids... What if those kids 20 percents really shouldn't be 50? Because mathematically, that's what happens. What is it? What happens?" Well, "You're giving them grades" "Is that what I'm giving them, what grade am I giving them?" Well, an F. Oh, oh, okay, but I'm giving hope. I'm giving you know, or leave it as 20 and sit down with the kids say, you know if I could get you to do this, maybe I could take... it would still be the same grade if I changed that 20 to a 50. Now you're closer now maybe you've... right. So what I feel like we're doing by having this vague policy under the umbrella of having kids be successful, is I'm meeting the teachers where they want me to meet him because I'm not, I have no intention of breathing down anybody's neck about grades. If a kid is not going to do, then that's not on us and we should not feel guilty nor be held to giving away the farm. That's not happening here, right. But if we can do some things to equip people with tools like, well then meet them, you know, they make these grades 50, get them closer. I said last time, "I've never had a single kid ever mad at me because I made that 20 into a 50." We only do it for summatives. We don't do it for formatives, but the best they can do it that is 30% of their grade. So kid chose not to do anything this unit and then took the test and tried and bombed it. No kidding. Okay, well, give them a zero for all formatives, they got a 50 for the test, right, or they will eventually have a 50 for the test. Now, work through some of those formatives, maybe we can retake the test, you wanna, right, you want to sit down talk about this? Maybe. You're really close on it, and there's only these three, these three learning targets for this unit that you really didn't understand. Maybe we sit down and can we maybe I'll give you a... how bout if I write you a quiz on these targets? You show me that you understand that better and I'll make the test to 70. What do you think of that? But you got to show me, right, you got to prove to me you understand better. And so we interviewed for this position. My question was "Okay, so if I find the successful candidate here and I become a division leader, is my job to help teachers to improve or to decide if they have?" And I still don't have an answer to that question.

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptualizing

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	We have to be there for them [students]. They all know what I believe in. They'll say, oh, yeah, he's been planning this. He knows really, or at least he's thinking he's been working with us on this. We've been talking the same thing as compared to other people. Like, he's got crazy ideas I politically lean probably more to the left, it's more of the left, and know that the only way you can stop the tree of trauma or all the tree of difficulties that families sustained from the parents and damage that they do to the children that public education is the option for people to better their future. So it's, do we believe in it or not, and if we believe in it, it needs to be up for everybody.
Beth	I feel like if teachers believe that new ideas, course, initiatives are focused on problems they see then they are willing to work toward solutions. If a new admin comes in and touts a new initiative that is an add on or a replacement for something they think already works, then they don't buy in. After five years, virtually all of my teachers now have a goal of increasing student engagement or student voice in the classroom, or increasing formative feedback.
Carl	I think one of the things that I was looking forward to when I was starting out was being able to direct a vision and help the department head in a certain way and, and also help teachers reach their goals because a lot of teachers have some great ideas, but, you know, they felt like there were some roadblocks in the way and I felt like maybe I'd be able to help them overcome some of those roadblocks.
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	You've got the grand visions that we have at the district level, which we have many here. Because now we're assessing speaking and listening which we hadn't assessed before. Developing a strong, heterogeneous grade 9 and 10 experience that uses let's call it progressive assessment, with such practices as like portfolios, micro summatives, gives more authentic assessment.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So that's a little bit of a longer term goal, but crafting an experience 9-10 that enables every student to have access to the most rigorous curriculum, but a common one at that that's differentiated that allows any of them to take AP in the future or be successful longer term and to know that that thing that we created, isn't what people what some people were afraid of as a lowering of standards, but it was more of a raising of of standards for all the kids and doing that through differentiation.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	N/A
Henry	N/A
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	Sharing research, creating a forum for teachers to share personal stories of success on an initiative, challenging all teachers to try something new but make it low stakes, providing meaningful and actionable feedback to individual teachers.
Kent	To develop a collective of you know, whether that's 10 or 15 or 20 teachers. We're going to develop some collective understandings and we're driving our boat this way, even if the whole school isn't, and I think that's much harder. But I think it can be done. And again, I think when you have a, when you have a leader and then then you're doing some, you know, upstream leadership too. So some of the tights that we defined and we knew like, we're going to it's going to be a four point scale. You know, exceeds, meets, approaching, developing. The three is the proficient level, right? These are some school wide tights. Another tight that we defined was that it was going to be around the [content area] practices. We said like we're going to, everybody's going to drive their grading through the [content area] practices. I think another tight was that the scale, the language in the four point scale, we said we're going to define that and we're just going to use the same thing.
Lori	I would say I'm interested in competency. I feel like there are a ton of different definitions and examples of competency in the classroom. My understanding is students are basically progressing at their own pace as they master skills throughout the unit or throughout the course. I noticed that's not what's happening in some of our departments that are [competency.] But like I do not know what that looks like in [department name redacted] so I feel like over the next couple of years as we transition to SBG [standards-based grading] and start thinking about competency, I'm going to have to do some like real digging and figure out what this looks like in our classrooms. And maybe like another working definition of what competency looks like in high school.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptualizing (Personal*)*

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	And you understand that this is our overall job. Outside of the collective bargaining agreements, and all the things we want to say that limit us, oh, we have so many poor kids, or we got this demographic. Who knows what parents, they have with any parents, but we need to make sure that we can get them out of that cycle of poverty and put them in a better spot. Or they can become better than the prior generation. We have different demographics in our in our two communities between you and I. But the goal is still the same, we always need to do the best thing we can do to get that student to wherever they need to be for the future. I know where we need to go.
Beth	I hope that I am helping my teachers by being a part of the work with them. I have taught each of the integrated classrooms and served as a member of each of the PLTs at least for one year. I have helped them create all of the materials. They know I am in this with them. So I think they know where I stand and I think they know some of the non-negotiables and I'm getting better at telling them some of the non negotiables, things like you know when I walk in your classroom, I want to see kids talking to kids, you know.
Carl	N/A
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	if you could, if you I mean, if you ever turn into a book or a training or whatever you do with or maybe it's just for your own self, your own practice, but I feel like there probably is a need, that people don't know about, to go deeper in, in making their own assessment explicit than they know I guess is what I'm, that's what I'm discovering as I'm talking to you is that like, I guess I need to probably, and I feel like I do go deep with my own assessment practice.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	N/A
Henry	So I've been able to set some goals to bring us in line with practices that have been going on and I think in my 10 years in the district, I'm going to actually achieve a good portion of that.
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	N/A

Participant	Participant Quotes
Kent	N/A
Lori	So me and my counterparts again at [school names redacted], we decided from year one, like two of us started the same year together. We were like, we want our teachers to be SBG [standards-based grading] or to you know, have an SBG gradebook. We want them to transition there philosophically. So here we developed this five year plan.
Morgan	I would start by deciding what is most important to you. What is it that you think? Because when you can get that defined for yourself, and I'm not saying you need to trumpet it to the mountaintop for everybody else to hear. That doesn't need to happen. But when you can define it for yourself, so that when [teachers] come and they ask you questions like “Well, what do you think?” You can answer with your opinion. And you can try to ask them questions to help them understand why that makes sense.

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptualizing (School/District)

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	So there's the importance of relevance within this [curriculum relevance], but it comes down to, are we making the world a better place for these students? And by doing that, we have to make tough decisions. There's tough things we have to call on.
Beth	Once we decided on a vision, we used that to help us choose a resource. I think our vision of using standards based grading is a bit more challenging. We are a school of three [feeder] districts and we did this initial work as a district. When it was time to start planning, we invited our sender schools to our training as they also were teaching our [department redacted] courses in their schools. We had no control over their grading practices, but we wanted them to use common assessments and try and share our same philosophies about task based instruction and conceptual understanding. Now that we are in year 4, and with COVID interruptions, I am finding that at my building, we need to revisit the vision. I personally feel that the more our teachers understand the vision, the more ownership and empowerment they will have in making the necessary changes they feel they need to do in the class and with assessments to meet the needs of the students currently in front of them. I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance.
Carl	One nice thing that lately has been because this is our vision or goal, our direction that we want to go. I think one of the things that I was looking forward to when I was starting out was being able to direct a vision and help the department head in a certain way and, and also help teachers reach their goals because a lot of teachers have some great ideas, but, you know, they felt like there were some roadblocks in the way and I felt like maybe I'd be able to help them overcome some of those roadblocks. So, I guess you'd say some opportunities to do some professional development. But then with time, I became more of the middle management type of person who had to link between the building and district administration with the faculty. And it became less of my vision and more of leaning towards the building's direction. So, which is rewarding, but not as rewarding.
Daryl	N/A

Participant	Participant Quotes
Eugene	You've got the grand visions that we have at the district level, which we have many here. [Our district is] like really visionary.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	I used to think a departmental vision statement was more important than I do now, I think it is enough to align with the Board's vision and strategic plans.
Henry	Researcher: Do you think your district would benefit from [having a strong vision]? Henry: Much, much. And I... because we're halfway through that five year cycle. I don't see anything dramatically changing even though we've got a new superintendent on board. But I think just in some of the things I've seen from him, he's going to push some things and push some initiatives that will fall under that vision. But I think, to me, when you start a whole vision process that's centered around some sort of an idea that gets people excited. You have a much better chance of making something happen, and I don't see people being excited about anything right now. You know, my gut when I come back, and I look at that vision. What's interesting since the time we originally talked and now that has become a theme in the district, among the leadership teams, and among our district, Assistant supt. for the curriculum director meeting that we had. We've not had curriculum director meetings for a while. So that came back up looking at the vision and what did it mean? And for her and a couple other people were heavily involved, it was very much the realization that they were deeply involved in the process, but other people didn't feel like they were involved. And so the lesson for me, really, has been that very same thing. If my staff isn't involved in the vision and developing of anything, there's not going to be buy in, there is not going to be a sense of belonging.
Isabelle	So I would say, as a district, we're pretty focused on our mission and I would say that I lead a lot through like that focus on making sure that what we're doing aligns with our mission and our mission as a district is to help kids demonstrate that they're college and career ready.
Jerry	I really appreciate it when a superintendent or principal has a strong vision. Our district regularly refers to our vision statement.
Kent	I would say that our superintendent has had a vision for a while. He's been in his role since 2007. And I remember talking to him back in 2007-2008, about fundamental errors in grading, like the use of zeros and averaging and things that

Participant	Participant Quotes
	just don't make a lot of sense when you really get back and look at them. He was very convinced of that, but I think that it took a little bit of time for that vision to emerge for how that would happen. [Our district vision] is a critical component of our work. I can't imagine not having our work directly connected to our mission, vision, and values; explicit, written collective commitments that specifically lay out how we will act and move forward on initiatives. I find these elements to be most important when moving resistors forward on new practices. In addition to what is noted before, we intentionally and routinely revisit our mission, vision, and values. We connect those to the "why" we are doing things. Finally, when folks are resistant, it's important to know if they are struggling with the why, the what, or the how of the change. That will then guide our response to move them along in their thinking.
Lori	Having a vision is of utmost importance to our district. And so I feel like from a 12 month admin perspective and a district office perspective, there's definitely a high expectation to make sure that we have a full understanding of how [the vision] translates to the work that we do with our teachers. Having a vision is of utmost importance to our district. Several years ago, the district established our five focus areas and each of our professional development offerings link back to it. As a department chair, the three goals I set for myself annually have to be tied back to one of the five focus areas. Each of these goals are communicated to my department members. I feel like I have totally melded with the district's vision. Teacher's often get frustrated about the number of "initiatives" the district engages in and my goal has been to simplify and streamline that information. I found a way to do this through the goal setting process teachers engage in as part of their evaluation. [Department name redacted] chose to focus on student self-assessment and goal setting, which connects to 3 of the district's 5 larger vision/focus area of SBG [standards-based grading]/CBE [competency-based education], Equity, and High Impact Instructional Strategies. This has helped keep our work focused and specific in [department name redacted]. All of our PD and evaluation/support conversations go back to how we can achieve this goal.
Morgan	Well, we're working on how "kids entering with promise leaving with purpose," that kind of thing. That's our that's really the big one…Well, is this helping kids enter with promise and leave with purpose, and that. No, but like, but it's in like, I

Participant	Participant Quotes
	think everything that we do, that's inherently what we're trying to do. We're believing in the kids that come in and trying to make sure that they're, that what they leave our building with is better than where they entered, right? That kind of thing. And so I do think that is in the back of our minds with everything that we do, but do we stop and go "Alright, well, how does this..." No, not not really, no.

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Conceptualizing (Future Goals)

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	I would like all of my teachers to have a common understanding of our goals, of our [course] sequence, and [course name redacted]. I want them to feel confident in what it means to earn a 4, 3, 2, 0 on a standard and how to create assessment opportunities that can capture that understanding. I would like them to incorporate conceptual understanding and reasoning equally with fluency. This is a shift in [curriculum]. I want them to feel good about the changes that we are making.
Carl	N/A
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	Right, so the short short term goal is to hand the baton back to the kids in discussion and try to get them to emerge back and take the lead in discussion and to cultivate cultures of, of intellectual risk in speaking across differences politically, racially, culturally. Developing a strong, heterogeneous grade 9 and 10 experience that uses let's call it progressive assessment, with such practices as like portfolios, micro summatives, gives more authentic assessment.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	N/A
Henry	What I am going to be able to do and what we have is an explicit goal is that we will do it within the next three years. So even though I'm going to retire, I'm going to have conditions set up that a predecessor or pardon me, a successor can step in and begin to continue to push that towards standards based grading. No, I really would like to have the conditions set. Even if everybody's not 100% on board. We are significantly closer to being a standards based curriculum and a standards based grading system. That we're really looking for student… we're really measuring what students can do, rather than having them just jump through artificial hoops.
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	So I, my goal is that we move more and more the direction of discussing and coming to an understanding of some things that we think all kids should know.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Call them learning objectives. And hopefully for the whole course, we've got these common learning objectives, common assessment questions on those learning objectives. And then most importantly, on the backside of that, looking at student data, and then talking about why do your kids get it and mine don't. So that I can, if you're doing something great, I want to do that too. So I really want to have true collaboration where they are seeing all [course name redacted] students as their students. And so that they would have an idea of like, "Oh, wait, we are all teaching this particular learning objective and pretty specific what we want kids to learn." I think that's going to be a, at least three year project. And then I think the other piece that I'd like to get them to do is connect with the outside world. Outside of your [school name redacted] more than they do.
Kent	N/A
Lori	We created a "5 year transition to SBG [standards-based grading]" plan that also laid out what support would look like. While some teachers were resistant and hesitant to the change, I think they were comforted knowing there would be a number of "contract hours" dedicated to both the philosophical and pedagogical transition. So I think that we're going to be probably almost 100% SBG by the end of year five, which would be awesome.
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Emotional Healing

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	I think it's just, it's listening and it's non-evaluative, does that make sense? So they have to know that they can come and have a conversation about the hard stuff. And have it be non evaluative so that those conversations are never going to show up in writing somewhere. And then being vulnerable, I would say because I'm teaching it with them. I can be vulnerable with having similar struggles.
Carl	And then the other way is more of meeting with teachers one on one and talking about their projects, you know, what they're interested in? I think that it's a lot more buy in as far as you know, personal reward for the teachers. And the teacher spoke about what his belief was that they should be applying, you know, doing these great things, but taught very traditionally. So there's a matter of talking with that individual that well, there's a couple individuals. Kind of talking with them and saying, "Well, what about, what is it about this that's challenging to you? Is it philosophical? Is it pragmatic? You know, is it that you're not sure what it looks like?" And for one of them, especially, it turned out that he just, he thought he was doing what he was supposed to be [doing], until he worked with a literacy coach. And then he got to see what the real example was compared to what he was doing. And it is amazing, because this year, I've already talked, I was already going into a class and talking about assessment with him this year. And he completely changed the way he was talking about it, because he's...we're talking about, “Okay, so we're going to use this assessment.” He goes, "Well, this is gonna take a couple of days, because the first day, I'm going to have to explain how the assessment works." And, you know, make sure you talk it through and obviously, something he would never have done, he would have just said, "Here's the assessment, go." And so it's been wonderful, because he didn't mean, he was not malicious, we just didn't understand and [he] was frustrated. And then try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf. But they also know that there's some times when I just have to come in and say, this is the way it's going to be. And there are times though, when I, I, if there's a debate going on, and let's say the [course team] group, and that decision just has to be made. And I say, "Look, guys, we've got to move forward, if you don't make a decision, I'm going to make a decision for you from the options and let's just move forward, we've gotta move forward and getting going." And they respect that. Sometimes you have to, sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it.
Daryl	Yeah, yeah, it's just individual, you know, just go to them and talk with them. And as a group, I mean, and that's the thing, I think my my relationship with them

Participant	Participant Quotes
	is, is fine, where we can be candid with one another and just look like, you know, this is I know you're trying to do with this part of it, but come on, that's not that's outside of the scope of that policy. And I get it too, I'm pretty straight up with them, too.
Eugene	N/A
Finn	So in terms of help trying to enact change, or you know, think grading, it's really here on a voluntary basis. I mean, there's no there's no standardized grading policy, because there sort of can't be. That doesn't mean that teachers are doing wildly different things in terms of grading, but you know, they're, you're limited by the contract in terms of what you can have people do. It really comes down to trying to have conversations, trying to encourage people, trying to have people think about assessment differently. So I've been focusing on the assessment angle, and not even talking about the grading component of it at all, just in terms of [department name redacted] teachers to start thinking about, you know, non-traditional assessment. Anything you'd want to talk about, constantly frame it in terms of students. Because that is what the whole thing like that's the one benefit, I think of education is that like, ultimately 98% of people are here to help kids. And if we're having the conversations from the framework of like, this, we I think this is going to help children I think this is gonna help students, and then you have the conversation, then it's at least like clear what we're trying to do as opposed to like, let's talk about this clause in the contract because I think it's ridiculous and I think that you're a bunch of entitled adults like yeah, then we're fighting but if we're trying to make things better. I'm trying to make things better. You're trying to make things better for kids, for students for learning.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	And the culture in [district name redacted] is very much the teacher voice is more important than administrator voice. And so by giving voice to those progressives, who will not allow the naysayers, the negatives, to drag their feet beyond a certain manner, things are going to happen, that change is going to move forward. So it's empowering them. I react a lot more to personalities now than I did early in my leadership career. Making sure that people are a little more comfortable. A lot more honey for the flies than vinegar these days. Although occasionally I'm given a lot of vinegar back that I tried to sweeten up and try to make it more palatable. It's very much a you know, I almost think sometimes that as a leader in my department that the law of attraction is probably the most important piece try to create things that will draw people in. For example, when I came to my current position they were very

Participant	Participant Quotes
	much mired in the past practices in education. Their previous leader was very much a traditionalist. They weren't in line with national standards. They were unaware of current trends for the most part. It took me six years of working and planting ideas for that to become rooted in their normal thoughts and processes. So I've been able to set some goals to bring us in line with practices that have been going on and I think in my 10 years in the district, I'm going to actually achieve a good portion of that. I try to find ways for people to feel valued and belong and feel like their voices [are] being heard.
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	I think for the most part, these course teams will figure out what is a good question and what is not a good question as they come up with these common assessment questions. But I think some will come into my office and say probably privately, like, "Our course committee talked about this. I don't like it. What do you think?" And you can talk through things like what is a good assessment question. It'll be probably a case by case but I think a lot of times in these scenarios, I don't want to be the guy that steps in, because I gotta be the guy that steps in all the time. Right? I want to move [inaudible] oh you are, do you mind cleaning it up by the end of the week. That's gonna go much better in the long run than having than running to me all the time. So I think it'll be mostly just helping them work through how do I how do they discuss these things? In fact, I get, now you say that I need to give them some ideas for how they start this work, you know, that we're gonna do this year on some of this stuff. Okay, so I remember I was at a conference once and I didn't take much away from the conference. But he did say something that stuck with me. He said, "Don't demonize the late adopters." And that's really stuck with me. That some of these guys that are in my department that are like "No no, no, I will not change," some of them really just need to see someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then they'll buy in because they finally, they've come around to it. It takes them four years, where you got your early adopters that were like, "Sure I mean, you didn't even have to give me the research. Just what you said alone I was convinced," that they should try something different, you know. So I think it's... it's a lot of convincing. Last year and this year when I first proposed this to the department I did a lot of here's what we're gonna do, here's why we're going to do it. And then I had to anticipate their objections. And say, for those that are thinking, a) no, that's not what I'm trying to do here. For those that are thinking b) I'm not trying to do that. Whereas when I was at [school name redacted], I didn't have to do that. It was it was like, here's what we're gonna do.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Here's why we should do it. And then they were on board. But I had to hear, I have to anticipate their objections and just address them.
Kent	So I think some of the laggards or some of the later adopters, it was all of those things, trying to bring you up to speed, trying to support them, acknowledging that that change brings a sense of loss. They're going to lose some confidence and proficiency. So I think not ignoring that, but ultimately like yeah, we're going here, and we're gonna help you get there. We know some of the personal stuff that's going on across the building because our administrative team meets every single day. We meet for an hour and a half of PD [professional development] on Mondays and then Tuesday through Friday Fridays, like an informational so you kind of know what's going on in the other divisions. But then just even in our division, like you realize, wow, when you have 50 teachers and you have a whole bunch of spouses and kids, almost always somebody's in pseudo crisis mode. So all the goal setting classroom observations, the relationship building, ultimately, I feel, you know, I feel the most responsibility for the well-being of our teachers and I pretty much know things that are going on like one teacher whose father is dying right now and you know, like all those things that are happening.
Lori	I have a ton of one on one conversations with teachers. For the first two years I had bi weekly meetings with teachers in years one and two. Just to make sure they were feeling supported and had everything that they need. It was a good opportunity for me to know how I could support them and coach them in a non evaluative manner. I also had monthly conversations with more veteran teachers. So in years three plus, again, just to serve as like personal and professional check ins to like get to know them as humans of like, what do they love outside of this building? And I feel like that was a really great way to just build good rapport and get to know them on a more personal level. Then I'm like, What do you mean you're giving group grades? Like, you know, I think it goes back to like, how do you know that this individual student is learning what you intended them to know? When they're giving them like this one blanket score that is just not representative of the work that they did. But, again, I don't know how many conversations they've had about like the rationale behind it or how often they've been questioned. It's just a practice that they've always done. So I don't fault them for it. I just don't know if the question has ever been posed. So I'd say like from a human perspective, what I hear is that they see me as being really busy, but I make time for conversation and that my door [is] always open. You know, there are areas for feedback for me are like, you know, spend more

Participant	Participant Quotes
	time reaching out to community partners and making those relationships or continue to have conversations with like 12 month employees so like principals, assistant principals, so they don't have to and really being like that, like, communication tool. There's a word for that I'm not thinking of so they feel protected. I think like in the past, there has been the we have a very veteran teaching staff and a fairly new administrative staff. I think in the past there has been some distrust between like 12 month admin and and teachers that were we're working to fix and restore. But I do try to just respond to everything that they did it that way. I make sure to ask teachers a lot of questions about their experience, opinions, and what they would like to see happen in the school or department. I feel like we give teachers a lot of opportunities to share their concerns, their frustrations, their successes, what's working well.
Morgan	I think everybody, I think that the most important thing you can do as a leader is get to know the people that you're trying to lead. And because if you don't know him, it doesn't matter what you say. They're not gonna listen to it, it's not gonna connect and it's not going to go where you're hoping it's gonna go. And so I worked really hard, like in the classroom, to get to know your kids, and kids get to know you. They start to believe this shtick that you're trying to sell them and off you go.

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Theme - Displaying Servant Leadership Behaviors: Growing and Empowering Followers

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	So he had them doing these pilots. So he had five teachers doing five pilots, five different ways, what it was going to look like, and then he retires. We had this rogue operation going on. But that had been let's open this up. As all on the side as quote a "pilot", we'd like piloting everything. This is district, let's do it on our our PLCs, we'll do it on the side, we can run like one teachers running a parallel Gradebook, just to see how they're scored out, versus our standard bad practice of points and totals and about weighted grades and such.
Beth	So I think that was a so I think what I did from a leadership perspective is I really went back to the greater team and then tried to push for a little bit more. I can't think of the word flexibility is what I'm saying right now. Autonomy that's within the district to be able to make some decisions that I feel my department needs. And my counterpart at [school name redacted], we kind of felt the same way. And I think we have slowly gotten there now where we don't have to bring everything back to the team and then we just reevaluate at the end of the year. So I mean, I really just think being a part of the team was the best leadership move that I could make. I really think I focused on that team of teachers and being a part of their PLCs and really helping them. The curriculum wasn't such an issue. So we adapted the curriculum and I kind of just set them free to figure out how to teach it. So the tasks were there. We selected a curriculum that had some really good rich tasks, and so I'm offering support, allowing time during PLT time. We got two days a week to meet so that's another thing I did is make sure that [course team] meets twice a week in their first year. So I've really shifted from being like really hands on to starting to try to pull away a little bit and trust that they can take the guiding principles and do what they feel is best. Yeah, a lot of talking. A lot of listening. Some of that definitely happens, after 3:30 is sometimes when you have your best conversations. So making sure that I'm around when they're finally ready to talk because they're not always ready to talk during the day because they're just doing their job.
Carl	I think one of the things that I was looking forward to when I was starting out was being able to direct a vision and help the department head in a certain way and, and also help teachers reach their goals because a lot of teachers have some great

Participant	Participant Quotes
	ideas, but, you know, they felt like there were some roadblocks in the way and I felt like maybe I'd be able to help them overcome some of those roadblocks. Whether it be administrative or logistical things like that to help them and, or just feedback along the way. All right, well, like I said, I bring the parameters into the department. And then each discipline makes some of their own independent decisions, as long as they stay within the parameters.
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	I honestly think I'm, I'm put more in the role of coach. It's gonna lean on my instructional coach background more than my formal evaluator background. And so that relies on me to be actually a lot, a lot more thorough in the qualitative feedback that I give teachers to coach them to be better. And so operationalizing it and just making sure it really happens is what we've got to do. We are on year three of four of a pre-competency based education pilot, which we're going to detrack and unweight [department name redacted] credit for grade nine and then the following year will be grade 10. So we've been at it for a while. And this is a little bit more broad strokes depending what they came in with. And that has been pretty satisfying. The four teachers that came on with me, I think, maybe it's like, you see what you want to see, you know, it's like they're doing what I want. But they're they're they're in a real generative state, all four of them doing really cool stuff that builds an extent off of the work that we did, on lesson planning but also on assessment. So yeah, for new teachers. Existing teachers I think that was part of the question. They've gone through the district training. So I haven't done a lot of department meeting let's talk just about grading. We've done it in the practice of our PLTs they have common assessments and they work on and they work on it together. And I do influence that and have. We had a workshop this morning for the department that, I lead it, but they all participated. And we began talking about that [differentiation]. So I think in short, there has to be a lot more of that. I think going from where we are, to where we need to be, in terms of differentiation is going to require a lot of a lot of practice. I feel like we haven't even really, really, really started on that. So I'm so trepidatious about it, honestly, trepidatious. But like, I realized it's such a big shift, that we're starting with discussion first, just getting the kids talking, getting them, getting them to carry the cognitive load. And then to do that, we're going to have to differentiate some of our preps for them. And so that's a way of bringing that in and also a way of like working on some of the classroom culture stuff that

Participant	Participant Quotes
	you do. And then, and then really hit differentiation a lot harder. Like I said, like I'm thinking it's November 1, something's going to happen November 1, we're on the note, we're going to be ready.
Finn	But anytime there's an opening, anytime anybody suggests anything, the answer, like, especially about assessment, it's, you have to give an automatic "Yes.
Glenn	And then I guess I would, where possible, allow multiple solutions. So I think I've been very effective in things like devaluing homework. How do you, so I think my teachers can tell me how they devalue homework, like in terms of it's mathematical weight. And as long as they can answer that for me, I'm kind of okay. So to me that's like multiple, multiple solutions to some of these problems. It works better when they kind of come up with their own one, but it's way slower.
Henry	But they really shaped the beginning of conversations and I began to codify that so that when we returned back to school in the fall of 2021, we began to put things together and in writing and surveying. I gave lots and lots of freedom that year for people to experiment. They actually put some formal pilots together and kind of played some of the traditional structure to their traditional ways. But a lot of the progressives continued to shape things. And so that's how we ended up with discussions all last second semester. And then over the summer, I created this document that I thought everybody could buy into and that there was still freedom for people to exercise their own beliefs within, pardon me their own practices within a belief structure. And that's what that's what we came up and that's what we have as a document. But I also don't want to get locked down in policy and procedure. Although everything we do here always goes back to that. You know, I don't want it to be too limiting. We, you know, we've gotten the ability to like do some pilot work and that's kind of helped. We've skirted around some issues. So I don't know whether we'll we'll work on changing a policy or not. What I am going to be able to do and what we have is an explicit goal is that we will do it within the next three years. So even though I'm going to retire, I'm going to have conditions set up that a predecessor or pardon me, a successor can step in and begin to continue to push that towards standards based grading.
Isabelle	So, even having the conversation, some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are unique. So I have been willing to allow some PLCs [professional learning communities] to go have some people go a little rogue on their PLC like to try something new with the intention of like action research, like they want to try it, they have a good reason why, they want to share out, which is good.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So they'll be like, “Do you want me to send the email?” And I'm like, "Yeah, that would be great." And so they're like,” I'll send it and say you and I are hosting but it's coming in.” So, I do think that helps. It does not sound like Isabelle's asking you to do this. And hey, "I believe it, too." And so she and I [present] together. So that's like the team building side.
Jerry	When I first got there the department steering committee was like making decisions about how to spend the party money. And I found that that was sort of a waste of everyone's time. So I've transitioned to be more of a, we are a leadership team. We are going to be leaders in our department, which means you've given me helpful feedback. I'm going to tell you what I think I want to do in the department, you tell me about that. And then also I'm expecting you to, on some level, lead. [Department] Steering Committee, especially, you know, they were coming in in the fall and saying, you know, I presented the things to them and they would say, you know, "How do you do this? How do you do that? I tried this, love it." And others. "I tried this, I hated it," and I said that's okay. I just want you to try something. And if it's terrible at the least you don't ever have to do it again. You know. But by and large, anyone who tried something and did it with fidelity, found that there was an improvement they could make to their grading practices. [I help teachers grow and develop by] Sharing research, creating a forum for teachers to share personal stories of success on an initiative, challenging all teachers to try something new but make it low stakes, providing meaningful and actionable feedback to individual teachers.
Kent	Yes, yes, I think I think a lot of it was finding a balance between leading them to learning and discovery and things like readings and site visits. So we visited lots of schools. We went to Iowa, we went to Maine, we went to Vermont, we visited schools, anybody who was doing something that was sort of in line with where we were going. We tried to get our thought leaders, the people who are kind of on the bleeding edge of innovation. We took them out to find people just to start the conversation. Think about what the pros and cons and upside and downside. Then we had a small group of teachers there were two courses that went the first year and they caught a vision for how it worked. So I guess my job was working with them as they were developing that to determine like what we were going to be loose and tight on. Well, I firmly believe that our model, like the professional learning community model, I tell our team leaders our teacher leaders... So that, the way we're structured, just so you know, the general structure in [department name redacted] we have basically 50 people. So there's me and then recently over the last five or

Participant	Participant Quotes
	seven years, we brought on an assistant director. So we had one that retired two years ago. Now we have one, another assistant director, he's an administrator, he teaches one class and then he's an administrator. So there's two administrators in our division, right? A little crazy. But then we have four core leaders. And then we have 14 team leaders. And I'm convinced that the best leadership that we do around standards based grading, curriculum, instruction, assessment, all of that... the best leadership comes from those teacher leaders. So the most important thing that I do is develop those teacher leaders for how they lead their team meetings, and how do the core leaders support the work of the team leaders. And so we spend a fair amount of time intentionally building in structures and processes so that we're meeting and coaching and supporting the teacher leaders so they can lead out the work. And anytime that they, and this is like real life this week. Anytime. Maybe one of those leaders tries to do an ole and say like, oh, it's top down, or [name redacted] or [name redacted] the superintendent like, "Oh, no, no, no. We, this circle, we are the leaders of this division. And if we're not on the same page, we need to stay in the room a little longer and get it." So I think that's like in terms of my leadership, in my sphere, that's probably the most important thing that I do. But teams will then determine the success criteria…So they decided that. Finally, we empower our teams to make many decisions for curriculum, instruction and assessment. As such, the team must come together on those items to gain consensus. So there's me and then recently over the last five or seven years, we we brought on an assistant director. So we had one that retired two years ago now we have one, another assistant director, he's a, he's an administrator, he teaches one class and then he's an administrator. So there's two administrators in our division, right? A little crazy. But then we have four core leaders. And then we have 14 team leaders. And I'm convinced that the best leadership that we do around standards based grading, curriculum, instruction, assessment, all of that... the best leadership comes from those teacher leaders. So the most important thing that I do is develop those teacher leaders for how do they lead their team meetings, how do the core leaders support the work of the team leaders.
Lori	I mean, at the end of the day, like I want, I want teachers to have autonomy in the classroom. I want them to be able to respond to their students needs I want them to in the assessments that they get excited about. And I also know that sometimes teachers, especially those who teach singleton classes, like are working on an island and I know that feeling all too well. It can be, it can be really challenging.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So when it when it came, when I got the opportunity to become an instructional coach. I was like, this is more of the direction I'd like to go, I love working with students in the classroom, but I really enjoy working with adults and I just liked having conversation about practice. And I thought that the evaluation conversations could turn into more of coaching conversations. So it was important to me that I got an opportunity to try to do more of that instead of being like, instead of having evaluation conversations that were like, You need to be doing this and this is why I thought that should be changed. I wanted to do that for whatever group of teachers I was working with. So that's what encouraged me to become a department chair. I use my favorite strategy ever. Of like the five why's or the nine why's to like get them get back to like what is the core reason for why you feel like you're not ready or you don't want to do it. And that's different for different teachers that I work with. But I feel like once I understand what the what the what the barrier is. That's where I can provide the provide the support, and I would say a lot of the support comes through just continued conversations, or me giving examples or us like co-creating things together to help them like take that next step. So we've allocated two days a month for teachers to work in their sub department course teams to have rubrics that they can like use in that unit that they're working on, and also provide support and like what this looks like in the gradebook. And this year, with the teacher I started talking with, I've seen like these these baby steps of she's, like piloting a rubric in unit one. And she's like, okay, it's actually not that bad. It just was a matter of like, instead of, you know, just kind of like dancing around the water and be like, well, it's like it's too cold to get in. She just like put her feet in. Just say okay, I can like see how this is working. Because we gave her the time and the space to connect it and it's where she's getting there slowly but surely, but she is coming around to it.
Morgan	Well, I think if you can, if your teachers will see that you're willing to "Hey, I'm gonna give you some tools to be able to work the gray area, to figure out how to make this work. So that nobody's crawling up your tail about grades. But if a kid ain't doing it, I'm also going to support you there, too. And I'm fully aware of that and fully willing to fail that kid and live with the consequences that go along with that." So I took my bunch of all stars, and they're working together trying to redo this [course name redacted] class, with the idea that as soon as they get this one done, then we're gonna do the same thing with [course name redacted] and [course name redacted], because we're going to try to figure out how to make it about the experience for the learning rather than the homework for the learning.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Because if I know what it feels like to be in Miss so and so's or Mr. So and so' class, then when I get a call when, when somebody when principal needs to talk to me about so and so or a parent calls me and says this is how things are. I can say now wait a minute, I've been in the class and I've seen this and this. I think that's interesting that you would have that opinion. Tell me more and that can help some credibility and it also takes some of the edge off when it's time for people to have other evaluators in their class.
	But I think I think any tool can be useful to move teachers practices forward if the evaluatee and the evaluator are setting that as a goal. And if this is about thinning the herd, and in getting rid of people and that sort of thing, then the tool is a bad tool, too. You know what I mean? It's about trying to find a way to... We want our students to try to get better every day. We want our teachers to try to get better every day. And if we're all modeling that and by the time that those students are done four years from now, their experience is only getting better over the course of their four years, right? That's that's the idea anyway.

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Theme - Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: **Developing a Philosophy**

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	But if we can make an argument of why we're doing it, how it's better for students, or how it's going to better our cause or how we're gonna have a better learning environment. Whatever example we'll use, it's hard to say no, or are you against it, unless we've done a really poor job selling or making a claim. I think more often than not, we don't put all the information out there, you don't put a solid data pool together. Say we need to do this, this, and this, it's going to cost this much. But one it's either part of the cost of operations, or we need to see how we're going to redo things or how to make things better in the long run. I'm not willing to go with my gut, but my gut usually tells me I'm right on many things. And over the years, people like we talked about this eight years ago, when he told us years ago, and now we're doing it. So 95% of time it's just listening, not the other 5%. [inaudible] Just listen to the 95%. But it's a, you have to have conviction in the role you have to know what you believe in. And you also I think you have to know what you're gonna fall for. And the people around you have to know too. That they're not willing to go the extra yard unless they know you're either in front of them, or you're going to be behind them. We don't get to like personality and roots of like, core ethical integrity of the individual. And how do you assess it generally in an interview process? I don't know. But if we want people to do what's right for kids, and teachers and community, ultimately, those are the things we have to have. So we just have to keep bringing up best practice and making arguments why we need to do stuff.
Beth	N/A
Carl	N/A
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	N/A
Finn	Because that is what the whole thing like that's the one benefit, I think of education is that like, ultimately 98% of people are here to help kids. You're trying to make things better for kids, for students, for learning. I'm concerned that if we, you know, interpret this a certain way, it's actually going to not help kids. Can we talk about that? You know, you can you can get a little bit further and maybe the conversation gets shut down anyway, and then just to not take that personally. Be like, okay, like, I think this is not helpful. You think it is helpful. It's the contract. I'm not going to win this argument. I'm just telling you, I

Participant	Participant Quotes
	don't think it's helpful. And just kind of leave it at that and like, but keep re-centering it on kids. What's best for students? What are we trying to teach? How are we trying to teach it? What's happening with our students?
Glenn	N/A
Henry	In the pandemic, as we were really looking at what was essential, and what was moving forward, and what was grading for equity, the teachers began to embrace conversations. Within the whole district we were having conversations just about equity in general. And what did that look like?
Isabelle	So I'm an extraordinary huge believer in standards-based grading and a standards based curriculum that focuses on student success. I think that standard based models can be very good and allow kids to continually grow and then their final grade as a result of what they know, at the end or overall or have demonstrated most often, instead of well, a few months ago you were here and that still counts in your grade because we had to report it. My team is a little traditional in their practices. And so some of the things I've brought up, they've not really even understood sometimes so I've had to, which is good, so they've asked questions. Like, “Why would you ever do a 50% minimum because isn't that unfair to the kids who got a 50 versus the kids that got a 10?” So like, even having a conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are unique.
Jerry	You know, so like, trying that, like you said, super subversive, and that's kind of what I'm, like.... I'm not I'm not making a big deal of this, but I'm hoping we can kind of show this to the department. So I'm hoping that those conversations come out almost through the task that I'm having them do, like, almost subversive but like the hidden curriculum is hoping they bring through the grading practices and discussion.
Kent	So if a teacher you know, if a teacher said like, well, eight years ago, you said this, and now you're telling me to do something different. And I would tell him, you're right. I did. I know better. Now we will do better. And I think being humble enough to realize, or if a teacher says, "Well, you never did standards-based grading in the classroom, and now you're telling me I have to do it?" like, "Yep, I never did it. Sorry."
Lori	So I feel like we're in a good spot and me and my counterparts just need to make sure that like the communication of our philosophies is consistent. Because that has been a piece of feedback. that it feels like there are some things where we

Participant	Participant Quotes
	hear one thing and we get something different if we talk to a different department chair, so we have worked to shore those up.
Morgan	So that once that's [what you believe in] set, no matter what comes down from the district, no matter what comes up from the teachers, that's your barometer of everything that you're doing. [A]nybody can teach the honors kids. Anybody can, because you can screw it up and they're still going to learn and they're still going to be successful. But not everybody can teach a kid who struggles. And if you can't teach a kid who struggles well, then then we shouldn't match you with a kid that struggles.

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Theme - Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: **Identifying Problems with Traditional Grading and Assessment Practices**

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	It should be an assessment of learning, not an assessment of how well your family life is because you have a table with a light, and it's quiet and no distractions so you can actually do your work, or you have to go to work. So you're up to two o'clock to fill out some BS assignment, because you need to get 10 points in order to make sure you get a D to still graduate even though you're fully capable of doing more than that. Got this report card. You gotta "B", and your mom is gonna come in [saying you're] an "A" student. There's three things here that he got a 62 on, and that brings his numbers down. So he's lowered that an 89.4. Well, 88.9 Because I don't round up because I've never made a mistake here. So we do that. That average has to be a B. I don't believe in averaging points. I don't believe in percentile. I mean, to think that you only have 10% to be excellent, but you have 60% to fail. There's fundamental flaws here, but also, grading comes down to teacher power. That's the to me and there's it's the the insecurity of a teacher to be able to define what this grade means because I gotta prove somebody. Because it says 90/80/70/60, because we've been doing that for hundreds of years because we have to store people for the workplace. I mean, to think that you only have 10% to be excellent, but you have 60% to fail. Homework that was garbage, daily, where anybody can copy it and you could have known it and not need to do that practice. [On converting standards to a letter grade] So we can say, alright, Ethan's got a, a three, on average, on the standard, he's got an 88 in class, so he's got an A in class.
Beth	So if you can imagine if you're a student and you have homework that gets graded in this class and your homework in math, it doesn't get graded. And then that makes all the work that we're doing rather meaningless, actually, because the gaming still happens and the homework isn't happening because it's not a part of the grade. But in high school, colleges want a grade. They don't want 60 or five or three different grades. If you report oh, here's their standards, and here's our habits of work who's looking at that? They're not looking at it. Everybody knows that. Nobody cares if you were to give them that grade. You know, parents of students

Participant	Participant Quotes
	only care about what that final grade is, unfortunately. And so they're left to me, therein lies the problem. And so at my school, we're then forced to take all these standards and come up with one grade.
Carl	So they said, a 50% is the lowest you could go if you're using percentages. And some people have difficulties giving 50% for missing work. But they are willing to give a 50% for somebody who tried and got a 40 or 30, they get the bump up to the 50%. And then the 40% is just don't turn anything in. So I was able to explain to them and they're still, we're all wrapping our heads around it because it feels icky, like you're awarding points for not doing anything. Whereas mathematically, we showed them several models where, on the zero to 15 scale, you're still giving them zeros, but it comes out saying that you're giving them a 50%, you're grading practices and stuff like that. So they see that it comes out to be the same grade. But it's different than what we're used to seeing. So the zero as a 40%. Now instead of a zero. And so that the discussion around that was, if you get a couple of zeros but perform very well... And let's say you get two zeros, and then on the other five assessments you do really well. You still might get a D. Just because zero is so hard [to recover from mathematically]. They're mathematically savvy enough to [inaudible]. You're averaging two zeros, and then [inaudible] these or whatever and it drags the grade down. Parents, when you explain it, that is basically the same thing. They just kind of shrug and say whatever they, they're more interested in, while there's a 40 percentage is the lowest that can go and use a parents think that's weird. Because they think you're awarding them points for zeros, instead of them all saying, "Hey, this is great." They're more like, "Why are you doing this?" And so we find that more. Some parents are like, "Thank you," because they are the students that struggle. But a lot of them are skeptical about why are you making it easy on their kids? And most of them really don't care. I'll add to that, that I agree that when you are using standards based grading, behavior shouldn't be a part of grade reporting. Because the grade, that you're grading a standard, but kids need accountability and parents need help knowing how their kid is doing. And so I do think there should be some place where we report out on habits of work and I'm actually okay with it being a part of their grade. The problem we have right now is standards based grading reporting works in middle school and grade school because nobody cares about those report cards.
Daryl	If nothing else, but what I think is coming also will be something close to like, we're changing our scale, like, we'll go from 100 to 50. So we're currently living

Participant	Participant Quotes
	through some like ongoing meetings and kind of kind of some collaborative discussions that seem to be heading in that direction. And so I will just kind of leave that as an umbrella term, because what does, it falls under that is are things like, you know, policies where it's one day late half credit, or, you know, so then therefore, very quickly, things are 50%. I think also things that go into that are giving the super F. How there's basically one way to get four other grades, but then there's five ways to have an F when you when you go from zero to that when you go from a zero to 100 scale. So when you have a combination of of like massive late deduction penalties, and also the super F's and 10 percents and 20 percents, the numbers just simply get to a point where a kid could mathematically be failing by midterm, and we, if they straight A's from there on out, they still would not pass the course simply because of the numbers. So it just seems broken. So yeah, I think it does come back to you know, what is what is a grade, what is, what points are more or less behavior, as opposed to representing their knowledge or understanding of a subject?
Eugene	N/A
Finn	N/A
Glenn	Guskey, you know, Guskey, you think Guskey is one of the ones I liked him, he's like, you know, 10% participation and all that, that's fine. That's as opposed... or 10% ungraded homework and participation, you know? He's not, he's not so pure philosophically, you know. 10% doesn't actually matter that much. And I think the same thing in some ways, you know, COVID, we lost a couple [inaudible]... We lost some ground. But in a couple places, COVID was good, because all my teachers decided to... Nobody really takes off for late, anymore. We either accept it or we don't. And everybody accepts it. Kind of during or before the unit is over. So if you... so that was a big thing of agreement that we came to during COVID. So, the teachers hate the pressure to accept unit one stuff in December before finals or before the end, right? They hate that. So they all thought that, you know, not grading late down with that. And so then we tried to come up with something we could agree on really the whole just the whole department. We had some people that maybe are quicker to say, "No, it's too late." But basically everybody accepts late work within the unit If you give a [bunch of] teachers and say, grade these, you can grade these from A to D. Right? You're gonna get a lot more consistency than if you have given this a number score out of 100. Right? Then they will be all over the map. I kind of think we pretend math is more fair than that. But I'm not sure.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	But yeah, right, rather than come in and argue for zeros. I think so many people like to have the zero fight, right. Well, I've been having the zero, I've argued about zero since I said, yeah, I don't know, the first assessment conference I went to a 2007 or something. I mean, I've, you know, O'Connor's 10 fixes for broken grades. You know, I read that when it was new. So, but people are still wanting to have that conversation. Right? That's just like a big conversation and big fight.
	I think I've been successful in kind of lowering those impacts on grades in my department, but I think being willing to let some teachers give zeros and other teachers, you know, not dying on that hill, I think helped me get them all to, you know, okay, fine, you can give zeros, but you know, how are you making most of your grade about what kids actually know and can do? What's your, what's your method?
	But [the gradebook is] a communication tool to parents and students.
	That they [teachers] use their gradebooks to communicate with students, parents, Special Ed teachers about students' learning and skill--not just work completion.
	Like, what do the parents see, what do parents see and expect? What are teachers required to do? You know, weekly, I think we are weekly grades.
	He's doing all his homework, but the tests are hard [inaudible]. So I'm not worried about him. Or more likely, right? He's not doing his homework and his test scores are low. You can see, here's his test grade, here's his homework grade. And be, just be able to see that has really been nice, because I can see it all along the way. And it's kind of always right. As opposed to the the total points thing like this guy talking to you like, "Well, I got a factor thing. And in the end, it's all going to be great." Yeah, but along the way, it isn't. So for communicating that piece, that was really wonderful. So I don't know, I think categories are nothing to science people, though you guys have been doing those for hundreds of years.
Henry	So for example, there was a big discussions about zeros and what does zero mean and all those different sorts of things. And rather than saying to people, no, you can't give a zero, we took a more positive approach and the statement in our practices, the belief is that we put, students must have the opportunity to continuously improve their skills as they move through language acquisition steps, okay? And then the actual practice is: retakes must be available for summatives for students to demonstrate, demonstrate growth. And late work should be accepted, but only until the end of the unit. So that allows somebody who really wants to still give that zero and feels like that's the only way kids will do their work. But it forces them to have a longer period of time for the kid to

Participant	Participant Quotes
	demonstrate. And I think that that's, that was something they all agreed that they could live with that. I think it's going to be people's attitudes. skepticism, "I want to do it my way because I think this is right," even though there's nothing to back it up in any kind of research manner. Right? There is nothing that supports a zero when it comes to research, but it's just you know, that's been my whole experience. And by God those kids are going to do it if they see a zero in their grades. Yeah, maybe they're not. And they still convert their standards based grading to a letter grade at the final moment because they need to report that for colleges, and God forbid a child at [school name redacted] wouldn't get into the best universities. The shame on the family if the child doesn't make it in, right. So, you know, we don't have that kind of, same kind of attitude here. But I think parents would not understand without there being an explanation. You know what, there's lots of things that say how that you know, that destroys in the same way you know, including behavior, rewarding behavior with grades, there's nothing right there yet. There are people in the department who super strongly feel like it is my responsibility to create a citizen, and a citizen includes these following things and the only way I can get them to do things if I make it part of their grade. No, you know, taking the kids grade down, because they're tardy does nothing, doesn't change behavior. I think that becomes, you know, a separate thing that you talked about, I think there's there's nothing to prevent you from making comments about that. As part of the grade you know, or pardon me the grading report, right? Progress Reports for us are coming out. You have the ability to have pre selected comments, or you have the ability to write your own comments. You know, at that point game, it's easy to say, you know, student is, student's tardiness is affecting their ability to be prepared for class activities. Right, you let the family know that. Is it going to change it? Perhaps not. But then you know, you got to go well, what are you doing when the kid doesn't care whether they're the first five minutes of class?
Isabelle	So if I'm doing it like based off of each of the learning targets for the unit, which is definitely not a standards based approach, but I'm grading their, I'm reporting their ability level for that learning target on a 4/3/2/1/0 scale of evidence that shows they grasp it. But I haven't yet thought far enough to think like in different units would they be able to show this and what I retro actively go back and change this because it's the same skill so it's more of like a skill based score reporting. I don't know. But I still feel like it's better than saying you got to 21% because that doesn't mean anything.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Interestingly enough, a lot of the pushback I get for a minimum grade comes more from [department name redacted] teachers, which seems so bizarre to me that they would not understand like the detriment of the zero in a grade. And then, just in terms of communication purposes, I think it's really important to have teachers realize what parents see when they log in. And like how confusing a gradebook is. If you have 57 assignments and you have things entered that aren't in Schoology, or that are named slightly different in Schoology and then figuring out what the kid's missing work is. You know, it's really hard to see and a lot of times they're seeing it on their phone, which makes it even harder because they're not even seeing a grade printout. It's just, click here to see the expanded category. So helping them see that if we were more consistent, even... I've even thought of it to the point, where could all freshmen teachers do the same thing? And [department name redacted] is a little different because they're all [taking the same course in 9th grade]. But in [department name redacted], as freshmen all, you know, kind of all over, or even traditionally, freshman courses.
Jerry	And part of it is the pressure of the community too. The community wants, so many of them went to [school name redacted], they want it to be exactly like their kid experienced it. So if you were to propose a course that had no homework, they'd be like "No, no, no. At [school name redacted] you have homework, because that's what I had." I don't know if you have this at [school name redacted], but because we're such a strong performing school, guessing [school name redacted] is too, there's not a lot of impetus for change. But when you're at a school that's getting, the average ACT a few years ago was 28, the average was 28. And AP scores are like an average of 4.8, it's hard for teachers to see that there might be any changes that need to happen, that could happen. And I quickly realized in the first very short time there, the first few months, that [school name redacted] teachers, at least in the [department name redacted], had had very little exposure to anything outside of [school name redacted]. And so even to this day, if you said professional learning team or professional learning community, they would have no clue.
Kent	I think we had a feeling that there's better ways to grade than averaging points and you know, percentages. We knew there were better practices. So we started moving toward them. One thing that we learned on the global scale that we're still struggling a little bit with, is parents early on, we tried to be very idealistic where kids are going to, we're going to be gathering evidence over the course of a semester. And we don't really give you a grade projection until later. What we found out is there was a

Participant	Participant Quotes
	little bit of mutiny because parents want to know before six or seven weeks, “Is my kid doing okay?” And so you can say, "Well, don't worry, I'm collecting evidence and they're not proficient yet. But it's okay, because we just started the class." And so we've tried to find the balance between projecting a grade that's going to be on the semester transcript after you've got enough evidence to do that in a meaningful way. I still think we're probably, now we've swung the other way. We're projecting a little bit too much, too early. So we've been talking about some ways to maybe delay that a little bit longer, and maybe have a gradual release, like "Hey, the first, the first three weeks or first four weeks, we won't project any grade. Then we'll go another four weeks and it'll be more like, “Hey, you're passing or failing, then it'd be a little bit longer.” That's been something we've tried to balance out. The ideal is, the idealism of not projecting grades too soon, but not keeping parents in the dark. So they're not all of a sudden, you're in November and they're like, “Yeah, my kid’s getting a C! What the heck? That might be good for you, that's not okay for us."
Lori	For decades, grades have been loaded. They have been an accumulation of points that speak to a student's behavior, timeliness, participation, engagement, compliance, and... at some point their knowledge of the content. Not to mention the role that bias plays in there.
Morgan	And then the other piece you had mentioned before about the 50% kind of thing and that sort of thing. I've been pushing that since he talked me in, and you think about that mathematically. We talked about the best example that I've come up with to get people to listen is "Here's what I'm going to do on your evaluation. When I do this, I'm gonna give you a low enough score, so that you're screwed on the next evaluation, too. How would you take that?" Well, it's not fair. Okay, well you just gave a kid a 36% on this test. And you're gonna let that kid have a 36% on the test even though 60% is passing. And we got 10% for A and 10% for B. So effectively what you just said is you just took 14 extra percent off of the kid's next test before the kid even started to try to get that grade to passing. Does that sound fair to you? Well no, correct? The 50 is an important thing I think. The 50% I think is a big deal. I think that people underestimate the difference between giving a kid an F on a test and giving the kid an FU on a test, right, that you know that. I think that's a big one. And so that's where our, we don't really go to 50s right away, we go to 50s at strategic times. Now you go to take the test you make a legitimate effort, than the worst you can do is a 50.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Well, so the district is trying to take prospective leaders and allowing them to kind of shadow or to sit in on our building leadership team meeting to find out how it goes. Well, one of our teachers who has transferred from a different building this year. So first year she's she's been at [school name redacted] she's been instead of being at [school name redacted] for her last 17 years. She's at [school name redacted] now. Partly if, well no, completely a function of numbers at [school name redacted] enrollment is you know, doing that kind of thing. And so now she's here this year. Well, we talked about the 50% thing, right? And and that has been something so this is I guess I'm going to also out myself as a as not being anywhere remotely close to perfect. But, so [name redacted] comes in from a different building. And we don't even talk about the 50% floor when we come back to school this year. Like we have no discussion about it in STEM, because it's just what we've been doing, right. So this is how great how great I am as a leader. We're sitting in this meeting yesterday and our student services director says, "Hey, are we still doing the 50% floor thing? Like is that an expectation?" And I you know, kind of look around the table and like, "Well, yeah, that's the expectation, is that this is part of what we do." And student services coordinator says, "Well, it's not happening." So it goes to another different division head and says "You're doing in your division. That's the expectation. That's not happening." Goes to a third one. It's not happening. It goes. So goes to [name redacted] and [name redacted] is like, "I don't know what you're talking about." Right? So here I am, you know, A plus for me. Pretty proud of myself for being in, being transparent, being a good communicator, this kind of thing. So we talk through it, largely the same conversation that you and I had last week or a couple weeks ago. Whenever it was that we did that. About why it's a good idea, about why it's right about why... I actually got lost in a Twitter feed yesterday about that 50% thing. I don't know whether you saw it or not. But, but right, just good stuff, like good communication, questions and discussion and things like that. [Name redacted] doesn't know anything, what it's about. [name redacted]'s teaching, [course names redacted], which is our lowest level juniors. And they're a ragtag bunch, I mean, they are. And so she's doing yeoman's work with those kids. And she's like, "But if a kid doesn't, if a kid sleeps through the test, I don't want to give him 50%." You know, she's being honest, right? Being upfront. No, no, [name redacted], that's not we're talking about. We're talking about what happens if we make legitimate effort, and mathematically... yada yada, yada, right? And so, discussions, right.
	And so I believe that homework is, especially with kids, like I teach, homework is worthless, or it's just a fight.
	It's [homework] setting them up for, setting them up for failure.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Theme - Revising Practices on Instruction, Assessment, and Grading: **Reforming Instructional, Assessment, and Grading Practices**

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	So I'm looking at evidence based, about 6, 7, 8 years ago, and we had a curriculum director was sort of in on it, but he lost sight of that thought process. Look and so with respect to assessments and those conversations, with my two counterparts, and we're all agreed so we're all having these conversations, with different departments to so they started seeing like health and wellness they're looking to go to a four point grading rubric. If we have that standards, and we have good targets, and we're using best practices instruction with there's a lot of ifs within that. And we understand what we're doing within these targets to really assess what we should be teaching and essentially learning, that might give us the most fair assessment with students learning over the confines, whatever we want to call unit semester or whatnot. But we're coding towards key standards, on assessment directly, that are not being part of the grade, but we're still collecting evidence and information. But they also have major problems, because the power? How do I control your behavior? Now, you don't even have to listen. You may be inherently good at English or already read this book, or you can sit down take a paper test. But kids you get at your school that miss like 40 days, we still get an "A" or "B". Still able to do it. I know that this says about my instruction. Maybe we did it in half the time and you can still do well. Your kids are sitting there every day they fail. So how are they just not listening? Are you just really not interacting or engaged with them? Or are you not checking daily to see what they know and don't know? And how would we change our approach and make sure they get there? I have a hard time. So let's start aligning. And it started with one on most of our fundamental work, in [department name redacted] has come from our [course name redacted] group that helped push our feeder schools to start looking at [curriculum] and changing down there. And then put a change in the force or [course name redacted], and [course name redacted], we said alright basically to turn into a [course name redacted]. Since we got away from the ACT into SAT, and the amount of [course] on the SAT is like 11% were like we get more [course name redacted] in there, we get some [course content] and [course content] in there. And we can bridge that gap with more kids and hopefully become successful, even though our SATs scores don't show that right now. But that had been let's open this up.
Beth	And so I do think there should be some place where we report on habits of work and I'm actually okay with it being a part of their grade.

Participant	Participant Quotes

So I guess where I am struggling, right now with what I believe is I don't think kids should go home and do an hour or two hours of homework. I have children, I hate homework. However, you have to practice to get good at anything you have to practice.

I will continue to listen and we will continue to problem solve homework.

But I will never win the battle like homework is never going to be worth anything.

So everybody [in our district] is moving towards standards based grading and competency, they're just all moving at a much slower pace. And what I'm learning is they're not all going to do common assessments like we did. I think because the district realized how hard that is.

And then, also at the same time [as a curricular revision], we also shifted to standards-based grading and what our district calls competency based learning. We did all of that at once.

The problem we have right now is standards based grading reporting works in middle school and grade school because nobody cares about those report cards. But in high school, colleges want a grade. They don't want 60 or five or three different grades. If you report oh, here's their standards, and here's our habits of work who's looking at that? They're not looking at it. Everybody knows that. Nobody cares if you were to give them that grade. You know, parents of students only care about what that final grade is, unfortunately. And so they're left to me, therein lies the problem. We're trying to learn standards and letting them know what they really know, but the rest of the world hasn't caught up to that yet. And so at my school, we're then forced to take all these standards and come up with one grade. And then that makes all the work that we're doing rather meaningless, actually, because the gaming still happens and the homework isn't happening because it's not a part of the grade.

Beth: Well, and then you add in, the next layer in my district, is everybody can retake everything.
Researcher: Are there limits to that in any way?
Beth: Well, we are pushing the envelope at [school name redacted] this year on that, we're trying to change it. But, no. I mean, like, there isn't like you ever. If our guiding principles say that every student has an opportunity for a retake. So we're working on defining what that means. And then another thing because you're not requiring homework. And yet you're not making the task important to the students. So it's just another layer of problems that we have introduced. That further showed that the grade is not a predictor of how well a kid's gonna do in

Participant	Participant Quotes
	college, you know, cuz I don't know. I haven't called and asked. I don't think colleges let everybody retake all their tests. And they are we all wrote our test our new curriculum, we all wrote our tests together. And we tried to keep them the same, but that like is a logistical nightmare. So they're pretty close to the same. They have the same kind of, they all have the same learning targets and the same structure, but schools have the ability to like adjust some of the problems and they can add a couple of extra. Well, we call them pods, but if they feel like they need to assess something a little bit more, they can have like a review, but they are created as they were all created at the district team. Yeah, so some of the [district name redacted], we just went all in, so we went all in my first year here with detracking. And when I say detrack while, we detracked and we integrated, and so integrated means we switched from the traditional [course sequence] to the [integrated] model. And also, not just that, but we also switched with our curriculum to more of a task based instruction and really pushing our teachers to teach using tasks instead of, you know, some of that more traditional kind of lecture based. You know, I we things we look for, like our learning targets being used, you know, are they visual? Like if, if I were to be in a classroom, I would ask a kid if they knew what the learning targets were for the day because that's a part of assessment literacy. And yeah, we do that too. So that part's really good. And then they're followed.
Carl	And that's a whole nother can of worms, because there's different styles of standards based grading that's going on in the school. And that's another one of the hard discussions that they had was, well, as you're doing it, you have to give feedback. And they have to make corrections along the way. Because their evidence has to be good in order to make their plan and use their evidence and reasoning. So you have to ensure that they have great evidence. And so philosophically, it's kind of a difficult one for some of them to understand that you can reassess them along the way and guide them, they'll give them a grade and say, "Okay, with help, they're able to come up with their evidence, and then make a claim that using the evidence and reasoning." But it's the application that's giving them [students] difficulty. And then it's changed some of their instruction. And because they learned quickly that students are really good at algorithms. But when they're asked to come up with a novel solution, they are having difficulty. So they realize they have to teach them how to problem solve for a new type of application without making it an algorithm. And that's really hard to do, because you can only give so many of the examples,

Participant	Participant Quotes
	and then it becomes another algorithm. But that's what they learned about their instruction was they said, "This is what we want to assess." Their assessment came back and showed them where the deficiency was. And they figured that a lot of that was because students were being asked to do something that they didn't have practice doing. They're just expected to figure this out when they've never had a problem solve before. So that makes sense. So there was no formative before the summative. Which I think was what the idea of an assessment is supposed to do is, not just tell you where the student is, but also then reflect, what does this tell us about the curriculum? They could have easily done, "Well, let's get rid of application questions, because because they're struggling with it." Instead, they changed their instruction and assessment because they felt that that's what their standard there was, and therefore they should change how they do the instruction so that we can meet their assessment needs.
Daryl	So I think it starts there with, you know, having policies where kids are not, you know, doomed to failure really early on or, or unnecessarily at any point in the semester. So, I don't score below 50. That's the lowest I'll give even if the kid doesn't turn something in. Which, instead of putting a zero in the gradebook; you know, late deductions are minor, if they are at all it depends on kind of what's going on with the kid's life or how late how late it really is. And also means that to be cognizant about, you know, homework, and what are some things that kids would be up late turning in, and if it's in class stuff, that's different, because maybe they're not able to finish in time. But if it's homework, then I also, I also really reduce how much homework I give. I am not a big homework teacher, I haven't been a big homework teacher in probably a decade. So just eliminating one more thing that a kid would be late on or that would pile up that would become an academic hurdle for the kiddo. No, but none of them exceed 10 in my group just because of, between homework and then plus labs, and then assessments. I am not a big homework teacher, I haven't been a big homework teacher in probably a decade. So just eliminating one more thing that a kid would be late on or that would pile up that would become an academic hurdle for the kiddo. I think the only thing is, I would say, right now our group is definitely as a group, I guess, our school board and district offices is, I think, wanting to move us to a standards based grading model. We're, we're relatively close to [school name redacted]. And when they have, a couple of years ago, it seems like after that, we're a couple years behind. So I think people are kind of anticipating something like that. If nothing else, but what I think is coming also will be something close to like, we're changing our scale, like, we'll go from 100 to 50. So we're currently living through some like ongoing meetings and kind of kind of some collaborative

Participant	Participant Quotes
	discussions that seem to be heading in that direction. So so I don't know if a year from now I'll say we're a standards based school or... because there is, the school board has requested some type of proposal for how to move forward grading and assessment as a district by the by June, this June. Okay. So there are focus groups and committees that are kind of marching towards that timeline to work on that.
	So it just seems broken. And that's the side of the standards based grading philosophy that I think I lean towards where, you know, a kid could demonstrate mastery of a standard, but then there's some hang ups I have kind of with just how the system get converted, and what happens, stuff around it for college applications and things like that. So some of that gets a little nitpicky, if and then for logistics, it's a little bit subjective, perhaps for me. So I think it starts there with you know, having policies where kids are not, you know, doomed to failure really early on or, or unnecessarily at any point in the semester.
	But I was okay with just leaving it that anytime a kid is assessed for a grade that grade should, that assessment should be retake-able. Well, you could argue if it is a formative or summative, or is it a Performance Task, there's probably some gray area with some of that debate, but but at least if it's like, to some level of integrity, here's a test like no talking, you know, there's whatever you do for test procedures. So if it's a quiz, or a test that's going in the gradebook for grade on like a formative or something, and we're just taking a check for understanding, then that should be retake-able. So they tried to kind of write their language where quizzes were exempt from this retake policy, but tests of course, they could retake tests. So that comes down to about three unit tests or so roughly a semester, but there's a whole bunch of quizzes in there that can very quickly, to this to the situation where some to some of the... I just knew that one of the teachers was planning on not having a unit test and one of the units and just only stacking it full of quizzes, just because he knew that those would not be retake-able. So, that was my push back to that group, where any time there's... whatever semantics you want to say, if it's a quiz or a test, that's an assessment you've taken for a grade, therefore, that has to be retake-able by nature of the policy.
	Yeah, you know, keeping, making sure tests are multifaceted. The retakes are multifaceted and leveled out and, you know, appropriate and so you know…So yeah, I think it does come back to you know, what is what is a grade, what is, what points are more or less behavior, as opposed to representing their knowledge or understanding of a subject?

Participant	Participant Quotes
Eugene	We did a curriculum rewrite just before I got here, and it was turning whenever we did traditionally, and just into standards based, standards referenced, education and grading. And so we've had rubrics and interrater reliability and all this stuff for a long time. But we haven't aligned it 9-12 on a rubric that is continuous and with performance indicators that are across the district and now we do have that. So that's what we've been working on, in turn though, was long as we're putting them into place we are revamping our assessment process to to shift a bit more towards whatever gaps we see happening. Like I said, there's probably about 20 different little criteria and some of which were nailing and some of which were not. That's what I will be in workshops with teachers directly going over that and as they build their units of instruction out. I'll be sitting with them and working with them on it. So it's a pretty ideal place to be for legacy project. So with respect to the CBE [competency-based education] rewrite very much, and that will directly affect freshmen next year, sophomores the year after. And juniors and seniors the year after that. With our current setting. We did a curriculum rewrite just before I got here, and it was turning whenever we did traditionally, and just into standards based, standards referenced, education and grading. And so we've had rubrics and interrater reliability and all this stuff for a long time. But we haven't aligned it 9-12 on a rubric that is continuous and with performance indicators that are across the district and now we do have that. So that's what we've been working on, in turn though, was long as we're putting them into place we are revamping our assessment process to to shift a bit more towards whatever gaps we see happening. So, it's, we are in the middle of of a rewrite that that's going to take kind of all we've got, and so far I like what I'm seeing, and we've given them some really great tools, a unit template, and we developed these performance indicators, these competencies, but now they have to think about how do I do six, seven units make them super interesting, scaffolded. We're detracking and completely so they've got to be academically diverse in terms of having heterogeneous classes, lots of supports for the whole spectrum of students that we have. So I think the teaming, the personalities, and the history of the department are what will answer that question.
Finn	Anecdotally, It feels like some teachers on my [course name redacted] team are assigning far less homework now. I don't have hard data to back that up. And it's definitely not the case across every single teacher, but it does feel to me from being with ninth graders over the last couple of years that the homework volume has decreased in, and particularly on the [course name redacted] team. So I'll take that as a small [win]. And this is one of the reasons that people are resistant to this, at least particularly in [department name redacted] from my standpoint is like, you know, standards

Participant	Participant Quotes
	based grading, as an idea basically calls out people's entire conceptions of what it means to do [content name redacted]. So trying to be more embedded and be more aggressive with [course name redacted], two course team terms of like calling meetings like we're going to meet, let's talk about this, beginning of this year, trying to be really out front of like, okay, what unit first semester, are we going to redo? It seemed like we went to this last year, kind of seemed like the [course content] unit was a unit we really, you know, kids really struggled with? Yes, let's redo the [course content] unit. Okay. So now we're trying to talk about redoing the [course content] unit. That's a pretty small team, there's like four teachers, and one of them, it's like, I'm thinking about, “I really want to do it, you know, can we think about the assessment?” Like, “Yes, great, let's talk about the assessment,” you know, so trying to really like, really, from my perspective, it's, again, it's embedded with those course teams, and like, in the real like, nitty gritty of the course teams and start to say things like, you know, "How do we want to assess them? How are we assessing them? What are some different things we could do to assess them?"
Glenn	So we have to learn how to write a short answer question, we have to learn how to write a DBQ question. We have to learn how to deal with a stimulus, multiple choice question. So we have to learn how to make a claim, describe evidence. So you have all those, so that course gives me a nice framework of skills that I can build as a ladder throughout the class. So then the skills would be the same through the whole course, the content would change. We're always making claims we're always finding evidence, and we're learning how to do that in the beginning of the class. So those, get used to the kinds of things we're asking them to do. So it really is a kind of a spiral curriculum, right? The assessment system would also spiral and this, it would be skill based. But the kids would see it for quite a while, and the kids would sometimes think of it as kind of, think it's a Content Test. But I can see how it's building the skills. Or the kids might even think it's very content knowledge oriented test, this quiz this week. Yeah, I can see how it's building the skill. You know, like, I had a question. I had a dumb question today, like if the Grand Canal in China is the answer, what's the question? And I'm trying to get them to see that the stuff chosen in the chapters is evidence for some kind of claim, right? China's this great commercial business powerhouse in the world. Right. And they have this huge canal for moving goods up and down, when the rest of the world doesn't have such a thing. So that same, that same thing, that same, you know, thinking skill is something we're going to keep going with. But devaluing homework, I think, successful with I don't know, what do you call them...ungraded grades, check ins, worksheets that nobody reads what they actually wrote on it. And giving points for that. So points for ungraded stuff or

Participant	Participant Quotes
	unread stuff. I think I've been successful in kind of lowering those impacts on grades in my department. And I think the other thing that makes my teachers crazy about is, you know... I guess the thing I fought teachers hard on as opposed to those fixes, and those ideas, you know, make retakes or not. I like corrections better than retakes. Like alternative assessments instead of retakes. So I guess I would have a system of what do you call it... I said not instead of retakes. I like revisions, corrections. I'd have a good test correction system. I get multiple kinds of assessments. I would have quick, I would have quick low stakes assessment. You know, I have some kind of quick low stakes assessment every day, I could do it. Everyday would be a low stakes, quick assessment.
Henry	No, I really would like to have the conditions set. Even if everybody's not 100% on board. We are significantly closer to being a standards based curriculum and a standards based grading system. That we're really looking for student, we're really measuring what students can do, rather than having them just jump through artificial hoops. And what's interesting to me is because everything shifted and we you know, they talked about the kids aren't able to do what they used to do at these levels and you know, all of this and a different work ethic. As I brought up though, do we have anything to say about this document at our department meeting this week? Some individuals came to you like our curriculum documents no longer reflect and you want us to examine our grading practices. You want to do this? Well, we don't even know for sure what we're teaching. And you know, they got a memo from me today, an email, saying, "Look, folks, that's up to you. You, you have late start times, you have your sixth assignment period, you have all the ability to control the curriculum yourselves. You just have to do it. And you know, let me know if you need help, but I'm not doing that work for you." My new secretary said they wanted you to wave a magic wand and fix it all for them, and you have to do the work. You got it. So we'll see if they, you know, kind of, but it's really hard to talk about, you know, grading in the modes of communication if your curriculum documents aren't even set up that way, because you've ignored making curricular changes over the last 4 or 5 years. Officially, and then more importantly is getting them to kind of begin aligning grade books beginning aligned to practice all those sorts of things that I think some of them are doing.
Isabelle	I think that standard based models can be very good and allow kids to continually grow and then their final grade as a result of what they know, at the end or overall

Participant	Participant Quotes
	or have demonstrated most often, instead of well, a few months ago you were here and that still counts in your grade because we had to report it.
Jerry	I hope they will try something different. And, I hope in some way (small or big) they will move toward better grading practices so that in five years, we are all more in line with each other and in line with what experts in this field have learned than we are now. I think this year, the same thing is going to happen when we look at assessments. I think for the most part, these course teams will figure out what is a good question and what is not a good question as they come up with these common assessment questions.
Kent	Yeah, like is so historically, big history, like it was probably 2007 or 2008. We took all of our team leaders schoolwide. So that's probably, I don't know, 100? 150? 150 teacher leaders, and we went off site and that's when people were just first starting to talk about learning targets. Right, which seems like we've been talking about learning targets forever. But really, that was the late 2000s. And [the presenter] talked about clarity, matching learning targets to assessments. So we did that work. We had some teachers that came back. I still remember one of the teacher leaders, on the way out she's like, "Are we going, does this kind of walk us towards standards-based grading?" And I said like, at that point, truthfully, "I don't even know what standards-based grading is, so I don't think so. I haven't heard, like I don't know that that's true." But it was really just around how the targets drive the instruction, the assessment. And then we had a couple of [teachers] out of that that tried to pilot some flavor of standards-based grading. And that, I would say they had mixed results, and then they kind of abandoned that. And then there were some people that started getting a vision for standards-based grading that was focused on skills. And that was probably like 2011-2012, and Driver's Ed. was one of the classes that piloted it. And so they started getting a sense, then they just started inviting some early adopters to come into that process. And then if you remember that whole window that was then from 2011 to 2015, the window of Common Core, NGSS and then the social studies framework. So we used that time to really take a deep look at our curriculum. SLOs [student learning objectives] were also going on at that time. So we tried to roll all those things together, where SLOs were skills based. Just like we wanted our grading system to be based. So we wanted the SLO to be focused on a skill to monitor growth. Then that naturally progressed into let's just do our whole course that way. So that was that, and I think probably by 2020... 2020 was probably the year I'm guessing 2019... Probably 2020, Fall of 2020, because I think it was COVID year like of all years. That was the last year, so those who were the resistors, the last adopters, like all teams must be standards based grading by 2020.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Yeah, I mean, we've been at it for a long time. We took the longest, we took the longest transition to standards based grading in the history of the world. Like 10 years from our first team to our last. I think our goal would be that teachers are somehow incorporating that and that there are... My bigger learning goal for teachers is that they have a better grasp on the cross cutting concepts as a lens to look at [department name redacted]. So they would be doing some learning to understand really what that means, like what cause and effect really mean when they talk about that as a cross cutting concept, the idea of mechanisms behind and between the cause and effect. But for them to get a grasp of that then to think about that, how that will play into their scoring as a success criteria. I'm, what I'm imagining it to be as success criteria, where the student demonstrates one of the cross cutting concepts or can look at the learning through the cross cutting concept…So I think having that being like, yeah, if you want to get a proficient score on this test, a proficient score is going to represent all three demands. So that would be kind of what we see. And we have a few courses and a few teams, teachers that are doing that, you know…A couple of other teams are playing around with that or maybe they've taken one cross cutting concept and tried to infuse it throughout the year. And if our goal is to prepare them for standardized tests, then I think we need to rethink what we're doing, because I don't think that's our goal is to prepare them. But I will say let's not let's not kid ourselves and say that that's not important, because it is important for our kids. That's a big deal for scholarship money, and for applications. So I do think we need to make sure that our kids are prepared for standardized tests. But if you think about the things that kids are asked to do on the standardized test, like synthesize reading, understand text, all those things, those are the skills. Those standardized tests are way more skills focused than our traditional content focused tests. So I think actually standards based does a better job of preparing that. Other than the, if the skill is select the right answer from a list of choices. If that's your skill, then you should do multiple, more multiple choice. I think otherwise standards based, the way that we've done it with skills I think prepares kids so much better. And the data would show that our kids are continuing to do better and better on AP exams. They're continuing to do better and better. Like it's I think that's like a, you know, it's a flare that people throw up. But it just, our experience is not that our kids are less prepared, if anything, they're more prepared.
Lori	I feel like I did have a little bit of help from the district because I came in here actually thinking that everybody who taught here was teaching an SBG [standards-based grading] course. Because I was like, Oh, this is like the most exciting part about like, coming to this district is that like SBG is already a thing. Only to find out that it's totally wasn't. So teachers knew that like SBG was coming and that CBE [competency-based education] was coming but there was

Participant	Participant Quotes
	never any structure in terms of how they would get there. So I feel like I had to like I had a leg to stand on to be like, okay, like, this is our plan. We all know that it's coming. And this is what we're going to do to get there and what it's going to look like. So there wasn't really a ton of convincing. But I did have a claim. Like the why and why I believe in it, and why I believe it's like a more equitable practice for our students. So same thing with like, you know, like a claim evidence reasoning standard are framed up a little bit differently. So what our three department chairs did was we created this like SBG menu of standards, and told teams you had to choose at least one standard from the menu to use in your courses. So the benefit of doing that is that students would see the same skill across, or the same standard across multiple [department name redacted] courses, and would see how the skill would just be applied differently to whatever course they were taking. So I think that we're going to be probably almost 100% SBG by the end of year five, which would be awesome. That said, as a [department name redacted] leadership team, we strongly believe that SBG allows for clearer communication around what a grade is, a more accurate representation of what students know, a more objective understanding of the skills students have acquired, a way to cultivate a greater growth mindset, and overall a more equitable/responsive approach to assessment. I feel like the area where there's maybe there isn't a ton of overlap, or there's a bit of a disconnect or inconsistency is just with retakes. And who gets a retake and how long you have to retake it and what the format of the retake looks like. I would say I don't have as many of those conversations in our project based classes. I think largely because the nature of the project is more student driven. At the end of the day, the retake is basically like go back and just redo this and resubmit it. Or try this stage of the process again …. And so teachers I feel have been really flexible with that but it's more of my traditional classroom environments like [course name redacted]. Retakes are definitely a large part of the conversation. And teachers feel like a retake has to be another teacher created exam with different questions. When it doesn't. And that's that that's where I think SBG [standards-based grading] can really come into play where it's like, you need to make sure that your assessment questions are aligning with the standard. And if they're not aligning with a standard or what you've taught throughout the course of the unit, then why are you assessing it? So you know, I've posed questions to teachers like…they did it incorrectly. You know, they can definitely go back in there and fix the errors that they made, but maybe it's also a conversation with you, where they're explaining their steps and

Participant	Participant Quotes
	why they made the decisions that they did as the retake and you can grade them on the spot and it can be a 10 minute conversation. It doesn't need to be this, spending 30 minutes, recreate this. But I just, I don't think that that philosophy is necessarily shared across the district or at least with other department chairs at [school name redacted]. I know that it's a huge topic of conversation and there's a lot of frustration around it. [In discussing reassessments]...And that's that that's where I think SBG [standards-based grading] can really come into play where it's like, you need to make sure that your assessment questions are aligning with the standard. And if they're not aligning with a standard or what you've taught throughout the course of the unit, then why are you assessing it? So the same thing with like, you know, like a claim evidence reasoning standard are framed up a little bit differently. So what our three department chairs did was we created this SBG menu of standards, and told teams you had to choose at least one standard from the menu to use in your courses. So the benefit of doing that is that students would see the same skill across, or the same standard across multiple [department name redacted] courses, and would see how the skill would just be applied differently to whatever course they were taking. We felt like that alleviated a lot of pressure and confusion. And it also just gave some approved common language for teams to use right away. So we weren't spending all this time wordsmithing the crap out of individual standards and rubrics. So that I think was a huge success throughout this entire process.
Morgan	But if I can't ever get them to play the game, right? I mean, what's what's, what should we do math guy we should whatever we ask kids to do, we should grade every single problem that they give us. We should give them feedback on it the very next day, and we should make sure that they have a chance to ask questions about that feedback, right? Every day. Why don't, why doesn't everybody do that? You can't. It's not practical? And so what we designed is this model where try it. Let's try this one. See what happens. To the point that we had set this up enough. We designed the course with the idea of trying to get them to ask us the questions that we wanted to answer. And so then as we work, continued to work through this and continue work through this, by the middle of February, I will have kids asking me Well, assuming it works well again. Last February, we had kids asking us how to factor. Well, we should be able to. Wait. Can you show us how to do that? No shit. Yeah. Okay. I mean, if you want me to there's a way out there. That right kind of thing. So I think that the practices, those people are exactly right. They're exactly right. But to think that I should tack on another 45 minutes on a life that kids don't necessarily want to be a part of this anyway. They think they're gonna do it and then be disappointed when I try to hold it over them. I'm setting them up for conflict. And I got enough reasons to have conflict with kids without trying to add that on. So let's build the practice into what we do every day in class

Participant	Participant Quotes
	and let's build the feedback into that practice. So that they may now go "Oh, yeah, I really don't know that. Can you show me how to?" Yeah, it's just it's turning everything around that I do. So let's build the practice into what we do every day in class and let's build the feedback into that practice. So that they may now go "Oh, yeah, I really don't know that. Can you show me how to…?" I also think the big piece of…there's still too many adults who have been conditioned to be afraid of the retake process. Because they have been beaten up enough times by the fact that kids want to retake it because they're picking for grades, right? That kind of thing that they're between [grades]... I need an A plus. Well you're not going to get that right, that sort of thing. And so I think the retake process is most important for the kids who struggle, with kids that don't understand after the kids that do, and being able to differentiate between the two types of retakes is important. And it's really necessary for struggling learners. And probably most fundamentally in all that is you... struggling learners just need you to sit down and listen to them and help them understand. But we have to get from them what they do understand first and that's, that's how it all gets packaged together, right. There's the "I didn't get a high enough grade" category. Which last year I did not have a single kid retake a test in the class, because it they didn't think their grade was high enough. I mean, so again, their grades were pretty solid compared to what they're used to because they were they were being successful. Maybe class too easy to I don't know, who cares, whatever. Nobody's asking any questions. about it. But the other category is "You don't understand the concepts the way I want you to understand those concepts." And if he wants to retake well then hey, let's let's burden them a little bit. You know what, I need you to do this and this and this. And if you do this, you do those three things first, then you can retake the test and you can have your new score, right, live happily ever after. Maybe we really need to think about how we're setting all this up. How could we redesign a course so that kids are having a different experience in the course, they're liking it, they're more engaged, the person that's doing the work is the one that's doing the learning. So we made it 100% project driven, everything is experiential learning for the kids.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	I'm a big, you know, people want to yell at me about our SATs scores and that kind of thing, and how are you going to fix them? What are you going to do to prep and what are you gonna... that's how I'm going to help our SATs scores, because I'm going to teach kids to think differently. I'm going to teach them to look more intuitively at what they're doing and do it and be a part of it and and quite frankly, mess it up so that we can fix their mistakes. That's the idea.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.

Theme - Encountering Barriers to Change: Meeting with Resistance and Pushback from Stakeholders

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	I mean, prime example, final exams. Why are we using this assessment as a terminal data point? It's usually a low Bloom's process in the first place that kids are going to manipulate based on what final grade they need, since we're still doing percentiles, or total points. Why are we doing this? Because we don't have to battle with parents, because parents will think there's value to it in preparation for the real world, and for years, and saying, we shouldn't be doing this. And hopefully, we'll get away from this concept soon. But we haven't done it yet.
Beth	We're trying to learn standards and letting them know what they really know, but the rest of the world hasn't caught up to that yet. And so at my school, we're then forced to take all these standards and come up with one grade. And then that makes all the work that we're doing rather meaningless, actually, because the gaming still happens and the homework isn't happening because it's not a part of the grade. The problem we have right now is standards based grading reporting works in middle school and grade school because nobody cares about those report cards. But in high school, colleges want a grade. They don't want 60 or five or three different grades.
Carl	For better or worse, this grading thing has been going on for four years. And it's slowly been getting tweaked and tightened, tweaked and tightened, tweaked and tightened. But there's also been professional development behind it and stuff like that. And so it's more lasting, and people are more likely to stay with it. And even the ones that may not agree, can say, "I understand why you're doing this. I will comply. I may not buy into it, but I will comply and I will not resist." Or, and if it's not, their philosophy, then it comes down to simply, "Look, you're gonna have to comply with us one way or the other." I've tried to talk him through this, I tried to win you over. You know, just make him then, you know, with the understanding of just don't undermine this project. Comply, and don't, you know, be a cancer in the department. That usually works, too. There's enough respect.
Daryl	So they tried to kind of write their language where that quizzes were exempt from this retake policy, but tests of course, they could retake tests. So that comes down to about three unit tests or so roughly a semester, but there's a whole bunch of quizzes in there that can very quickly, to this to the situation where some to some of the... I just knew that one of the teachers was planning on not having a unit test and one of the units and just only stacking it full of quizzes, just because he knew that those would not be retake-able. So, that was my push back to that group, where any time there's... whatever semantics you want to say, if it's a quiz or a

Participant	Participant Quotes
	test, that's an assessment you've taken for a grade, therefore, that has to be retake-able by nature of the policy. Yeah, I mean, most people that are going against it seem to well fall back on, you know, things like, it's the excuse of "It's not preparing them for college." And some of the teachers even teach at the college level, teaches at [community college]. And, and you know, that that's, that's an argument of, I'm happy to entertain, because there's a lot of things [inaudible], you know, even some of the researchers out there like, I think it's Wormeli, I want to say offhand. Yeah, I think it's him. He gives an example where he's like, you know, he's like, just because there's bad practices at the next level, that doesn't justify us having to be forced to do them here at this level.
Eugene	[Discussing practices among singleton and elective teachers]. There's a few, like a few stubborn practices that are still in place. And what's tricky is that doesn't usually happen in the larger teams. We have [large course team family, name redacted]. And then we have electives. Right? So if somebody's teaching an elective solo, they're [on an island]. It's also a place where they're not going to have the cross pollination of different assessment practices going on. So in [large course team family, name redacted], unlikely to have too much pay for points, playing on pay for pay, to play paying with points, or not offering a lot of chance for redos and revisions, or not getting much formative feedback before the summative, you know, some of these practices that used to be around but really have faded away. We still see it a little bit in some of the electives are you know, it's like content, content driven, not skill driven where it's like you know, we covered this and gave a test on it, you know, that that if it exists, it's more in the veteran staff and it is more in the electives. classes, but it's not that widespread either. But that's where it is, hard to get at areas.
Finn	And this is one of the reasons that people are resistant to this, at least particularly in [department name redacted] from my standpoint is like, you know, standards-based grading, as an idea basically calls out people's entire conceptions of what it means to do [content]. Right. If your conception of [content] is doing [work] to get points that you know, standards-based grading, asks you to rethink that. And so, rethinking how you grade people means rethinking what it means to do [content], which is something that you know, is, it's a big ask of people it shouldn't be but you know, it is a lot of psychology and everything goes into that. So yeah, system change is not easy.
Glenn	I mean, one, my really leadership style that works for me... and it's really spending more time on the getting teachers to buy into the problem. Right, one of my teachers said, "Oh, you like to go into a department meeting, let off a hand grenade, and then end the meeting and leave." And I'm, like, well, I hadn't thought of it that way. But yeah, right, rather than come in and argue for zeros. I think so

Participant	Participant Quotes
	many people like to have the zero fight, right. Well, I've been having the zero, I've argued about zero since I said, yeah, I don't know, the first assessment conference I went to a 2007 or something. I mean, I've, you know, O'Connor's 10 fixes for broken grades. You know, I read that when it was new. So, but people are still wanting to have that conversation. Right? That's just like a big conversation and big fight. And that to me, that's a solution. Right? That's, as opposed to what a problem. Could've proposed a problem with zeros I suppose, and that's, that can kind of work. But what's, what's even the problem underneath that, you know, what's wrong with our grading? And so I probably would spend more time talking about what you know, what's not working, you know, what's broken, what's broken, trying to get them to really buy into that. And then I guess I would, where possible, allow multiple solutions. So I think I've been very effective in things like devaluing homework.
Henry	You know, one thing that I have experienced since we talked the last time has been pushback from people because they didn't feel like there was buy in. They... they... and it really kind of sharpened the knife for me of where I stand. You know, am I going to where am I gonna fall? How am I going to do that and that acknowledgement that I need to work on that still, even after all these years. Because it felt really horrible. It felt like they were ready to guillotine me. Well, [course team name redacted] has openly said it's too hard for us to collaborate. "There are too many of us, we can't get along." So they constantly are finding their excuses and their blames rather than making it happen and I lost it at one point this year and I just said, "You know I'm tired of these excuses. Make it happen. You're the professionals. Do it." And they still give me excuses. So that is a major challenge. And you know my teachers regularly will say when people start to balk or whatever, and "Hey, remember [Henry's] got a boss, he has to please too, ok." There is some of that. I've used that as a crutch. It's never successful. Right? They you know, and you know, I've also used the phrase "I work at the pleasure of the board. You have a union. I work at the pleasure of the board. So I do what I'm told." And there, there's always a push back to that. And the culture in [district name redacted] is very much the teacher voice is more important than administrator voice. And so by giving voice to those progressives, who will not allow the naysayers, the negatives, to drag their feet beyond a certain manner, things are going to happen, that change is going to move forward. So it's empowering them. You ask what what percent, I never really answered that. I would say that 60 to 70% of what I believe, I'm trying to encourage people to follow suit. And I'm lucky that in my nine years, I've hired about a third of the department. So I have not hired a traditionalist if I can avoid it.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	I am uncomfortable with consistent and constant conflict. And so I try to find ways to smooth over conflict. I try to find ways for people to feel valued and belong and feel like their voices are being heard. I try to cajole people into at least accepting and listening versus automatically shutting off, and I talked about, like the law of attracting, attracting what you want. I also think of 12 step [programs], right, where you can't force people to do things. Instead you have to figure out how they're going to, you know, be pulled in and accept something. So there's a lot of providing them with more information, providing them with more experiences, providing them with sources from different places in order to keep that moving forward. So hey, "I'm not crazy. I'm just telling you what lots of other places are doing. I you know, I'd really encourage you to belong and be a part of this." We definitely would have to educate [the community]. I think that's been the case everywhere. You know, when I first came to the Chicago area I taught at [school name redacted], you know, and [school name redacted] is the leader at this point in the game in this area, particularly in [department name redacted] with standards-based. And it took them years to educate the community.
Isabelle	Right. And I mean, I think of that often. That's like what I always like, even what I said already, like the luck of the teacher draw, you know? One is better, easier, more accurate, whatever you might be looking at than another. So I'm aware of that…So we have six schools, [school name redacted] and [school name redacted] are like the two highest socioeconomic and I would say the vast majority of parents in those communities are college grads. Well, yeah, graduate degrees or higher. I work at [school name redacted], which like a third of our student body lives in the mobile home park. Many, many parents have not graduated high school. So there's differences in both of those. So having taught in the one now leading in the other and teaching you get a lot more parent pushback at [school name redacted] then you do with us. So I'm grateful that our parent community here really moved to the area because they want their kids a lot of times not to go to CPS. They want to be in a more suburban area. But they trust what we do without a lot of questions. I do believe that. The reason we don't have a top down approach to grading is because of some of those other schools, that they would get, that the superintendent would get pushback from some parents that are very, like "Well, that's how it was when I was in school. And that's, you know, that's what I think they can expect in college." So, yeah, I don't think we're gonna get a lot of top down directive in terms of like what you described at [school district redacted]. I don't think we'd get that here. I'm still, of course, slightly, a slave to the SAT. So we do have [content]. And that is a barrier for college and dual credit classes that have SAT requirements. So I hope that our courses in general align to what the state and national standards are

Participant	Participant Quotes
	so that kids that do well in our classes also do well in those other areas. Instead of like an either or.
Jerry	Okay, so I remember I was at a conference once and I didn't take much away from the conference. But he did say something that stuck with me. He said, "Don't demonize the late adopters." And that's really stuck with me. That some of these guys that are in my department that are like "No no, no, I will not change," some of them really just need to see someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then they'll buy in because they finally, they've come around to it. It takes them four years, where you got your early adopters that were like, "Sure I mean, you didn't even have to give me the research. Just what you said alone I was convinced," that they should try something different, you know. And part of it is the pressure of the community too. The community wants, so many of them went to [school name redacted], they want it to be exactly like their kid experienced it. So if you were to propose a course that had no homework, they'd be like "No, no, no. At [school name redacted] you have homework, because that's what I had."
Kent	And I think just from a leadership standpoint, realizing that you might not you might not win over everybody, you might not change everyone's mind. But ultimately, it's not about building universal consensus. But it's about making decisions that are based on better practices and better ways of doing things. So in some ways, the determination that we are doing this, like yeah, that's probably a little bit top down a little bit bottom up, but eventually it came for those folks as top down.
Lori	Lori: I think where I'm seeing pushback right now. And I don't know if it's as much pushback as it is just like, teachers need more information about the philosophy I need to see more examples of like SBG [standards-based grading] in practice, but it is about the philosophy of I think that there are, there are, especially some of our veteran teachers who would love to like continue like taking off points for late work, would like to give points for participation, would like to like, take off points for tardiness, and like all of those behavioral things that shouldn't play into a grade. Similarly, like giving group grades, like that's, that's one of the biggest areas of pushback I've gotten is like, what do you mean they can't give group grades? Then I'm like, What do you mean you're giving group grades? Like, you know, I think it goes back to like, how do you know that this individual student is learning what you intended them to know? When they're giving them like this one blanket score that is just not representative of the work that they did. But, again, I don't know how many conversations they've had about the rationale behind it or how often they've been questioned. It's just a practice

Participant	Participant Quotes
	that they've always done. So I don't fault them for it. I just don't know if the question has ever been posed. So I think the pushback is more like the grappling with those and the self-examination of their practice and just thinking about what that change might look like in their classrooms. Researcher: What do you think is going to help them get over some of that resistance? Lori: I think that I feel like they need to see examples of teachers who are teaching the same thing, or similar things, at least, do it successfully. And so, actually, you know, a handful of them are on Twitter, and they're putting things out there asking questions for people who are doing SBG in [department name redacted] classes as an example, and like people are sharing their resources, which is awesome. So I think that what I can do is to help make some of those connections and get some of those examples to be like, "This is how [school name redacted] is doing it. This is how this guy in Ontario is doing it" and just share this with them and help them make sense of what that looks like with their own assessments. So we've been working on that a bit this year.
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Encountering Barriers to Change: Working with Teacher Autonomy, Contracts, and Unions

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	N/A
Carl	Right, and the balance of autonomy, and, you know, being cohesive, because we originally were pretty much lockstep in that. This is, you know, here are the common assessments. You teach the way you want to get there, to suddenly down to three common assessments and you can do the assessment, teach very much any direction you want. You can [use innovative practices], you can do this other more traditional style, you can you know, it just got really, really messy.
Daryl	You know, there's an autonomy clause in our teachers' contract. I don't know how much of that they would interpret falls under autonomy. And therefore, you know, challenge or grieve me in terms of my threat to their autonomy [inaudible] and ask like that, you know. So it hasn't gone there because at this point, there is just no... because the policy that was written in this district with the blessing of the school board says you have to have a retake policy. And, therefore, maybe the art of teaching and so policies that are kind of, although personal, and a part of the teacher's classroom really outside of the art of teaching a little bit and so that's a like you still have that autonomy to kind of like to craft your art the way you want, but in terms of the backbone that is, you know, the policies of your room and how the numbers calculate, transcripts and all of that that's, that's on the other end of school that is not necessarily an art form as it is, like building code or guidelines or, you know, that kind of like [policy]. [Discussing teacher autonomy]. That's where it's probably the million dollar question there for sure.
Eugene	N/A
Finn	That doesn't mean that teachers are doing wildly different things in terms of grading, but you know, they're, you're limited by the contract in terms of what you can have people do. Anything that has to do with the classroom again, that classroom space is just kind of off limits. Like I can't even say, you know, to even try to say like, “Hey, this is what we're going to do now.” Like that's not even a thing that I can say. I do, I keep meaning to do this conversation and I'm going to need to is is to actually just have a conversation, because that kind of that classroom that contract language is somewhat broad, right. And I have thought about trying to have a direct conversation with the department and be like, Look, like we need to decide

Participant	Participant Quotes
	what this language [means] for us in this room. What does this language actually mean? And maybe that decision is made course team by course team. Like what is this language actually protecting? What is it, what are w, because if you don't have that clearly defined then it's that's going to be that can get used as like a derail anything card, right? Like I don't want to know so like, do we need to have a conversation about that, that clause specifically and be like, let's define what this means for us and come to a working definition, even if it's in a course, even at a course team level, right? Because that of course team level like it can just interfere it of course, you know, where somebody's like, Hey, I got this cool lesson. If your whole system is is geared towards no one can tell me what to do when I teach, then that means you're also not as open to better ideas from your colleagues. Since the current union president and long standing union Vice President is in my department. It's also, like I'm trying to think of it from an admin perspective, it also really matters how the union is viewed in your building, you know, or in your local context, like, if the union reps go and complain to your principal or whoever is above you. [Discussing teacher autonomy]. So it's the million dollar question.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	And in the current district's culture, the strength of the Union controls absolutely every move the administration does. I have one very vocal person in particular that no matter what I say as a leader, her response is "No." Negative. That's not what we're going to do because this is what the union says. The teacher contract talks about academic freedom and so that's what they always run to, to say I don't want to follow whatever your suggestion is. So part of the challenge is what the contract says and people will go back to, although I'm finding lots of instances where if it's not convenient, or it's not what they want, they'll willingly ignore the contract unless somebody brings it up later on.
Isabelle	We have the union and then we have the union president in our building. I'm limited in that I can't call a department meeting. Ever. So our teachers' union rule, it's a union thing. So we're given like six building meetings a year. But some

Participant	Participant Quotes
	of those are like the day before or the week before the SATs, talking about the proctoring. The school pulls them, so I end up having like three division meetings a year, which is challenging.
Jerry	I don't know the whole history but it sounds like at some point in [school name redacted]'s past, this was an idea or proposal or something to the [department name redacted] and the department rejected it flat out, "We are not doing course teams. We will not have common assessment anything. We will not meet together to talk about what's in common at all." And I feel like it's a massive detriment to our students. And I think actually, it's more work for teachers to try to do everything on their own and never learn from one another. So we're trying that this year. I will say that there are other departments that are like they can't even get a third of their people to show up to the department meetings. Because that's not my contract, you know. Again, because the autonomy piece, they're not gonna listen or hear well, like you must do this, but a challenge, and that's optional, and we're good with that. It'll depend on the course team, some teams. I described this collaboration that we're going to do this year. I actually have two or three teams that have been doing this for years. And they're like, Yeah, [name redacted], we're done. And that's fine. And I've got others that never want to talk about what they should do that is similar. You know, and those will be more of a fight. Like, "I don't want to cover [topic]," and the other three are saying, "Well, I want to, you know, figure that stuff out."
Kent	N/A
Lori	I mean, at the end of the day, like I want, I want teachers to have autonomy in the classroom.
Morgan	Well, and on how about we factor in everybody's favorite lesson that they want to teach and I don't want to give this up and that sort of thing? Hey, here's what we got. Our curriculum used to be this wide, and I symbolically have my hands off screen because it was infinitely wide, and so okay, if this is how many of the infinite number of topics that are in [course], and that's what we chose, whoever, wherever long ago, then is it really a tragedy if we only do this many instead? And we got an 18 week semester. What if we plan for 14 weeks worth of stuff and the other four weeks can be for what you think they should be? Or they can be for remediation, or they can be for taking your time, or they can be for making what we're doing experiential and meaningful for kids as opposed to, I can't get to everything.

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Theme - Encountering Barriers to Change: Interpreting and Responding to District Leadership

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	On the leadership side, we went with a five year period, this would have been probably, oh 12, maybe 10 to 15 years ago. We had a principal nice guy, just not a building leader, overwhelmed. And then we had three years of an interim, the principal he hired was the ex supe. And he reneged on his contract. So we had to go to an interim. And then we went two years with interim, so we had five years without an effective principal. So there was a lot of gaps that need to be filled. Either curricular issues, assessment issues, we started looking at the ideas of actually validated assessments. So there's, there's dilemmas in the timeliness as to how we operate these days in education, where there's not that long term built in process. And we don't build long term plans for the most part, either. Boards make five year plans, whatnot, projections of what we're bringing in for revenue. But, if we're not talking to our feeder schools, and know [their] population coming through. And our [superintendent] has been, he had been… he had his ideas, but he's pretty hands off on instruction and overall philosophy. And hopefully, we'll get away from [final exams] soon. But we haven't done it yet. And [the superintendent] agrees with me, but [s/he] makes a final call because [s/he]'s gonna take the phone calls from parents, and the community.
Beth	I think it's funny because sometimes they will say to me, they will say, I know this isn't you I know this is coming from above. I am pretty quick to say like what some of it, but I also am a part of that team. So I have to kind of remind them like, I'm not going to let you just place all the blame above me like I am on the team. I'm a decision making person. I do stand behind all of this. But I think they see that I'm pretty transparent. I am not afraid to let them know the things that I agree with. And then the things that I struggle with when we're discussing them as a district, if that makes sense.
Carl	We'd all be working on a common goal, a common direction and everything. And then one of the teachers would go off and see storylining and bring this back. And then that person would go and share it with my supervisor who thinks it's absolutely wonderful, which I agree, is cool. But my supervisor would overrule me or would simply say, Well, okay, that person uses story lining. So now all sudden, we'd go into a divergent direction. And then we'd go this direction, and then all sudden, no, that's not what I meant. I meant this. And so our targets kept moving. And then permission to diverse, diversify an experiment [inaudible community. I think that was probably been my biggest frustration the last seven years, is, you know, somebody who likes, thinks something that's a really cool

Participant	Participant Quotes
	idea, and therefore it should be implemented, even though that person doesn't have to work with the department directly. And so that's, that's been the frustration because, you know, I wasn't even in on that conversation and say, Well, wait, let's not do this, because this is going to make, and then a couple of times where I did say, this is going to make things more complicated. The decision was made anyway. And then [inaudible] this mire, and then my supervisor is actually acknowledged and said, yeah, it got a little muddy. I'm like, yeah, so now we're trying to pull ourselves out of the mud. But at least there was an acknowledgment of it, we got too loose in ownership of causing a direction to build there. But there's two different ways of looking at it educationally, this is why grading a sound. Equitably is good for all kids. So we've done some PD behind both of those processes. And they align with each other very nicely. And so that's been good, versus just a while ago as like, Okay. Here's your DOK. look at your assessments, bam, you do it for one year. And then there's no support and follow up for the following year. And there's something new for the following year. That doesn't, that didn't go very well, because then everybody lost track of where we were supposed to be going. And you know, some support. It's, it's, you know, many years ago, we tried to doing the PLC, your data warehouse project. So the assessment would be sent through the scantron type of machine, and then you'd get all your assessment data and stuff like that. And then the answer to the questionnaires. And everyone saw it as this is what we have to do. We didn't see any value behind it. And it lasted for one year. And then, and then it just kind of disappeared. And there was, no and that's the other problem with that is the consistency.
Daryl	[Discussing resistant teachers]Well, right now, no, only because of that district requirement. You know, they kind of know at the end of the day, they can't argue with it, because it's a have to by the district. How we manipulate it in our department is to some degree a level of individuality. But in the end, I mean, I think if there was not a district requirement, then you would have groups that are like, "No, I'm, you know, I'm not changing." And then probably, it goes on from there. You know, there's an autonomy clause in our teachers' contract. I don't know how much of that they would interpret falls under autonomy. And therefore, you know, challenge or grieve me in terms of my threat to their autonomy [inaudible] and ask like that, you know. So it hasn't gone there because at this point, there is just no... because policy that was written in this district with the blessing of the school board that says you have to have a retake policy. But in the end, I mean, I think if there was not a district requirement, then you would have groups that are like, "No, I'm, you know, I'm not changing.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So I do, so that said, No, I don't really have necessarily input on the decision or what the parameters are that that district proposes.
Eugene	N/A
Finn	And I think it's like finding…like, the question I would ask is standards-based grading, you know, the people who are teaching standards-based grading who are already thinking in that way. So has anybody's teaching actually changed? Because, you know, they were told to do standards based grading. And that's not to pick on standards based grading. My point is, anything that we that administration just tells teachers to do, is, is only going to be enacted so much
Glenn	So similar scale to probably what you and I have, maybe they got a few more, but otherwise, I don't think they're [high school principals] very successful at all. In the maybe the I watched the process of going standards based. I remember I went to a workshop in [inaudible] 2008, maybe, about how to move your district, with a bunch of superintendents, how to move your district to standards based report cards, with some districts in Seattle, that succeeded and all that. But I tell you what, a ton of those districts went back. The early adopters of standards based grading, districts don't do it anymore. I mean, not all of them or anything, but a bunch of them. So I don't know if we as a country with, you know, Rick Stiggins is running around the country saying we needed to fix assessment. And I think he could do that all again today. And there's a lot more people that have ideas. There's people in every school that know what he was talking about. That's maybe better, but I don't know. The systems don't move very easy.
Henry	And there, there's always a push back to that. And that's kind of happening currently with some, a new [course] we're bringing on board, that has the endorsement of the superintendent and it's going to have the endorsement of the board and the people are not necessarily as thrilled about it. My job is going to be to make sure that it happens, and that we create the best program we can. And boy, did I get pushback from that a couple weeks ago. Henry: Other departments are moving in that similar direction. So I don't know that necessarily we'll be a model. I think the way I've done the grading piece may be used a little bit more. But across the board we've all been talking about grading since the pandemic kind of came on board. What's a little bit different now in [school name redacted] is that we've become much more building based and less district driven. District leadership has taken a smaller step back. So for example last year we had one curriculum director meeting all year. And it used to be twice a month. Researcher: Do you feel like that was a positive change?

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Henry: No. Because it's left us as [administrators], not knowing as much and since I sit in [multiple] leadership meetings, I hear it through [multiple] lenses. And so the message wasn't the same. Researcher: Would you say that your district currently has a strong vision? Henry: Nope, nope. What we have I mean, even the assistant [superintendents]. who are behind say, there's nothing earth shattering, there's nothing great here. There's nothing that whatever we're working toward is not going to align with because it's that vague and wishy washy. And, you know, kind of boilerplate and you know, there's not a lot there to push or excite. So we, as a [department name redacted], are kind of hanging on to that global citizen clause to really try and push what we think is important with learning [course content]. So that you know that that's probably the only thing that they're really holding on to at this point.
Isabelle	I do think I tried to give the opportunity of leading or co-leading to a teacher. I think I get some buy in sometimes. And I have a few teachers that are very aware of my limitations as a department head.
Jerry	Jerry: I really appreciate it when a superintendent or principal has a strong vision. Researcher: Do you feel like you have that now? A strong vision or direction? Jerry: Not at all. But I think part of that is coming out of COVID. I mean, I know our admin is just exhausted and I think even for them, they were like, "I don't know why I'm doing this. I went into it for like, teaching and learning." And we can see [inaudible] reports. So I don't know that they have a strong vision of what they want. And also like, things have changed because of COVID. So I think for them a little bit. It's about like, "Well, I'm not sure where we stand right now. I don't know the ground I'm standing on, let alone where to go from here." So I feel for them, but I also think sometimes you just take a step forward, like I think we should go this way and just take, like, do it and see what comes our way. And my principal will not be doing things that I think... like my principal has nothing to do with curriculum and instruction. Zero. She doesn't know what's going on. It's not her job to know what's on in curriculum and instruction. I've never been in a school where the principal doesn't know those things. Her main job is to talk to parents and make them happy. And that's a significant role on [redacted]. Yes. And even when I was at [school name redacted] as the principal didn't know... she wasn't intimately involved in curriculum and instruction, but she had an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction. We reported it to her

Participant	Participant Quotes
	so yeah, she was aware. Whereas again, my principal at [school name redacted] no one reports to her on curriculum and instruction.
Kent	N/A
Lori	So teachers knew that like SBG [standards-based grading] was coming and that CBE [competency-based education] was coming but there was never any structure in terms of how they would get there. But, we have gotten no oversight [from the district]. I want the autonomy to be more to be more of that but I feel like it's going to take to get there is more of that just more support, both from myself from like a district training and resources and from their colleagues. I don't know a ton about what other departments are doing. I know about my stuff and [other departments] because they are being asked to go in the direction of CBE [competency-based education]. Math has already been doing it. And I know that they're having some challenges but like, let's say like [other departments]. I think that they have some teachers who went to SBG training that's like given at the district level.
Morgan	But if I were writing a policy, for our teachers, I'm tired of crawling up people's tail about grades. I don't agree with it. I think it's wrong but what that comes from isn't an insecure, an insecure principal…But it comes from an insecure leader who's worried about, who somebody said, "You have too high a percentage of kids failing." So then you go to your leaders in the building and you say you need to talk to so and so about how many D's and F's they had, and you talk to so and so about how many D's and F's. So because that happened so many times, our people are so... looking for whatever. And my message to them is, "Okay, you got all these D's and F's in your class. Do you have a plan? Do you have a reason why that is? Do you have a... Can you give me a list of the things that you've done to try to intervene? Put your head on the pillow at night and sleep great because you've done all these things that you can do?" And that's the thing that you can then say to your teachers, "Guys, this is what I believe. And I'm not necessarily asking you to completely agree, nor to laugh, but this is what I believe and this is what I'm going to make decisions around because this is fundamentally what I think is most important in education." And now okay, the district says we got to do this. Okay, well, that gives you you know, what's most important to you. Now what comes downhill... And you got to look at and interpret and figure out. There aren't too many things in this education that are going to be new, it's all come around and around and around, right. But every one of them so can be massaged into whatever you need it to be. And so that's why I

Participant	Participant Quotes
	said you figure out what your stuff is. And then you can kind of start using that to help provide some consistency to your people who are clamoring for it. Because this is everything. There's going to be such incredible turnover in our district in our admin team across the district, not just at [school name redacted] but it's at [school name redacted] in our team of 10 building leaders, four of... two of them turned over last year and four of them will turn over in the next two years. So we're looking at you know, I'm going to be one of the few that are still potentially sitting in the same seat in two years and all of this change and all this.

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Organizing Teams of Teachers

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	I would say before I was here again, they created this and then we train every single person on assessment practices, and then it's part of our four year rollout for any new hires, they have to go through assessment training. Yeah, so we do cooperative learning. So everybody in our districts has been trained on cooperative learning. And then any new hires, we'll go through that in one other four years. And then we have like an equity and that's new now. So equity, and inclusion training. When we started the rollout, we started with teachers that wanted to be in the first round and then we built capacity from there. The teachers did a lot of learning from each other. We also have building coaches that are aware of our initiatives. We train all of our staff on cooperative learning strategies and assessment literacies so they all have that background knowledge. After 5 years, virtually all of my teachers now have a goal of increasing student engagement or student voice in the classroom, or increasing formative feedback. So they [teachers] have to know that they can come and have a conversation about the hard stuff. So like our assessment practices, you can't not follow them. Like everybody has to have a retake. If you're not offering that you would get in trouble. We have PLTs [professional learning teams]. Every PLT has to operate the same. You have a learning team, PLCs, whatever you call them. Of course you like to, so you can't go rogue and your PLC, you have to give the same tasks. Same guidelines.
Carl	Sometimes you have to, sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it. One is, of course, the directive, here's, you know, this is what the district is saying, we're gonna have to do for grading. So this is what our parameters are. Let's talk it through and figure out how does that work as a department? So you know, it's a loose type situation where they give us the parameters, and then I can help them come up with what's comfortable for the department, if that makes sense. So like, you know, the directive is to, we have three different grading styles that they can do have a floor of 40%, if you're using 100%, a 15 point scale, or standards based. And so I can work with them and talk to them and say, Well, which one seems to fit best and things like that? So we're getting more consistent across the board.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Daryl	But then what comes back down my way is those parameters, I'm able to work within my group on. So I'm responsible for approving the syllabi of every course. And one of the rules is, you know, a grading practice has to be common across a course team. You might be on two different course teams…And so therefore, you might have two different slight adjustments in your syllabus. But at least everyone in that same course team has to have the same policy. So then, in my department, then, kind of the three general hubs…are the largest teams of teachers, there's slight differences in how each of those interpret our district's parameters for grading. And so it's my my, I do have the authority to, you know, approve or disapprove. And I have said, sent some groups back to the drawing board to kind of to kind of adjust what they've what they've brought forward. So we're currently living through some ongoing meetings and kind of some collaborative discussions that seem to be heading in that direction [standards-based grading]. Grading for Equity. So that, there's there were those occurred and that spiraled into there's work over the summer. We have like summer PD opportunities for teachers on those. So there's both there's during the school year and the summer, in terms of like books study or just lunch and learn to go to. There's also been different pull out meetings for those and I'd say professional development for funds for off campus PD, that's specific around this area, that's kind of earmark only for that area. So not that each department gets like a set cut, but but definitely if you have teachers that are interested in a certain one, certain ones are one of the districts when I think they went to see Zaretta Hammond last spring, and there were like 20 vacancies the district was willing to pay for. So so each of us sent one or two people from our departments from both schools, and then district offices, as well.
Eugene	[Discussing practices among singleton and elective teachers]. There's a few, like a few stubborn practices that are still in place. And what's tricky is that doesn't usually happen in the larger teams. We have [large course team family, name redacted]. And then we have electives. Right? So if somebody's teaching an elective solo, they're [on an island]. It's also a place where they're not going to have the cross pollination of different assessment practices going on. So in [large course team family, name redacted], unlikely to have too much pay for points, playing on pay for pay, to play paying with points, or not offering a lot of chance for redos and revisions, or not getting much formative feedback before the summative, you know, some of these practices that used to be around but really have faded away. We still see it a little bit in some of the electives are you know, it's like content, content driven, not skill driven where it's like you know, we covered this and gave a test on it, you know, that that if it exists, it's more in the veteran staff and it is more in the electives. classes, but it's not that widespread either. But that's where it is, hard to get at areas.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	We've done it in the practice of our PLTs they have common assessments and they work on and they work on it together. And I do influence that and have, we use that to generate our our tier two [interventions]. So we have an articulated tier two for for freshmen, sophomores and juniors so will, we use the assessment data to generate referrals for the tier two which comes out of their study hall. So that's another piece it's kind of like the machine, formal machine we have. But the informal practices that happens more through observation walkthroughs, informal, formal, formal observations. Okay, so they've gone through like a new teacher training cohort that the district has, but they've also gone through my own boot camp. They went through a rigorous Ainsworth 14 Step assessment writing process while back right when I got here, and so that was something, they generally like each other and like to learn from each other. So I mean, that's good. They meet every week. So they're discussing things if we do need the assessment to happen because it generates tier two, and teachers do want to have support for students who need tier two. So that's part of the way we do things. And then now, we're redoing it and that's a little bit of a hard thing. You know, you're already feel like you're in pretty good shape. And it's like, now we're gonna do a marathon, you know. So, it's, we are in the middle of of a rewrite that that's going to take kind of all we've got, and so far I like what I'm seeing, and we've given them some really great tools, a unit template, and we developed these performance indicators, these competencies, but now they have to think about how do I do six, seven units make them super interesting, scaffolded. We're detracking and completely so they've got to be academically diverse in terms of having heterogeneous classes, lots of supports for the whole spectrum of students that we have. So I think the teaming, the personalities, and the history of the department are what will answer that question.
Finn	Anything that has to do with classroom again, that classroom space is just kind of off limits. Like I can't even say, you know, to even try to say like, Hey, this is what we're going to do now. Like that's not even a thing that I can say. I do, I keep meaning to do this conversation and I'm going to need to is is to actually just have a conversation, because that kind of that classroom that contract language is somewhat broad, right. And I have thought about trying to have a direct conversation with the department and be like, Look, like we need to decide what this language for us in this room. What does this language actually mean? And maybe that decision is made course team by course team. Like what is this language actually protecting? What is it, what are w, because if you don't have that clearly defined then it's that's going to be that can get used as like a derail anything card, right? Like I don't want to know so like, do we need to have a conversation about that, that clause specifically and be like, let's define what this

Participant	Participant Quotes
	means for us and come to a working definition, even if it's in a course, even at a course team level, right? Because that of course team level like it can just interfere it of course, you know, where somebody's like, Hey, I got this cool lesson. If your whole system is is geared towards no one can tell me what to do when I teach, then that means you're also not as open to better ideas from your colleagues.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	In the pandemic, as we were really looking at what was essential and what was moving forward and what was grading for equity, the teachers began to embrace conversations. Within the whole district we were having conversations just about equity in general. And what did that look like? And we had a strong group of teachers who were meeting in the evening with the union sponsored discussions. They met every Thursday evening at like 8:30 at night, so that people could put their kids to bed and then participate. And that kind of led into the department beginning discussions.
Isabelle	I think as a department, there should be consistency among grading. [Discussing the return to in-person instruction during the pandemic.] And I have teachers asking me "Hey, are we going to do this [professional development] work again?" Because like what you said, there are some that are ready. Back in school, all the kids are here, like I know we kind of went a little, I don't know what you're [in-person instructional plan] during the pandemic was, but loose I would say was ours. And so now we're reining it in a little, we're doing hands on [activities] again, we're doing much more normal things. Can we get back to some of the grading practices that we think should be there, holding kids accountable, but not in the negative way. But they are doing good work. How are we, how does their grade reflect the good work that they're doing? We know that they're not just on zoom copying, you know, we can see them in class doing it. So does the grade they're earning reflect what they know and they're able to do and are confident in that? In [department name redacted], we are definitely more torn because we had some significant loss on the SAT. And so I have like a big SAT skill push coming and realignment. So yes, they're not going to also want to discuss it, but I do think the two can go hand in hand because if you're looking at like, "Hey, we're going to tweak some of our curriculum, why don't you just tweak the way you're reporting it? You know, do they know the skill or do they not?" But I've started to lean into the like, "Hey, I'm having an optional meeting to discuss what the zero does versus what the 50 does, and I'm gonna do it this Wednesday and next Wednesday. Come if you're interested." I'm a little disappointed when I'm like oh, only six people came out of 36. But then I'm like, but who cares? Six, that's six. That's great. You know, and hopefully they'll go

Participant	Participant Quotes
	back and it'll spread or they're thinking about it enough. So I'm trying, you know, now that we're back in the building, and it's more normal this year. I am trying to incorporate those types of meetings and discussions. I've only done it for my [departments], like I haven't opened it up school wide. But I know my people better. So I hope that there's a little bit more about trust thing, where they'd be willing to push back or ask questions. I don't know, it is difficult and it's kind of a mixed bag. I feel like I have a, and maybe this is a I've never been a division head in a different district, so like I feel at times that I've been told like "Lead, the sky's the limit." And then really, if the district's not saying it, the sky is not the limit because they [teachers] can say yes, we don't want to do that.
Jerry	High, high, high, value on collaboration among teachers. And it, what we, what many teachers call collaboration is, "Hey, you're the new [course name redacted] guy. Here's my binder. Let me know if you have any questions." That's what they call collaboration or like, over lunch. "Hey, I tried this [activity] today and you should try it too." That's really good. I hope that continues. But more purposeful collaboration, and that's so professional learning teams, we're going to do professional learning teams light. We will never go to a common assessment, 100% common assessment. That's not going to happen. We will never go to 100% common curriculum, we wouldn't even get to, well I couldn't even say at 80% [common]/20% [unique] on paper, right? It might again be that way, but I could never mandate that. So I, my goal is that we move more and more the direction of discussing and coming to an understanding of some things that we think all kids should know.
Kent	So some of the tights that we defined and we knew, like we're going to a four point scale. You know, exceeds, meets, approaching, developing. The three is the proficient level, right? These are some school wide tights…I think another tight was that the scale, the language in the four point scale, we said we're going to define that and we're just going to use the same thing. I think they're pretty similar because we've pointed them towards some common resources. Like for, since it was [national content standards], we looked at that to think about what are some indicators for those practices. And that was used for a lot of the success criteria and then, you know, our teams are made of teachers that teach multiple courses. So there's this natural cross pollination of ideas. So they might evolve a little differently, but ultimately, you know, they're pretty, they're pretty similar. There's four critical questions of a PLC: what do all students need to know and be able to do? How will one know they learned it? And then Question three is like RTI, what do we do for students who have not yet learned? And then Question four is what do we do for students who are already proficient? So question three

Participant	Participant Quotes
	would be like if kids are continually scoring around one or two, what scaffolds and supports will we use to bring them up? We've spent a lot of time on that, lots of time, right? Your kids that are not yet proficient? How do you support them? How do we extend their thinking and say, "No, we want all of our students growing and deepening their skills." So that would be something that we're really intentionally thinking about right now. Especially because we're making a pretty intentional push, either for next year or for the next year to do some deleveling of courses, where we're bringing kids into common experiences.
Lori	So I want them to be able to… that's why, like with the PLTs [professional learning teams] are trying to get PLTs to move from this day to day planning of like, “What are you doing today? What are you doing this week?” It's like true collaboration, like looking at student work. Norming rubrics. Like designing learning activities or assessments that are going to tie in more of that student inquiry. I want the autonomy to be more to be more of that, but I feel like what it's going to take to get there is more of that, just more support, both from myself, from district training and resources, and from their colleagues. And also a desire and a belief that this is important for students. And what's going to make a super meaningful learning experience for them.
Morgan	Our category weights, our grade weights are consistent across your building, your course learning team within your building, knowing that they're within those parameters.

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Encouraging Innovation

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	So he had them doing these pilots. So he had five teachers doing five pilots, five different ways, what it was going to look like. As all on the side as quote a "pilot", we'd like piloting everything. This is district, let's do it on our our PLCs [professional learning communities], we'll do it on the side. We can run like, one teacher's running a parallel gradebook, just to see how they're scored out, versus our standard bad practice of points and totals and about weighted grades and such.
Beth	Autonomy that's within the district to be able to make some decisions that I feel my department needs. So we adapted the curriculum and I kind of just set them free to figure out how to teach it. So the tasks were there. We selected a curriculum that had some really good rich tasks, and so I'm offering support, allowing time during PLT [professional learning team] time. We got two days a week to meet. So that's another thing I did is make sure that [course name redacted] team meets twice a week in their first year. Leadership as far as far as implementation, we we definitely want that rollout model…And you get the way, I did it versus like my counterparts. Because we're a [number redacted] school district, we start with the early adopters, right? Like the teachers that are all in the first year and then the next year you bring in [more]. And so now that we're in year four, I had a goal that every single person has to be in. And so it'll be interesting to see as the year plays out, because now in year three and year four, you start to have the teachers that never bought in, you know, and now they don't have a choice.
Carl	The [name redacted] department is trying five different rubrics for doing [standards-based grading] and saying, Well, if you get two twos, and five... they're doing all sorts of different things. And they still didn't settle on anything. And that's just the math department and that's not including the English Department of Social Studies. So we have a bunch of pioneers that went out and started trying, and trying to make it, they're having a hard time doing their own, let alone across the board.
Daryl	N/A
Eugene	We are on year three of four of a pre-competency based education pilot, which we're going to detrack and unweight [department name redacted] credit for grade nine and then the following year will be grade 10.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	Give you an example. Like we would assign a book chapter and you come to class and you're gonna talk about the book chapter. Well, reality is now in this, especially in a heterogeneous classroom, but even right now, there are students who could operate with that just fine. And there's others that need a scaffolded prep for that discussion. So there might be like a half day where we're doing things with the chapter before we go talk about it all together. It requires a little more architecture on the way in so that they're there. They're ready to facilitate that. And I just think there's interest. So, there's areas where [teachers] can flex and do different things. And that's, that's been from before I was here. So I think it's critically important.
Finn	But anytime there's an opening, anytime anybody suggests anything, the answer, like, especially about assessment, it's, you have to give an automatic "Yes. So today, actually, we were meeting and they were like, the couple of teachers that were interested in, we're talking about the [course content] unit, and I'm like, "Okay, so I'm going to think about, you know, the individual lessons and like, what those could look like, and you all are going to talk, think about assessment for the end of the unit." And they're like, "Yeah," and they were and then one of the teachers was like, "Well, actually, I'm also thinking about doing a non-traditional assessment for the unit that we're on right now. Because we got some teachers going to [a national conference] you know, in two weeks, it's at the end of the month, that you know, we're all going to be out. I'm going, a couple other people are going, you know, you're gonna miss two or three days of school and as teachers like so I thought, you know, they could do collaborative, you know, take home or open ended assessment during those days. Because I'm already not going to be here anyway." And I'm like, "Yes, great idea." You know, and when one of the other teachers was just like, "Well, what were you thinking?" They start describing it. I'm like, "Yeah, that makes perfect sense, I have some kind of things like that, you know, I'll shoot, I'll send over to you, like, you know, think that's a really good idea, that's a great way to assess them, I'll send you a couple ideas, you know, problems that I've given like that, you know, maybe you don't want to give, but at least are in that vein, you know, and you can modify them however you want." And just trying to constantly, constantly, reaffirm and say yes to people. Which is really to me, one of the biggest keys.
Glenn	And so I probably would spend more time talking about what you know, what's not working, you know, what's broken, what's broken, trying to get them to really buy into that. And then I guess I would, where possible, allow multiple solutions.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Henry	But I think a lot of that has been based on selecting some individuals who are going to keep doing that. My [course name redacted] team for example, I had someone who was hired in the same year that I hired in and you know, she answered questions interview-wise, in a way that let me know she was very much a progressive, progressive person. The long term teacher who had been here forever and ever and ever was one of the movers and shakers that began to move towards proficiency, particularly with the influence of the new teacher. And then as we've hired part time people coming in, we've made sure that they have that same philosophy. And so then the [course name redacted] team has become this model for everybody else about how to transform curriculum, how to transform practices, how to transform grading. And I have given them whatever they want, or they need in order to make them successful. And what happened was members of the department stepped forward and began to lead discussions about equity, began to lead discussions about grading, began to push their colleagues in a way that changed and shaped the department's philosophy and approach. We, you know, we've gotten the ability to like do some pilot work and that's kind of helped. But they really shaped the beginning of conversations and I began to codify that so that when we returned back to school in the fall of [2021], we began to put things together and in writing and surveying, I gave lots and lots of freedom that year for people to experiment.
Isabelle	So like, even having like the conversation, like some philosophical conversations, and so and then you know, sharing things other teachers are doing that are that are unique, so I have been willing to allow some PLCs [professional learning communities] to go have some people go a little rogue on their PLC like to try something new with the intention of like action research, like they want to try it, they have a good reason why, they want to share out, which is good.
Jerry	Sharing research, creating a forum for teachers to share personal stories of success on an initiative, challenging all teachers to try something new but make it low stakes, providing meaningful and actionable feedback to individual teachers.
Kent	Or rather, we started letting teams innovate and try it and they started going and then you start realizing like, “Oh, that's better, that's better.” And then it's almost like one of those things that once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. And there's no way you could go back. Well, I think they've been forced to innovate a ton because what, six or seven years ago I would say that almost all of our summative assessments, or the things

Participant	Participant Quotes
	that we use for summative assessments, were probably, I'm just guessing now, I'm arbitrarily going to put a number. 90% [multiple choice]. Our assessments that are used for summative scoring [now], let's say 5% are multiple choice. I'm gonna be generous and say 5%, because I'm sure there's somebody that's doing some multiple choice somewhere. But they've had to innovate. So like what assessments look like [now] don't look anything like they did 10 years ago. And so just the assessment process and feedback and how that scoring works and then, how that trickles into the instruction. That alone has been a lot. So I think if one thing, that's pulled us away from some things like maybe authenticity or problem based learning, or those kinds of things, even phenomena driven, like we don't do as much of that as I would like, there's some really good pockets of that happening. But a lot of our work has been on good assessment and feedback and that whole process. Yeah, I think that's pretty typical. Most schools have some, almost every school that I visit. They have people that are trying it out, you know, like, Mr. Jones down there is all about standards based grading. He's trying some crazy stuff and another teacher in math is doing some crazy stuff. So I think that's where it's important as a leader to quickly bring those folks together to like, learn and innovate, but let's come around some philosophies because otherwise you start evolving some systems that are maybe even competing. Yeah, which I think is okay, like, you get a few people or get a few people to just pilot it and try it out.
Lori	I mean, at the end of the day, like I want, I want teachers to have autonomy in the classroom.
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Supporting and Coaching Teachers

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	I think they're pretty used to my feedback, it's pretty consistent all the time. It's how much is the kids talking versus how much are you talking? And then when it comes to grading practices, so that's like teaching practices when it comes to grading practices. Just bring the test to me and actually talk about it. So if you're like wondering, would I give this a two or three on our rubric, let's talk about it. And those are some of our best conversations because then we can really be like, “What was the standard? You know, how much does this little mistake matter in the standard?” And we talk about it, and then I'm learning to try to do more listening.
Carl	So they still have some buy in, you know, some feedback and input along the way. So that's one way. And then the other way is more of meeting with teachers one on one and talking about their projects, you know, what they're interested in? I think that it's a lot more buy in as far as you know, personal reward for the teachers. So, our PLC [professional learning community] group might be interested in a PD day for extend as new modeling curriculum. So enabling them to go and see some professional development about it, and then talking about it and say, "Is this something we want to adopt? If we want to adopt how do we roll it out?" And things like that. And, you know, it might be a multi year process. But that's, that's the more fun way of doing it, is when someone has an vision and helping them reach their goal, rather than when it's coming from the district down. Yeah, I think the biggest thing that is most when they buy in and are most likely to make the shift is when you come up with some kind of philosophical reasoning, some kind of research from [professional groups]. So it isn't just, “This is what we have to do.” So for the grading, it took us along, because we were trying to help them understand what the grading philosophy was, were they after the instruction, are students demonstrating what they know. And then some of our practice, so for example, extra credit. A lot of teachers gave extra credit. And we said, "Well, that's not very equitable. Because for some kids, they can't afford to go see a movie, because they have to stay home or they have to work or something like that." So extra credit became a debate. So when they understood the philosophy behind it, that helped. [An instructional coach] could come in as an outsider with the literacy angle, and give feedback along the way and say, "Well, that's great. But when does the student ever practice this?" Or, you know, "What about the reading levels?" And, so they were able to come in and consult. And they're very knowledgeable. So that's a great resource that they've used in World Studies, which is where the

Participant	Participant Quotes
	detracking started, or earned honors started. And now it's spreading to English and Science. And then [I] try very hard to make things manageable on their behalf. But they also know that there's some times when I just have to come in and say, “This is the way it's going to be.” And there are times though, when I, if there's a debate going on, and let's say the [course name redacted] group, and that decision just has to be made. And I say, "Look, guys, we've got to move forward. If you don't make a decision, I'm going to make a decision for you from the options and let's just move forward, we've gotta move forward and get going." And they respect that. Sometimes you have to be more directive than others, but I feel more collaborative if I can help it. And for one of them, especially, it turned out that he just, he thought he was doing what it was supposed to be, until he worked with a literacy coach. And then he got to see what the real example was compared to what he was doing. And it is amazing, because this year, I've already talked, I was already going into a class and talking about assessment with him this year. And he completely changed the way he was talking about it, because he's...we're talking about, okay, so we're going to use this assessment. He goes, "Well, this is gonna take a couple of days, because the first day, I'm going to have to explain how the assessment works." And, you know, make sure you talk it through and obviously, something he would never have done, he would have just said, "Here's the assessment, go." And so it's been wonderful, because he didn't mean, he was mot malicious, we just didn't understand and was frustrated.
Daryl	Yeah, yeah, it's just individual, you know, just go to them and talk with them. And as a group, I mean, and that's the thing, I think, I think my my relationship with them is, is fine, where we can be candid with one another and just look like, you know, this is I know you're trying to do with this part of it, but come on, that's not that's outside of the scope of that policy. And I get it too, I'm pretty straight up with them, too. I'm like, I get where this is coming from, it's coming from a core disbelief in the system, or, you know, you don't value the retake policy, like maybe others do. And so that's driving you like the root of it is that you don't really believe in it. And so you're trying to find ways to go around it. Like that's obviously where it has to be coming from, because otherwise, you'd be like, Yeah, everything's retake-able. And so, just working through trying to work through that a little bit. We have five instructional coaches, and two of them are on the student services side of things, one is a social worker and the other one is…she's a speech pathologist I think. So they kind of help the classroom teachers, that instructional coaches design some of their internal PD through the lens of social emotional learning or cultural responsiveness, and then those instructional coaches do a

Participant	Participant Quotes
	couple things. We have lunch and learns, we call them. The district provides a lunch, teachers come in during their lunch hour to learn or engage in a presentation put on by the instructional coaches that addresses one or more of these topics, like once a month or twice a month like that…There's been a couple of different rounds of books studies.
Eugene	I honestly think I'm, I'm put more in the role of coach. It's gonna lean on my instructional coach background more than my formal evaluator background. And so that relies on me to be actually a lot, a lot more thorough in the qualitative feedback that I give teachers to coach them to be better. New teachers. So I've had a bit here nine years, and I haven't had to hire a bunch, a lot of teachers, but I hired four new teachers. And I hired, I've hired a bunch of TAs. Okay, so they've gone through like a new teacher training cohort that the district has, but they've also gone through my own boot camp. So there was this as needed basis on a couple of teachers' cases, it was like we're doing daily lesson plans with other ones. It was like, "Great, you're learning enough year to year." And this is a little bit more broad strokes depending what they came in with. And that has been pretty satisfying. The four teachers that came on with me, I think, maybe it's like, you see what you want to see, you know, it's like they're doing what I want. We had a workshop this morning for the department that I led, but they all participated. And we began talking about that. So I think in short, there has to be a lot more of that. I think going from where we are, to where we need to be, in terms of differentiation is going to require a lot of a lot of practice. I feel like we haven't even really, really, really started on that. So I'm so trepidatious about it, honestly, trepidatious. But like, I realized it's such a big shift, that we're starting with discussion first, just getting the kids talking, getting them, getting them to carry the cognitive load. And then to do that, we're going to have to differentiate some of our preps for them. And so that's a way of bringing that in and also a way of like working on some of the classroom culture stuff that you do. And then, and then really hit differentiation a lot harder. Like I said, like I'm thinking it's November 1, something's going to happen November 1, we're on the note, we're going to be ready.
Finn	So in terms of help trying to enact change, or you know, think grading, it's really here on a voluntary basis. I mean, there's no there's no standardized grading policy, because there sort of can't be. That doesn't mean that teachers are doing wildly different things in terms of grading, but you know, you're limited by the contract in terms of what you can have people do. It really comes down to trying to have conversations, trying to encourage people, trying to have people think about assessment differently. So I've been focusing on the assessment angle, and

Participant	Participant Quotes
	not even talking about the grading component of it at all, just in terms of [department name redacted] teachers to start thinking about, you know, non-traditional assessment. And by that we mean, anything that's not a paper pencil test, or quiz. So trying to encourage problem sets, projects, take home tests… start encouraging people to move in that direction, you know. Finding people who are interested in it by examples, by providing feedback on whatever they might be trying to encourage, and their type of assessment besides paper and pencil tests.
Glenn	N/A
Henry	I have publicly countered [naysayers]. I have privately countered them, but usually in this instance, it's been with a union member present. Because when I've tried to do it without a union representative, then that's blown up, become a huge mess. The conversation, it gets convoluted and there's a whole different philosophy than this. One particular individual always writes a response after the fact and copies multiple layers of people in it. So I've learned not to meet with that individual alone. I oftentimes will ask for others. “Does anyone have anything they'd like to add or share, or a different perspective?” And usually, that comes out pretty quickly, so that I want her as well as others to understand that not everybody else thinks the way that she thinks. That's hard, particularly when it's a short meeting and particularly if it's the before school meetings versus the after school. But what's said publicly and what's said privately because I know for example, two days after we had the beginning of the year meeting where this came out, I walked into the office, and this individual was standing up preaching out to the entire office group. And I came to the doorway and I looked at and I said, Should I turn around or should I back out of the room right now? And they all laughed and they said, “Oh no, X is just saying what she thinks about it.” Right but it was very clear that she was on a rail and she was gonna…but they were all very much, "That's just her." And the culture in [district name redacted] is very much the teacher voice is more important than administrator voice. And so by giving voice to those progressives, who will not allow the naysayers, the negatives, to drag their feet beyond a certain manner, things are going to happen, that change is going to move forward. So it's empowering them. You ask what percent, I never really answered that. I would say that 60 to 70% of what I believe, I'm trying to encourage people to follow suit. And I'm lucky that in my nine years, I've hired about a third of the department. So I have not hired a traditionalist if I can avoid it.
Isabelle	But I think what we have planned to do at an upcoming Institute Day is share some grade books and have them actually calculate the different grades based on how teachers input things. Like showing, for example, like having them walk through it and see okay, so if these are all zero, the student ends up with a grade of 38%, and if these are all 50, the student ends up with a grade of 53%. You

Participant	Participant Quotes
	know, I mean, you're not giving away grades to the kids that aren't doing it. But the kids that have a lot of the work up here, looking at the detriment of this few zeros versus the 50. So having them actually work through it and calculate it by hand. Instead of like, “Oh, well, the Infinite Campus spits out their grade, I don't determine their grade.” You know, having them kind of think through some of that. I think that standard based models can be very good and allow kids to continually grow and then their final grade as a result of what they know, at the end or overall or have demonstrated most often, instead of well, a few months ago you were here and that still counts in your grade because we had to report it. So I've really tried to move away from that and my own grading practices and model that with my colleagues here. So I'm trying to model a willingness to try something.
Jerry	I think for the most part, these course teams will figure out what is a good question and what is not a good question as they come up with these common assessment questions. But I think some will come into my office and say probably privately, like, "Our course committee talked about this. I don't like it. What do you think?" And you can talk through like what is a good assessment question.
Kent	So I think some of the laggards or some of the later adopters, it was all of those things, trying to bring you up to speed, trying to support them, acknowledging that that change brings a sense of loss. They're going to lose some confidence and proficiency. So I think not ignoring that, but ultimately like yeah, we're going here, and we're gonna help you get there.
Lori	And I thought that the evaluation conversations could turn into more of coaching conversations. So it was important to me that I got an opportunity to try to do more of that instead of being like, instead of having evaluation conversations that were like, You need to be doing this and this is why I thought that should be changed. I wanted to do that for whatever group of teachers I was working with. So that's what encouraged me to become a department chair. In my first 2 years, these [1:1] meetings [with teachers] happened monthly with veteran teachers and biweekly for teachers in years 1-2. Now that I have more of an established relationship with teachers, these happen quarterly with veteran staff and still biweekly for teachers in years 1-2. I make sure to ask teachers a lot of questions about their experience, opinions, and what they would like to see happen in the school or department. When I first started the job I was surprised to learn that many teachers had not be given an opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions or ideas. This was a great trust builder, especially when I was able to act on a recommendation they made or follow up about a topic that gave them

Participant	Participant Quotes
	closure. As teachers talked with one another about their experiences, I noticed more teachers being vulnerable and sharing what was on their mind. I often reiterate to teachers that I have their best interest in mind and that I'm on their team. I am transparent about my decision making and always give the "why" (when I can) behind decisions that they are impacted by.
Morgan	N/A

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Seeking New Perspectives

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	So like, for example, when we switched to our curriculum, we brought in the authors of our integrated curriculum, to come in and train us and show us how they envision this curriculum being taught. I've learned a lot so I started this school year out on like the back to school days, you know, before the kids come with, like our department meeting was all about like resetting the purpose of what our competencies are and how we grade and making sure that everybody understands the philosophy behind it. And offering some examples, giving them a little bit more freedom. You're gonna hear that the research says the homework shouldn't be a part of the grade. We shouldn't grade behavior, the grade should reflect what students know. And I agree with all of that. However, what I am seeing now, in year four is students aren't practicing. There's not enough time in a class for students to be exposed to all of the wonderful problems that we need them to be exposed to. We think we can, we just can't, and so we're losing some of that, so we're losing some skills, which maybe is okay. But what we can't do, we can't have it all right, so we can't not have homework, have students doing less problems, and then still expect us to move at the same pace and rigor that we have for the last eternity. And that's just what we're noticing.
Carl	Then, they realize the value of a higher level question. So you know, giving them some examples to help them see what we're talking about. Really helpful. Yeah, well, variety of resources. I'd say we've had four or five books that were book talks in the administration, reading and you know, some I know the English chair at a book club that they did.
Daryl	Yeah, I mean, it is in this kind of fear of, and it really comes down to I think, like having a culturally responsive pedagogy or culturally responsive practices as Admin's kind of saying that phrase. Like having, I'd like to have a way where teachers reflect on their own course policies, under, through a lens of, of equity and, and diversity. We've read Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain, there's another one... I think it's called there's a here's a great here's a specifically a grading one…Grading for Equity.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Eugene	They went through a rigorous Ainsworth 14 Step assessment writing process while back right when I got here, and so that that was something, they they generally like each other and like to learn from each other. But I do believe it's a process that begins with direct instruction, guided practice, multiple chances to see how students are doing and then a chance for them to show what they know. But I'm I want to move more towards UDL [Universal Design for Learning] which is like giving the students more of a voice and how they pick what they want to be assessed on.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	N/A
Henry	And for many people, unless they're out there and they're involved and they're reading, they don't necessarily have those same ideas. And so they need to figure out where they're going. And if somebody doesn't show them that, you know, Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem on the hill, they're gonna think that they live in the New Jerusalem. It has been and it actually because of the pandemic, and the approach that we as a district began to take. Now there was work building up to all of that. That was one of the things that was very apparent to outsiders, and by outsiders like I mean, other directors and my principals, that it took me a while to realize yes, I am laying the groundwork for things. So a lot of our discussions in our work about standards, and about performance based teaching, versus memorization and regurgitation, which is the model they were kind of under before, and I mean, we I still have people who use matching and multiple choice and simple translation, right? That drives me crazy that, because that's not best practices in world language. But at the same time now we're having conversations about what our students doing? How are we measuring what they can do versus what they can't do? How are we pushing growth moving forward?
Isabelle	Yeah, so over the past, I guess since the pandemic, the book Grading for Equity, kind of boomed a little in our district. And then just this year, we transitioned to a three year evaluation cycle, because that was a new thing by the state of Illinois. I'm actually on the group that helps determine what the evaluation cycle is. I'm like the administrative side. And there's teacher representatives. And so teachers have the opportunity to like take part in a professional learning experience and one of those is Grading for Equity book discussion group at the district level. So I feel like there is kind of grumblings over that, you know, I mean, like clearly the district keeps mentioning

Participant	Participant Quotes
	it. And schools keep looking at it. But there's been no like, duh, people were doing this. You know, there's been no, you must read this.
Jerry	N/A
Kent	So we visited lots of schools. We went to Iowa, we went to Maine, we went to Vermont, we visited schools, anybody who was doing something that was sort of in line with where we were going. But those kinds of things, though, when we did site visits for people that were doing it, that gave us some new ideas, you know. Even if we took a trip and we came back like we got one idea from them. When we went to Solon, Iowa, I remember the idea we got from them. And we went to Vermont, I remember the idea we came back with. We went to Maine, I remember what we came back with. And then we built that together and said, like, this is our thing. I think one of the reasons that we wrote the book and one of the reasons we took the site visits was the need for discipline specific models. People want to see, people want to see the model applied within the context of their discipline. So you could... it was amazing for us early on how people would talk to somebody who's an English teacher and say, like, "Yeah, yeah, that's fine in English, but it wouldn't, it wouldn't work in science." Or like, "Oh, that's fine in social studies, or PE A driver's ed, it just...you just don't get it. It wouldn't work in…" But then you start going to schools that are doing it… and they explain how they're doing you're like "Oh, I'll be darned, it would work… We can do that." And you start. It's amazing how powerful that is. When you get job-alike people together to see a model for how it works. I just need a taste of what it could look like. And then I could pull it off, and I can replicate it and then I can tweak it to make our own. So that's huge to me. I think that's a huge leadership skill for people to get a pretty clear vision of somebody that's doing something like that, or working with students, “Like you don't understand. We have more black and brown students. We couldn't do it.” Like, "Oh, no, look at this school. They're doing it. Come over here. It's working." But people really value seeing something that looks like them being successful.
Lori	So I think that what I can do is to like, help make some of those connections and get some of those examples to be like, This is how [school name redacted] is doing it. This is how this guy in Ontario is doing it and just share this with them and help them like, make sense and make sense of what that looks like. I feel like [teachers] need to see examples of teachers who are teaching the same thing, or similar things, at least, do it successfully.

Participant	Participant Quotes
Morgan	We brought in Rick Wormeli…I think he's awesome. I think that guy's awesome. I don't think I necessarily agree with everything he says but I agree with a lot of what he says you know. The end, we then went formative/summative, so all our grading categories are formative/summative now. And so our classes have to be at least 70% summative, 30% formative is the most it can be but it can be less than that if you want it to. Our category weights, our grade weights are consistent across your building, your course learning team within your building, knowing that they're within those parameters.

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Managing Change

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	Because I don't have all the constraints of the classroom, and I don't want all constraints of the school board, so I think it gives us some latitude to be a little more open and what we believe in because there's not as much to lose.
Beth	I definitely think there is a balance of what you think is right, and then what the district wants and the district vision. So we'll start with that and always, so for me, it's always trying to work on that balance. Even if people don't want to hear it and that just goes back to that balancing. You know, like the goals of the District versus, so that's kind of I mean, that's, that's pretty general, but there's a lot going on, so I don't know. So there was definitely stress and anger [over curriculum revision]. But everybody was going to do their best. And there was really no time to complain. So this is what I would say to them. It's funny as I ramble, I remember things so I would always say to them, be consistent in your class. Then you can worry about the PLC/PLT [professional learning community/professional learning team]. And then we could talk about the district but right now, you gotta figure this out for you and who you are and how you're teaching in your class. We tried so hard to make it a district effort. And what that did for us was bad. Changes couldn't be made in the moment to adapt to the needs of the building. So like if a teacher would come to me and they would have a concern. I'd be like, Okay, well, we gotta go bring it back to the team. And what ended up happening is, you know, there was a lot of anger, resentment, there was a lot of not all of it teacher, because they couldn't adjust, which I mean, if you think about teaching, I mean, I don't know, I went into teaching because my room is I'm in control, you know, give me some guidelines and then I'm gonna teach the kid. And many teachers, they were used to that and then here we like pull the rug underneath them and be like, No, you're gonna do this, this this, this thing exactly like this. And you have very little time to plan plus you have to create. So I think that was a so I think what I did from a leadership perspective is I really went back to the greater team and then tried to push for a little bit more. I can't think of the word flexibility is what I'm saying right now. Autonomy that's within the district to be able to make some decisions that I feel my department needs. You will never have full buy in. You have to get started and learn along the way. The learning never stops. You know, like we built that by not, like by going too fast and by not providing those opportunities for like it just needed all slowed down and the teachers needed to be more a part of the change.

Participant	Participant Quotes
	So I have to kind of remind them like, I'm not going to let you just place all the blame above me like I am on the team. I'm a decision making person. I do stand behind all of this. But I think they see it I'm pretty transparent. I am not afraid to let them know the things that I agree with. And then the things that I struggle with when we're discussing them as a district, if that makes sense.
Carl	So there was no formative before the summative. Which I think was what the idea of an assessment is supposed to do is, not just tell you where the student is, but also then reflect, what does this tell us about the curriculum? They could have easily done, "Well, let's get rid of application questions, because because they're struggling with it." Instead, they changed their instruction and assessment because they felt that that's what the standard there was, and therefore they should change how they do the instruction so that we can meet their assessment needs. Let's talk it through and figure out how does that work as a department? So you know, it's a loose type situation where they give us the parameters, and then I can help them come up with what's comfortable for the department, if that makes sense. We've been going through a journey for the last four years or so. And it's been interesting being on the grading committee; consists of a variety, wide variety of people, and reading books and such. And I think what we came down to is a grade should represent what a student knows, and what they can, you know, perform. And just because I've seen some of the practices that have been done with standards based and just, I can't buy some of the stuff that they do there, and it'd be hard to get the whole department, you know, settle in on [inaudible], things like that. So I guess it's my grand compromise of logistical practicality, pragmatic versus soft goal, theories and such.
Daryl	Well, you know, it's still definitely a work in progress, I think it comes back to you know, it's unfortunate, it's generally the more experienced teacher that's like, is thinking about kids taking advantage of the system. And then we do, again, in their defense, we do have kids take advantage of the system where they'll, they'll purposely and admittedly, not prepare for an assessment the night before, knowing that there's an opportunity for a retake. And how that just drives teachers crazy when you spend time writing an assessment, and now I gotta write a whole nother one, because you've asked for a retake, just because you don't see it kind of get a feel for what the test was like. And I get that some of those things that the students' end that is kind of against the spirit of the policy to you do it so that you can give them a chance to before re-perform if they didn't do it the first time around, not necessarily gamed the system. So I think it's just about, you know, relating to them and acknowledging that I see the same kind of struggles with it

Participant	Participant Quotes
	that you are, but we just can't, then we can apply that to every kid by [inaudible]. And therefore apply that to everybody. When it, when every kid is going to game the system like that.
Eugene	So, you know, I'm happy to work for a team that is completely willing to go against what everybody else is doing and try things, but then with that, just comes a little bit of stress and anxiety and uncertainty. Because we are doing things that not everyone does, so we don't always have a model to follow.
Finn	N/A
Glenn	Well, I think [assessment and grading practices are] a systematic thing that people don't have the guts to talk about. Like, that's not an unreasonable thing, because maybe you're not gonna get fired as a teacher over that, but you're gonna get beat up. I think one of the mistakes people make is they choose the hills that they like, and they have, but they don't, they don't consider their own system.
Henry	For example, when I came to my current position they were very much mired in the past practices in education. Their previous leader was very much a traditionalist. They weren't in line with national standards. They were unaware of current trends for the most part. It took me six years of working and planting ideas for that to become rooted in their normal thoughts and processes.
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	Very private, very personal, and no one ever talks about [grading and assessment practices]. And you could show the research. And so at that point, I just sort of thought through, How can we move some teachers from doing some of the things that they're doing and they don't even realize that it's hurting kids or it's... It's impacting, maybe that's what it is. It's impacting kids and they don't realize that. How can I help them see that and then move them to a different spot? So last year, we so I've done different things over the years, but last year, we really embarked on, what are best practices, and grading practices, and then kind of went from there. So I'm tackling more this year actually. So I think this is where I have to really rely on their peers because those that are resistant to change are probably resistant to anything that I'm gonna to say. These are the same people that will complain about the principal, and everything, you know. And so, you know, some of this is like, putting them on certain teams to make sure that they're surrounded by the right people and quite frankly, there are times when I take all the negative people put them on the same team like "Okay,

Participant	Participant Quotes
	you want to do nothing, that's fine, but don't negatively impact all these people." These guys want to do something different and not for the sake of doing something different, but to be better you know. I, for better for worse, I, because I didn't say this is a thing that we're going to do last year with grading practices, there were some that never adopted it. That's okay with me, actually. I didn't I didn't set out last year to have a big sea change. I really thought by the end of the year, I'll convince 10 people to really take a serious look at their grading practices and try something different. I was surprised that so many accepted the challenge. I would be willing to bet that more than half are doing something different this year, significantly different. And some of those are incremental. It was, it really was because they saw their peers.
Kent	So I think in terms of [strategies] that lead to relative success, because anytime you have a big paradigm shift, or you're leading a massive you know, transformational kind of a change, you know, adaptive change where you're changing mindsets, not just fixing the bus routes, but you're like fundamentally changing people's mindset, I think we did it over a long period of time helped people come up to speed. So my role, I think, was to shape some of the learning and to provide some boundaries of what you could go, you know, where you could play in the in the sandbox, and then just to provide them the resources and the time and the ability to do that together. And then there's also some inevitability. Eventually get to this inevitable, "Yeah, in the next four years, every team has to get there," and we lined them up, like you might be four years out, but it's coming and it's not going away. So I think that helped people to realize that they almost resigned themselves to the fact that it has to happen. And I think by that time, some of those late adopters or laggards depending on you know, you know what leadership research you read, but those late adopters saw models of it working and people that they work with that they trust, other teachers, that said like. "Oh my gosh, I'll be darned. It actually worked." So that helped.
Lori	I also asked them similar questions of like in your perfect you know, [classroom], what would this look like? You know, both during evaluation post observation conversations and chats in the hallway, and ask them to work back backwards from there. I feel like that is one of the few opportunities that [we] get to have more of those like big picture, dreamy conversations. Some teachers who are like “Oh, yeah,” like, "Yes, and…" people like, “Let me give that a shot.” Or like, “That's really interesting. I haven't thought about that. Let me do some digging.” They're the ones who are already starting to, try some pieces of it. I've also found that there are teachers who are just really comfortable doing things the way that they've been doing it for years. But they're also the same people who are saying

Participant	Participant Quotes
	like “Oh, yeah, like I know, things are changing. And I know you want us to go in this particular direction. I just haven't convinced myself to do it yet.” So you know, that eventually goes back to the support in place to help them embrace the change. But I think it's like a fear of the unknown right now. And teachers are basically saying, like once, once they've taught one year of a standards based class are like, well, it's actually not that bad transitioning the others. And then we can also way easier to just have the same assessment practice across all five of my courses instead of trying to balance like a traditional gradebook in one and an SBG gradebook in another.
Morgan	And you think about the whole idea of retakes and things like that. What's everybody get freaked out about? Now I gotta write another test and I got this, now I gotta do that. Well, what if we're talking about just the little things that you missed and that, because I think a lot of people over estimate kids motivation of grades on kids who don't already have the grades. And so I think if we can find a way to make it, hey, my grade is going to be solid. And the teacher wants my grade, you know, the teacher wants the grade to be better so nobody's breathing down their neck about poor grade, poor grades, D's and F's. And the student wants nobody bothering them. It's a win win. Right? And so I think that's partly, also find, Daniel, that when if you if you if you package things in such a way that it meets their needs and my needs, they're a lot more eager to meet my needs. There aren't too many things in this education that are going to be new, it's all come around and around and around, right. But every one of them can be massaged into whatever you need it to be. And so that's why I said you figure out what your stuff is. And then you can kind of start using that to help provide some consistency to your people who are clamoring for it. Because this is everything. We're always going to do this. "Guys, I'm willing to err on the side of believing that the kids are the ones that have to do the learning, that have to do it right. This is all about the kids. This is all about the kids. This is all about the kids. What would I want if it were my kids? What would I want if it were me? What would I want if it were you learning?" They're not all 100% on board on this, but I would bet I would bet it's safe to say that 85% on board with things that I'm talking about right now, partly because it also saves them work. When you turn those words back on the adults and say, "I need you to think about what's happening here. I need you to think about, you're frustrated that they won't do homework. They don't want to do homework. It's leading to more poor grades in your class. Maybe we really need to think about how we're setting all this up. How could we redesign a course so that kids are having a different experience in the course, they're liking it, they're more engaged, the person that's doing the work

Participant	Participant Quotes
	is the one that's doing the learning. Well, if the teacher stand in front of him the whole time talking the whole time then the teacher is doing a fantastic job of the learning, but who knows what in the world the kids are getting? How can we turn that around?" And I think the technology has been a premium importance in helping make that happen.

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Theme - Building Collective Efficacy: Being Okay with Imperfection

Participant	Participant Quotes
Alden	N/A
Beth	[In discussing a major curriculum revision.] So there was definitely stress and anger. But everybody was going to do their best. And there was really no time to complain. So this is what I would say to them. It's funny as I ramble I remember things so I would always say to them, be consistent in your class. Then you can worry about the PLC PLT. And then we could talk about the district but right now, you got to figure this out for you and who you are and how you're teaching in your class. So I can't come in and give you how to grade it, but I can listen to you and we can, I'll ask questions about how you taught it. In class, you know, and then we can bring things to the team and then start talking about it. Because they would get really stressed about how things didn't match up. Like, or how's everybody else grading and it's like right now we can only have really good discussions, but that doesn't mean you need to go and regrade everything. So consistency in your class, then we need to go to the team and then we could go to the school even and then bigger, which we have worked on. My goal this year is to gather data. That makes a lot them uneasy. But I think that's been my strategy right now.
Carl	[In discussing the district's move to an earned honors credit for some courses.] Well, depends on what you call working, effective and longevity. A straight up directive usually doesn't last very long. You know, this is the way it's going to be, boom. Especially if you don't provide any professional development behind it and training on how to do it, implement it. Then it becomes a you know what, this is what will comply with. And, you know, when the next pendulum swings a different direction, or the winds change direction, they know it's going to they're not going to stay with it or if people are not staying on top of it, they'll drift back to their old practices. So you have to keep staying on top of it and be more coercive because If it's strictly, this is the way it's going to be without the philosophy and stuff like that, it's just that's the way it is, you're not going to get any buy in. And that's where the earned honors has been a challenge because a lot of them are struggling with the, they like the philosophy, the idea of it. Pragmatically, they're having a difficulty with it. So we're trying to find a way of making it pragmatic, and palatable. And being able to say, "Well, I really don't believe that three assessments determines whether or not you're an honors student. But if that's what we're told that we're going to do within those parameters, we can come up with three decent assessments." So, yeah, it's just straight up directive or saying this is what we want, and not giving them professional development behind it. And you know, some support.
Daryl	N/A

Participant	Participant Quotes
Eugene	N/A
Finn	N/A
Glenn	I think I've been successful in kind of lowering those impacts on grades in my department, but I think being willing to let some teachers give zeros and other teachers, you know, not dying on that hill, I think helped me get them all to, you know, okay, fine, you can give zeros, but you know, how are you making most of your grade about what kids actually know and can do? What's your, what's your method?
Henry	N/A
Isabelle	N/A
Jerry	Okay, so I remember I was at a conference once and I didn't take much away from the conference. But he did say something that stuck with me. He said, "Don't demonize the late adopters." And that's really stuck with me. That some of these guys that are in my department that are like "No no, no, I will not change," some of them really just need to see someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then someone else do it, and then they'll buy in because they finally, they've come around to it. It takes them four years, where you got your early adopters that were like, "Sure I mean, you didn't even have to give me the research. Just what you said alone I was convinced," that they should try something different, you know. So I think it's... it's a lot of convincing. Last year and this year when I first proposed this to the department I did a lot of here's what we're gonna do, here's why we're going to do it. And then I had to anticipate their objections. And say, for those that are thinking, a) no, that's not what I'm trying to do here. For those that are thinking b) I'm not trying to do that. Whereas when I was at [school name redacted], I didn't have to do that. It was it was like, here's what we're gonna do. Here's why we should do it. And then they were on board. But I had to hear, I have to anticipate their objections and just address them.
Kent	And I think just from a leadership standpoint, realizing that you might not you might not win over everybody, you might not change everyone's mind. But ultimately, it's not about building universal consensus. But it's about making decisions that are based on better practices and better ways of doing things. So in some ways, the determination that we are doing this, like yeah, that's probably a little bit top down a little bit bottom up, but eventually it came for those folks is top down.
Lori	I was coming in with a bunch of SBG experience a lot of my own trial and error. Going back to like the first question that we talked about of vulnerability, I was like, I can tell you that my first attempt to SPG was a hot mess. And like I showed them what I did, and then I showed them like, what I did the first year I was here

Participant	Participant Quotes
	the second year I was here and now the third year I was here to just like, re-emphasize like this is it does not need to be perfect the first time that you try it. I would like to think that that like built some trust and like, I philosophically feel very strongly about this method of assessment of like where we're at right now and working with with what we're working with. So I feel like I was definitely really able to explain the why, whether they are 100% on board with the why I'm not sure but like I think laying it out giving them this five year plan and really like critical steps of what we're doing. Each one of those stages was positive.
Morgan	[Discussing his influence on teacher reassessment practices]. Yes, do I think I could have influenced? Yes, because I have. But it also comes, it also helps to have conversations with people about these different things. They're not all 100% on board on this, but I would bet I would bet it's safe to say that 85% on board with things that I'm talking about right now, partly because it also saves them work. Right? And you think about the whole idea of retakes and things like that. What's everybody get freaked out about? Now I gotta write another test and I got this, now I gotta do that. Well, what if we're talking about just the little things that you missed and that, because I think a lot of people over estimate kids motivation of grades on kids who don't already have the grades. And so I think if we can find a way to make it, hey, my grade is going to be solid. And the teacher wants my grade, you know, the teacher wants the grade to be better so nobody's breathing down their neck about poor grade, poor grades, D's and F's. And the student wants nobody bothering them. It's a win win. Right? And so I think that's partly, also find, Daniel, that when if you if you if you package things in such a way that it meets their needs and my needs, they're a lot more eager to meet my needs.

Note: Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and/or redacted where necessary to maintain confidentiality.