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A Case Study of a Career Ladder Pilot Program Within a Large Florida School District

by

David LaRoche

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Keywords: merit pay, pay for performance, teacher leadership, resource reallocation, and school reform

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DEDICATION

The fact that I have completed the requirements for this doctoral degree says more about my support system than myself as a student. I am extremely fortunate to have so many family members and friends in my life that have given me the strength to persevere throughout this six-year journey that began April 18, 2001. At the foundation of that system is my wife, Susan, who has sacrificed for me and been the steadying force when our lives needed balance. She is my best friend and the love of my life; without her love and devotion, I surely would not have finished. To my parents, Connie and Paul, who taught me the value of education and continue to be involved in my life. They have been tremendously supportive of all of their sons’ educations and are always available when I need them. To my son Eric, who has been through this process since the beginning and has had to be understanding when daddy had to work on a paper instead of playing soccer in the yard. To my daughter, Jenna, who does not know yet what is going on, only that I spend many Saturday mornings at my computer. To my brothers Mike, Jay, and Tim along with my sisters-in-law Gloria and Becky for always showing interest in my work and being there when I needed them right from the start.
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A Case Study of a Career Ladder Program Within a Large Florida School District

David P. LaRoche

ABSTRACT

In 2003, the Florida legislature appropriated funds to finance pilot programs (1012.231, Florida Statutes) to prepare for the 2004-2005 school year in which pay for performance initiatives were to be implemented in each district. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine and describe the planning, processes, and implications of a pilot career ladder program that was implemented into a large Florida school district in the spring of 2004. During data collection, the program was terminated therefore creating a second purpose that sought to describe residual implications of a program when it is discontinued.

Data collected for this study were used to respond to six specific research questions. The first inquired about the planning process prior to implementation. Archival documents were used to determine whether research-based strategies were involved. The second through the fifth questions rely heavily on survey and structured interview data collected by the district and the primary researcher respectively and seek to determine critical perspectives from teachers and administrators regarding the career ladder including knowledge, fairness, and implications for school and district. The sixth question asks whether residual effects remain in place after an initiative has been terminated.
Particularly, as a major finding, time for implementation was a theme throughout the study as most respondents were concerned about the short timeline this program had to develop fully. Stakeholder buy-in and understanding of program roles emerged from the data. However, the notion of a mentor that was given the time and resources was frequently mentioned as a benefit to new teachers and the school overall. Furthermore, respondents saw the potential long-term benefit of staff development that would allow highly trained master teachers to coach new and struggling teachers during the day in a clinical setting. There was evidence that this program did have an initial negative impact on the culture of the schools in the district. One unplanned aspect of this case study was the fact that the program was terminated at the state level. This had implications for all stakeholders and could be a strong factor in later implementations; therefore, this would require further study.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2003, a large Florida school district planned and implemented a pay for performance pilot program using guidelines provided by the state legislature. This case study describes one district’s rapid journey through the process of developing and implementing a controversial plan that would impact all instructional staff within the district. In describing this journey, the research is focused on data collected in the form of archival documents, surveys, and interviews with participants.

Background

The 2003 Florida legislature created the Better Educated Students and Teachers (BEST) Act, which required all school districts to implement a salary career ladder for classroom teachers beginning with the 2004-2005 school year. The career ladder had to have four levels: associate teacher, professional teacher, lead teacher, and mentor teacher. The recommended salary schedule for teachers for 2004-2005 had to be consistent with the district’s career ladder, and the district’s five percent performance pay policy had to provide for the evaluation of classroom teachers within each level of the salary career ladder provided in Section 1012.231, Florida Statutes.

According to the proposal submitted by the grant writing team, the intent of the Career Ladder Program was to provide (DSBPC, 2003):
1. New advancements and career paths for teachers who want to stay in the classroom.

2. Opportunities to participate in leadership roles as key agents of change and continuous improvement.

3. A re-emphasis on the importance of teacher effectiveness as the key determinant of student achievement.

4. Continued high performance in the classroom through the use of research-based strategies.

5. Ongoing assistance to associate and professional colleagues.

6. Leadership through professional development.

The district developed the proposal for the career ladder program by reviewing current literature in teacher recruitment, development, retention, and compensation, as well as direct communication with representatives of national and state teacher development programs. Research done by the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), an initiative of the Milken Family Foundation, was the primary focus of the framework for the district proposal. In an effort to design effective and efficient methods to attract, retain, and motivate high-quality teachers, TAP established the following five main principles:

1. Multiple Career Paths

2. Performance-Based Accountability

3. Market-Driven Compensation

4. Ongoing Applied Professional Growth

5. Expanding the Supply of High-Quality Teachers
The key component of TAP is giving teachers the opportunity to advance without having to leave the classroom. The performance-based requirements differ for teachers based on their career level. The underlying principle is that as teachers advance, they should increase their skills, responsibilities, and professional knowledge and their compensation should increase accordingly. Milken sponsored further studies that suggest multiple career paths would not only expand the roles of teachers, but also increase the rewards of becoming leaders, mentors, and decision-makers (Milken, 2003). This research is supported by the work of Lambert when she suggested that, given the opportunity, the teachers assumed greater collective responsibility, became more self-organized, and were able to lead without the principal’s guidance (2006).

The TAP program and the Milken Foundation studies, built on earlier ones conducted by T.L. Good and J.E. Brophy (1994), contend that good teaching is central to student achievement, and that teacher effectiveness has a direct link to the way students perform in the classroom (Sanders, 2000). Other research evidence over the past thirty years has indicated that a knowledgeable teacher is the most important school-based determinant of how students learn (S. Carolina Summit, 1999). Significant research evidence also suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

Traditionally, teacher compensation has been viewed in isolation from other components of organizational reform (Odden, 1997). Other organizations outside education in the United States have successfully implemented compensation structures that reward employees on the basis of performance (Odden, 1997). Many reform advocates argue that teacher pay structures should be considered as a critical component
of school improvement to encourage teachers to achieve organizational goals (Kelley, 1995). According to Protsik (1996), “The ways an organization compensates its employees is strategic: compensation… serves more than the simple purpose of paying people for their time and hard work. Compensation systems communicate organizational desires to employees” (p. 267).

Salary schedules typically reward teachers for years of experience and their level of knowledge based on credits (Odden, 1997). Over the past 20 years, there have been several attempts in the United States to depart from the single-salary schedule, in place since the 1920s, and to apply performance–related or merit pay to teachers assessed either at the school level or individually (Odden, 1997).

Today, teacher compensation formulas represent residues left from scientific management models, which were popular at the beginning of the 20th century (Kelley, 1995). The complexity of the profession has forced school leaders to recognize teacher compensation as a valuable organizational component that could be used to support the skill and knowledge development of teachers and to provide incentives for teacher teams and school faculties that improve their students’ level of achievement (Kelley, 1995).

In 2003, the Florida legislature mandated the appropriation of $25 million for the implementation of pilot programs designed to institute a salary Career Ladder Program for classroom teachers during the 2003-2004 school year (DSBPC, 2003). Within the Florida statutes, the legislative purposes and guiding principles of BEST Florida Teaching were:

1. Teachers lead, students learn.
2. Teachers maintain orderly, disciplined classrooms conducive to student learning.

3. Teachers are trained, recruited, well-compensated, and retained for quality.

4. Teachers are well-rewarded for their students’ high performance.

5. Teachers are most effective when served by exemplary administrators and supervisors.

In order to be eligible to participate in the BEST practices developmental models for the Florida BEST Teaching Program, a school board must adopt, in an open meeting, new, permanently established positions of increasing responsibility for teachers at each of the four salary career ladder positions as defined in s. 1012.231(1), Florida Statutes (DSBPC, 2003). Agreement between the district school board, the Commissioner of Education, and district-wide trial implementation had to have taken place by January 2004 (DSBPC, 2003). Furthermore, each selected district also had to adopt a plan for principal leadership designation based on student performance, school grade, and teacher retention as described in s. 1012.987, Florida Statutes by the same date (DSBPC, 2003).

The District School Board of Pasco Salary Career Ladder Pilot Program provided incentives to attract and retain quality teachers in the profession, improve and encourage teachers’ growth, and give teachers distinctive roles and responsibilities intended to improve student achievement. Retaining and promoting good teachers is one of the most important long-term goals for the District School Board of Pasco County, so this program was aligned to the goals of the school board (DSBPC, 2003).
Statement of the Problem

Across the country, state, and district, leaders are experimenting with a wide range of pay for performance plans to improve teacher quality and student performance. Researchers have concluded that merit pay, pay for performance, and career ladder programs are efforts to recognize and to reward the best teachers by altering the current flat structure and successfully linking organizational needs and working processes of effective schools to implementation (Kelley, 1995). In order to be successful, these plans would have to rely on research-based analysis that describes both effective and ineffective strategies that have been utilized in current programs responding to public accountability concerns. A greater emphasis should be placed on gathering and analyzing data to determine the critical factors for determining success in pay for performance programs. As a point of clarification within this study, pay for performance is a term to describe a wide variety of programs of which a career ladder is just one.

Research Problem

Unfortunately, a limited number of successful models exist with adequate support data that district leaders can utilize as a framework for effective implementation of a pay for performance program. Therefore, with the goals of developing and retaining quality teachers, how do school leaders implement a district-wide Career Ladder Program that would significantly change salary structures in the future?

Purpose of the Study

According to Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform, it is recommended that “teachers provide the leadership essential to the success of reform,
collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role” (NASSP, 2004). This statement is at the heart of school improvement as school communities design goals and strategies for success. In many parts of the United States, a strong component of these plans is a merit or pay for performance initiative (Kelley, 1995). Most of the research conducted on group incentive plans has focused on the outcomes of the programs instead of the actual process that must be implemented to achieve success. Indeed, as noted by Cable and Welbourne (1995), more extensive research on the process of implementing group incentive plans for classroom teachers should be attempted (Cable & Welbourne, 1995).

This break with tradition does not come without controversy as there is just as much literature arguing that merit pay for teachers would have limited success. Therefore, the purpose of this study was not to resolve this issue but to investigate the implementation of a Career Ladder Program within a large Florida school district in 2004. Although, without warning, the state was betrayed by legislators as funding was discontinued for the 2004-2005 school year.

This change in legislation led to a second purpose for this study. The researcher sought to describe the potential residual effects from the perspectives of practitioners for a program that was implemented and then discontinued for financial reasons.

This case study is significant as the state of Florida is in the process of implementing a merit pay system rewarding teachers for performance related to student achievement. Education leaders will be interested in the results of this study as they develop plans for implementing a new program as practitioners may be reluctant to participate a second time given the outcome of the pilot.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that drive the organization of this study are from more than one source. First, Odden (1997) identified 10 key process principles that districts should utilize when developing, designing, and implementing a teacher compensation system. These principles include: (a) the involvement of all key parties; (b) broad agreement on the most valued educational results; (c) sound, comprehensive evaluation systems; (d) adequate funding; (e) investments in ongoing professional development; (f) avoidance of quotas; (g) considerations of the general conditions of work; (h) management maturity; (i) labor maturity; and (j) persistence.

Six other research-based factors were identified in the literature and used in the theoretical framework for this study. They are (a) employee participation in the implementation process, (b) a link between pay and performance, (c) line of sight, (d) organizational trust, (e) alignment to a strategic plan, and (f) employee perception of failures (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991).

Qualitative Research Questions

The term “participant” within these questions refers to a member of the school district that was eligible for the career ladder salaries. The following six qualitative research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What research-based planning activities took place prior to implementation of the Career Ladder Program?
2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed in the role of the teacher as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

6. What were the perceived residual effects among respondents, positive or negative, regarding the Career Ladder Pilot Program after termination by Florida legislature?

Assumptions

For the current study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The responses of the administrators, lead teachers, mentor teachers, and other teachers who voluntarily participated in this study adequately represent the perspectives of their colleagues.

2. The data that were collected in the form of surveys and interviews after the pilot program was complete are valid indicators of perceptions and attitudes.
3. The intent of the pilot was to construct a framework from which a career ladder program could be continued into and beyond the school year following the spring of 2004.

*Overview of Methodology*

This was a naturalistic research study. This type of research “… typically involves the long-term study of a case through first-hand contact between the researcher and the subjects of the research” (Smith & Glass, 1987, p. 253). In this case, the study was also participatory as the researcher fulfilled a dual role: one as a participant as an administrator responsible for the implementation of the Career Ladder Pilot Program at a high school in the district, and one as an observer of the process.

This study was designed first to examine the process of implementation through the use of various archival documents including: implementation committee minutes, process presentations, procedural timelines, job descriptions, application forms, interview schedules, and the state grant application. This study was also designed to identify, from the perspectives of teachers and administrators involved in the pilot, any confusion or concern that may have been felt prior to the spring term or within the program’s duration. Finally, through two sets of structured interviews, this study attempted to determine perceived implications that surfaced as a result of the pilot itself and by the fact that it was discontinued due to lack of funding.

Four data sets were analyzed for this grounded theory case study. Prior to the beginning of any analysis procedures, an application to conduct a study was submitted to IRB in the fall of 2004 (see Appendix C). An application for continuance was submitted in the summer of 2005 and expired in June of 2006 (see Appendix K). In addition, as a
result of recommendations by the committee during the proposal defense, an application for modification was submitted to complete the necessary changes in the study (see Appendix L).

The first was archival data in the form of documents collected by the chairperson for the district committee who is responsible for the development and implementation of the Career Ladder Pilot Program for the entire school district. The researcher was given permission to use these documents as a data source for this study. The second is data that were generated from surveys conducted toward the end of the period of time the Career Ladder Program in question was in place. This survey was developed by the members of the department of research and evaluation at the district office and, after it was analyzed, a copy was made available to the researcher for this study. Permission to use the results within the study was secured from the department of research and evaluation. The data were analyzed to identify themes or patterns that occur. Meetings with members of the committee that developed the survey instrument were scheduled to validate the connections between the results and the themes.

The third and fourth sets of data for this study are structured interviews. One interview guide was developed to gain insights into the various perceptions about implications of this particular Career Ladder Pilot Program. The interviews were also used to explore themes found between schools that may help to develop theories in the research and lead to the development of a response to the research questions. As a follow-up to the first set of interviews, the researcher conducted a second set of interviews using some, but not all, of the participants already interviewed. The interviews were taped and notes were taken. The researcher had each numbered interview transcribed. The results
were then analyzed for themes and patterns that were consistent. Validity was established through the use of data workshops that were scheduled after analysis had taken place to review the themes that emerged. Three members of the research and evaluation department from the school district were invited to participate in these data workshops. Each member of the team has had extensive experience with data analysis procedures.

Limitations of the Study

Findings from this case study were based on qualitative data collected from documents, interviews, and surveys at the district office and at three high schools within a large school district. The following limitations may impact results:

1. Administrators, lead teachers, mentor teachers, and others who volunteered to participate in the study may have been hesitant to give candid responses, especially those negative in nature.

2. The pilot program was discontinued for lack of funding by the state legislature; therefore, responses made by participants in the data collection phases of the study may have reflected feelings of frustration and disappointment.

3. Data was collected for a different purpose initially. As the program was discontinued prematurely, a secondary purpose was targeted and may have possibly had an impact on the results.

4. As multiple reforms were being implemented concurrently within this district, it is not possible to disaggregate multiple effects of reforms within this single district in the state.
5. The researcher had no way of exploring the effects of this program or the planning process itself on the test performance of students, although it was one of the expectations in the legislation that this program would improve student academic performance.

Definitions

Better Educated Students and Teachers (BEST) s. 1012.231, 1012.987, Florida Statutes – According to state statute, these are funds to be used by the Commissioner of Education to identify and fund early innovator school districts that will establish best practices developmental models for implementation (DSPC, 2003).

Associate Teacher – An associate teacher is a classroom teacher who has not yet received a professional certificate or a teacher who holds a professional certificate, but has demonstrated low performance on the district’s state-approved evaluation instrument which reflects the standards outlined in s.1012.34(3)(a)1.-7 (DSBPC, 2003).

Professional Teacher – A professional teacher is a classroom teacher who holds a professional certificate. To maintain the professional teacher designation, the teacher must annually demonstrate satisfactory performance on the district’s state-approved evaluation instrument which reflects the standards outlined in s. 1012.34(3)(a)1.-7 (DSBPC, 2003).

Lead Teacher – A lead teacher is a classroom teacher who holds a professional certificate and participates on a regular basis in the direct instruction of students. This teacher will have additional responsibilities which may include leading others in the school as department chair, team leader, intern coordinator, and/or professional development coordinator and must serve as faculty for professional development
activities. A lead teacher must have been a professional teacher for at least one year and demonstrate outstanding performance by successful completion of the district’s lead teacher pool process (DSBPC, 2003).

**Mentor Teacher** – A mentor teacher is a classroom teacher who holds a professional certificate and participates on a regular basis in the direct instruction of low-performing students. This teacher will have additional responsibilities as a regular mentor to other teachers who are either not performing satisfactorily or who strive to become more proficient. They may also serve as faculty for professional development (peer trainer/facilitators), coordinate school level professional development programs, and regularly demonstrate and share their expertise with other teachers. The mentor teacher must have successfully served as a lead teacher for at least two years and demonstrate outstanding performance by successful completion of the district’s mentor teacher pool selection process (DSBPC, 2003).

**Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)** – A research-based whole school reform program created by the Milken Family Foundation to recruit, motivate, develop, and retain high quality teachers in order to increase student achievement (Milken, 2003).

**Summary**

The first chapter describes and outlines a case study of a Career Ladder Pilot Program implemented in a large Florida school district. The background to this program is a state legislation that mandated all districts submit a plan for a career ladder to be implemented in the fall of 2005 (BEST). The problem prompting this study was that if these plans were going to be successful, they would have to rely on research-based analysis that described both effective and ineffective strategies that have been utilized in
current programs responding to public accountability concerns. There were dual purposes for this study. The first purpose of this case study was to examine the planning, processes, and implications of a pilot career ladder compensation system implemented in the spring of 2004 in a large Florida school district. The changes in legislation terminating the program after the pilot was implemented led to the second purpose. Various definitions are included to enlighten the reader on the descriptors used within the BEST program legislation guidelines.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The remaining two chapters of this proposal present information related to this study. A review of existing literature is discussed in the second chapter including: the evolution of teacher leadership, a history of pay for performance, a discussion of compensation design, implementation philosophy, reasons for supporting pay for performance compensation designs, and concerns regarding pay for performance or merit pay models. In the third chapter, the design and organization of the methods that were utilized in the study are delineated. Site descriptions, populations, instruments, and methods used in the design of the study are described. Chapter four describes the results of all data set types. At the end of each data section, a summary for each describing trends and patterns ends the section. Concluding the chapter, the trends have been aligned to the research questions targeted in this study. Chapter five describes the findings related to the research questions along with a conclusion. The author then describes implications for practitioners, policymakers, and research. The chapter ends with a short discussion and a list of recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of related literature begins with a discussion of the evolution of teacher leadership as it relates to school reform. The changing role of the teacher leads to thoughts on organizational change and the historical perspectives of alternative compensation models for classroom teachers. The review of the literature then begins to focus on the benefits of pay for performance models along with a discussion of concerns.

Teacher Leadership

One of the driving forces at the center of the debate about merit pay in education is that of school reform and the role of the teacher leader in those efforts. Like the literature on merit pay in education, teacher leadership is emerging because the concept is relatively new (Vandiver, 1996; Wasley, 1991). It was not until the 1980s that the focus for school reform began to center on teachers as the change agent (Fullan, 1997).

Recognizing that successful school improvement would only occur with teacher involvement, new roles began to develop that extended beyond their traditional teaching roles and into leadership activities outside the classroom (Busching & Rowls, 1985). While formal leadership roles such as department chair or grade-level chairperson continue to be the norm, a number of informal leadership roles have emerged such as coaching or mentoring peers and assisting with a change initiative in a school, which are some of the ways teachers are leading informally (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996).
Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) further suggest that new roles emerged for teachers as they wished to remain with students in the classroom and yet be involved in making decisions about the curriculum, engaging in school governance, or becoming involved in the operational tasks of the school. As a result, teachers are empowered to make site-based decisions as principals relinquish some of their power that, in some cases, results in greater job satisfaction (Schneider, 1984).

These new roles for teachers begin to complicate the traditional models of school organization, and people begin to see information related to the successful and unsuccessful change efforts. Senge submits that in order for organizations to change successfully, people will need to do the following: (1) See interrelationships among variables versus linear cause and effect thinking; (2) View changes as a process which continually evolves; (3) Think of change as a dynamic, overlapping, complex process. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) note that in order for change to occur, it must absolutely occur at the school worksite.

In a study of school leadership capacity for lasting school improvement, Linda Lambert, a Professor Emeritus at California State University, collected data from 15 schools at all levels that were no longer low-performing schools. After experiencing instructive, transitional, and high leadership capacity phases of growth, teachers journeyed from dependency to high levels of self-organization and demonstrated a readiness to lead a school without a principal (Lambert, 2006). Lambert describes leadership capacity as broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership (Lambert, 2003). In her description of the constructivist teacher leader, leadership is understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in community settings (Lambert, 1996).
The idea of changing the teaching compensation system is not new, but concepts regarding the appropriate basis for paying teachers have changed (Odden, 1997). Many organizations outside of education have structures that compensate employees on the basis of performance rather than tenure or entitlement (Odden, 1997). They encourage organizational performance and enhance a closer connection between employees and organizational goals by enabling employees to share more fully in the rewards and risks of the enterprise. According to Goorian (2000), “A tight labor pool, greater scrutiny by legislatures, and new laws create pressures to raise salaries even while half of new teachers resign within five years and policymakers remain reluctant to allocate more resources” (p. 54).

Forced to account for teacher-quality reform mandates, legislators and school districts are reviewing alternative compensation plans in an effort to attract and retain qualified teachers. According to Goorian (2000), the four major systems in use today are: (1) pay for performance initiatives linking compensation to student achievement; (2) knowledge-based and skills-based systems employing new assessment tools; (3) school-based award programs offering financial bonuses for reaching specific goals and benchmarks; and (4) compensation for certification with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBTTS). Local differences have also precipitated variations of these models to meet the needs of individual districts nationwide.

History of Pay for Performance

Pay for performance models grew in popularity in the United States following the 1957 Russian launch of Sputnik and a concern about student performance in science (Clardy, 1988). After that, interest waned until the 1983 publication of A Nation At Risk
recommended that teacher salaries be “professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based” (National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983, p. 30), at which point the idea of merit pay resurfaced (Clardy, 1988). Since then, districts have experimented with various forms of merit pay such as career ladders, extended contracts, pay for extra duties, and pay for special knowledge and skills. Currently, the popular trend is to reward teachers who meet measurable goals in student progress (Cornett, 1995). In 1984, Tennessee became the first state to establish a statewide career ladder program, and a number of states followed suit by creating similar career ladder or performance pay programs over the next eight years. The number of states and districts, such as Douglas County Colorado, that enacted career ladders peaked in the 1990s, but many of these programs languished or disappeared over the next decade. In the past few years, states have been showing renewed interest in these programs as a way to provide alternative teacher compensation systems (Odden, 1997).

Compensation Design and Implementation

Advocates of merit pay systems suggest that a critical error districts make is to ignore important issues of local context such as the organization’s history, the issues being addressed, and why the approach chosen is the preferred solution (Odden, 1997). In an effort to assist organizations in making these decisions, Odden (1997) identified 10 key process principles that districts should utilize when developing, designing, and implementing a teacher compensation system. These principles include: (a) the involvement of all key parties; (b) broad agreement on the most valued educational results; (c) sound, comprehensive evaluation systems; (d) adequate funding; (e) investments in ongoing professional development; (f) avoidance of quotas; (g)
considerations of the general conditions of work; (h) management maturity; (i) labor maturity; and (j) persistence.

Along those same lines, the Milken Family Foundation has used research to design the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) that is intended to recruit, motivate, and retain high-quality teachers in order to increase student achievement. TAP provides a five principle approach to overcome traditional drawbacks that plague the teaching profession such as low compensation, lack of career advancement, ineffective professional development, and unsupported accountability demands. The five key principles are:

1. Multiple Career Paths – Under the current system, the most common way for teachers to increase their salaries is to become administrators. Unfortunately, this takes them out of the classroom where they are most needed or where they would choose to stay. TAP allows teachers to pursue a variety of positions throughout their careers depending on their interests, abilities and accomplishments. As they advance, their qualifications, roles, responsibilities and compensation increase.

2. Market-Driven Compensation – In most professions, people are rewarded for how well they perform their jobs, although teaching is generally the exception. TAP allows schools the flexibility to compensate teachers according to the performance of their students. It also provides the opportunity to offer competitive salaries to those who teach in the most challenging classes and schools.

3. Performance-Based Accountability – TAP has developed a comprehensive system for evaluating and rewarding teachers who have success with their
students. These evaluations are based on criteria including position responsibilities, classroom observations, and student test score gains.

4. Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth – TAP also supports quality professional development including teacher collaboration. Rooted in the program is the requirement that the school change to provide time during the regular school day for teachers to learn, plan, mentor, and share with other teachers in order to continuously improve the quality of their teaching.

5. Expanding the Supply of High-Quality Educators – TAP encourages education leaders to implement policies that enable talented people of any age to become teachers by eliminating unnecessary barriers to the profession. This allows prospective candidates to obtain certification in less time and for less money as well as opening doors to assign mentors to help new teachers during their early years of teaching.

The TAP program and the Milken Foundation studies built on earlier ones conducted by T.L. Good and J.E. Brophy (1994) contend that good teaching is central to student achievement, and that teacher effectiveness has a direct link to the way students perform in the classroom (Sanders, 2000). Other research evidence over the past thirty years has indicated that a knowledgeable teacher is the most important school-based determinant of how students learn (S. Carolina Summit, 1999). Significant research evidence also suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student school-based learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).
Factors for Success

Numerous factors are evident in the literature that either ensures the success or demise of pay for performance programs. Through this literature and research, factors of success will be discussed; and, if they are in place in the new pay plans, the schemes may be successful. The six research-based factors are (a) employee participation in the implementation process, (b) a link between pay and performance, (c) line of sight, (d) organizational trust, (e) alignment to a strategic plan, and (f) employee perception of failures (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991).

Employee Participation in the Implementation Process. Researchers believe that pay for performance decisions require involvement from employee groups that are affected in the design and implementation phase of the plan (Balkin & Bannister, 1993). In a study by Jenkins and Lawler (1981), data were collected on the effects of having employees participate in the design phase of a base pay plan for a small manufacturing firm. It was concluded that employee participation in pay plan development resulted in a better overall relationship between the employees and their organization and created a more effective pay plan.

Link Between Pay and Performance. Employees must perceive a clear link between pay increases and performance (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991). In a study completed by Immerwahr and Yankelovich (1993), it became apparent that employees do not perceive a link between their performance and their pay. Lawler (1987) further noted that most organizations fail to “create a perceived relationship between pay and performance” (p. 16).
Line of Sight. Employees must be able to affect his or her performance measure through their work behavior (Lawler, 1990). Lawler (1990, p. 86) calls this “line of sight.” In a study by Bennett (1997) of various sites that have implemented pay for performance, he found that if the program were to extend beyond the employees’ site boundaries, it would be very difficult for workers to feel that they could affect performance measures.

Organizational Trust. Prior to the implementation process for a pay for performance plan, organizational trust must be present. The organizational climate of the organization should be one that is based on shared goals and values between managers and employees (Ingraham, 1993). For a school community to work well, it must achieve agreement in each role relationship in terms of the understandings held about these personal obligations and expectations of others. Relational trust in building effective educational communities refers to an interrelated set of mutual dependencies embedded within the social exchanges of any school community. Regardless of how much formal power any given role has in a school community, (student to teacher, teacher to teacher, or teacher to principal) all participants remain dependent on others to achieve desired outcomes and feel empowered by their efforts (Bryk, 2003). This seems to be a common theme in programs that have been implemented thus far. Vest (1988) argues that individuals are more likely to perceive that their pay is based on their performance levels if they are satisfied with their pay increases and they have trust in management.
Aligned to the Strategic Plan. Lawler (1990) suggests that if an organization has a clear sense of its strategic plan, then it should place an emphasis on the types of skills needed to achieve these goals.

Employee Perception of Fairness. Studies have shown that employee perceptions of procedural fairness significantly influence his or her impression of the pay for performance plan (Lawler, 1987). Milkovich and Newman (1993) suggest four ingredients for a pay plan to be perceived as fair. These are: (a) if they are consistently applied to all employees, (b) if employee participation and representation are included, (c) if appeals procedures are available, and (d) if the data used are accurate (p. 49).

Reasons for Pay for Performance Implementation. Pay for performance models are used by managers to motivate individuals to perform more effectively, to allow organizations to develop performance-oriented cultures, and to increase the rate of attraction and retention of high performers (Lawler, 1990; Milkovich & Wigdor, 1991). Meyer (1975) suggests that pay for performance schemes serve as powerful motivators for most people because the principle of this plan is logically based. In other words, “If two people are hired to perform the same job and one performs at a substantially higher level than the other, surely he should be paid more for his superior contribution” (p. 39). In addition, research has also found that an added benefit of pay for performance schemes is the increased socialization and communication among employees and supervisors (Ingraham, 1993; Milkovich & Wignor, 1991).

Concerns Regarding Performance Pay

Although numerous examples exist in the literature documenting various levels of success of pay for performance programs, concerns have surfaced that must be taken into
account when implementing such programs. Organizations have encountered problems with supervisors overrating employees on their evaluations, inadequate funds to support the rewards, failure to link appraisal to reward (Immerwahr & Yankelovich, 1983), and managerial reluctance to deal with poor performers (Ingraham, 1993; Milkovich & Wignor, 1991). In addition to these issues, certain types of incentive plans have created competition among employees whose success depends on complimentary relationships with their colleagues (Ingraham, 1993; Milkovich & Wignor, 1991).

*Reward Theory*

Despite the fact that almost all management members of large organizations are covered by merit pay plans, most salary administrators will admit that they are very difficult to administer properly. In most cases, the plans are not administered according to a formalized policy, rather they are inclined to treat salaries on factors such as length of service instead of performance as intended (Meyer, 1975).

Employee satisfaction is also mentioned in some of the literature as an area of concern regarding merit pay and pay for performance models. Meyer (1975) concluded that few people are happy with the way merit pay plans are administered and, in fact, surveys of managerial level employees have shown consistently high levels of dissatisfaction with pay. In a large scale multi-plant study conducted in the General Electric Company in the 1960s, it was found that only nineteen percent of management personnel, all of which were working under well-administered merit pay plans, declared that they were satisfied with their current salaries (Lawler, 1965). In a more recent study conducted in a large insurance company, only thirty-five percent working under a merit pay plan expressed satisfaction with their pay. In this case, over seventy-five percent of
the same employees reported satisfaction with other aspects of their jobs (Lawler, 1965). Meyer (1975) assures that most experts on this subject decry the fact that most people are doing a poor job of administering merit pay plans.

Proponents of merit pay plans support the notion that financial rewards are a priority for people as this is the foundation of the theory. Fascinating research by Edward Deci (1972) demonstrated that to the extent pay is attached directly to the performance of the task, intrinsic interest in the task decreases. He further concluded that when pay becomes an important goal, the individual’s interest tends to focus on that goal rather than on the performance of the task itself.

The problem with the input-reward system and the outcome-reward system is that they ignore the basic dynamics of what motivates human beings (Ramirez, 2001). Glasser (1997) points out that all people are motivated to meet their needs for belonging to groups, maintaining a sense of self-efficacy or power, and having fun. Glasser contends that when extrinsic motivation is used by institutions to manipulate members, they become frustrated and the strategy becomes destructive to the organization. Extrinsic reward systems “squeeze out from an individual, over his lifetime, his innate intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, dignity (Deming, 1993).

Meyer (1975) recommends a salary plan in which an individual is employed on the basis of an implicit contract. Meyer suggests that this would reduce uncertainty about future pay along with preventing the development of false expectations. Another major advantage of a stable and predictable salary progress schedule is that it would force managers to acquire skills in more effective ways of motivating individuals. Rather than
Pay, managers would motivate by adding responsibility or allowing them to participate in decision-making.

Pay for performance programs are not a good fit for every organization. Critical analysis of the organization should take place to determine whether there is adequate capacity for long-term implementation. According to Lawler (1981), performance pay plans should not be used if the trust level in the organization is low, high performers are not able to be compensated substantially more than low performers, and performance can not be validly and objectively measured.

Summary

This review of current literature on compensation design and related topics seeks to uncover a rationale that school districts nation-wide have used to implement alternative compensation design models. The underlying principle throughout the research is that as teachers advance, they should increase their skills, responsibilities, and professional knowledge and that their compensation should increase accordingly.

Within this literature review, a wide-range of topics are discussed to provide a foundation in which to build a study. These include related topics such as teacher leadership and reward theory. Topics also include a history of pay for performance, a discussion of various compensation design and implementation models, and implementation factors for success. The chapter ends with a discussion of concerns regarding merit pay.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This was a qualitative case study that focused on the implementation of a pay for performance salary schedule in a large school district. The qualitative research methods utilized were interpretive in nature. Merriam (1998) defines interpretive research as a mode of inquiry dedicated to understanding the meaning of an experience from the perspective of multiple socially constructed realities.

The method of inquiry I chose is case study. The primary reason I chose case study is because of its “chief characteristic,” as identified by Creswell (1998), which is to conduct an in-depth study of one case. Conducting a case study provides a picture to help inform our practice or to see unexplored details of the case (Creswell, 1998). A case study provides the opportunity to investigate the real-life situation as a “complex social unit” with a number of multiple realities resulting in a “rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, Merriam reports that a case study is particularly well-suited to studying educational innovations. Pay for performance programs, like the one in this study, are considered largely innovative. Innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education. Such studies often form a base for future comparison and theory building (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) describes case studies as particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. This study was particularistic in that it focused on individual administrators
and teachers who were staff members at schools where the Career Ladder Program was implemented. This study was heuristic as it sought to illuminate new understanding on the participants’ perspectives of a career ladder. Finally, the emergence of themes about the participants’ perceptions was inductive as all data were analyzed through the constant “comparative” method of data analysis (Merriam, 1998).

Three different modes of data collection have been utilized in this study to attempt to answer the research questions. The first was archival documents collected during the planning stage and after the pilot was in place. They were used to respond to research question number one. The second were the results of district-wide surveys developed and analyzed by the district office department of research and evaluation. The results of this data were used to uncover emergent trends or patterns from respondents as related to research questions two and three. The last method utilized in this study as a form of data collection was in-depth interviews designed in two phases.

Using a schedule developed from outcomes determined by the developers of the program, the first interviews were conducted to identify the impact the program had on schools through the perspectives of various participants. This phase was analyzed to find common ideas or themes that assisted in answering research question number four, which was to identify perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program. As a follow-up to the first set of interviews, a second interview guide was developed and administered to three volunteers from each site who participated in the first interview phase. Emergent patterns that surfaced from these interviews were used to respond to research questions five and six. These were: (5) What behaviors were perceived to have changed in the role of the teacher as a result of the
Career Ladder Pilot and (6) What were the perceived residual effects among respondents, positive or negative, regarding the Career Ladder Pilot?

Qualitative interviewing is often considered a favorite methodological tool of qualitative researchers (Denzin, 1978). By gathering and analyzing firsthand experiences from volunteer participants, the researcher has hopefully uncovered the depth and detail necessary to address the problem and purpose of the study.

**Review of Research Questions**

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach in that data was collected through archival documents, surveys, and interviews in an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What research-based planning activities took place prior to the implementation of the Career Ladder Program?

2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?
5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed for teachers as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot?

6. What were the perceived residual effects among respondents, positive or negative, regarding the Career Ladder Pilot after termination by the Florida legislature?

Research Site

School District. The study was conducted in a large school district of 64 schools. The district contains 35 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 9 high schools, 4 alternative education centers, and 5 charter schools.

The district is comprised of the entire geographic area of the county, as is the case in the state of Florida. The population of the school district is growing rapidly with approximately 1,500 additional students each year. In the fall of 2003, this large Florida school district had a student membership in grades Pre-K through 12th of 57,476. During the 2003-04 school year, there were 34 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 8 high schools, 1 middle/high school, and 4 educational centers. Of the total student population, 10,191 were in the minority population, which represents approximately 17.7% of the district’s total student body. Approximately 19% of the students were special education (ESE) students. Approximately 4.4%, 2,529 students, were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). In the last 10 years, the school district’s special needs student population has increased in number of students served, severity of disabilities, and diversity of languages and cultures (Superintendent’s Annual Report 2003-04).

The district implemented a Career Ladder Pilot Program during the spring of the 2003/2004 school year. Other than the archival documents, data were collected after the
pilot program was completed in the summer and fall of 2004. The initial purpose of this pilot was to use the grant money from the state to implement the career ladder salary schedule and, in turn, have a framework in place to continue in the fall of 2005. This was not to be the case.

Though supported in theory and initially planned for indefinite funding across the state beginning in the fall, the Florida legislature pulled the money allocated for the BEST Program. District planners were therefore forced to discontinue the program due to lack of available district sources to use in place of the state money. This change left the district and all of its schools to deal with any fallout that may occur.

*Schools A, B, and C.* In an effort to confine the study and stay within an area where the researcher had intricate familiarity, only high schools were chosen as a focus for the interviews in this study. In an attempt to give the study a perspective from across the district and include participants with varying daily work experiences, three public high schools were selected in which to conduct interviews for both phases.

The schools are positioned in the south, central, and north sections of the district. The schools were selected to create an adequate response pool with potential for diversity from which to draw results. There were at least three mentor supplements and ten lead supplements allocated to each of the three schools for the duration of the pilot (Appendix A). The schools were coded using the following scheme: school A (south), school B (central), and school C (north).

*School A.* School A (south) had an approximate student enrollment of 2,300 students. It was the newest high school in the district opening in the fall of 2000. The percentage of students on free and reduced lunch was 29.30% and the exceptional student
population was 29%. In terms of ethnic minorities, 2.4% were Asian, 3.0% were African American, 5.5% were Hispanic, and 1.5% were of other ethnicities. As with each high school in the district, school A was organized around a learning community model. The unique style and layout of the school enables school leaders to easily implement components of the learning community model that is the district vision for high schools. This school within a school structure emphasized an integrated curriculum that focused on career and interest areas.

School B. School B (central), which had a student enrollment of almost 2,200 students, was established in 1977. Located on the same campus as the district office, the school was built to house about 1,500 students when it was constructed. The free and reduced population at school B equaled about 18.03% of the total student body. School B had an exceptional student population that equaled 15% of the students. The minority group breakdown of the school was as follows: 2.7% Asian, 3% African American, 9.4% Hispanic, and 1.5% others. Unlike the other eight schools in the district, the school only had three learning communities focused on career clusters, but had an International Bacchalaureate Program in place for the past five years. School B had slowly been able to progress toward the learning community organizational model but, like two other schools in the district, was limited by its architecture.

School C. School C (north) had an approximate enrollment of 1,640 students. The percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch was 43% and had shown steady increase since the 2001 school year. School C had a total minority student population of 6.5% and an exceptional student population of approximately 520 students, which was 32% of the student population. As far as diversity, school C had 1.3% Asian students,
.5% African American students, 3.7% Hipanic students, and 1.3% were of other ethnicities. The school had been in existence since 1975. Learning communities were used to organize the teachers and students within the building but like school B, the architecture had limited progress toward full implementation. Each of the four learning communities was organized around a broad career and interest cluster.

**Career Ladder Program**

The *Educate 2000: Pay for Performance Program* 1012.22(4c) FS was mandated by the Florida legislature in 2000. Districts were obligated to design and develop a process for identifying and compensating teachers who distinguish themselves as “outstanding” by annually increasing the performance of the students assigned to them for the school year. Each county in Florida was to have these career ladder plans in place by the beginning of the 2004/2005 school year.

The district for this study took advantage of an opportunity to obtain close to $7 million dollars for teacher salaries through the state Early Innovator Grant Program. This grant program allowed the district to devise its own plan within the state guidelines, make any adjustments to the program during the pilot, and bring needed money into the district to compensate dedicated school leaders for the work they were already doing.

This district’s rationale for implementing a career ladder program was to provide incentives to attract and retain quality teachers in the profession, improve and encourage teachers’ professional growth, and give teachers distinctive roles and responsibilities intended to improve student achievement. Retaining and promoting good teachers was and is still one of the most important long-term goals for the district, so this program was aligned to district goals.
Throughout the district, all teachers were classified as either associate or professional teachers determined by criteria described in the BEST Florida Teaching Salary Career Ladder Program 1012.231 (FS). Each school then received allocations for lead and mentor salary supplements based on student enrollment at each school. Schools would receive allocations for two mentor and two lead teachers for every 750 students. Each additional 500 students earned one additional mentor teacher while each additional 250 students earned the equivalent of two additional lead teachers. The district-wide plan provided for 140 mentor positions and 280 lead positions (see Appendix E). The mentor teacher positions would require each to have leave time; therefore, schools would need to hire the equivalent of 70 teaching units to accommodate the program.

Selection Process

Lead and mentor candidates were all required to go through the same selection process with feedback available for teachers after each step. Each interested candidate applied to the appropriate level pool during a two-week advertisement period. As part of the application, teachers were asked to provide behavioral examples (see Appendix G), background information (see Appendix H), a supervised writing sample, and a rating form from a direct supervisor. These materials were then screened and applicants were either approved to enter the interview phase or exited from the process by a team determined by each school site. Each school designated an interview team made up of teachers that were not going to pursue a position and had been nominated by the staff. A targeted selection style interview was then scheduled for each applicant. The team either approved the applicant’s entrance into the career ladder pool or exited them from the process (see appendix F). At each school, lead and mentor teachers were selected to form
a well-balanced team, capable of improving student performance. Each position had a specific job description as defined by the Florida statute (Appendix K) and each school was responsible for making accommodations for the new positions in their master schedule.

New Compensation Components

The district’s Career Ladder Program took a much different approach to compensation than the salary schedule that was currently in use. The following compensation schedule was composed of six district components, which included the total cash compensation due to a teacher for a given school year. This could be modified based upon labor negotiations, funding, and bargaining unit ratification. The components included:

1. Demonstrated Satisfactory Performance Pay. Instead of providing salaries based on years of experience, this plan took a base compensation amount and increased it by a set factor for demonstrated satisfactory by the teacher as outlined in Florida statutes. 1012.34(3)(a) 1-7, F.S. The base pay for teachers performing unsatisfactory did not increase until satisfactory performance was demonstrated.

2. Knowledge Pay. Teachers who chose to pursue education beyond the bachelor’s level were provided additional compensation for coursework leading toward advanced degrees. The compensation provided by the state via the Excellent Teaching Program and National Board Certification was also included.
3. Responsibility Pay. Teachers who performed additional work or took on increased responsibility received additional compensation/supplements. Lead and mentor supplements were compensated at the following rates:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lead Supplement</th>
<th>Mentor Supplement</th>
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<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
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4. Achievement Pay. Teachers who were able to show class specific student learning gains, completed a significant amount of value-added staff development, and maintained a satisfactory professional development plan would qualify for achievement pay. The total amount of this award was $1,500 per teacher, with 30% based on documented student learning gains, 30% based on value-added staff development, and 40% on a satisfactory professional development plan.

5. Pay For Performance Pay. This added an additional 5% compensation for those teachers who met the requirements for the district’s performance-based pay plan at their specific career ladder level.

6. School Recognition Pay. Teachers who showed school-wide performance gains as measured by the Florida School Recognition Program may have received additional compensation based on individual school awards (DSBPC, 2003) (see Appendices I & J)
Population

The data that were utilized for this study were qualitative and were collected using a variety of methods. Archival documents, survey results, and two sets of interviews were collected. Other than the documents, all data were collected after the pilot program was completed in the spring of 2004. A district-wide survey that was distributed to all instructional staff in each school level to provide feedback concerning satisfaction and knowledge about the grant-funded Career Ladder Program was administered. The survey had both qualitative and quantitative components. The balance of the data was the results of interviews conducted at selected sites in the district to further ascertain information about individual perceptions related to the pilot.

At each school in the district, administrators were responsible for implementing the process for teachers in the salary Career Ladder Pilot Program. All K-12 teachers in the district were placed in one of the four categories required by the provisions of the state statute (see Appendix I & J). Teachers who made it through a rigorous, multi-step process were entered into a pool and could be assigned a role as a lead or mentor teacher.

For these interviews, three types of participants were purposefully selected on the basis of their level of involvement with the program, job title, and work location. The first interview that took place at each site was the administrator assigned the responsibility for the implementation of the process, not necessarily the principal. The administrator was also asked for assistance in finding volunteers to participate in further interviews at the site. Through this administrator, teachers who were assigned roles as lead or mentor teachers and instructional staff who did not have a position as a lead or
mentor teacher were scheduled for interviews voluntarily. This maximum variation sampling strategy was described by Seidman (1998) as the most effective strategy in selecting participants for interview studies.

The interview participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy. Volunteers were selected from each subgroup of the population being studied. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this type of purposive sampling style assists in describing subgroups and illuminating comparisons between those groups. This required certification, via IRB, was secured prior to the beginning of any interviews. Interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. The researcher traveled to each participant’s school to complete the interviews.

Data Collection

Documents. As support information, archival documents were secured with permission from the personnel relations office to use in this study as they were responsible for the facilitation of the committee implementing the Career Ladder Program district-wide. These archival documents included agendas, presentations, directions to principals, and research materials distributed to the task force and site-based administrators. On the recommendation of the researcher’s doctoral committee, very informal interviews of selection committee members were conducted at each of the three interview sites selected for this study.

Surveys. The survey data are archival and were collected by the district’s research and evaluation department (see Appendix B). Surveys were returned to the district office and were analyzed overall and by school. 2,135 instructional personnel out of 4,569 from 58 schools and technical centers in the county responded to the survey. The
administration of the survey took place in May 2004 before the end of the school year to maximize return. Surveys were distributed to all instructional staff members at a faculty meeting. Completion of the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The survey was produced as a scannable document that was identified by school cost center numbers for data analysis purposes.

The Career Ladder Survey was developed by the district to analyze six major categories pertaining to the specifications of the program determined by the state (see Appendix B). The categories were:

- Knowledge
- Experience
- Greatest Potential Benefit
- Concerns
- Application Process
- Overall Satisfaction

This survey categorized several different item formats to assess respondents’ views in each category. Specifically, likert scale and multiple choice format were drafted by district measurement specialists and reviewed by district administrators and project planning groups for conformity to the specifications articulated by the state (see appendix B). Open-ended responses and comments were aggregated by category for district inspection by the researcher. No further codings of open-ended responses were conducted, although these data were analyzed for trends and patterns related to the research questions. According to the research and evaluation department, within each category, responses were combined to indicate a positive or negative stance on each
category depending on the nature of specific item formats based on the various response types. In addition, the number and percent of individuals that did not respond to each item was reported to account for 100% of the responding group consistently.

Results of the Career Ladder Survey were reported in terms of frequency and percent of positive responses selected. They are presented in table form and each table represents an item category (see Appendix M).

Interviews. This study also employed an interview method of data collection in two phases to gain insight into various perceptions of the pay for performance program implementation that took place during the spring of 2004. Rossman and Rallis (1997) described a structured interview tool, known as an interview guide, that assisted the researcher in designing a format that provided a more consistent and reliable methodology.

For the first set of interviews, a structured interview guide for administrators and teachers was designed that included a list of questions that could be used to identify implications of a new pay for performance program from the perspectives of various participants. The guide assisted the interviewer in pacing the interviews and making the interviews more systematic and comprehensive (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). These interviews were conducted with the consent and assistance of the district office (see Appendix D). The interview questions themselves closely followed the content of questions used on the survey and the six major program specification categories provided by the state (see Appendix B). Questions were reviewed for clarity and conformity to the state’s program specification categories by the district’s measurement and research department and an outside researcher familiar with similar school reform initiatives.
Based on feedback from these individuals, minor modifications were made to the questions, and they were placed in a final format.

An example of a question within the guide designed for this study was, “Do you believe the lead and mentor teachers have enhanced programs at your school?” (see entire interview schedule in Appendix A). In order to preserve the integrity of the interviews, the researcher conducted each interview in 30 to 40 minute time frames, adhered to a uniform protocol instrument, recorded on audio tape, and then transcribed. Creswell (1998) views data collection as a “series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (p. 110). All of these interviews were conducted in “a quiet location free from distractions” (Creswell 1998, pg. 124). Seidman points out that in addition to preserving data, use of the tape recorder allows interviewers “to study their interviewing techniques and improve upon them” (p. 97).

As a follow-up to the first set of interviews, a second set of interviews was conducted in an effort to identify changes that took place as a result of the pilot. An interview guide was developed that focused on residual effects of the program alluded to in research questions five and six (see appendix N). The interviews were conducted in the same manner and with participants that volunteered for the first phase of interviews. The researcher secured permission to conduct these follow-up interviews through IRB.

These questions were developed in cooperation with the researcher’s doctoral committee members and were designed to extend the initial interview responses to identify whether the Career Ladder Program, despite its early termination, had any individual effects on the school or those selected for the program. These questions were
also reviewed by district measurement and research staff and the external researcher used in earlier reviews.

In addition, these individuals were teachers who were members of selection teams that determined which staff members were eligible to be lead or mentor teachers. These informal conversations focused specifically on morale and collegiality issues that resulted from their service on the selection committee.

Procedures

Consent. The researcher met with the Administrative Assistant for Secondary Schools, Alternative, and Adult Education and secured a letter of support for the study that was used as documentation required by IRB. Permission to conduct a study in the school district was requested in July of 2004 using the district’s established procedures and proposal request form. An application was also submitted to IRB and approval was granted as mentioned in a formal letter of approval for the researcher to conduct the study (see Appendix C).

Documents. Archival documents were collected with the permission of the district office departments of employee relations and staff development. These documents were analyzed for evidence of strategies for effective implementation of a program mentioned in the literature review.

Surveys. The Career Ladder Survey was administered to all instructional staff in each school level. The administration of the survey took place in May, 2004 so that perceptions would still be fresh in the minds of the paricipants. The survey was produced as a scannable document that was identified by school cost center numbers for data analysis purposes.
Surveys were distributed to all instructional staff at a faculty meeting. Completion of the survey was voluntary and anonymous (see Appendix B). Surveys were returned to the district office and analyzed overall and by school. Out of 4,569 instructional staff, 2,135 from 58 schools and technical centers in the county responded to the survey. All schools except two (one elementary and one middle) returned surveys to the district office. Results from the Career Ladder Survey were reported in terms of frequency and percent of positive responses selected. Various response types were used depending on the nature of the question.

*Interviews.* Appointments were made at all three of the selected schools with a principal or designated assistant principal responsible for organizing and facilitating the Career Ladder Program at that school. A voluntary interview was conducted at each site using the instrument developed by the researcher. Subsequently, the researcher asked the administrator to assist in setting up four voluntary interviews with staff that met the requirements requested. At each site, three mentor or lead teacher interviews took place including one with a teacher who was not assigned one of these roles during the pilot. These interviews, along with the administrator’s, were completed in the first phase of interviewing to get a varied perspective at a time when the details of the program were still fresh. In all, fifteen interviews, five from each school, were conducted between August and December of 2004.

Interviews allowed the researcher to capture the perspectives of participants at the conclusion of the pilot. Patton (1990) suggested the use of in-depth interviews when trying to answer questions about participants’ perceptions. The goal of an in-depth interview was to elicit rich, detailed material that could be used in analysis.
The results of these interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. A copy of the transcription was mailed to each interviewee with a request to review and verify what was said during the interview or to add any additional information they might have wanted to include. Any changes in the results that were identified by the participants were immediately amended in the data.

The follow-up interviews were scheduled in the same manner as the first set and required no more than 30 minutes each. The researcher requested that the administrator interviewed in the first phase along with two teachers who participated in the first interview volunteer their time for a follow-up.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators related to the implementation of a district-wide Career Ladder Program. The documents collected are archival. The surveys used in the study had both qualitative and quantitative components while qualitative data were collected from the interview phases. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to triangulation in the form of multiple validation procedures as this study combined the use of surveys and interviews from both administrators and teachers at three secondary school sites within a district.

Merriam (1999) reported that data analysis is a process of making sense out of data. It can be limited to determining how to best arrange the material into a narrative account of the findings. More commonly, researchers extend analysis to developing categories or themes that interpret the meaning of the data. Seidman (1998) discussed the
same issue and suggested that researchers are sometimes tempted to let the narrative of the participant’s experience and the categorized excerpts from interviews speak for themselves, but he feels another step is necessary. The researcher must identify the connective threads among the experiences of the participants and understand and explain these connections. Discussing the patterns or themes of each participants’ experiences was imperative to constructing the meaning of the data.

Documents. The documents were analyzed for evidence of strategies for effective implementation of a program mentioned in the literature review. The six research-based factors are (a) employee participation in the implementation process, (b) a link between pay and performance, (c) line of sight, (d) organizational trust, (e) alignment to a strategic plan, and (f) employee perception of failures (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991).

Surveys. Data from the surveys were used to identify patterns or themes that emerged from the six different specification areas that made up the survey (see Appendix M). These large or recursive trends or patterns were then explored through the interviews. This process of repeatedly looking for patterns of data and variables in field notes and developing constructs that account for these patterns, comparing them with each other, and redefining and reconceptualizing them into more coherent variables and patterns has been called the “constant comparative method” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In order to verify the themes, members of the task force that developed the survey instrument were then consulted to confirm that the decisions were accurate.

Interviews. Data from the individual teacher and principal interviews were read and coded by the researcher. Codes were assigned to respondents according to their school (South A, Central B, and North C), and their role in the career ladder
(administrator “A”, teacher without lead or mentor status “T”, or a lead/mentor teacher “L”). Each was also assigned a number to designate the frequency of that type of interview within the sequence of one school. The researcher identified any emerging themes or patterns from the transcribed data. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that this part of analysis involves how to differentiate and combine the data that has been retrieved and the reflections that need to be made using this information.

The researcher scheduled data workshops to verify the findings of this phase of the data analysis. These groups were four educators who have extensive background in data collection and analysis. They were oriented to the process used to collect the data and the nature of the study itself. They were then given a copy of all transcriptions to review. The workshop participants were then asked to read and confirm the interviews and corresponding themes identified by the researcher.

*Extension Conversations*

In an effort to collect the richest data available, the researcher had informal extension conversations with members of the committee responsible for determining which staff members were chosen as lead or mentor teachers at each target school. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the perspectives of these staff in terms of the selection process itself and the effects it had on them and their colleagues.

*Ethical Considerations*

For all activities contained in this study, participation was on a voluntary basis. During the interviews, permission was requested of all respondents to audiotape the conversations for effective transcription. For anyone who refused to be audiotaped, detailed notes were taken either during the interview, if permitted, or immediately after
the interview when the information presented could best be remembered. Only the researcher had access to the interview data. The data were collected and reported in a manner that did not reveal the identity of any participant.

Summary

This study utilized various types of data collected prior, during, and at the conclusion of the Career Ladder Program implemented in the spring of 2004. Archival documents, survey results, and the transcriptions of two sets of interviews were analyzed for trends and emerging patterns. The archival documents were given to the researcher for analysis by the career ladder committee chairperson at the district office. The results of the Career Ladder Survey was aggregated by the district research and evaluation department, and the raw data was given to the researcher for further analysis. Each piece of data was given at the request of the researcher with permission to be used for the purpose of completing this study. The interviews conducted for this study were done at three target secondary schools in the district. Five interviews in the initial interviews and three interviews in the follow-ups were conducted in each school. Informal extension conversations took place at each site with members of the selection committees to determine their perspectives of the program. The analysis of the interview data was validated by a group of four educators who have extensive experience in the area of data collection and analysis. This analysis was used to respond to the six research questions designed for this study.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The primary purpose of the fourth chapter is to report the data that resulted from the exploration of a Career Ladder Program implemented into a large school district in Florida in the spring of 2004. Various types of data are used to tell an evidence-based “story” of how this program was briefly put into practice and, through the perceptions of teachers and administrators in the program, attempt to recognize the implications that may exist while implementing a new salary structure that emphasizes pay for performance. The data used to respond to the research questions designed for this case study was reported on in the following format with the first section of the chapter as a detailed chronology of the planning process evidenced by archival documents collected from the implementation process. The remaining portion of this section is a detailed summary of a district survey’s results as they pertained to the research questions. This is completed with the analysis of the initial and follow-up interviews that took place at the conclusion of the Career Ladder Pilot. The questions from each interview protocol are presented followed by an analysis of the respondents’ answers.

The data collected for this case study was analyzed and used to report findings based on the exploration of the study’s six research questions. The research questions explored in this study were:

49
1. What research-based planning activities took place prior to the implementation of the Career Ladder Program?

2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed for teachers as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

6. What were the perceived residual effects among respondents, positive or negative, regarding the Career Ladder Pilot after termination by the Florida legislature?

The data used to describe planning activities that took place prior to the implementation of the career ladder were collected from school sites and from the supervisor of district employee relations who was the chairperson of the career ladder taskforce. Documents were examined such as meeting minutes, timelines, budgets, an original grant application, job descriptions, and copies of staff development presentations.
used to assist schools during the early stages of implementation. Through this evidence, the researcher identified issues that arose and how they were resolved and looked for examples of best practices found in research that were used in the implementation of this district-wide initiative.

**Documents**

This first section of chapter four will describe the process that led to the implementation of the Career Ladder Program in the spring of 2004. Numerous factors have surfaced in the literature that either insures the success or the demise of pay for performance programs. Through this literature and research, factors of success will be discussed and, if they are in place in the new pay plans, the schemes may be successful. The six research-based factors are (a) employee participation in the implementation process, (b) a link between pay and performance, (c) line of sight, (d) organizational trust, (e) alignment to a strategic plan, and (f) employee perception of failures (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991). Archival documents have been used as evidence to determine whether these strategies were utilized.

*Employee Participation in the Implementation Process.* Researchers believe that pay for performance decisions require involvement from employee groups that are affected in the design and implementation phase of the plan (Balkin & Bannister, 1993). Evidence that falls under this factor for success is difficult to locate as this program was implemented as a pilot. The subject district in this study applied for a grant called the Early Innovator Program that was to be a lead-in to the Better Educated Students and Teachers (BEST) Florida Teaching Salary Career Ladder Pilot Program. In the proposal by the district, it describes the preliminary research done to choose an appropriate model.
The Career Ladder Committee, made up of representatives of the district administration and the teachers’ union, agreed to pursue this grant based on a review of current literature in teacher recruitment, development, retention, and compensation. A primary source of interest was the research done by the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), an initiative of the Milken Family Foundation. The committee also conducted several phone interviews with school administrators from Arizona, Missouri, and other school districts across the country that have pursued a Career Ladder Program. After twenty-one meetings between July 16th and October 29th 2003, the committee developed a plan based entirely on their research. There is no evidence that, before the plan was developed, staff in any school impacted by the Career Ladder Program were included in any decisions pertaining to implementation. However, data in the form of results from a district-wide survey (see Appendix B) and several focus group meetings were collected at the conclusion of the pilot in May of 2004. The information from these activities was to be used to determine the overall knowledge and satisfaction perceived by instructional staff throughout the district.

_A Link Between Pay and Performance._ Employees must perceive a clear link between pay increases and performance (Milkovich & Wignor, 1991). According to the established legislative purpose for the Better Educated Students and Teachers program, teachers being well rewarded for their students’ high performance is one of five guiding principles. Guideline 2.2 of the BEST Florida Pilot Career Ladder Program Guidelines states that a district school board, in determining the salary schedule for instructional personnel, must base a portion of all instructional personnel’s compensation on performance. Performance-based accountability criteria may include:
1. Classroom achievement gains

2. School achievement gains

3. Skills, knowledge, and responsibilities, including but not limited to:
   a. Design and planning instruction: lesson plans, student work, and assessment
   b. Instruction: standards and objectives, motivating students, presenting instructional content, lesson structure and pacing, learning activities and materials, questioning, academic feedback, grouping students, teacher content knowledge, teacher knowledge of students, thinking, and problem solving
   c. Learning environment: expectations, managing student behavior, environment, and respectful culture
   d. Responsibilities: staff development, instructional supervision, school responsibilities, mentoring, community involvement, reflecting on teaching, and professional growth (DSBPC, 2003).

In the fall of 2003, using the above guidelines as a framework, the district developed a Career Ladder Pilot Program Annual Salary Formula (see Appendix J). The differential pay components of the career ladder were figured for each instructional employee based on whether they met the criteria described in Appendix I. For lead, mentor, and achievement pay, supplement amounts were pro-rated as the pilot was implemented for only the spring semester. Job descriptions and requirements for lead and mentor teachers (see Appendix K) were made available to all employees in November of
2003. Positions for each school were advertised according to allocations determined by student membership (see Appendix E). The selection process to place teachers in lead or mentor positions at each school (see Appendix F) began after school board approval on November 4, 2003 and was in place for the second semester of the 2003-2004 school year.

*Line of Sight.* Employees must be able to affect his or her performance measure through their work behavior (Lawler, 1990). For teachers to be confident that this is the case, an ongoing, systematic, and comprehensive system of professional development must be put in place as a component of the program. According to the proposal (DSBPC, 2003) submitted to and approved by the Florida Department of Education, there was extensive training provided by district for both current and potential administrators, lead, and, mentor teachers. All staff members were divided into groups and training dates were set at various sites and times from January 16th to February 20th. Follow-up sessions were scheduled later on in the semester and the teams were encouraged to attend together to maximize effective collaboration. According to the budget proposal for the Career Ladder Program, the staff development portion was over five hundred and twenty five thousand dollars.

The training for administrators focused on the leadership skills required to support curriculum development, professional development, and performance assessment. The training for lead and mentor teachers were designed using the Florida Staff Development Protocol and were focused on the following:

- Data analysis and needs assessment strategies
- Leadership skills
• Coaching, mentoring, and modeling for peers
• Standards-based curriculum development and implementation
• Performance assessment and principles of performance-based accountability
• Florida Educator Accomplished Practices
• Clinical educator training
• Management/facilitation of online training and follow up
• Developing and leading professional learning communities
• Designing and implementing standards-based professional development
• Individual professional development plan processes and follow ups

Organizational Trust. The organizational climate of the organization should be one that is based on shared goals and values between managers and employees (Ingraham, 1993). Of all six factors in the framework for successful implementation, organizational trust was the one area that may not have been present in the career ladder. In the middle to late fall of 2003, many schools had just completed the process of deciding how to allocate and use school recognition money. A process that, for many schools, was frustrating and in many cases caused division within the staff. This was followed in October and November by the information pertaining to the implementation of the career ladder. The grant mandated that each school would be prepared to put the program in place for the entire second semester beginning in January 2004. Therefore, there was no time to create a perception of trust between those implementing the career ladder and the teachers it would be impacting.
Alignment to a Strategic Plan. The district committee spent extensive time prior to implementation making sure that the program that was going to be developed was aligned to the vision already in place. Lawler (1990) suggests that if an organization has a clear sense of its strategic plan, then it should place an emphasis on the types of skills needed to achieve these goals. District administrators took every opportunity to connect the district vision with the goals of the career ladder. In the minutes from a presentation to interested employees at the teacher’s union office prior to implementation, an assistant superintendent aligned the goals of the Career Ladder Plan modeled after the Milken Foundation TAP program and the district vision for its schools. Similarly, in the first set of slides at each of the presentations for administrators, lead teachers, and mentor teachers there was an overview of program expectations. Each of these expectations was carefully aligned with district priorities in the areas of: high quality teacher performance, ongoing professional development, peer leadership, and coaching.

Employee Perception of Fairness. Studies have shown that employee perceptions of procedural fairness significantly influence his or her impression of the pay for performance plan (Lawler, 1987). Throughout the implementation process, every effort was made to certify that all decisions would be fair. As the plan for implementation was being created, the committee included the teacher union as much as possible (a union official sat on the committee). The mentor and lead teacher selection plan proposal (see Appendix M) included various activities to insure a certain level of awareness throughout the district. However, the short timeline for implementation guaranteed that many employees would be skeptical of the fairness of a program initiated by the state.
Surveys

The Career Ladder Survey (see Appendix B) was administered to all instructional staff throughout the district at each school level to provide feedback on levels of satisfaction and knowledge about the grant funded Career Ladder Program. The results were to be used to determine an appropriate point to modify and improve the implementation of the program in the 2004-2005 school year. Due to budget constraints at the state level, however, the funding allocated for the Career Ladder Program (BEST) for the 2004-2005 school year was eliminated. The administration of the survey took place in May of 2004. The survey was produced as documents that could be scanned and were assigned school cost center numbers for data analysis purposes. Surveys were distributed to all instructional staff members through school faculty meetings on an anonymous and voluntary basis. The surveys were returned to the district office (Department of Research and Evaluation) and analyzed overall and by school. 2,135 instructional personnel from fifty-eight schools and technical centers in Pasco County responded to the survey. All schools except two (one elementary and one middle) returned the surveys. The results are reported in terms of frequency and percent of positive responses selected. Responses were combined to indicate a positive stance based on various response types. The number and percent of individuals that did not respond to each item was reported to account for 100% of the responding group consistently. Six major categories pertaining to the specifications of the program determined by the state were included. The categories are:

- Knowledge
- Experience
• Greatest Potential Benefit

• Concerns

• Application Process

• Overall Satisfaction

The following tables represent the survey items and responses related to the six category areas. A summary of each table with any patterns or emergent themes follows each category.
Table 1: Knowledge of the Career Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Are you aware that the Career Ladder Program is required by legislation to be</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>implemented in all school districts at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Are you aware that the Spring 2004 Career Ladder Pilot Program is</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completely grant funded?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have you received an explanation of the salary components of the Career</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ladder Program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Are you aware that the $750 achievement pay supplement that all instructional</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bargaining unit personnel are eligible to receive is provided by the grant?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Extensive to Some Knowledge</th>
<th>Little to No Knowledge</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 What level of knowledge do you feel you have on the Career Ladder</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the category of Knowledge, most respondents gave the items (2-6) a very high frequency of positive responses. Clearly, more than 80% of respondents were aware there was a requirement of state legislation for all school districts to have a plan for implementation prior to the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. They also indicated that they were aware of the fact that the pilot that the district was implementing in the spring of 2004 (prior to the state requirement) was funded by a grant. Teachers indicated that they had been given a thorough explanation of the components of the career ladder including the $750 achievement pay supplement that instructional bargaining unit personnel are eligible to receive. The respondents were confident of their overall level of knowledge on the Career Ladder Program as indicated by the 87% positive response on item number six.
Table 2: Experience with the Career Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Yes Frequency</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No Frequency</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
<th>No Response Frequency</th>
<th>No Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Have you worked with a Lead or Mentor Teacher during the 2004 pilot?</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Are you receptive to working with a Lead or Mentor Teacher?</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you believe that the Lead and/or Mentor Teachers have benefited other</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individuals at your school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do you believe the Lead and/or Mentor Teachers have enhanced programs at</td>
<td>1057</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>your school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Were you aware of the application process, timelines and procedures for the</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Ladder Program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Do you believe the school-based selection team effectively selected Lead and</td>
<td>1474</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor Teachers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in the experience category (above) deal with both the process of getting the various personnel into place at each school site and the experience of the respondents as they were given the opportunity to work with lead or mentor teachers. The results from this category are split. Again, much like the results from Table 1, item 13 asks specifically about the application process, timelines, and procedures resulting in 90% positive responses. The perception is not as positive when respondents are asked about the opportunities they had during the pilot to work with staff that had been assigned as lead or mentor teachers. Only 51% indicated that they had worked with a lead or mentor teacher during the pilot. 62% believed that lead or mentor teachers had benefited other individuals at their school. Along the same lines, 50% of respondents believe programs
within the school were enhanced in some way by the lead or mentor teachers. Also 27% of respondents were concerned about the school-based selection team being able to effectively select lead or mentor teachers for their respective schools. Comparatively, the results from item ten indicate that respondents felt that they were receptive to working with a lead or mentor teacher.

Table 3: Greatest Potential of the Career Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Which part(s) of the Career Ladder Program do you feel has have the greatest potential to benefit you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity for Advancement</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement Pay</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Assistance from Lead Teachers</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor Teachers with Increased Time to Work with Teachers</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues Trained and Paid to Assist Colleagues with Individual Needs</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional School-Based Professional Development Opportunities</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to the option to "Mark All That Apply", percentages do not add up to 100%

The item within this category (above) was structured as a “Mark All That Apply” type of response. The results are recorded by frequency for each choice, therefore the percentages do not add up to 100 percent. Achievement pay (58%) was indicated most frequently as the component of this program having the greatest potential benefit. Other
areas within this item given at similar frequency levels include opportunity for advancement, curriculum assistance from lead teachers, mentor teachers with increased time to work with teachers, and colleagues trained and paid to assist colleagues with individual needs. “Additional school-based professional development opportunities” was chosen on 35% of surveys returned.

Table 4: Concerns Pertaining to the Career Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which part(s) of the Career Ladder do you have concerns about?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for Advancement</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Pay</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Assistance from Lead Teachers</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Teachers with Increased Time to Work with Teachers</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues Trained and Paid to Assist Colleagues with Individual Needs</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional School-Based Professional Development Opportunities</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to the option to “Mark All That Apply”, percentages do not add up to 100%

Item eight for this category (above) was also structured as a “Mark All That Apply” format. When asked about concerns pertaining to the Career Ladder Program, respondents indicated most frequently (32%) the opportunity for advancement component of the Career Ladder Program. Achievement pay and colleagues trained and
paid to assist others were a close second with 30%. Curriculum assistance from lead teachers and additional school-based professional development opportunities were chosen 24% and 29% of the time respectively. Curiously, the option that was least chosen by respondents was mentor teachers with increased time to work with teachers.

Table 5: Application Process for the Career Ladder Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Did you apply to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher for the Spring 2004 Pilot?</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Did you apply to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher for the 2004-2005 school year?</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1753</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Application Process for the Career Ladder Program</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Did any of the following reason(s) prevent you from applying to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher?</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophical Beliefs</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Requirements</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of Planning Time</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education Requirements</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra Work Days</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical Educator Training Requirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied with Current Position</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in this category (above) indicated that less than 10% of respondents applied for the pool to be a lead or mentor teacher in the spring of 2004. Equally, the same number of respondents said that they applied for the same positions in the summer of 2004 for the upcoming school year. Respondents indicated in 42% of surveys that the reason they did not apply was because they were satisfied with their current position.
Compensation (4%) was chosen least as a reason preventing respondents from applying for a position.

Table 6: Overall Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Question</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>See the Potential</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>At this time, what are your overall feelings on the Career Ladder Program?</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>961</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 2% of the sample did not respond to this item

The item within this category of the survey was number one. It asked respondents about their overall feelings toward the career ladder at the time of the survey. 5% and 15% of respondents were very satisfied and satisfied respectively. Interestingly, 45% of respondents indicated that if the Career Ladder Program were permanently implemented, it had the potential to be a good program. Also interesting was the 34% of those that responded to the survey who were dissatisfied with the Career Ladder Program.

**Interviews**

The following results are organized by question for both the initial set of interviews and the follow-up interviews. Each question has comments from respondents that developed into trends or patterns that support the research questions identified in this study. A summary of the results for each question is included at the end of each section.
The question from the interview guide that is supported by the comments and results precedes each section. Reviewers familiar with qualitative data analysis matched the themes extracted from the data by the researcher.

Describe how the lead and mentor teachers were organized at your school? What tasks or projects were targeted for them to complete during the pilot? Were there any action plans constructed for the upcoming school year?

All three target sites were organized differently in terms of the way they determined roles and planned the completion of tasks, but there were some consistencies found across the sites.

AL1 explained:

We were organized as a large group that met every two weeks. The mentor teachers met a little more frequently. There were four of them, so they got together to work on separate projects, but as a whole, we were grouped together and that’s how we met to come up with ideas. We had a brainstorming session where we listed probably about twenty-five different things that we came up with ourselves as a group, things that needed to be worked on at school. From that list, then we chose something that we could work on by the end of the year to show that the leader/mentor program was working and that would give the staff that weren’t lead/mentor teachers the ability to see that we were actually doing something. We also wanted to do something that could be done quickly but make a large impact.

Lead teacher AL2 remarked:

The lead and mentor teachers became a secondary leadership team from the current leadership team at this point. We had a brainstorming session that listed about 25 or 30 areas from general to specific as to what the lead or mentor teachers felt needed to be addressed at the school. We worked on the school improvement goals, everything from communication to student morale, student and teacher recognition, FCAT testing, and numerous others. We were able to get people to prioritize.

Lead teacher AL3 stated:
That was, in some respects, a little frustrating because in the beginning of the process, we were asked to brainstorm about certain things that we wanted to change or things we wanted to work on: issues around the school that we thought needed improving. So we prepared a list, we spent an entire meeting brainstorming and writing things up on the board, and then I’m not really sure what happened with that, somehow the direction of the whole group changed to dividing into sub-committees to cover the goal areas for the school. So from where we went, the direction we were headed in initially didn’t end up where we concluded at the end of the year; but, in some respects, where we ended up at the end of the year was pretty good because we ended up identifying not only the needs as far as school goals are concerned, but also what teachers felt were the problem areas, the areas that we needed improvement for the next school year. The committee that I worked on was for student performance, and we dealt mostly with what the students were able to accomplish as far as school goals were concerned.

An interview participant (AT1) that was not a lead or mentor teacher explained:

The lead/mentor teachers were organized in such a way that the lead teachers were told that they were going to be looking at and helping shape curriculum choices. Mentor teachers were going to be given extra time in their daily schedules to be able to act as mentors to both new and experienced teachers and help them improve their skills whether it was a question of management, teaching skills, or what have you. I know that the mentors met on a regular basis as well, together, just the four of them in developing their portion of the program. I know, specifically, of one I was most familiar was the project the mentor teachers were working on giving teachers the opportunity, and I believe they even sent out invitations with tickets, that any teacher on campus could request that a mentor teacher come into his or her classroom for any purpose, whether it was so that teacher could go and observe in another classroom the practices of one of his or her colleagues, or to have the mentor teacher come in and observe that teacher in the practice of teaching to offer constructive criticism.

Administrator CA1 said:

It was a pilot, and part of the pilot was to look at how those people could function in the overall organization of the school; so, we were certainly looking at how to incorporate them into our leadership structure for the next year in terms of a total leadership team, which actually meant looking at some of our current roles and probably blending some of those roles together. This was much like the way we had specific team leaders for learning communities and we had team leaders for departments. For some of that, we were looking at blending, so we thought that if the pilot stayed in place, we would totally reorganize the whole concept of the leadership team where would we have, depending on how many lead teachers or mentors we had, assumed different responsibilities that were currently under the direction of team leaders. It gave me an opportunity to identify those individuals
and probably to define what their roles would be as a lead or a mentor. At our site a lot of that came under the responsibility of the assistant principal who was trying to figure out how to best use those people. Once the group was accepted by the staff as a resource, it gave them a functional purpose. It was a pilot, but a lot of that we were hoping to take the good from and apply toward the following year. One of the biggest aspects I think that was a sales job, which had to be done. Staff had to actually see these people as a resource, so that was one thing that had to be done so you were conscious of putting them in positions that they could really be used as a resource. Some of the tasks that the assistant principal came up with were taking some of the lead teachers and some of the mentors who became a specialist in terms of, “Okay, I do this really, really well. I have an instructional program that has strong emphasis on technology so I will model so those who I want to gain expertise and use of technology to apply for an instruction program can come to me.” They kind of set up model classrooms and then they would advertise these within the school, “This is my expertise as a lead or mentor. If you want help in this area, come and see me.”

Teacher CL1 remarked:

There was some talk amongst the faculty that we would somehow be in a leadership position amongst the faculty, perhaps as department heads or something of that capacity. That never really happened. It may have happened down the line, there was some talk of restructuring the school hierarchy if you will, but in actuality, for the spring, we were equal to other teachers. We didn’t see ourselves as superior or anything of that nature. Our current leadership structure and these positions operated concurrently, maybe almost independently. There were times we met together as a group and we tried to sell things to the faculty, ways of improving our methods of instruction and such. We were working as mentors, somewhat independently of each other, and there were times that my assistant principal would give us permission to move ahead with something. For example, we talked about targeting the ninth grade. Another lead in the program got together with me, and we decided the ninth grade ought to be targeted because they are the ones that most directly impact the FCAT scores of the school, and the ninth grade year is such a pivotal time in a young man or woman’s life. So we looked at that and created a program we called SHIP, which was targeting the ninth grade as sort of a mentor within the students, having clubs or organizations mentor these ninth graders and bring them up and show them the right way and what happens if they don’t follow the right path. So there were times that we did that, we also created methods of instruction and went to inservices and things like that. We had a teaching practices calendar that we worked out where qualified teachers would use methods of instruction as examples in class. It could be anything from classroom management to a totally different practice like a group strategy that other teachers hadn’t seen. The idea was to put that in the faculty lounge so if you wanted to see something modeled, you could go to that teacher’s classroom and all the leads and mentors were encouraged to sign up for that and do some of that. Another teacher in the building worked with
me on a method of instruction that we both used this year and we were trying to sell as a method for teachers in the future. We did a cooperative learning in-service and a lot of teachers came to that and adapted that into their classroom and all of that was supposed to be followed up into this year.

Lead teacher CL2 stated:

Yes, we had eleven lead teachers and three mentor teachers. The three mentor teachers would meet quite often, once a week in an administrators’ office. Sometimes we decided we didn’t need a meeting, and sometimes we would take turns on different jobs where we would divide up discussing things with the other lead teachers. The administration would ask us to do such things as walk through the building, and so the mentors sat down and divided up the building. We divided up who would take what parts of the building so that we could do it quite easily and quickly. There were other jobs where administration presented us with data and we would either volunteer to do it or he would request certain people to take it and work with it. Of course, the mentor teachers had the additional period to work with beginning teachers, so we were assigned brand new teachers to work with and also people who were novices but perhaps not a first year teacher. We were assigned them to touch base with and just gently approach and offer our services. We worked with data and looked at what areas needed to be strengthened, and then we pulled together and worked on what areas needed to be concentrated on. For example, we found that math was an area of concern.

She went on to explain a deliberate plan for this group to develop an awareness school-wide:

It was recommended that mentors and leads start attending more leadership meetings like the School Advisory Council to see what are some of the behind the scenes things that people aren’t aware of, and they can view the big picture. The mentors would get together and discuss different things that Mr. Letvin would present to us and we were looking raw data from each teacher as to how many students were passing and failing and trying to get a feel for the whole school and we divided that up by lead and mentor. The mentors did a lot of planning more with Mr. Letvin, and then we would have a large meeting every week with all the leads and mentors together and talk about different projects and things we had been working on together. We had a very nice meeting toward the end of the year, just prior to the announcement of the end of funding for the program, where we met at Safety Town.

Lead teacher CL3 explained:

We met as a group, the leads and mentors, and we met at first it probably wasn’t every week, it just felt like it because of all we were going through; but, it was at least every other week, and it eventually became every month. One of things we did is we talked about what we were doing in terms of working with
teachers. We also talked about things that we were trying to target, and we tried to refer that back to the school improvement plan. We wanted to try to work and help teachers who had very high failure rates. We wanted to work with improving reading scores and that type of problem. There were people, obviously the mentors because they had extra time, who took other things on their shoulders that they were working with, but it was the general goal of reducing failure rate. We were all going to present or co-present during one of the in-service days. That was one of the things we tried to do, and everything tried to come back to the school improvement plan in terms of what we were trying. We were also trying to earmark some new teachers or teachers in their first couple of years and to see if we could help them in that transition. We had one meeting, it was late in the year and that’s when it was all up in the air whether it would be continued, about who could apply because we were starting new information and criteria. We did have one meeting, and as I recall it was not very well attended, where we tried to get together and organize what we had done and what we would like to do. But that was again built on the presumption that those of us who were leads or mentors would reapply and be accepted into the position and, of course, we were hoping to be funded.

Lead teacher BL1 said:

There were administrators assigned to the lead teachers and to the mentor teachers. Administrators that were assigned to the mentor teachers met once a week to discuss what the needs of the school were that we could probably focus on and be helpful with; then we went out and observed, offered our assistance, came back and reported, adjusted our focus, and went out again the next week. I know some of the tasks that were assigned to lead teachers, but I don’t know exactly how they met and what their meeting schedule was. I know the mentor teachers met once a week but of course we had the periods off in which to do that, the lead teachers were harder to corral. I think there were fourteen of them, so it was hard probably to get a common planning time for them. I know the lead teachers were given certain projects that were short term activities that would sort of lay the ground work for things they were going to do the next year or that would make things more efficient like scheduling, graduation check, attendance and things that they really did in the summer time. I know the lead teachers came in and checked to see if students were placed correctly in whatever content area they were supposed to be in. They went through all the schedules, that’s two thousand schedules, and made notes for students who were misplaced according to the criteria that we use and that information was handed to our assistant principal who reviewed it and then turned over to the guidance department to implement the change. Nobody else was doing that yet theoretically; technically, guidance counselors were supposed to check that. Then again, a math teacher could be verifying math placement. That’s a lot more effective than a guidance counselor. Then we all got on the phone in the summertime. We called parents to say, “We noticed a discrepancy in the scheduling. Do you want to think this through?” It really was, I thought, great communication with the parents.
She went on to talk specifically about the mentor teachers’ roles:

The mentor teachers during the school year focused primarily on co-teach situations and then reading enhancement and intensive reading classes. We collected information, observed the classes, and worked with the individual teachers and the new teachers as well. We observed the new teachers and the co-teacher situations and the intensive reading teachers, then we tried to find their strengths and point out some obvious inefficiencies and how to address them. Then we made some presentations to the faculty about some things that we just wanted to remind them of if they were working in a co-teach situation or, if the situation arose, how they can handle a certain classroom management situation or who they can ask if they need help, and then we just re-grouped, discussed this out, and then charged ahead.

Lead teacher BL2 explained:

Basically all the lead and mentor teachers were invited to attend all the leadership team meetings, so that’s something that we did together and then individually, we were divided into groups and asked to complete various things. I was asked to look at the failure rate in the math department, specifically for the ninth graders, and also look at the attendance and their discipline record and look for a correlation. We were working toward a plan for how that information could help us as teachers, but we ran out of time.

Lead teacher BL1 stated:

The mentor teachers met with administrators, and we identified areas that we needed to concentrate on. One of those areas was reading. We would look at how the reading classes were set up, the students themselves, what they were doing, and how they were performing. A couple of those mentor teachers, two of them, took that on and really focused on that. Then, we also looked at beginning teachers. We talked about how we could help them and what kind of resources we could provide for them. Many of the beginning teachers were having problems with this, so two of us really focused with beginning teachers and tried to enhance their program and whatever subject they were teaching. We worked on technique rather than having to know the subject. We helped Mr. Knobl with scheduling. There were so many things we did at the school, but my major focus was with beginning teachers. We met with administrators and we sat and brainstormed, and we prioritized what the needs were for our school. We each took something that interested us and also, for instance, I may have been working with several beginning teachers, so if I needed help I’d ask somebody else and they’d come in and they’d go through the same thing with another set of eyes and we looked at it. It wasn’t that we just had one day set up that people visited us. We didn’t do it like that. We were out. We were visible.
Administrator BA1 remarked:

All of our lead and mentor teachers were already on our current leadership structure, on our current leadership team, with the exception of one, the foreign language teacher. A lot of the choices were real easy to make, most of the people applied that we expected to apply. They were doing obvious leadership things for us here at school. In terms of organization, they basically were our leadership structure, which is a horizontal structure that we have. We have a lot of committees here at the school, those committees feed to the leadership teams to present, and the leadership team makes the decision. So they just carry the title, that they were lead teachers or mentor teachers during the pilot. Our leadership team meets every other Thursday, twice a month. It was very hard to meet because of our schedule with ten periods. We had some lead teachers that were late start teachers, so I would need to meet with three, four, five of them at a time, after school, or during a common period to get them all together to work on projects. We wanted to look at our lead teachers. We wanted those teachers to be vocal leaders with the faculty. We wanted them to run our committees, to really perch the school in the direction that the administration saw that the school should be going in.

This school administrator went on to describe the differentiated projects of the team:

Some of the projects the lead teachers were involved with included our lead literacy team. The majority of the twelve lead teachers were members of that team. In the AIP process, a lot of our teachers were involved with that through our parent meetings, our Lexile testing and those types of things. Many of them had been trained prior to the lead/mentor program. We did some learning community projects, we did a career night, we did our Gator Festival and a couple of other school wide. We assigned our mentor teachers along with a lead teacher to our new teachers on staff. We already had a mentor program in place, but we assigned that during those two periods when they were not instructing their own classes they were not only in classes within their department, but classes of those new teachers that they were assigned. Then, those mentor teachers did some staff development training for our teachers and because it started so late in the school year, around Christmas time, they missed the November staff development day. Some of them were already doing trainings for people, for staff, but I know two or three of them were involved with training. I think we didn’t get to that point because I think we knew pretty early on, at least I did just through conversations between administrators, that because it was a pilot and the funding wasn’t there, after the March Legislative session, we weren’t going to have it again, that they were going to cut it, so we really just focused our attention on maximizing what we could get out of those staff members for us to just make school improvements. We just tried to maximize those people at that time. I think if we didn’t know as of the Legislative session that they tabled it or something like that, then the leadership team, along with the administrators, would have sat down and we would have had a focused action plan for the next year with those people. We
would have taken two or three basic school initiatives and ran with those for the next year with those people.

Results Question 1. Teachers and administrators reported that there was an effort at all three school sites to regularly meet as a group or two separate groups. In most cases, the facilitator of the meetings was a school administrator, and the agenda was developed by the group. Early on in the process, there was a strategy that many respondents categorized as a “brainstorming” activity. The purpose of this activity was to develop a list of target projects that could be quickly completed by the group. In many cases, committees were organized to work on specific projects within the list. Both administrators and teachers indicated that this team of lead and mentor teachers operated as a parallel leadership team to the one that was already in place on each campus. Often, examples given by respondents were: surveys, data analysis to make decisions, working with new staff, and staff development. Many respondents indicated that the leave time offered to mentor teachers was a critical advantage to being able to work with staff, and that lead teachers were limited by the fact that they were working a full schedule. It was consistently apparent that long-term action plans were not put in place at any school in this study. This may be a result of the uncertainty of the program’s future.

What was the overall reception to working with the lead/mentor teachers at your school by the faculty and staff?

Respondents to this item indicated that there was concern among staff members relating to the pilot program and the assignment of roles.

A lead teacher AL1 remarked:
I think people were upset, people who had been in the school system a long time hadn’t been chosen to be lead/mentor teachers. I think they were a little put off by the selection process, whatever the issues were. But I think, overall, I never really heard anything incredibly negative about, “Oh you’re a lead teacher, or, “You’re a mentor teacher.”

A lead teacher AL2 said:

There was a lot of frustration and resentment I think, in the beginning, from people who felt they should have been able to apply for these positions and weren’t eligible, or just the process of being chosen, being chosen and then what role they would have and how it would impact the other teachers in the school. I would say the most positive impact was the mentor teachers. Even though at first people were resistant to allowing them to come into the classroom, they learned that they could help them. I thought that those people really developed a plan that would encourage everyone in the school to participate, either as an example to others, or if they had troubles or struggled with anything, they would allow them to help them. That just increased over time. I would say after about a month or two months into the program, people were very receptive to mentor teachers and what they were doing and having them in their classrooms.

A school administrator AA1 explained:

It wasn’t received well. Some people on the faculty did not feel that certain people should have been chosen, and maybe certain people shouldn’t, and that was more in the lead area and not in the mentor area. I don’t think anyone really had a problem with who was the mentor teacher, but I do feel that there were some people that felt that they should have gotten it, and we did not use all the slots that we had allocated.

A lead teacher AL3 stated that there were negative comments in the school:

It was very positive as a whole. There were some negative comments. Obviously, you’re going to have that. Most of the negative comments that I heard came from people who resist any kind of change. It didn’t ever have to be geared toward lead or mentor teachers. It had to do with change in general. But, most of the comments were positive ones because I think they understood that the lead and mentor teachers were part of a team that were actually trying to make the school better.

An administrator CA1 remarked on the hesitation and skepticism of the staff:

Initially, it was rather tenuous. I think there wasn’t a real clear picture from the staff on what these people were willing to do. The pilot came along quickly. There wasn’t a real opportunity to sell the benefits. We applied for it, we got it, and we put it together. In retrospect, one would like to have had a lot more
opportunity to kind of build support for the program, but we didn’t. There was this distant perception of what this thing was all about and why we were paying these people all this money. The other problem I think we had to deal with was in the selection process. The people had to fill out the application and had to meet the criteria. Initially, I think there were some questions from staff as to why this person was selected and this person wasn’t. You were dealing with a specific rubric that was developed for the program.

A lead teacher CL1 stressed the possible impact this program could have on new staff:

I would say, at first, there was some resistance just because people are not real receptive to change, but once they realized that we weren’t going to be barging into their rooms or threatening them in any way in their profession, I think it was really welcomed. A lot of teachers I worked with were young and they really wanted to hit them hard, but there were other teachers in the building that just said, “Hey, I know you’re good at this, and I’m not. Would you mind coming by and/or working on a lesson plan, or anything like that?” So we did a lot of that. It was received well by the end.

A lead teacher CL2 explained the plan to have an impact on the staff:

It was mixed. I think, for the most part, many people wondered what it was. It was recommended to us by the administration that we make ourselves visible so people could actually see what it was we were doing because if you’re always writing reports or behind doors, then it doesn’t look like you’re as productive as you’d like to have people understand that you are. I think the walk through made people very open to it. They seemed nervous at first, like we were going to evaluate them and it would affect them. They eventually realized that we were there just to gather data and we’d make sure to be positive and point out all the good things we saw in each room, this seemed to open them up to welcome us and start talking about themselves and what they were doing in their curriculum. On a few occasions I walked around with the group.

A lead teacher CL3 discussed hesitation on the part of veteran staff:

That’s a tough one. There was a lot of reservation on the part of some of the more experienced faculty. I’m talking about people who’ve had a lot of years of experience and are very good teachers. I’m not sure it was resentment. I think they misinterpreted the role, of particularly the mentor teacher. Once you’ve been teaching twenty, thirty years, you don’t take all the new in-services, you’ve got your stuff together. A lot of these people, as soon as they saw what it was supposed to be, wanted nothing to do with it. They did not want these people in their classroom. Whenever you work in a faculty, people have legitimate or illegitimate opinions about people on the faculty and its resemblance is, “What is this person going to tell me that I don’t already know.” So there was some real resentment. The other side of that is I think, for a lot of the newer teachers or
younger teachers, here was somebody who was designated that they could go to and ask for help without it being directed by an administrator.

A non-lead or mentor teacher CT1 commented:

I don’t think it was very well received for a lot of reasons. I believe that most of the faculty thought that it was fairly subjective, and that the process was not done in a way that was either relative or had any basis in some kind of professional need. It was just a question of who wanted to be a lead/mentor and they went before a board of their peers and one administrator. I don’t believe it was accepted that well by the faculty. I can’t think of one person that said that something positive was done as a result of that initial program.

A lead teacher BL2 said:

I think it was mainly positive. I think some teachers were resentful, but at the same time, the teachers that I can think of who were resentful of the financial part of it, didn’t apply to the program either. So they really weren’t willing to do extra work but resented the fact that the people who applied and got it were making some extra money. Well, you know the money issue is big for teachers. But, I would say overall it was positive.

A non-lead or mentor teacher BT1 stated:

Aside from the politics involved in any situation like this, I talked with several of my co-workers, and the general consensus was it would be nice to have someone in a position like a lead or mentor teacher to go to for questions, concerns, everything from difficulty managing your classroom to, “I don’t know where the heck this form is.” Somebody that would be there to assist and lead and that we could rely on.

A lead teacher BL3 remarked on the positive reception by a school:

Overall, the reception was good. People would ask questions. I think it was a new thing, so people were apprehensive. I kept reminding them, it’s a pilot program so we don’t know where it’s going to go. We’re piloting this to find out where the bugs are.

An administration BA1 commented on the skeptical reception observed:

We didn’t have a very good reception initially at the school at all. That’s an overall reception. We had some teachers that were just thrilled because of the monetary attachment that came with it. But, we had a lot of teachers who felt like, depending on who the teachers were that were going to be on that group, that decision making group and who the administrator was, was going to either seal their fate or there were just too many loopholes within the rubric that they felt
they would get, that they would not make it through for the school. I think there was some dissension initially because one of our goals was that one of those positions would hopefully be mentor teachers in classrooms, not as an administrator but just somebody to help. Whether it was a beginning teacher or an experienced teacher, I think they made a lot of connections, and they formed a lot of good relationships. I think it strengthened the school and it strengthened those teachers, their teaching styles and how they develop units and everything that goes with it including planning, instruction, etc.

*Results Question 2.* In almost every response to question number two, those interviewed perceived that there was a feeling of discontent among the staff during the implementation of the Career Ladder Program. Eight of 15 respondents mentioned that staff had concerns about the process itself and that it was unfair. Several patterns inside this response were the most common reasons for dissatisfaction. First, some of those interviewed indicated that many teachers in their respective schools were upset about the fact that they did not get chosen for either a lead or mentor position. Many of those interviewed also spoke about the problem some teachers have with change as some teachers were reluctant to seek out the assistance of the newly assigned staff. Most respondents found this to be true primarily with veteran staff. There was a pattern within the responses to this question that indicated beginning or new staff were more likely to utilize the support of these staff members, in most cases, the mentor teachers.

*Do you believe that the lead/mentor program has benefited you or other individuals at your school? Explain.*

A lead teacher Alex remarked on the benefits of the program:

Yes, I would say it has definitely benefited me, and if you are not a department head or on a leadership team, which I wasn’t at that time, I really needed a leadership role. It was a perfect opportunity for me to experience that and be involved in school-based decisions and leading the school in a positive direction, so it was an incredible opportunity for me not only to make more
money, but also to actually have my hands in something that I wasn’t able to be a part of before. I think it was a great opportunity for others for the same reason. It gives more people an opportunity to have a say and to understand what’s going on in the bigger picture.

A lead teacher AL2 stated:

I would say it benefited me only to see the opportunity to restructure. I thought that the restructuring of leadership in general could be very beneficial to any school involving more people in leadership roles, specifically to address areas that never get addressed at schools. As far as the school as a whole, I would say the only real impact would be mentor teachers and their work with newer teachers. Most people I would say didn’t feel any impact by the lead or mentor program. I felt that if they wanted to do that program, then they should have invested the time and money into it, at least eighteen months.

An administrator AA1 explained:

I definitely feel that it could have been a dynamic program if it had been utilized properly, and if it had continued. I think it was priceless as far as the new teachers were concerned, and I think that’s where we would have steered that whole program, if it had continued, with the new teachers and using our lead teachers to go into classes and help.

A lead teacher AL3 gives a clear example of the positive impact the career ladder can have on teachers:

Absolutely, and I’ll use an example. A mentor teacher brought another teacher into my classroom to observe a lesson that I was giving in the same subject. The mentor teacher wanted this teacher, who was struggling in the classroom, to see how I would go about doing the lesson. It was not necessarily about the lesson itself, but the techniques that I used in the classroom to instruct the students in their lesson. I think it not only helped the struggling teacher see what he could possibly do a little bit different the next time he gave the lesson, but it also helped me refocus on what I needed to do in the classroom to get that lesson across.

A non-lead or mentor teacher said:

Definitely, and I think with regard to helping teachers, it helped both new and experienced teachers to improve their skills. For the most part, the choices for the four mentors showed that they were not just very capable educators, but really good people who cared very much about the students. They also care about their
colleagues and really had a desire to see teachers be successful and do the best work they could do.

An administrator CA1 remarked about the leadership opportunities this program presented to teachers:

I think that one of the benefits I saw was that it really gave people opportunities to assume leadership positions that had not opportunities previous to this. It gave those individuals an opportunity to see the other side of the coin, get out of the classroom so to speak, and see some of the other issues that we deal with outside of the classroom.

A lead teacher CL1 stated:

Specifically, it has benefited me, there’s no doubt. Everybody has things they do well. I’m not a perfect teacher, nobody is. But getting in other people’s rooms and helping them and discussing ideas was really helpful. All of the programs I came up with I usually worked cooperatively with other people. Sometimes I was the leader of a committee, sometimes not, but it was the opportunity there to bang heads with the professionals and come up with some really good ideas, and I feel we did. On the other side of that, I worked with a lot of young teachers especially.

A lead teacher explained:

I believe that this program was pretty much tailor-made for me, and I really enjoyed mentoring teachers. I love working with new teachers.

A lead teacher CL3 observed benefits for staff explaining:

I know it has benefited people at this school. I know that there are people that I can say, without a doubt, have benefited from this program because of the leadership and the guidance and, in some instances, the hand holding that they got as well as the fact that they were able to get somebody to come in and model.

A lead teacher explained:

I know it has benefited me because I don’t care how much you think you can handle what’s going on at school, when you get out and get into classes, it becomes different. I also, because I had the periods off, went and visited all of my members of my departments, and I modeled lesson plans and talked about what they were doing. There’s nothing like getting into a classroom and then letting people come into your classroom.
A lead teacher BL2 expressed the benefits by saying:

I know that it benefited me because I have a clearer understanding now of failure rates within my own department, and I was placed on the literacy team and learned some strategies to explore literacy in the math classroom. We came up with some great ideas. The math department just forgot to order new textbooks, but we gave away the old textbooks once the new ones came in.

A non-lead or mentor teacher BT1 offered:

Aside from myself, I believe there was another young lady, and her department head, I believe, was a lead teacher. He was very helpful to her as far as getting materials for her classroom, above and beyond the average department head for the situation, and he was more of a facilitator for her in getting some things that she needed.

A lead teacher BL3 discussed the collegial nature of the pilot period:

I think it has benefited me because I had the opportunity to see my colleagues, talk to them, and actually to help them because I do think there’s a part of the teacher, when they get to a certain level they have a lot of experience, and they just need to share that experience with others. As far as the teachers that I worked with, everyone was appreciative. There were two teachers that we thought we were going to lose, and they’re back this year.

An administrator BA1 explained the benefits from an administrative standpoint:

Personally, it benefited me. Both the lead and mentor teachers have been involved with the master schedule, and that’s the main job in the summer. I used all sixteen people for different things. Some of it was grunt work that I would have had to do, or a volunteer or a data entry operator would have done. To have people that placed, for example, incoming freshman into a foreign language, I used two Spanish teachers that were two foreign language teachers: one lead and one mentor. I had those two teachers pair up for the four days, and one of their jobs was to look at the current eighth graders coming in and place them in intensive reading in either Stage A or Stage B as opposed to being in a foreign language class.
Results Question 3. All but one respondent said that this program was beneficial to themselves and/or others within their respective schools. Interestingly, the participant that gave the negative response was a teacher who did not have a lead or mentor position. Other respondents mentioned the opportunity to make decisions to improve the school, a chance to have an impact on the school outside the classroom, and to work with other staff members in a mutual collegiality setting.

Do you believe the lead/mentor teachers have enhanced programs at your school? Can you give an example?

A lead teacher AL2 concluded:

   No, actually I felt that the opportunity was there with that brainstorming list, but because it was short-term, we picked things that were easy and that need to be done all the time. There were many things that were listed there that, had they been worked on, they could have made a tremendous impact.

A lead teacher AL3 gave a specific example:

   The existing program that I can think of goes along with that same example would be the step program, and that would be the mentoring of the teachers and showing them actually going through observations in the classroom.

A non-lead or mentor teacher AT1 commented on the success of mentors in the career ladder:

   Not to be redundant, but the mentor program, I think, could have been the most effective tool we had with regard to teacher retention and with regard to acclimating new teachers to this career field.

An administrator CA1 stated:

   I don’t believe we developed any specific programs as an outgrowth of that other than utilizing the resources of each those individuals as a resource tool and a research tool for the staff.

A lead teacher CL1 explained:
We were asked to do a variety of things, from coming up with a whole modern discipline plan to helping with attendance issues so that we could see the county change its ten day policy.

A lead teacher CL2 said:

If given more time yes, it was just barely starting to scratch the surface. Of course, we do have the plan where one teacher works with one new teacher for the beginning teacher program.

A lead teacher BL1 said:

Yes, because we tried to develop some guidelines for each program. For example, “Here’s what you should do if you’re a co-teacher. Here’s what you should do if you’re a content teacher and work with a co-teacher in the classroom.”

A lead teacher BL3 gave a clear example:

I can only give you an example of what I and some of the other teachers did. Yes, I think we enhanced the reading program because we saw what was going on and what the needs were. We helped the students.

An administrator BA1 responded to the question emphasizing the FCAT administration and the assistance the team of lead and mentor teachers offered by stating:

I used two or three of the lead teachers during the FCAT process. Again, it helped me, and overall it helped the school. With over 80 boxes of FCAT materials coming in, and with just unpacking and organizing and helping design the exam schedules, it is difficult. In terms of specific programs, it was beneficial for our literacy program. We didn’t have a literacy team, so we built that team up to make sure every group was represented. We did like a coffee shop type atmosphere in February, and some of the mentor/lead teachers were involved with that, specifically with designing that. It was the second year we did it, but we made some changes with their help. They were involved in our Gator Fest, and that’s a big learning community activity. So, I would say that in some of those activities they were involved with the school.

Results Question 4. No response to this item in the interview included the discussion of a program at a school that would indicate the career ladder was going to have a long-term impact. Actually, most of the respondents were not able to give an
example of a specific program that had been impacted at all. On four occasions, the respondents said that there was not enough time for any plans for program additions or augmentations to take place. It does seem though, in many cases, that as mentioned in the results from question one, plans were made at the onset of the career ladder program to work in numerous areas.

Specifically, how were the lead/mentor teachers at your school given the opportunity to lead teachers?

A lead teacher AL1 stated:

A specific example would be an extended-day group that I was working with. We touched our entire faculty basically by involving them in the process. The nine/ten period day, whatever it was going to be, is a huge change.

A lead teacher AL3 described the assistance the lead and mentor teachers were able to provide:

The lead teachers were put in a position with other teachers, especially in the learning community, that had questions or concerns about policy or about the way they were to run things in their classrooms and the responsibilities they had. They knew they could go to the lead teachers to find out what the policy was and what was expected of them. That was a big bond, I think, in terms of being actively involved with the other teachers in the learning community.

A non-lead or mentor teacher said:

It’s my opinion that we just entered this program maybe without all of our ducks in a row because it was my understanding that it was mandated we jump into this program. Perhaps if we had a better understanding of what people could do and how best to utilize these individuals before jumping into it maybe they would have had the opportunity to make more of a difference.

An administrator CA1 concluded:

Yes, but only from the standpoint of providing training for staff. In terms of other administrative roles, I can’t recall any.
A lead teacher CL2 described the situation:

No, I really don’t think that the lead or mentor teachers had the opportunity to really lead teachers. I think they just lacked the time or direction on how to do that kind of roll.

A lead teacher BL1 said:

A lot of the lead teachers that I know assumed tasks that were previously designated to department chairs or team leaders, and that’s true of the mentors as well. We assumed tasks that were traditional that existed in our school before they were handled by somebody else. So as a person who has a responsibility of leading a department or leading a team, that’s your opportunity to assume some leadership roles without being an administrator.

A lead teacher BL2 described how they looked at failure rates school-wide:

I guess we were leading teachers because I was on the team and we looked at the failure rate. We put it all into a spreadsheet and discussed it within our math department and such so we led our teachers to be aware at least in the department.

A lead teacher BL3 discussed the efforts of the mentor teachers:

The mentor teachers were invited into the classrooms. I guess the lead teachers were given opportunities, but I didn’t see that because I didn’t see them in the classroom. But, I’ll tell you who I did see was Penny Garcia. She would come into classrooms and help teachers that were struggling. So we did have some veteran teachers that invited us into the classrooms to help them, and I did see her visibly in classrooms helping teachers.

An administrator BA1 remembered:

In a lot of our committee work, we already had chair people. It was just kind of funny that most of the chair people were lead or mentor teachers, so I don’t know per se if it would have been any different without the mentor program. When we revamped and the district changed its attendance policy, we had one of two lead teachers who started an attendance committee here at the school, and those two teachers led that committee that created the policies for Land O’ Lakes. They then presented to our leadership group, and one of them presented to the faculty. For a lot of those teachers, it was recognized by the faculty when they came back in August some of the nice things that they had been able to implement and put in place. We had those teachers plan, and we did a second evening registration that we had them really heavily involved with, in planning that, and getting volunteers to cover that. I think we’re going through stats right now. We had a couple of our lead/mentor teachers kind of spearhead that process along with me and another administrator. We kind of went in the
right direction, but let them lead and run those different sections. We were just kind of there as participants. They asked us questions if they weren’t sure of something or they needed clarification, but we let them go and lead the group, develop the agendas and do the different things that needed to be done.

*Results Question 5.* Eleven of fifteen respondents to question number five were not able to give a specific example of any activity in which a member of the lead or mentor group at any school was given the opportunity to lead teachers. This was a primary purpose of the Better Educated Students and Teachers program outlined by state legislation and the data indicate the pilot fell short of this objective. One trend that appeared within the responses from non-lead or mentor teachers from each school was that they indicated a lack of planning when it came to the implementation process. Again, as in previous questions, the mentor teachers were mentioned by four of the respondents and seen as the more successful of the two when it came to the goals of the program. Only the mentor teachers were observed actually leading other staff during the pilot.

*Do you believe that within the pilot program there was an effort to reward teachers for their students’ high performance? Can you give an example of what might have occurred?*

A lead teacher AL1 stated:

> Other than that, I don’t really know how teachers were rewarded except with being able to participate in the bigger picture of the school. I don’t know of any ways that teachers had been rewarded. How could they have been rewarded?

A lead teacher AL2 remarked:
None I can think of. That is one of the areas that we felt should have been addressed: teacher recognition along with student recognition. To recognize teachers for the good job they’re doing in the classroom with their kids.

An administrator AA1 explained:

We were looking forward to that part of it because we thought that it would be difficult to say, “Okay, here is money because your kids did well.” We were told the money was coming from the teachers that didn’t do well, so how could we justify that and what would it do to our morale at the school?

A lead teacher AL3 said:

I’m not aware of any outright reward or recognition or anything the teachers were given for their student performance. I do know that when we looked at the goal of student performance in Goal 3, we looked at ways to add incentives for the students, not so much for the teachers.

A non-lead or mentor teacher AT1 explained:

I don’t know. I think in theory, sure. Quite honestly, I think in the initial pilot program, with it being such a brief experience, people were trying to understand and decipher the paper work. They were looking at the bottom line saying, “Okay, if I do this I will get this monetary reward.” My perception is that district was told this is what you need to implement. District told administrators this is what you need to implement, administrators told staff this is what we have to implement, but I didn’t get the impression from all of the administrators that this is something that they believed in or that they were ready to invest in beyond what was required of them. That’s why I say in theory, sure. In fact, when it came right down to it, if a teacher is told, “You’re going to get a $750 check if you do this,” then I jump through that hoop to get that $750. Whether or not student performance is actually impacted, I don’t know.

An administrator CA1 concluded:

The concept was there and I know with the pay structure and how it was broken out was a part of what has to do with student achievement; but, that part of it, given the current state of where we’re at, I thought was very difficult to assess. Specifically in getting the immediate feedback in terms of the data that you needed to show that the student actually did achieve. What we tried to move toward was having the teachers select some quantifiable measure that would give them more immediate feedback.

A lead teacher CL1 explained:
I know that part of the program involved hitting your PDP goals, which was fairly easy. Other than that, I didn’t see a whole lot of effort in that way.

A lead teacher CL2 explained:

Yes, because besides the fact that as a mentor teacher I was given career ladder money, which of course I was very grateful for, teachers were able to write their PDP with the approval of the administrator and then meet the objectives they set for themselves. Whoever did that was able to gain monetarily.

A non-lead or mentor teacher CT1 said:

I’m not aware of it.

A lead teacher BL2 explained:

No, that was such a good idea though because I struggle with writing a PDP every year, and this is, I think, my eleventh year teaching. That’s definitely something that could happen and be a good that thing could come out of the lead or mentor program by providing some examples of really great things that you could do.

A non-lead or mentor teacher BT1 said:

Yes, based on the fact that we were given the opportunity to utilize other individuals on the staff that only furthered our ability to have our students succeed.

A lead teacher BL3 remarked:

That’s how I feel. With the career ladder, at the end of the year if you did your PDP, you had certain things for students. For instance, I would have something where they would improve, called a pre-test or post-test. For this year, it would be working on reading and plans or how to progress and to chart if they’re progressing and that would be attached to my plan. If their performance was higher, then they would be rewarded at the end of the year. I set it apart from what would be AP funds or IB money where students’ high performance is rewarded with money in this program, but our career ladder was because of the PDP, and if they did meet the higher standards, they got better scores.

An administrator BA1 discussed the rewards:

I would say that just the surface answer would be, “Yes,” that they were funded via stipends and part of that stipend was for them to not only to help improve student performance, but just overall school climate would be improved by the extra hours and the extra efforts with projects.
Results Question 6. Question number six seemed to cause respondents the most confusion. In twelve out of fifteen cases, respondents did not think that the Career Ladder Program made a real effort to reward teachers for student performance. Only three of the respondents mentioned the Professional Development Plan as a part of the program. Achievement pay, a component of the Career Ladder Compensation Plan (see appendix I), was directly tied to student performance through each teachers Professional Development Plan, but was recalled by few teachers (one of them a non lead/mentor) and only one administrator.

What will be the long-term benefits of a Career Ladder Program at your school?
Specifically, which areas of your school or district would be addressed?

A lead teacher AL1 reflected:

I think the benefits would have been great, and if they kept it, I think they would have been incredible. I think it’s just another way to involve a lot of people. I tend to feel that an elected position is a little better than an appointed one because you have people at your school saying, “Okay, we’ve interviewed these people who are wonderful educators and we want them to be part of the leadership at our school.” So, I think that people will really respond to that. We had a huge list of things we wanted to accomplish. If we had been able to work on those types of things, I just think it would only improve our school and its issues that the lay community can’t ever get to because of the way that it’s set up.

A lead teacher AL2 explained:

There needs to be more people than just the administrators involved in the operation of the school, so I think if there was a big restructuring, then administrators could utilize teachers and their strengths of their schools to help
them with things to make their schools better. There’s just not enough time for administrators to do some of the things teachers and students feel need to be done.

An administrator AA1 discussed the collegiality and how it can impact student performance:

I think the collaboration between the teachers and the students would increase student performance. If you have these teachers working together, and really working together and helping one another, they are working for the better of the school. I think that you’re going to definitely see an improvement, even in the morale of the teachers, because I know that like the one mentor that had done the project with the other teachers, there was a trust and a relationship that was built between the three other teachers and the other mentor that had never been there before.

A lead teacher AL3 explained:

I think, in terms of actual planning, curriculum and teacher development as professionals, the lead and mentor positions were extremely important. I think in terms of long-term goals and long-term expectations for the program, the county could only benefit by having a group of teachers whose job it was to provide support for the rest of the people around them: their colleagues. I don’t see how that could be viewed as anything but a positive experience.

AL3 went on to the impact of these leaders:

It was as though they actually were a part of the decision-making process, and it gave them a stake in what was going on and what was happening, and when that occurs, they tend to take policy decisions more seriously. They took them more seriously because it directly affected their professional procedures and their jobs every day that they came to work. I don’t think that can be understated. I thought that was a huge bonus for the lead and mentor program.

A non-lead or mentor teacher stated:

Not to beat a dead horse here, but I keep going back to the new teacher and teacher retention. I think that it’s a key area because it isn’t just a matter of getting with a new teacher in the first couple of months they’re in school; that’s the honeymoon phase, as everyone knows.

An administrator CA1 talked about the benefits of teacher relationships:

I think there’s a real benefit for teachers teaching teachers. I think just the teacher to teacher relationship removes the stigmatism that it’s teacher vs. administrator. I think it kind of frees up more of a relationship of benefits from
teacher to teacher, if it’s done correctly and as long as it’s not part of the evaluation process. The faculty needs to see these people as true professionals, worthy of being someone they can listen to and learn from. I think there’s a tremendous benefit.

A lead teacher CL1 stated:

The main benefit, as I see it, is there is no answer that we don’t have as a faculty. I really believe that. There are answers to every problem the school faces within these hallways. What we lack in education is the ability to meet with each other. We lack that ability to discuss, to sit down as adults and come up with ideas. We don’t have that. There was a wide-range of ideas within this program within a very short time. Just the ability to sit down with another professional and say, “What do you think about this?” lets us fix it. We attacked every single flaw we saw within this building that we could possibly deal with in a short time. One of the flaws of any school is the administration being disenfranchised from the faculty in that there isn’t a go-between. You can talk meetings all you want, but that informal sit down in a circle, let’s see what we can both do, what’s practical concept is missing. The administration doesn’t have a real grip sometimes on what is happening in the course of a teacher’s day and vice versa.

A lead teacher CL3 remarked about staff perception:

There are people, teachers, that have an incredible amount of talent and that talent can be shared. Now, during this first semester, there were a lot of people in the school that said this will be gone; it’s never going to happen. But, if they knew it was going to continue, I think it would be very possible to have some of that expertise shared. Now I know that this whole project was thrown together in a very short period of time between the district and the union and so forth, but I think that the best way to improve teachers is with teachers. No offense to administrators, no offense to college professors, but you people are not on the line anymore. You have a totally different paradigm than somebody who is doing it in the next room. I think constructive criticism is much easier to accept from those people.

A non-lead or mentor teacher CT1 stated:

Well, if it’s done properly, I think everybody needs to know some sort of modeling and someone to compare to. I think, in the long run, since they’ve done away with a lot of the programs that were in place for new teachers, it would be a benefit, but I think a lot of work has to be done in laying out the ground rules: the
people, the procedures, and the policies. I think all of that was done too haphazardly to make it effective as it exists right now.

A lead teacher BL1 discussed the staff resentment:

I think that if it started at the beginning of the year and nobody was ever impacted by the change, people would begin to realize that we weren’t a pipeline to the administration. As far what you do in the classroom, we’re really there to be helpful. If they began to trust us, that would have been immeasurably effective and helpful to everyone.

A lead teacher BL2 commented:

Well, I guess we were leading teachers because I was on the team and we looked at the failure rate. We put it all into a spread sheet and discussed it within our math department.

A non-lead or mentor teacher BT1 remarked:

I think long term there would be a number of benefits. Primarily, for me, I’m a very team-oriented individual, and I think it fosters more team work, less bickering, less dissention in the ranks, and less fissures in the faculty. The more unified that a faculty can be and the more goal-oriented as a team that we can be, the better off our students are primarily but also the school as a whole. I think a lead/mentor program would provide people the opportunity to be trained, to get some information from peers and co-workers. A lot of times it is easier to take information from a peer and a co-worker than in other places, especially in the technology department. So more training, more time, more people available to help out and to address issues would be very, very beneficial.

A lead teacher BL3 stated:

It will help you so much with your beginning teachers. You make a better teacher, you produce better students. By having teachers that feel comfortable in the classroom their first year, and even struggling teachers, you enhance their performance and then they’re better able to disseminate the information. I also think it helps if you have lead teachers rather than administration doing this kind of work. Other teachers are more apt to come ask for help from teachers than they would be the administration, and I did see that last year with a couple members from my department who were struggling.

An administrator BA1 concluded:

I think it’s a shame it only lasted one year because our perception at school changed not quite 180 degrees, but a lot of people are coming around to
the fact that these people are doing things. At the same time, the argument that is made every day is that this teacher does nothing and gets paid the same thing that I get.

Results Question 7. All respondents were positive about the possible long-term benefits the Career Ladder Program could have on their respective schools if it was to continue. Four of the 15 respondents indicated that these staff members were an extension of the administrative team. The lead and mentor teachers were getting the opportunity to work on tasks that traditionally had been completed by administrators. Another trend was the benefit of being able to share expertise among staff and to assist with the professional growth of new staff.

Do you believe the career ladder will affect the way in which schools are organized?

Explain.

A lead teacher AL1 suggested:

Yes, I definitely think they could. We want these learning communities. We kind of force these learning communities in our county, and I think it is exactly what it does. It’s forcing people to be together and then the scheduling doesn’t work out that way. I think that we’re seeing that you can’t try to group in that manner. I think it doesn’t work, and I think that this program could make this school a big cohesive unit whether it’s broken down into learning communities or not.

A lead teacher AL3 responded:

If you put in place of these mentor programs, in place of the community leaders, in place of department heads, and allowed these people to be in a position where they were not only helping to facilitate the way the school runs but also in a position of support for the rest of the community, I think it would be a huge bonus rather than having fragmented positions, each responsible for this task or that task. If you consolidate things into lead and mentor teachers, it just makes it more organized and more convenient and much more productive.
An administrator CA1 concluded:

The program did it to a degree. By defining the specific job the people are going to be doing, I think it gave them more opportunity to be leaders within the school than our traditional concept of leadership teams. I like it in that perspective because it gives them more functional things to do within the school, a communication vehicle with a lot of time for planning the utilization of the leadership team.

A non-lead or mentor teacher BT1 concluded:

From what I understand of the plan, it’s kind of intended to be an organizer, but that is just my take on it. I would think it would definitely reorganize it because there wouldn’t be such a division between the administration and the faculty. There would be a connection that through a lead or mentor teacher would be less confusing as far as what the administration would expect. There’d be more clarification. It isn’t that the administrators aren’t clear, it’s that they’re busy as well and sometimes that clarification does get lost in the shuffle. If you have people devoted to fostering this program, fostering the sense of community and the sense of teamwork that I see in this program, then it’s going to definitely restructure things for the better.

A lead teacher BL3 said:

Yes, I think it can affect it because when you look at your administration and then you see the next level, maybe the lead or mentor teachers and then the teachers, there is another level there and the teachers can feel more comfortable. Let’s say a teacher is struggling; they’ve been here two or three years, but they’re still having problems. They see an administrator walk into their classroom, and give them some advice. So will it affect the way the schools are organized? Yes, I think it will eventually do that. The lead/mentor could act as a buffer. At our school last year it was almost the same. All of the teachers, except for maybe two, were department heads on the leadership team, and were not the lead or mentor teachers, so our leadership team was the lead and mentor teachers basically, except for maybe two people. So when I think of it, I think of it as the same basically. We do that informally now, without that name.

An administrator BA1 explained:

I think if the career ladder was going to be implemented and it would stay, whether it was for a three to five year pilot or if it was funded or it was fully implemented, I think this district would be smart to do away with certain terms such as department head, learning community or grade level chair, and senior project sponsor. Those types of positions would need to go away, not so much because it would be confusing, but I think there would be some disparity with who is responsible for what.
Results Question 8. Within this question no clear trend or pattern emerged; although, three of 15 respondents spoke of a possible third tier of leadership that would operate as a liaison between faculty and administration. It was also obvious with those lead or mentor teachers that were interviewed that they were appreciative of the opportunity to serve in these positions and work with staff members as coaches.

Describe your feelings regarding the supplement amounts for lead Teachers, mentor Teachers, and achievement pay.

A lead teacher AL1 recalled:

Personally, I thought the achievement pay was difficult to get. I thought there was a lot of work and you weren’t really a part of anything. Again, it was an individualized situation. That really didn’t appeal to me. I wasn’t interested in it, so I didn’t really research much of it. It appealed to me at first glance, but it was a lot of work for not a lot of money. The mentor and lead pay I thought was very nice. I had no problem staying after and working more, and I felt a responsibility. You’re on a committee, you have a responsibility to go to those meetings, but you don’t have a responsibility to stay after longer. Most teachers stay after, but when you’re getting paid that money I think it fosters a responsibility in you. Teachers don’t get paid for anything extra that they do. I think it was a very nice motivator, but your real motivation is to really want to perform and participate.

A lead teacher AL2 said:

No, I didn’t think it was balanced at all, actually, and only because the mentor teacher not only received more money, but received release time. It was actually not necessarily double the amount, but almost triple the amount of money because now the responsibilities in their classroom were cut tremendously, and they were able to do their mentor work basically during the school day which did not require a lot of outside time. Even their planning time became outside time. They were only planning for a few classes compared to the five classes, whereas lead teachers kept all five classes, received less money, and were required to do more of their work outside of the regular school day. I do think the mentors needed to be paid that much but because they had to request it. I don’t think they needed as high a supplement. Their responsibilities, I thought, were greater and impact could potentially be much greater. I think that if the supplements were
equal and they still had release time it would be fairer. I think there were more problems with the people who were all lead teachers receiving the same amount and not having the same responsibilities.

An administrator AA1 suggested:

I thought it was fair as long as they were willing to do the work and they were given the time to do it. I think in the long run, not in the pilot program, but if it had been a long-term program there would have been a lot of extra work involved.

A lead teacher AL3 said:

I honestly don’t think too many of the teachers got into the program because of the money. I don’t think any of us got into the teaching profession with the expectation that we were going to get rich. I understand that the bonus for the position was the extra pay that you receive, but as for the money I received as a lead teacher, that wasn’t my motivation for being a lead teacher. It’s nice and it’s nice to be recognized and compensated for the extra work that we put in, but I don’t think that was a motivating factor. I’m speaking for us as a group, and I don’t mean to do that, but I don’t think that in many of the cases that it was motivation for lead teachers to be lead teachers or for mentors to be mentors. I think that the mentors probably should have been compensated a little higher only because of the responsibilities that they had to take on. The requirements for the mentor position were a little more rigorous. They had to have a little bit more training in terms of clinical education and being able to relate that knowledge to teachers who needed their help. So, in that respect, I guess the mentors pay structure probably was justified. Again, I don’t think the people who applied to be mentors did that based solely on the extra dollars they that they would earn above a leadership position.

A non-lead or mentor teacher AT1 remarked:

I thought the mentor supplement was amazing. Wasn’t it $8000? Because I think the only person who gets a bigger supplement is a teacher who has National Board certification, and mentors are not National Board Certified teachers. That’s quite an incentive. For lead teachers, was it $5000 or less than $5000? It was $2500 for half a year. Again, I think that is a large sum of money as well. To tell you the truth, to have that kind of money out there as an incentive, yes, it’s a nice thing, but I’m not sure I saw opportunity for enough effort to warrant that kind of money. What I did see was people seeing the dollar signs and presenting themselves in such a way that they could make it attractive for those kinds of position. I think maybe I would have felt better about lesser supplements for the positions because for the mentor teachers for instance, they were teaching
three classes instead of five, having three classes to teach, and a planning period and then two mentor periods to take care of the other responsibilities is a lot of open time. I think having those two extra periods can be considered a form of supplement. Not that it’s time off because it isn’t time off. I know, for the most part, the individuals we had had been working diligently during that time. I think it was a huge leap to take for what I saw being required. With regard to the achievement pay, again that was very attractive, and it was nice to see that if I accomplished the goals on my PDP, then I was going to earn an additional supplement of, I think, $1500 a year, because it was $750 for one semester. But, there again, I don’t think that’s a true reflection of whether or not I accomplished those goals. I think that there’s going to need to be more checks and balances if the program is going to be really effective.

An administrator CA1 explained:

I thought that after we finished the pilot that I would rather have put leads and mentors together and just call them all leads. We had some issues with time for mentors to do their job. They were really reluctant, I thought, to do some of their tasks after school outside their time, and that’s really what they were being paid for. I would like to see, and if the pilot continued to move forward, more out of people by giving them relief time during the day to do those jobs. If they’re going to be leads and mentors and they’re going to be seen as a resource to the faculty, they need to be doing it in the instructional day. We were only given maybe three leads at a time. I’d rather have four or five leads and no mentors and have them do some of those roles to give me enough time to do the real work. In the high school, with all these learning communities, to have one for each learning community with adequate relief time, and a pay scale of $5000 or $8000, I think you’d get people to do that.

A lead teacher CL1 said:

I think that’s where the program got in over its head. I think it was a real financial downfall, to throw the money down the way they did. Just provide a teacher an opportunity to lead, give them the time to do it, and the money is irrelevant to me.

A non-lead or mentor teacher CT1 remarked on the supplement amounts:

I think that the supplement amounts were more than adequate. In fact, in some cases, I think it was too much, but I think the supplement amount was more than adequate. I think that if it were possible to find people who would have been willing to do it for free, if there were that blend where people would do this for free just because they thought it was important, I think that program would have more merit to it, and I don’t know if that’s possible. Some of the other inequities are relative to pay and other issues. I think if a person truly felt that he has something to give back to the system and to the colleagues, then I think those
people would consider it for either free, or for a lot less money than $4000 or whatever it was.

A lead teacher BL1 said:

It’s a lot of work and it’s the kind of work that money doesn’t really pay you for. We have ten periods every day, and we work more than our normal allocated time. Really it was so we wouldn’t appear to not to be doing anything, and we didn’t want to give the program a bad name, so we wanted to make sure that we were covering all the bases, not that I was in the least bit intimidated if somebody would accuse me of doing something wrong. I think it’s fair to do more than I would normally do because I was getting more money. But I think without our normal salary, I know a lot of people would be willing to do that same sort of mentoring because the issue is with the time.

Results Question 9. One of the more consistent patterns that emerged from the responses to question number nine has to do with motivation to pursue these positions. The perception held by four of the lead or mentor respondents was that the motivation to apply and act in these positions had to do more with intrinsic rewards from leading rather than financial gain. Various respondents indicated that the mentors were successful during the pilot because of the fact that they had extra leave time during the day to accomplish their goals. Confusion about the components of the career ladder in terms of the types of supplements one could earn was apparent as five of the fifteen respondents gave answers inconsistent with the supplement schedule provided by the district for the program. Two of three non-lead or mentor interview participants were negative toward the amount of money paid within the pilot.

(Teacher) If the Career Ladder Program were permanently implemented, would you choose to participate? Why or why not?

A lead teacher AL1 concluded:
Yes, I would definitely. I would participate because it is a great experience. It made you a part of a bigger picture, and I like that. I don’t want to be stuck in my room. I want to be a part of the bigger picture. I want to see what’s going on. I want to know what the issues are everywhere in the school, whether it’s ESE, regular education, testing or whatever the issues are.

A lead teacher AL2 said:

It would depend on how specific the structure was and the vision of those people at the leadership group. What impact would they have on student performance?

A lead teacher AL3 stated:

I would definitely choose to participate only because I think it provides a sense of worth that you don’t necessarily experience all the time as solely a classroom teacher. There’s an element of responsibility that you gain from these positions, and an element of pride that you get out of seeing a program put in place that you worked on and seeing students’ success because of that program. Those are the kinds of rewards that teachers are looking for.

A non-lead or mentor teacher AT1 confirmed:

Yes, I would choose to participate, maybe because I feel so strongly that new teachers and veteran teachers need to have that support. It’s essential. This job is not getting easier. It’s getting more difficult simply because the population that we teach is finding it less and less necessary to demonstrate respect and submit to the authority that’s placed over them and so on.

A lead teacher CL1 verified:

I would absolutely participate because it enhanced my performance as a teacher, and I think I had an impact on the school. I would love to do it again. I enjoyed it. I thought it was the best of all worlds. Being with the administrator, working longer, and working into the summers and all of that to me doesn’t excite me because I like to be in the classroom, and I like my professional life the way it exists. I wouldn’t want to lose that interaction I had with the students. In this capacity, as a mentor, I had the classroom part of it, which was huge for me. I didn’t want to be out of classroom, but I also had a little taste of administrative life. I had a lot of programs I had to create on the computer, and had time to think and manage my day in a totally different way. It really was an awakening for me that there’s so many good things that were happening in this building that I would not have been aware of otherwise.
A lead teacher CL2 stated:

If we had it re-implemented, I would definitely want to participate. I felt very good about it. It infused me with a new excitement that I hadn’t felt in a while, and I enjoy teaching. I tell my students I enjoy teaching and I’m a lucky person to have found a career that I like. I like being around young people, even if I’m not making the kind of income that somebody else might make with the amount of education I have completed. It’s nice to know that every day is a new and exciting day. You never know what to expect day after day in education, but I do enjoy working with peers and making a difference in education in my own school as well as feeling that I’m contributing in a valid way.

A lead teacher CL3 hesitantly said:

I would have to look at that very carefully. I’m a teacher. I like to think that I’m a good one, but I’m a teacher. To teach teachers is something that I would like to do if for no other reason than I think that I have some things that I can give them that can help them help kids. If a program came into effect, and I felt that I could make a contribution without taking myself completely out of the classroom, I would be interested. It would almost have to depend on how the program was put together. Whether I would apply for a position would depend a great deal on what the expectations were, what the time constraints were, and what the goal was for the program. One of the reasons that I got involved in this last one is that I wasn’t totally convinced it was the perfect model, but my concern was that if it continued another semester, the model would be modified and I hoped to have some input into doing that. I would probably have to look at it very, very carefully.

A lead teacher BL1 explained:

Yes, I would choose to participate because I’m arrogant and like to believe I can make a difference. It is kind of an ego boost when you realize that your years of experience actually can give you that collection of suggestions that you can offer to somebody else. It is a wonderful thing that it’s something you can realize about yourself, but also that you can provide that, which doesn’t seem to be difficult, assistance to somebody else.

A lead teacher BL2 verified:

I would do it. I would do it again. I thought that it was very positive. I learned a lot and the money was great. I really felt like I earned the money as well.

A lead teacher BL3 stated:
Yes I would. I had a good experience with it. I feel what I did in that program really did make a difference and it changed me.

Results question 10. Of the 12 teachers that responded to question number ten, nine said that they would welcome the opportunity to participate in the Career Ladder Program. Many were exited about the program and the impact a team of teachers (lead and mentor teachers) could have on a school. Enhanced teacher and student performance was frequently mentioned as a potential outcome. Only one teacher (a non-lead or mentor teacher) indicated that he would choose not to participate. Two respondents said that their participation would depend on how the program was organized.

(Administrator) If the Career Ladder Program were permanently implemented in the district, what changes would you make given the opportunity?

An administrator AA1 suggested:

I think that you’d be giving them a lot more responsibility, both the mentor and the lead, at our school anyway. If you’re getting this extra money, you definitely need to be doing something to get that money.

An administrator CA1 recalled:

I mentioned this a little bit before, but the selection committee I think is a good idea. School is extremely time intensive, so finding somebody not so involved is significant. The second round, when we had to get staff to serve on a committee, we didn’t have a whole lot of volunteers because they saw in the first go around how much time it took. For the selection committee, their time commitment has to be a little bit less. They were doing this for no money. They were selected by the faculty to serve on that committee. Their time commitment came into question. The other area you’ve got to continue to look at is the criteria by which you select leads and mentors in the initial screening process in order to make sure you don’t exclude real quality people. That may be like coming up with that other category. The perceived ability to lead or contribute to the school affect some of those other things.

An administrator BA1 stated:
I would have, out of all sixteen people, lead and mentor teachers all with the same stipend in a school. I would have the mentor teachers still teaching three classes. Of those three classes, I don’t know if it was required, but we had all of our mentor teachers teaching one lower level class of the three. I would really strongly look for people that would want to do that again. One of the requirements to be a lead teacher would be to teach one lower level class because I think those are your, again, department heads and best teachers. Not your best teachers per se, but your experienced teachers. The reason they’re department heads is because they’re respected leaders and they’re disciplined. Generally they determine what everybody in the department has to say and what everybody in the department is going to teach; and, everyone in the department looks to them for advice and for direction, and I think having them teach one class of lower level kids too would help school grades, AYP status, and everything if that was happening.

*Results Question 11.* All three administrators had different perceptions of what changes they would make to the Career Ladder Program. This difference may be a result of the fact that each of these administrators had a different experience at their respective schools and therefore identified various issues to be addressed.

*Follow-up Interviews*

The following results were collected in the fall of 2005. They are an effort to collect any residual data from the Career Ladder Program from teachers and administrators that had previously been interviewed in the initial post program set of interviews.

*Are there behaviors or approaches that have changed in your classroom, from planning to daily instruction, that have come about because of your experience in the pilot program?*

An administrator AA1 explained:

Here, at Mitchell, there’s been a lot of residual effects I think from some of the mentor programs. We have a lot of teachers, first year teachers, that we let
go into other peoples classrooms, more specifically the model classrooms that a
group of teachers have come up with through our staff development.

A lead teacher CL1 remembered:

I think one of the best attributes of the program from my point of view
was the ability to get into other classrooms, to witness other teachers, and to
witness the learning environments in their classrooms. I think that had an impact
on me because you should be self-reflective if you go through that process.

A lead teacher BL3 suggested:

Yes, I feel that some of the behaviors that I’ve changed are that I critically
look at how I approach certain areas of instruction. After being in other teacher’s
classrooms, I’ve either wanted to adopt those things in my classroom, or I wanted
to get rid of them if I saw them in myself.

An administrator BAI confirmed:

For me personally, as an administrator, what I found was that the lead or
mentor teachers were for the most part the best teachers on my staff. So,
instructionally, they already run a great classroom, they already do outstanding
things with kids, they already do things that lend itself to being successful because
they use a lot of best practices.

Results Question 2. Five of nine respondents said that they did not feel that there
were any significant changes that had resulted from their experience in the pilot. Two of
those were administrators.

Has your attitude or perspective toward the teacher and his or her role in the school been
modified or changed because of the pilot?

An administrator AA1 stated:

Oh, definitely. I think that we are no longer as isolated as we used to be. I
think that people are looking for other people to help mentor.

A lead teacher AL1 explained:
I think it has allowed me to see what really is the way we should be going is to get teachers involved in the running of the school and the helping each other and mentoring as far as sharing of ideas because they typically won’t do that on their own.

A lead teacher AL2 said:

I feel that there is a great need for mentor teachers in the roles and responsibilities that we discussed. They’re just not interested.

A lead teacher CL1 explained:

If anything, I think it’s been reinforced that the teachers in the school need to be directly related in problem solving, policy implementation, hands on best practices when it comes to teaching methods and such.

A lead teacher CL3 stated:

The only the thing that bothered me about the pilot and the role of the teacher is that there were times, and I saw this or felt this in the training as well, that the concept of best practices, which I understand and I believe in, was being trivialized to being nothing more than a skill.

A lead teacher BA1 recalled:

It gave me another outlook or another perspective on them as instructional leaders, what they bring to the school, what they bring to students, how strong many of them are in terms of curriculum development, and alignment of their curriculum if they were department heads. I thought information like that was valuable.

Results Question 3. Seven of the nine respondents recognized role differences as a result of the pilot. They described mentorship type relationships that were evident through one-on-one and group sharing activities.

Has the pilot program had any impact on the culture of your school?

An administrator AA1 remembered:

Oh, again yes.
A lead teacher AL2 stated:

That’s hard to answer. I would say no, but only because we’ve had such growth and turnover that I don’t know that enough of the people who were even present that spring are here anymore. I would think, in a school where you didn’t have a lot of change in faculty, there would have been some effects. These would probably be some negative effects that lingered on at that time.

An administrator CA1 recalled:

It had somewhat of a positive impact in that some of the people who had not ever taken on a leadership role were now applying for and taking on a leadership role. That was very surprising to some peers, and they rejuvenated some of them. On the other hand, it had a very negative impact when people weren’t chosen because of the rubrics that were used. We had, in particular, one teacher who got very angry because he wasn’t chosen. He ended up resigning from all of his club sponsorships and his leadership roles. He stopped doing everything that he was doing for the school and ended up eventually leaving the school to go somewhere else because he was not chosen for a position in the pilot program. It was strictly due to the way the rubric was written that he was not chosen, and the way the state chose who could participate in the pilot program had nothing to do with what was happening here at the school level. He got so upset about it that he chose to retaliate, I guess, against the school. And, his negativity ran rampant through the school and caused a lot of problems. In a negative way, it probably had a larger impact on the school.

A lead teacher CL3 explained:

There were people who definitely carried the title with them as a badge, “I’m a mentor teacher.” I thought that had some negative impact on the school.

A lead teacher BL2 said:

I think some people were resentful toward not being chosen to be a lead or mentor teacher. I think there was resentment. We’ve got other things to worry about now. I would say that’s gone, but at the beginning it was like that.

A lead teacher BL3 recalled:

I think initially it did. Now that we haven’t had it for a year, people forget. I know that the teachers that I mentored are so appreciative. We talk about the things that we did. As an entire school, our school has changed. We have so many new people that weren’t here for the pilot.

An administrator BA1 confirmed:
I think absolutely. There were three or four people who applied that did not get a position. Two applied for mentor and lead positions and did not get the mentor positions but got lead positions. I believe four people applied to be lead teachers that did not make the cutoff. When it came down to it, when we had only had X number of positions, we didn’t consider them, we took them out of the running for the positions. So, I think there was a little animosity, a little underlying animosity with some of the staff, especially the ones who didn’t get a position. I think some of the people didn’t apply for certain positions, especially the mentor position. We had some teachers that would have been dynamite mentors. We had good ones doing the pilot, but we had a couple of others that would have been dynamite but didn’t apply because of some of the restrictions or some of the requirements, like clinical education training. Some of the things that they needed to have that they didn’t.

Results Question 4. Six of nine respondents said that they felt that the Career Ladder Program had an effect on the culture of their school. Four of those felt that, especially at the inception of the program, there was resentment on the part of certain individuals because of the fact that they did not make the pool through application, nor were they assigned a role of lead or mentor during the pilot. It is important to note that many respondents mentioned that with so many personnel changes since the pilot, many teachers were not aware of the program, so any residual effects are not being felt.

Are there any programs, committees, procedures, activities, etc. that can be directly attributed to the pilot as a “spring board”?

An administrator AA1 reported:

Oh, definitely. Again, like I said, we do the “lunch and learns.” I would even say the walk-throughs are kind of a side kick to that, and we also have a mentor program where teachers go into the other classrooms. We actually have a new teacher program. Then we have committees that are involved in organizing those programs and running those programs.

A lead teacher AL2 explained:
The only one that probably is somewhat in place would be the mentoring piece. I would say that the mentor’s role, because there were so few, had a more defined role or responsibilities during the spring that allowed the school to understand and appreciate the importance of mentoring. So I think that there has been an effort to keep those things in place.

An administrator CA1 remarked:

There were a couple of long planning days where the lead and mentor teachers were actually allowed to have pool days for planning, and they were actually working on integrated learning community units and a ninth grade mentoring program to try to help our ninth graders have and find more success. We are still doing the learning community units to a certain extent. We’re moving forward with some of that with our movie nights and our fine arts learning community and we did move forward with some learning community surveys as well as the videos that we’re doing this year for the marketing of the learning communities. This all came out of one of those work days with the lead teachers. With the ninth grade mentoring, we have been sort of on hold now for a year or so, but we have come back around to trying to put that in place. We’re going back to the work that they did and using that as sort of a springboard or a guide so there were some good things that came out of the work that they did.

A lead teacher CL3 stated:

The one thing that I’ve noticed is I’ve seen a carry-over from some of the lead/mentor staff to the program where you work with a beginning teacher, the clinical education. I’ve seen where some of that has made that program a little more structured.

A lead teacher BL2 said:

Just within my own department, I know we talk a lot about placement. I can’t think of anything else that still exists because of that.

A lead teacher BL3 explained:

One of the things that I saw this year is that you have a teacher that is overseeing mentor teachers. I think that’s probably very beneficial. In the long run, somebody can keep track rather than an assistant principal trying with everything that they have to do.
Results Question 5. In the responses to item number five, seven of nine could give at least one example of a component of their school program that may be a direct result of the Career Ladder Program. Staff development, coaching, and mentoring were some of the more frequently mentioned activities connected to the program instituted in the spring of 2004.

Did the fact that the career ladder was discontinued for lack of financial support after the spring of 2004 have negative or positive implications for your school?

An administrator AA1 declared:

Definitely no positives, but you’ll see teachers are willing to work if they think other people are being rewarded and not necessarily monetarily. If they themselves are being rewarded by helping someone else, they seem to do it. Do I, as a professional in administration, think it’s a negative? I think it’s very negative. I think that they should be rewarded monetarily for their efforts because we have some teachers that really put in a lot of time and effort. They’re the cream of the crop. They’re willing to do what they need to do to have consistency, and that means to share.

A lead teacher AL1 explained:

I think initially it had negative implications because we had raw feelings for people that didn’t make it. I think you’re always going to have that with anything. People are upset that they don’t make the cut. But, since then, I don’t hear any negative anymore. I think people have forgotten about it, but I do hear people talk about it in a positive way saying, “Yes, that was really a good thing and I wish that we’d continued that.” I think that people that were involved with it really enjoyed their role, and I think that they really felt like they were doing something to promote a whole school leadership atmosphere.

A lead teacher AL2 stated:

I would say negative. I think it was negative because it’s just a frustrating piece, that another something that was started and then stopped. We were never given enough time to see if it could really work or be effective. Of all programs, I thought that one had a lot of merit and a lot of value and that if given two to three years to work, could have really changed the school. It could have really changed
how schools work. It just wasn’t given the time. I think because of that and things that have come up since then, the reading initiative and anything else, people don’t want to give it the chance.

An administrator CA1 confirmed:

Yes, because the ninth grade mentoring was a great program if it could have continued. If the program career ladder provider had continued with financial support with the ninth grade mentoring program, it would have started two years ago and we would have been in better shape than we are right now with the ninth graders. With the new teacher orientation, that part of the mentoring role for our mentor teachers and our classroom teachers who just need a little bit of extra help along the way, an assistant principal has had to take over that role and our teacher leaders are probably not growing as fast as we would like for them to grow. That put more of a responsibility back onto the administration instead of putting it out there with teachers teaching teachers and helping teachers. If the financial support had continued, we would have been able to run that program as an after school type activity. The lack of financial support is a big negative.

A lead teacher CL1 said:

The fact that it discontinued bothered me in the way that I felt we were making real change happen in the building. Without that program, I don’t know that this change can happen. With seventeen hundred kids in this building and four administrators, you can’t expect four people to run a building of that size. It’s just a ludicrous idea in my mind. So there has to be an avenue, a forum, or a program where teachers can be more directly involved with change, enforcement, discipline, attendance, programs, or anything. I thought this program was good for that.

A lead teacher BL2 stated:

I personally liked it because I liked what I was doing, and I liked the extra money. Like I said, it makes for people to be resentful if they’re not chosen for it. I think I would have liked to continue to be involved in the scheduling part of it, so stopping it was kind of a negative thing. I don’t like it when there’s animosity among the different teachers.

An administrator BA1 recalled:

If it was funded, used right, and the administrative team really understood how important it was, I think that it could be an outstanding program if it’s run correctly through the leadership of a school administration and a school leadership team. Now negatively, I think three or four of those folks just skated, collected a supplement, did very little work, and the accountability I think comes into question. As the assistant principal at that school doing forty different
responsibleities, I relied on them to document and log their activity to justify their supplement.

Results Question 6. Six of nine respondents said that the discontinuation of the career ladder for financial reasons had a negative impact on their school. Each respondent was positive about the attributes of this program and its prospects for the future. It is evident throughout the answers to this item that there was positive thought and planning occurring at all three schools. However, it seems that any ideas that began to unfold as the program was put in place quickly began to lose momentum by the end.

Selection Committee Interviews

In an effort to uncover the richest data available, the researcher also had extensive conversations with a member of the selection committee at each of the three target schools in which the interviews took place. The purpose of these conversations was to determine whether a difference existed between perspectives of those interviewed and another group of teachers that had a role prior to the pilot’s inception. The conversations were anonymous and informal. The principal or other administrator at each site gave selection team participant’s names, and each was approached during their planning time after school. The conversations focused on two issues primarily. First, each teacher was asked about their feelings regarding the selection process to get teachers into the lead or mentor positions. Second, they were asked whether being on the selection team had an effect on them and their colleagues.

In each conversation, the teacher felt that the process was very fair, and that the district and school had made every effort to create a high level of awareness in a very short time. Each felt that the school administration had worked hard to make sure all staff
understood the roles and requirements of the Career Ladder Program, along with how it would impact the school. Two of the three teachers talked about how more time to implement the program would have been helpful, but they understood that the pilot was set up for that purpose.

In terms of the selection committee appointment having an impact on their lives or those of their colleagues, the responses were consistently the same. Each teacher felt that the fact that the staff of the school was responsible for placing them on the committee through a balloting process minimized any negative effect it may have had on them or their colleagues. Each teacher also mentioned the initial skepticism and animosity toward the career ladder prior and during inception. They felt that even though some of those feelings were brought on by the fact that they did not get into the pool for selection, for the most part, they did not feel that it was directed toward them in any way.

*Summary of Responses to Research Questions*

The results of the analysis will be discussed as they relate to the six research questions. Recurring themes and emerging patterns that are identified in the data from all four phases of the study will be presented following the research question that it supports.

*Research Question 1. What planning activities were perceived to have taken place by participants after the pilot program was over?*

- There is no evidence that before the plan was developed the staff at any school impacted by the Career Ladder Program was included in any planning activities.
• As part of the career ladder implementation plan, an ongoing comprehensive staff development was utilized to provide support for site-based staff members working with faculties during the pilot.

• Archival documents, survey, and interview data indicate that the pilot was a process that was being funded to prepare the district for a state initiative that was to begin in the fall of 2004. However, funding for the program was cut in the summer by the state legislature; therefore, the program was not implemented.

• Various activities, just prior and then during the semester of implementation, introduced employees to the goals of this program and how they aligned with the district vision.

• At different points throughout the implementation process, various activities were planned to insure confidence within each staff that decisions related to this program were being made fairly.

Research Question 2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

• District survey results indicate that district employees were knowledgeable of state guidelines for implementation of the BEST program.

• Although each staff member at each district school was given the opportunity to learn the different components of the Career Ladder Program, many respondents to the interviews did not believe that there was an effort to reward teachers for student performance but were mostly unaware of the
achievement pay component and how it was tied to the Professional Development Plan.

Research Question 3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

- A short timeline for implementation did not provide the district with adequate time to develop awareness levels that would provide adequate organizational trust.
- Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated in district surveys that they were dissatisfied with the Career Ladder Program. However, forty-five percent said that the career ladder had the potential to be a good program.
- Over two thirds of respondents to the interviews indicated that they felt that colleagues were dissatisfied with the program because they were not selected for a lead or mentor position at a school.
- All but one respondent to the interviews said that this program was beneficial to them or a colleague.
- Two out of three non-lead/mentor teachers interviewed indicated that they were dissatisfied with the financial stipends provided for lead or mentor staff during the pilot.
- Of all respondents, only one non-lead/mentor teacher said that he would not be interested in participating in this program if it were to continue.
Research Question 4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

- In the course of one semester, over fifty percent of respondents indicated that they had the opportunity to work with lead or mentor teachers. Well over that number believed that they had benefited other teachers within the school. About half said that programs within schools had been enhanced by the pilot program.

- Achievement pay, that portion of the incentive pay schedule received for reaching annual goals, was indicated by respondents as that which had the most potential for benefit for schools overall. Other potential areas of benefit observed in the survey results were opportunities for advancement, curriculum assistance from lead teachers, mentor teachers having increased time to work with staff, and colleagues trained and paid to assist others with individual needs.

- According to respondents in the interview phase of this study, the pilot work was not going to have a long-term impact on a specific program at any of the target schools. Although, in the follow-up interviews, mentoring and coaching forms of staff development were mentioned as a possible focus for change as a result of the pilot.

- All respondents to the interviews felt that the Career Ladder Program could have a positive long-term impact on their school. Most of them mentioned the collegiality aspects of such a program for the benefit of the school as a whole.
• All administrators interviewed said that if they could they would change something about the program and, in each case, it was different.

• All selection committee members interviewed were very positive about the selection process and felt no animosity from the staff at the school in which they worked.

Research Question 5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed for teachers as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

• Teachers leading teachers, though a primary purpose of the Better Educated Students and Teachers, was not a frequently observed behavior during the pilot according to respondents. However, mentor teachers at each site were observed leading other staff.

• Most respondents to the interviews did not perceive any changes in behavior as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program.

• Respondents described collegiality in the form of coaching relationships and sharing activities that seem to have been more prevalent during and since the program was in place.

Research Question 6. What were the perceived residual effects among respondents, positive or negative, regarding the Career Ladder Pilot Program after termination by the Florida legislature?

• All but two of the respondents to a follow-up interview recognized role differences as a result of the pilot.
• Most respondents perceive an effort to develop mentor/coaching relationships. These are mostly seen between new teachers and a veteran mentor that has been assigned.

• Two-thirds of respondents to the follow-up interviews felt that the Career Ladder Program had an effect on the culture of their school. In most cases, this was felt early on as teachers were frustrated with the process and upset that they were not assigned a role as a lead or mentor teacher.

• Many respondents felt that with so many new staff and changes in leadership throughout the district and individual schools, many had forgotten or are unaware the program was ever in place.

• Six of nine respondents to the follow-up interviews said that the fact that the funding for this program was cut by the Florida legislature had a negative impact on their school.

Summary

In the fourth chapter, data in the forms of archival documents, results from a district-wide survey, and two sets of interview data were analyzed for trends and emergent patterns. The results are described within each data set separately with a summary at the end of each type, category, or question. At the conclusion of the chapter, data were then aligned with the purpose of the study by separating out findings according to each of the six research questions.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to examine the planning, processes, and implications of a pilot career ladder compensation system implemented in the spring of 2004 in a large Florida school district. As changes in legislation essentially discontinued funding for the BEST program statewide, a second purpose surfaced. This purpose was to describe the residual impact a program can have after it is terminated prematurely.

This study was designed to collect various types of data in the forms of archival documents, survey results, and two sets of interviews used to answer six research questions. The research questions created for this study are as follows:

1. What research-based planning activities took place prior to the implementation of the Career Ladder Program?

2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?
4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed for teachers as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

6. What were the perceived residual effects, positive or negative, among respondents regarding the Career Ladder Program after termination by the Florida legislature?

The study was designed in phases, according to data types, in order to examine the implementation by collecting data from prior to, during, and at the conclusion of the pilot program. In the first phase, data was collected from the district office in the form of archival documents from the chairperson of the district career ladder committee in the fall of 2003. Meeting minutes, presentation materials, research collections, and the original grant application were all used to determine which research-based strategies were used in the implementation process.

In the second phase, a post-implementation survey was developed to help move the Career Ladder Program forward as the district prepared for the first full year of implementation. Two thousand one hundred and thirty five instructional personnel out of four thousand five hundred and sixty nine (46.7 percent) from fifty-eight schools and technical centers in the county responded to the survey. The survey instrument (see Appendix B) was designed to analyze the specifications of the program determined by the state of Florida.
In the last two phases of the study, a structured interview method was used to collect data in three secondary schools across the district in the fall of 2004. Various types of teachers and administrators were interviewed using a structured interview guide developed by the researcher. Five volunteer participants were interviewed at each site in the fall of 2004. As a follow-up, three of the five participants from the first set of interviews were asked to volunteer for the second set of interviews. All interview data were recorded, coded, and synthesized to address the research questions. Recursive themes and emerging patterns were identified by the researcher through analysis of the data collected during this phase of the study. The themes identified by the researcher were validated by four independent readers with experience in the collection and analysis of qualitative data.

Findings

The following section describes the findings from data analysis completed for all data sets collected for this case study. This study was designed to be ethnographic as analysis was performed throughout the study and not just after the data collection period was complete. Therefore, although the research questions have primary sources of data that they draw from, there is significant overlap between data sources and research questions in terms of findings. The findings are organized across data sets by research question.

1. What research-based planning activities took place prior to the implementation of the Career Ladder Program?

Throughout the data, it is evident that the short timeline for implementation had a negative impact on understanding and buy-in for
participants in the pilot program. The process lacked documentation of any inclusive events in the planning stages designed to acknowledge the input of various stakeholders in the program. Within the survey and interview data, this conclusion is supported by respondents’ uneasiness about the short timeline, distrust for implementation procedures, and disappointment in the fact that the legislature had discontinued the program for financial reasons. These perceptions could be the result of the fact that district planners did not utilize school-based staff to implement the pilot. However, the fact that data were collected by the district in the form of surveys after the pilot as well as the idea that there were planning events scheduled for the future, shows that plans were being made for the following school year until there was communication about its termination from the state. Therefore, a major finding as a result of this study is that there may not have been adequate time prior to the beginning of the pilot to involve all stake-holders in the development of the implementation plan because of the short timeline set by the state legislature. This may have influenced some of the responses made in a negative way.

2. What knowledge levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

There is significant support both in the survey and interview data collected and used in the design of this case study to conclude that participants were knowledgeable about certain aspects of the Career Ladder Program. In terms of the process district and school-based administrators were going to utilize, there clearly is evidence that
participants were very aware of the process and how teachers were selected for the pools and then chosen for school-based roles. There was, however, confusion about the specific roles and responsibilities the lead or mentor teachers were to assume after they were placed in positions. There was a sense of distrust and disillusionment heard in comments by respondents as they talked of possible termination by the Florida legislature.

Administrators were given the flexibility to hire within the allocations assigned to their school and build a team that would meet the needs of that school. Unfortunately, respondents described their experience as inconsistent and without specific goals that groups were to be working toward. Initial motivations waned and, specifically, the lead teachers had no real guidance, although they had plenty of innovation in mind and were excited about the prospects of implementing them. This was probably because administrators were given direction on implementation processes, but no real guidance was given on what to do after staff members were assigned roles.

3. What satisfaction levels exist about the Career Ladder Program among participants in the pilot?

A sense of frustration and distrust was evident in responses that highlighted the implications this program had on the culture of schools. This perception was captured as respondents recalled staff members’ remarks when they were not selected for pools or were chosen for the pools and not for positions. Staff members openly discussed their dislike for the program and process as they thought it was unfair. Outside the lead and mentor groups, there was concern over the size and differentiation of the monetary supplements awarded to teachers assigned roles.
Clearly, there is evidence across the data that respondents saw a benefit to both short and long-term colleagues, especially when it came to new teachers. In the limited time the pilot was in place, teachers were given the opportunity to work on school-wide initiatives or problems. In many cases, these efforts were determined by the lead and mentor teacher groups. The lead and mentor teachers were satisfied to be involved in this site-based management opportunity.

4. What were the perceptions among representative groups regarding implications of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

In the short time the career ladder was in place, respondents indicated that they had the opportunity to work with staff in a one-on-one basis or in a group setting during the pilot. However, respondents were not able to give significant examples of programs that would be impacted positively or negatively by the career ladder. The exception to this statement would be the practice of collegial coaching and mentoring that was observed during the pilot. Many indicated that the mentoring component of this initiative would have the most potential merit and long-term impact.

In responses to the survey, when given a choice, achievement pay was the one component of the Career Ladder Program that respondents thought would have the most potential for benefit. This is the $750 supplement attached to the successful fulfillment of teachers’ Professional Development Plan. This is interesting as this component of the career ladder compensation amounts (see Appendix I) was available to all teachers and the process for determining eligibility was more unclear than any other component of the Career Ladder Program.
5. What behaviors were perceived to have changed for teachers as a result of the Career Ladder Pilot Program?

Consistently, respondents were unable to identify any behaviors that changed because of the career ladder implementation. Interestingly, collegial activities that were already in place before the career ladder began expanded during implementation and after the program was terminated. Coaching and sharing opportunities have become priorities, and many respondents believe that this is a result of the pilot experience. Many respondents remarked that the lead teachers were not as active as the mentor teachers whose primary role in most schools was the coaching of new staff.

6. What were the perceived residual effects, positive or negative, among respondents regarding the Career Ladder Pilot Program after termination by the Florida legislature?

As earlier stated, many staff members were frustrated early in the implementation process because they were not selected for the lead or mentor position pools. Teachers felt that they were competing for positions and, when they were not selected, spoke openly about their displeasure with a process they deemed unfair. These discussions did damage to the culture of schools. Time and teacher turnover have been able to overcome the negative impact this program had on each school’s culture. With new legislation (Special Teachers Are Rewarded), these feelings could surface again, deterring the new program’s implementation and limiting its success.

It is worth mentioning again that collegial mentoring and coaching initiatives for new teachers were described as an ongoing example of a residual effect the career ladder may have had on schools. As teacher development and retention have become a priority,
schools have continued to utilize some of the best practices put in place during the career ladder to better support teachers.

Conclusions

Within the data, several major trends arise. First, there is overwhelming evidence that the opportunity to utilize teachers as mentors for other teachers, especially new teachers, was a great benefit to schools. Keys to this success were that these teachers were chosen for their skills as master teachers, and the fact that they had an extra two periods of leave time a day to work with staff. School administrators, lead and mentor teachers, and non-lead and mentor teachers all recognized the value of these educators sharing their expertise in an ongoing, embedded staff development structure.

Second, the entire program was put together according to strict time constraints mandated by the state. The district was responsible for developing a plan for implementation that had to be approved by the teachers’ union. This short timeline made it impossible for district planners to involve stakeholders and, therefore, lacked the buy-in and ownership necessary for successful school reform.

Last, throughout this process, there seemed to be a feeling that disappointment was never far away. Educators have seen numerous initiatives start and end, mostly without positive results. The position of most respondents was positive, but they were always able to find shortcomings in the process or in the fact that this was another mandated program mishandled because it was not given the time to properly develop. This feeling of betrayal between teachers and legislature is commonplace and will be a barrier to successful implementation the next time a pay for performance initiative is attempted.
Additionally, there was a negative reaction to the program because it is impossible to link the performance of teacher performance to student achievement.

**Implications for Practitioners**

Results of the data collected for this study indicate that district planners responsible for the implementation of the career ladder tried to make sure that all staff involved in this program had an awareness of all of its components. Unfortunately, both teachers and administrators realized in the process that the state-mandated short timeline for implementation may have had a negative impact on the program in terms of the perspective. Documents from implementation planning, along with survey and interview results, indicate that there was a lack of employee participation in the process causing a feeling of dissatisfaction among some employees (Lawler, 1991).

A reoccurring theme throughout the data was a perceived disconnect between their own performance and the performance measures used to determine success. Lawler (1987) stated that organizations generally fail to create a perceived relationship between pay and performance. Time constraints limited the amount of time district leaders were able to spend developing awareness within the district staff causing frustration. Along these same lines, the time limit also left employees feeling that there was a rift between the goals and values of the employees and the supervisors.

When it comes to the successes of the program, the data suggest that one of the most widely recognized attributes of the career ladder in the short or long-term periods was the opportunity it gave teachers to share expertise. Numerous examples were given throughout the data indicating that mentor and lead teachers were given opportunities to
support staff by sharing their knowledge of the classroom in various ways. New teacher orientation, observations, meeting facilitation, professional learning communities, and staff development were all mentioned as successful practices that teachers and administrators recognized as having the most long-term impact of this program.

One additional implication for practitioners to consider from the results of this study is the fact that the negative perception of the program will need to be overcome before any subsequent innovation of this type is implemented. Along with that, variations of this program in the future may not have the same components as this one, changing the perception of those effected. It will be important to remember that the perceptions of this program may shape future incentive plan implementations.

*Implications for Policymakers*

Funding a program of this magnitude is very expensive. At this time, there are other major funding issues facing the legislature including class size. Unless funds are specifically earmarked for career ladder, school districts cannot meet the fiscal demands of the constitutional requirements of class size, continue to make progress toward adequately compensating all school district employees, and the funding of the career ladder. According to Odden (1995), adequate funding is one of ten key process principles that must be adhered to when implementing a pay for performance program.

If legislators want these programs to be profitable, they must recognize the fact that wages, hours, terms, performance evaluation and conditions of employment are proper subjects for bargaining. The fact that legislators put in place such restrictive policy with such a tight timeline attached to the grant funds is evidence that they overlooked the
research and what it says about employee perceptions for pay for performance implementation and school reform in general. It is imperative that local and state policymakers understand these issues and develop legislation that follows the guidelines set forth by the literature.

*Implications for Research*

The research on pay for performance initiatives for education is recent. In 1984, Tennessee became the first state to establish a statewide career ladder program, and a number of states followed suit by creating similar career ladder or performance pay programs over the next eight years. Each of these programs has different components depending on state or local involvement. The short-term results of pay for performance in education have been met with limited success nationwide. These efforts have developed with skepticism, and they have become very controversial, especially with teacher union organizations. During the 1990s, the number of states enacting career ladders peaked, but many of these programs have languished or disappeared over the next decade. Now, with renewed interest in teacher career ladders, the results of this study are very important.

Studying an initiative of this magnitude is probably best accomplished by utilizing an ethnographic research style that typically analyzes data throughout the study rather than just after the data is collected. The overall format and organizational design could be used effectively to study pay for performance initiatives in any school or district in the future.

The results of this study are important to research because the trends and patterns that have developed will enable future researchers to focus their study on those
components of concern to respondents. The one area that this study has touched on, but obviously could be explored at a deeper level, would be the impact on a district when an initiative is terminated without warning. Pay for performance is and will be controversial for times to come, but probably even more frustrating to educators is the lack of consideration planners at the state level have when they create mandates, and once the effort and emotion is done by practitioners, funding is cut.

Discussion

Across the nation, a desire to ensure that all children learn and achieve now poses a fundamental challenge to every component of American education. Policymakers and educators are searching for better ways to provide students with the knowledge and skills that they will need to function effectively as citizens and workers in a future society that will be increasingly complex and globally interconnected. However, reformers have come to realize that more challenging standards and assessments are not enough to raise student achievement. Improving curriculum, better-trained educators and changes in the organization and management of schools are also necessary to facilitate education reform (Odden, 1995).

Though the dramatic effects that teachers have on student achievement are indisputable, the exact ingredients of effective teaching are anything but settled. Questions about how to value experience, education, certification, and pedagogical skills have created one of the most highly contentious fields of inquiry in education, particularly since they have clear implications for the design of teacher compensation systems. Today, most teachers’ salaries are distributed according to fixed salary schedules that consider only a teacher's education and years of experience. This system
has its origins in the first half of the 20th century and was partly a response to the racial and gender discrimination that existed under more discretionary systems at that time. Therefore, over the past 20 years, more educators have wondered whether such pay packages can attract, motivate, and retain high-quality teachers in a highly competitive professional world. Critics of merit pay argue that the fall off in such programs was due to the fundamental technical difficulties of accurately identifying effective teachers and rewarding good teaching practices. Those opposed to this type of program also insist that pay for performance plans will be unsuccessful as they lack the ability to overcome the morale and fairness issues that have been present when these incentive plans are implemented.

Proponents of performance-based pay insist that these experiments were too limited in scope and were destined to fail in the face of stiff opposition from teachers and unions. The controversy will not end unless educators take the time to look at research like that documented in the case study so that systems meet the needs of our students within a framework that all stakeholders are comfortable.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the archival documents, survey data, and interview results the following recommendations seem appropriate for further research:

• Expand the study by adding elementary staffs to the interview process. Data could be analyzed for trends and patterns. Focus study on differences between secondary and elementary results in terms of residual impact from career ladder.
• Use the same study design to explore new teacher pay for performance programs to be implemented within the next year or so.

• Collect data from other districts that received BEST grants within the state. Compare results in those districts to that of the target district in this study.

• One of the more prominent findings of this study was the focus placed on mentorship and coaching in a collegial setting. Has this emphasis on mentoring changed the professional experience of new staff?

Further investigation will strengthen the findings of this study and continue to develop an understanding of pay for performance implementation.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A. Interview Guide

Career Ladder Implementation Interview Protocol

Interview number:

School:

Current Position (include whether you were a lead or mentor Teacher):

Years in Education:

1. Describe how the lead and mentor teachers were organized at your school? What tasks or projects were targeted for them to complete during the pilot? Were there any action plans constructed for the upcoming school year?

2. What was the overall reception to working with the lead/mentor teachers at your school by the faculty and staff?

3. Do you believe that lead/mentor program has benefited you or other individuals at your school? Explain.

4. Do you believe the lead/mentor teachers have enhanced programs at your school? Can you give an example?

5. Specifically, how were the lead/mentor teachers at your school given the opportunity to lead teachers?

6. Do you believe that within the pilot program there was an effort to reward teachers for their students’ high performance? Can you give an example of how that might have occurred?
7. What will be the long-term benefits of a Career Ladder Program at your school? Specifically, which areas of your school or district would be addressed?

Appendix A (continued)

8. Do you believe the Career Ladder Program will affect the way in which schools are organized? Explain.

9. Describe your feelings regarding the supplement amounts for lead teachers, mentor teachers, and achievement pay.

10. (Teacher) If the Career Ladder Program were permanently implemented, would you choose to participate? Why or why not?

11. (Administrator) If the Career Ladder Program were permanently implemented in the district, what changes would you make given the opportunity?
Appendix B. District School Board of Pasco County Career Ladder Implementation Survey Instrument

District School Board of Pasco County
Career Ladder Implementation Survey

This survey was created to help move the Career Ladder Program forward as we progress into our first full year of implementation. Completion of this survey is voluntary and will be anonymous. For data analysis purposes, please mark your primary work assignment:

- Career Ladder Lead Teacher
- Career Ladder Mentor Teacher
- Other Area Teacher (Media, Guidance, etc.)
- Classroom Teacher (incl. Art, Music, P.E.)
- Administrator

Remember that the Career Ladder is currently a pilot program which has been implemented for less than three months. This program is providing each of our schools with additional resources and assistance.

1. At this time, what are your overall feelings on the Career Ladder Program?
   - Very Satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - See the Potential
   - Dissatisfied

2. Are you aware that the Career Ladder Program is required by legislation to be implemented in all school districts at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Are you aware that the Spring 2004 Career Ladder Pilot Program is completely grant funded?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Have you received an explanation of the salary components of the Career Ladder Program?
   - Yes
   - No

5. Are you aware that the $750 achievement pay supplement that all instructional bargaining unit personnel are eligible to receive is provided by the grant?
   - Yes
   - No

6. What level of knowledge do you feel you have on the Career Ladder Program?
   - Extensive Knowledge
   - Some Knowledge
   - Little Knowledge
   - No Knowledge

7. Which part(s) of the Career Ladder Program do you feel has/have the greatest potential to benefit you? (Mark all that apply)
   - Opportunity for advancement
   - Achievement Pay
   - Curriculum Assistance from Lead Teachers
   - Mentor Teachers with increased time to work with teachers
   - Colleagues trained and paid to assist colleagues with individual needs
   - Additional school-based Professional Development opportunities

Please return to:
Chris Dunning
Employee Relations

Please continue on the back.
8. Which part(s) of the Career Ladder Program do you have concerns about?
   - Opportunity for advancement
   - Achievement Pay
   - Curriculum Assistance from Lead Teachers
   - Additional school-based Professional Development opportunities
   - Mentor Teachers with increased time to work with teachers
   - Colleagues trained and paid to assist colleagues with individual needs

9. Have you worked with a Lead or Mentor Teacher during the 2004 pilot?
   - Yes
   - No

10. Are you receptive to working with a Lead or Mentor Teacher?
    - Yes
    - No

11. Do you believe that the Lead and/or Mentor Teachers have benefited other individuals at your school?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Do you believe the Lead and/or Mentor Teachers have enhanced programs at your school?
    - Yes
    - No

13. Were you aware of the application process, timelines and procedures for the Career Ladder Program?
    - Yes
    - No

14. Do you believe the school-based selection team effectively selected Lead and Mentor Teachers?
    - Yes
    - No

15. Did you apply to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher for the Spring 2004 Pilot?
    - Lead
    - Mentor
    - Neither

16. Did you apply to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher for the 2004-2005 school year?
    - Lead
    - Mentor
    - Neither

17. Did any of the following reason(s) prevent you from applying to be a Lead or Mentor Teacher?
    - Philosophical Beliefs
    - Leadership Requirements
    - Loss of Planning Time
    - Education Requirements
    - Extra Work Days
    - Clinical Educator Training Requirement
    - Satisfied with current position
    - Compensation

18. What composition of the school-based selection team would you like to see?
    - Current - Two elected teachers and an administrator who agree by consensus
    - Two elected teachers who advise the administration with the administration making the final decision
    - Administration selecting two teachers to participate in the interview process
    - Administration hiring on their own

Optional:

19. In what ways could Lead Teachers best address your needs?

20. In what ways could Mentor Teachers best address your needs?

21. Is there any other information you feel the Career Ladder Committee should know?

22. Describe your feelings regarding the supplement amounts for Lead Teachers, Mentor Teachers and achievement pay.

Appendix C IRB Approval

September 3, 2004

David Paul LaRoche
5324 Brush Lane
Hudson, Florida 34669

Dear Mr. LaRoche:

Your new protocol (IRB #102728), "Pay for Performance: A Case Study of a District-Wide Care Ladder Pilot Program for Instructional Staff" including your Adult Informed Consent Form has been reviewed under expedited review category numbers six and seven (6, 7). Having made any required revisions, the approval period for your protocol including your Adult Informed Consent Form is shown on the stamp below. This information shall be presented to the Institutional Review Board-02 at its next convened meeting on September 17, 2004.

You should take special note of the following:

- Approval is for up to a twelve-month period, after date of initial review. A Research Progress Report is due 90 days after the submission deadline in the eleventh month of this approval period. A final report must be submitted if the study was never initiated, or you or the sponsor closed the study.

- Unless the requirement has been waived by the IRB, documentation of informed consent/assent should be obtained on copies of the attached stamped informed consent/assent document. Please note the form is valid only during the period stamped on the informed consent/assent document.

- Based on the new HIPAA Privacy Rule, if the study involves generating, collecting, using, or disclosing protected health information the subject must be given an appropriately approved Authorization for prior to enrolling them into your research study. If the study involves review of medical charts only, please ensure that you have a Waiver of HIPAA Authorization granted by the Privacy Board, prior to commencing the study.

- Any changes in the above referenced study may not be initiated without IRB approval except in the event of a life-threatening situation where there has not been sufficient time to obtain IRB approval.

- All changes in the protocol or informed consent must be reported to the IRB.

- If there are any adverse events, the Chairperson of the IRB must be notified immediately in writing.

Research investigators are required to keep all research related materials, including all IRB correspondence for no less than three (3) years. If at the end of 3 years, the data is no longer needed it should be destroyed. However, if data are kept after 3 years of study completion, please report to the IRB how you will keep data confidential.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to call Angie Reagan at (813) 974-5741 or myself at (813) 974-9343.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul G. Stiles, J.D., Ph.D.
Chairperson, IRB-02

PGS: amr

pc: Dr. Howard Johnston

IRB Approval
FWA 00001669
IRB Number: 102728
From 9-2-2004
Thru 9-1-2005

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS, FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida • 12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618
Appendix C (continued)

June 30, 2005

David LaRoche, PhD
9324 Brush Lane
Hudson, FL 34669

RE: Approved Application for Continuing Review
IRB#: 102728
Title: Pay for Performance: A Case Study of a District-Wide Career Ladder Pilot Program for Instructional Staff
    Start Approval Period: June 28, 2005 to June 27, 2006

Dear Dr. LaRoche:

On June 28, 2005, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED your Application for Continuing Review for the aforesaid protocol. It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review based on the federal expedited category number six and seven (6,7). Approval is granted for the period indicated above.

Please note, if applicable, the enclosed informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on page one of the form. Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form. Make copies from the enclosed original

Please reference the above IRB protocol number in all correspondence regarding this protocol with the IRB or the Division of Research Compliance. In addition, we have enclosed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Quick Reference Guide providing guidelines and resources to assist you in meeting your responsibilities in the conduct of human subjects research. Please read this brochure carefully. It is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to the Human Research Protections Program. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-9343.

Sincerely,

[ Signature ]

Paul G. Stiles, J.D., Ph.D.
USF Institutional Review Board

Enclosure(s): (If applicable) IRB-Approved, Stamped Informed Consent/Assent Document(s)
IRB Quick Reference Guide
Cc: Angie Reagan, USF IRB Professional Staff
    Howard Johnston, Ph.D.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH • DIVISION OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS, FWA NO. 00001669
University of South Florida • 12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618

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To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is provided to David LaRoche an administrator at J. W. Mitchell High School, Pasco County. Its purpose is to endorse a research project titled "A Case Study of a Career Ladder Pilot Program" proposed by Mr. LaRoche, who is in the Doctoral Program at the University of South Florida (USF).

Mr. LaRoche has provided further assurances of the manner in which information will be handled in the course of his project, and the procedures which will be followed to assure privacy.

We are satisfied that no foreseeable negative effects are likely to result from the activities proposed, and are therefore endorsing this project as proposed for the Summer and Fall of 2004.

Sincerely,

Robert Dorn
Assistant Superintendent for Administration

RD:Ir
### Appendix E. District-wide Lead/Mentor Allocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teacher Positions</th>
<th>Mentor Supplements</th>
<th>Lead Supplements</th>
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Appendix F. Career Ladder Implementation Guidelines

Career Ladder Implementation Guidelines

Recommendations to begin implementation

1. Hold a meeting with all the Administrators, Lead and Mentor teachers to review the Lead and Mentor job descriptions.
2. Focus on a few key aspects, for your school, of the job descriptions that have the potential for the greatest impact on student achievement and teacher performance. Keep your focus during the pilot narrow.
3. Make a plan for your school based upon these discussions
4. Establish a time for weekly meetings for the team (or teams) to reflect on what they are doing, to plan, and to keep a journal of accomplishments, issues, suggestions, etc. (We will formalize this later.)

Goals of initial training that begin on January 16.

1. Articulate the rationale for the Career Ladder
2. Define roles and responsibilities
3. Connect the work to the district’s priorities in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
4. Study the research on peer coaching
5. Explore approaches to coaching
6. Examine personal skills related to roles and responsibilities
7. Plan for next steps

Concerns to be aware of .

1. Lead and Mentor teachers will be held to a higher standard by their peers.
   Their actions will be observed with scrutiny.
2. They need to be seen as valuable additions to the staff
3. Perception is reality

Some “Do’s”

1. Review the CIP for areas that address student achievement and teacher performance
2. Enhance current activities (testing program, articulation, induction etc.)
3. Any new projects or activities that are begun by Lead and Mentor teachers should be short term and achievable this semester
4. Involve them in the testing program, especially data analysis for impact on curriculum and instruction
5. Strengthen the implementation of continuous progress K-12 i.e. Themes, Streams, and Learning Communities
6. Create exemplary lessons and model classrooms
7. Provide, create, or develop resources for instruction
8. Work with willing teachers, to identify and develop best practices
9. Participate in parent conferences and planning for student achievement
Appendix F (continued)

10. Get a substitute for their classroom responsibilities when they are out of the building on leave or temporary duty.
11. Encourage and support flexible scheduling among the Lead and Mentor teachers within the school day so that they can fulfill their responsibilities
12. Assist in presenting staff development and in identifying areas of need and staff appropriate to participate
13. Prepare a classroom that is open to visitation by other teachers
14. Provide parent programs
15. Concentrate on improving and modeling the best instruction and making the services available to all the staff
16. Assist in the induction program
17. Assist teachers in curriculum development and implementation

Some “Don'ts”

1. Change their current duty or assign additional administrative or non-instructional duties
2. Make them responsible for other jobs in the school that are currently held by others (i.e. testing coordinator)
3. Assign them any new or existing projects that will go beyond this semester.
4. Teacher evaluation responsibilities
5. Student discipline responsibilities
6. Use as substitutes to any extent beyond current practice
7. Give them all the training opportunities that are open to all teachers.

Next Steps

Revise organizational structure of leadership teams to include Lead and Mentor roles and responsibilities (We need small group of administrators to recommend)

Pool Process for second semester

Leadership supplements will be determined the same way as this year, except the total will be reduced by the number of lead and Mentor supplements
Attachment B

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF PASCO COUNTY
Career Ladder Behavioral Example Form
MENTOR

Job Dimension 1.0 Critical Thinking: Uses appropriate techniques and strategies which promote and enhance critical, creative, and evaluative thinking capabilities of students.

BEHAVIORAL EXAMPLE:

Name of supervisor: __________________ School: __________________
Title: __________________ Address: __________________

To the supervisor—please review the above behavioral example and check one of the following:

_____ I verify that this statement has been performed at a satisfactory level.

_____ I verify that this statement has occurred but was not performed at a satisfactory level.

_____ I am unable to verify the statement.

Signature of supervisor:

NOTICE TO APPLICANT: Do not send this form to the verifying supervisor; return it to the District School Board of Pasco County.
CAREER LADDER APPLICATION: MENTOR TEACHER

Send completed application to the Career Ladder Administrator/Designee by ________

Name of Applicant ___________________________ Date of Application ________________

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

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<tr>
<th>College Attended</th>
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

___ National Board Certified (Please indicate if you are certified).

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<th>Year(s)</th>
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<th>County</th>
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AREAS OF FLORIDA CERTIFICATION

1. ________________  3. ________________
2. ________________  4. ________________

PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1. List any staff development, inservice activities, and/or coursework you have participated in during the past 5 years that you think are relevant to this position. Put a check \( \checkmark \) in the box for any that you have trained.

___ Clinical Educator Training (required). You must be on the district approved mentor list.

___ ESOL Training for area of certification (if applicable).

Mentor Teacher Application 11/12/03
Relevant coursework/staff development and the year:

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

☐ ___________________________  ☐ ___________________________

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

1. List relevant committee and/or curriculum development work along with dates served (both school and district-level). Designate any chairmanships by making a check ‘X’ in the box.

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2. List leadership/membership positions in any professional organizations.

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Check leadership experiences that you have had in leading adults. Indicate the number of times in the last 5 years.

☐ Mentor Teacher

☐ Intern Supervisor

☐ Teacher Assistance Team Member (TAT)

☐ Other (Please list):

☐ Linker/Bridges Support Teacher/ Learning Community Team Leader

☐ Dept. Head

☐ Professional Practice Partner (PPP)

☐ Team Leader

OTHER

1. Please list any other skills, talents or interests that you believe are relevant to this position.

2. Please list any district, state and national recognitions received.

Mentor Teacher Application 11/12/03
Appendix H (continued)

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE/COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Please briefly respond to the following questions. You may use the space provided or respond on a separate sheet of paper. Please limit your responses to one page, (12 pt) double spaced per question.

1. What do you hope to accomplish during the pilot?

2. Describe a successful curriculum experience that you had during which you assisted teacher(s) with implementing new curriculum expectations in their classroom(s). Please describe the curriculum implementation expectations, process and the results.

3. Describe how you provided assistance to a peer to improve instruction. Describe the process and outcomes of your assistance.

4. Describe a time when you supported fellow teachers to implement best practices that were introduced through staff development. Please indicate the specific staff development program or skills, the process and outcomes.

Mentor Teacher Application 11/12/03
Appendix I. Career Ladder: Annual Compensation Amounts

Total Annual Financial Compensation Amount

School Recognition Pay
- School receives School Recognition Fund
- Faculty and School Advisory Council agree to disburse funds as bonus pay

Achievement Pay
- Demonstrates specified student learning gains
- Completes significant professional development
- Completes satisfactory Professional Development Plan
- National Board Certification

Pay for Performance Program Pay
- Qualifies for the district’s Pay for Performance Program

Responsibility Pay
- Assumes additional responsibilities for student co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

Knowledge Pay
- Successfully completes additional postsecondary coursework

Base Pay
- Demonstrates satisfactory performance
Appendix J. Career Ladder Annual Salary Formula/Schedule

District School Board of Pasco County
Career Ladder Pilot Program
Annual Salary Formula*

New Compensation Formula

Base Pay Level
\times
Satisfactory Performance Index
Satisfactory Performance Base (1) +
Knowledge Pay (2) +
Responsibility Pay (3) +
Pay For Performance (4) +
Achievement Pay (5) +
School Recognition Pay (6)

Total Cash Compensation

Knowledge Pay (2)

\begin{align*}
\text{BA + 18} & : \$600 \\
\text{MA} & : \$2400 \\
\text{MA+18} & : \$3100 \\
\text{Ed. Spec.} & : \$4100 \\
\text{Ph.D.} & : \$5100
\end{align*}

Responsibility Pay (3)

\begin{align*}
\text{Lead Teacher} & : \$5000 \\
\text{Mentor Teacher} & : \$8000 \\
\text{Academic Supplements} & : \text{See Schedule} \\
\text{Athletic Supplements} & : \text{See Schedule}
\end{align*}

Pay For Performance (4)

Amount varies, but is based on 5% of a teacher's Satisfactory Performance Base.

Satisfactory Performance Base (1)

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Years of Satisfactory Performance} & \text{SPI Index} \\
\hline
1 & 1.006431 \\
2 & 1.014469 \\
3 & 1.022508 \\
4 & 1.030547 \\
5 & 1.038585 \\
6 & 1.046624 \\
7 & 1.054663 \\
8 & 1.062702 \\
9 & 1.070741 \\
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11 & 1.086819 \\
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16 & 1.126015 \\
17 & 1.133054 \\
18 & 1.140093 \\
19 & 1.147132 \\
20 & 1.154171 \\
21 & 1.161210 \\
22 & 1.168249 \\
23 & 1.175288 \\
24 & 1.182327 \\
25 & 1.189366 \\
26 & 1.196405 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Achievement Pay (5)

Supplement is $1500

40% Achieve Professional Goals
30% Professional Development
30% Student Achievement

School Recognition Pay (6)

Annual bonus amount is determined through the approved faculty, staff and school advisory council plan.

* The lead, mentor and achievement pay supplements will be pro-rated for the duration of the pilot.
Appendix K. Lead/Mentor Teacher Job Descriptions

JOB TITLE: LEAD TEACHER

JOB DESCRIPTION:

This job description is not a stand-alone job description, but a rider to our basic education or exceptional education job descriptions. This teacher must participate on a regular basis in direct instruction of students and serve as faculty for professional development activities. The teacher is responsible for organizing and implementing curriculum and instructional program students and meeting the duties of teaching as outlined in laws and policies. During non-student contact time, this employee is responsible for assisting in the development of standards-based curriculum and assessment opportunities, research-based instructional methods, aligning of materials and resources to curriculum outcomes, and other teacher leadership responsibilities.

Duties of this position include but are not limited to:

1. **Professional Development:**
   a. Training early Associate and Professional Teachers, other Lead Teachers and Mentor Teachers.
   b. Observing and providing peer assistance for colleagues.
   c. Leading early Associate and Professional Teachers.
   d. Participating in professional development activities.
   e. Participating in a formalized peer review process as a formative evaluator.
   f. Assisting in the coordination of all school based professional development opportunities linked to individual professional development plans and job competencies.
   g. Assisting in the coordination of the program for preservice teachers by communicating with Human Resources Department and college/university personnel.

2. **Curriculum:**
   a. Collaborating with colleagues to construct benchmark lessons.
   b. Serving as the official liaison between the school site and the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Services.
   c. Assisting with identifying the curriculum needs of the faculty.
   d. Planning and managing the development of standards-based curriculum, instruction, assessment plans and strategies.
   e. Assisting in the adoption of curriculum resources that are consistent with the district's curriculum. Overseeing the textbook ordering and inventory for the school site.
   f. Ensuring that all textbooks are used effectively as a resource to meet curriculum goals.
   g. Updating themes/units and supervising theme/unit writing.
   h. Ensuring that all substitutes have lesson plans.
   i. Coordinating communication and planning among all learning communities.

Lead Teacher
Page 2 of 2

3. **Leadership:**
   a. Serving as a resource to the School Advisory Council and working with school administrators to develop, implement, and evaluate the school's Continuous Improvement Plan.
   b. Supporting and assisting in implementing the district vision.
   c. Serving on district-level committees.
   d. Writing grants to aid in meeting the goals of the Continuous Improvement Plan.
   e. Assisting in the coordination of the school's testing program (AIP, FCAT, diagnostics, etc.).
REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:
1. Valid professional teaching certificate
2. Master's degree or 18 graduate level hours in an educational area or National Board Professional Teacher Standards certification, or one year curriculum leadership at the school or district level.
3. Minimum of one year as a Professional Teacher
4. Outstanding performance pursuant to Section 1012.34(3)(a.1.-7., Florida Statutes as evidenced through selection into the district's Lead Teacher pool.
5. Ability to work an extended schedule.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS:
1. Professional development in the area(s) of:
   a. communication and conferencing skills
   b. leadership development
   c. classroom management
   d. standards-based curriculum development
   e. peer observation, coaching, mentoring, and conferencing skills
   f. student and parent conferencing skills
   g. knowledge of subject matter
   h. planning for instruction
   i. delivery of instruction
   j. assessment of student performance
   k. grant writing
2. Master's degree or higher
3. In-field certification
4. Clinical Educator Training
Appendix K (continued)

JOB TITLE: MENTOR TEACHER

JOB DESCRIPTION:

This job description is not a stand-alone job description, but a rider to our basic education and exceptional education job descriptions. This employee is a teacher who has received a professional certificate and serves as a regular mentor to other teachers who are either performing satisfactorily or who strive to become more proficient. The Mentor Teacher must serve as a faculty-based professional development coordinator and regularly demonstrates and shares expertise with other teachers in order to remain a mentor teacher. This teacher must also participate on a regular basis in the direct instruction of low-performing students and meet the duties of teaching as outlined in laws and policies. In addition, this employee is responsible for assisting in the improvement of instruction through analysis of instructional teaching methods, identification and management of professional development opportunities, and follow-up and coaching of strategies related to individual professional development plan goals. This position has a reduced teaching schedule to allow for the completion of other duties and responsibilities.

Duties of this position include but are not limited to:

1. **Professional Development**
   a. Providing demonstration lessons.
   b. Leading professional development activities, including the formation of learning communities.
   c. Participating in a formalized peer review process as a formative evaluator.
   d. With the faculty representative, serving as the official liaison between the school site and the department of staff development.
   e. With the faculty representative, conducting strategies for identifying the professional development needs of the faculty.
   f. With the faculty representative, planning and coordinating school-based professional development opportunities linked to individual professional development plans and job competencies.
   g. Following-up/extend staff development trainings.

2. **Curriculum**
   a. Collaborating with colleagues to construct exemplary lessons.
   b. Overseeing the adoption of curriculum resources.
   c. Facilitating curriculum planning.

   Mentor Teacher
   Page 2 of 2

3. **Leadership**
   a. Sharing instructional leadership with principal.
   b. Serving as a resource to the School Advisory Council and working with school administrators to develop, implement, and evaluate the school's Continuous Improvement Plan.
   c. Supporting and assisting in implementing the district vision.
Appendix K (continued)

Approved 10/7/03
Revised pending Board Approval

d. Developing relationships with community members and seeking mentors and/or resources from the community (students, parents, business partners) to aid in meeting the goals of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

e. Giving feedback to and verifying experiences of those individuals who are participating in the Pay for Performance Plan.

f. Serving on district-level committees.

g. Writing grants to aid in meeting the goals of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

h. Overseeing the coordinating of the school’s testing program (AIP, FCAT, diagnostic etc.).

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Valid professional teaching certificate
2. Master’s degree, or National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification, or 2 or more years experience in:
   a. developing, presenting, or implementing staff development, and;
   b. mentoring teachers or interns, and;
   c. curriculum development

3. Minimum of two years as a Lead Teacher (or similar roles)
4. Clinical Educator Training
5. Outstanding performance pursuant to Section 1012.34(3)(a.)1.-7., Florida Statutes as evidenced by selection in the district’s Mentor Teacher pool.
6. Required score on the Gallup Teacher Perceiver Instrument
7. Ability and willingness to work an extended schedule

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Professional Development in the area(s) of:
   a. communication and conferring skills
   b. leadership development
   c. classroom management
   d. standards-based curriculum development
   e. peer observation, coaching, mentoring, and conferring skills
   f. student and parent conferencing skills
   g. knowledge of subject matter
   h. planning for instruction
   i. delivery of instruction
   j. assessment of student performance
   k. grant writing

2. Graduate coursework in a curriculum content or other education area
3. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification
Appendix L. Follow-up Interview Guide

Protocol Title: A Case Study of a Career Ladder Pilot Program Within a Large Florida School District.

Follow-up Interview Guide

IRB # 102728

Interview # ____________

1. What was your role during the pilot in the spring of 2004?

2. Are there behaviors approaches that have changed in your classroom, from planning to daily instruction that have come about because of your experience in the pilot program?

3. Has your attitude or perspective toward the teacher and his or her role in the school been modified or changed because of the pilot?

4. Has the pilot program had any impact on the culture of your school?

5. Are there any programs, committees, procedures, activities, etc. that can be directly attributed to the pilot as an “spring board”?

6. Did the fact that the Career Ladder was discontinued for lack of financial support after the spring of 2004 have negative or positive implications for your school?
Appendix M Proposed Selection Process for Career Ladder

Proposed Mentor and Lead Teacher Selection Process for Career Ladder

Step 1: November 4 - Allocations are sent to Board Meeting for approval.

Step 2: November 5 to November 12 - Positions are advertised. Deadline is at the end of each individual school’s workday. Positions will be posted on district website, the dialer system, and paper listing at each school site. Each interested applicant must complete the Career Ladder Screening Form (attached). If an applicant answers “No” to any of the questions, then he/she is not eligible to apply. However, we would like the principals to collect the forms for data collection purposes and improvement of the Career Ladder process.

Step 3: November 5 and 6 - Interview Process and Guidelines will be given to the principals at a meeting at the USEP Building.

Step 4: Eligible applicants complete the appropriate Application Packet (attached) and submit it to the school administrator by November 12.

Step 5: Principals make school wide announcement that 2 members of the interview team will be instructional personnel who will be elected by their peers (could be guidance, media, etc.). Nomination forms will be accepted up until the end of the workday on November 10. The nominees must accept the nomination and agree not to apply for any of the positions and will make himself/herself available for the interview process. Money will be available for substitutes to cover classrooms should interviewing occur in the middle of the day. The election will be held at a meeting by secret ballot on November 12, 13, or 14. The elected interviewers are notified by the end of the day on the 14th.

Step 6: November 17 - Elementary principals may begin to advertise anticipated vacancies for elementary positions which will be left vacant when Lead and Mentor Teachers are chosen.

Step 7: November 17 - Secondary principals may begin to notify staff that additional classroom responsibilities and pay will be available to those who qualify and are interested.

Step 8: November 14 to December 5 - School-Based Interviews are held. The Career Ladder Interview Team consists of the school administrator and the two elected interviewers. The Interviews will be conducted as a group and each member of the team will rate the applicant’s response on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest). Discussion will take place after the interviews and the team will come to consensus on which applicants are in the pool. More people may be placed in the pool than there are positions.
Appendix M (continued)

Recommendations will be made for applicants to fill the vacancies.

Step 9:  A. Select a team for the school from the pool.
       B. Applicants in the pool but not selected may apply at other schools.
       C. Applicants not placed in the pool may not apply at other schools.

Step 10: By no later than December 12th - The applicants will be notified as to the results of their screening. This includes those who have been chosen to fill the vacancy, those who have been approved for the pool, and those who have not been chosen.

Step 11: By no later than December 12th - Principals will use their Lead and Mentor Teacher Supplement forms and Change of Assignment Forms to submit the names to Human Resources for Board approval.

Step 12: December - February - Initial training of the Lead and Mentor Teachers will be conducted.

Other Considerations:

First selection process will be for specific allocations at specific schools. Subsequent selection processes will be for a pool for consideration on an as needed basis.

Teachers selected for the position will be placed at the school at which they are presently assigned. Teachers approved for the pool may apply for positions at other schools if available and selected by principals in a team interview conducted at the school.

At the end of the pilot, all personnel will return to the positions they held before the pilot. This will include those hired to replace participants in the pilot.

If applying for both mentor and lead positions, both sets of behavioral events questions (mentor and lead) are required.
Appendix N Transcription Data

Interviews

Describe how the Lead and Mentor teachers were organized at your school? What tasks or projects were targeted for them to complete during the pilot? Were there any action plans constructed for the upcoming school year?

All three target sites were organized differently in terms of the way they determined roles and planned the completion of tasks. AL1 explained:

We were organized as a large group that met every two weeks. The mentor teachers met a little more frequently. There were four of them, so they got together to work on separate projects, but as a whole we were grouped together and that’s how we met to come up with ideas. We had a brainstorming session where we listed probably about twenty-five different things that we came up with ourselves as a group, things that needed to be worked on at school. From that list then we chose something that we could work on by the end of the year to show that the leader/mentor program was working and would give the staff that wasn’t a leader/mentor teacher the ability to see that we were actually doing something. And we also wanted to do something that could be done quickly and but make a large impact. So we decide on FCAT and split into groups to promote the FCAT, to work on commercials, one group worked on commercials, one group looked at the specifics of the areas of FCAT, tests from the previous year, where the teachers seemed to focus their information, try to get that information out to the teachers, that was the main thing that we worked on during the year and then we had hopes of working on the extended school year, that’s supposed to be in place next year, we had groups that worked on that. Over the summer we met to try to work on those things in the hope that the career ladder would be in place next year, but no. Yes, the actual group that I was on, the extended day committee, like I said we were supposed to go to ten period days next year, so our group started working immediately after FCAT on looking at the issues related to that. We actually came up with a timeline that was put into place and we worked on that also over the summer, about a time line that needed to be held to for this school year in order for a ten period day to be put in place the following year.

Lead teacher AL2 remarked:
The Lead and Mentor teachers became a secondary leadership team from the current leadership team at this point. We had a brainstorming session that listed about 25 or 30 areas from general to specific as to what the lead or mentor teachers felt needed to be addressed at the school. We worked on the school improvement goals, everything from communication to student morale, student and teacher recognition, FCAT testing, numerous others. We were able to get people to prioritize. We decided that FCAT testing should be one of the main focuses so the group was divided into smaller groups to work on, one was FCAT testing, one was student recognition, and the others were in goal groups. In terms of action plans, I think that’s where we struggled the most. I felt that because the lead or mentor teachers didn’t know where they stood the following year, they really addressed things that they could have an impact on immediately. Didn’t make any long term plans, although they tried, I think that there wasn’t the investment, didn’t have the interest in going any further, not knowing what they were going to be doing or if they would be around to continue working on this. So everything was really an immediate.

Administrator AA1 said:

Our faculty actually got to put in five names of people that they wanted to be on a selection team and they just tallied up the number of people with the five highest votes and those people were actually the ones that selected the mentor and leads. Unfortunately it was thought by the top administration that this “too” shall pass type attitude. I think that other people in the administration used the mentor for giving them projects to work on such as helping the new teachers, but actually it was one mentor person that actually steered that and the other mentor people really didn’t want to have a lot to do with it. And the lead teachers were never utilized. One of the projects that one of the mentor teachers did was she went around to different communities, it just so happened that each mentor was assigned a different community and this one mentor person wanted the program to go so she went around and helped with doing curricula and also going and doing observations of teachers that asked her to come in and giving them feedback. One in particular was one of the teachers didn’t know how to really design a very good test, so the mentor sat with her and designed a test and showed her researched based stuff on information the person could use. Also she did a program where she did a whole lesson in Pasco History and she used that with three other teachers and it was a community project where she actually steered it and it was kind of a best teaching practice, and that went over very well. But as far as the other teachers, I think that it was a matter of maybe they were going to come in the summer and give them a couple of hours and work on a continuous improvement plan, which they did do. We did have weekly meetings and we did bring a lot of best practices together and we created these folders with a lot of information of things that were best type practice information that we could hand out to people when they asked for it. We sent out a survey in regards to what the teachers wanted. The mentors met with those people and went over their survey with them, because their name was on the survey, it wasn’t anonymous. They
actually went in and talked with the person and said where can I help you. And they had the information and were willing to go in at any time to do anything with these teachers. I think that the thought in the administration was we were going to wait the pilot time and if it continued then to get an action plan. But we didn’t invest a lot of time into the original program.

Lead teacher AL3 stated:

The process to select them was an interview process where we had several people who were not eligible for one reason or another served on a panel. They were given questions to ask of the people who were applying for the both the lead and mentor positions and then based on their responses the lead and mentors were chosen. There were obviously a smaller number of mentors for our school. As a matter of fact I’m not really sure how many lead teachers there were total to be honest. There was some discussion about whether or not there were going to be at least two lead teachers from each learning community, I’m not sure that eventually happened, but I know that in our community there were lead teachers from our community so that worked out as far as leadership abilities within the community itself. That was in some respects a little frustrating because in the beginning of the process we were asked to brainstorm about certain things that we wanted to change, or things we wanted to work on, issues around the school that we thought needed improving, so we prepared a list, we spent an entire meeting brainstorming and writing things up on the board and then I’m not really sure what happened with that, somehow the direction of the whole group changed to dividing into sub-committees to cover the goal areas for the school. So where we went, the direction we were headed initially didn’t end up where we ended up in the end of the year, but in some respects where we ended up at the end of the year was pretty good because we ended up identifying not only the needs as far as school goals are concerned, but also what teachers felt were the problem areas, the areas that we needed improvement on for the next school year. The committee that I worked on was for student performance and we dealt mostly with what the students were able to accomplish as far as school goals were concerned for last year and the ones that we did not accomplish, how we were going to change that, how we were going to make improvements for this year. The committee worked on that a little bit over the summer, but as of right now we haven’t addressed those needs any further because we didn’t really know where our roles were going to be as far as learning community leaders, department heads, lead/mentor teachers, nobody knew where they were supposed to go with that at this point.

An interview participant (AT1) that was not a Lead or Mentor teacher explained:

The lead/mentor teachers were organized in such a ways that the lead teachers were told that they were going to be looking at and helping shape curriculum choices and that mentor teachers were going to be given extra time in their daily schedules to be able to act as mentors to both new and experienced teachers and help them improve their skills whether it was a question of management, teaching
skills, or what have you. It’s my understanding having not been in the program and not being privy to all of the announcements at the meetings, it is my understanding that the lead and mentors teacher met on a regular basis together and that they also met separately and I believe the lead teachers met in sub groups, I could be wrong on that. I know that the mentors, that we had four mentor teachers here on our campus and that those four individuals met as well on a regular basis, together, just the four of them in developing their portion of the program. I know specifically of one I was most familiar was the project that the mentor teachers were working on, giving teachers the opportunity, and I believe they even sent out invitations with tickets, that any teacher on campus could request that a mentor teacher come into his or her classroom for any purpose, whether it was so that teacher could go and observe in another classroom, the practices of one of his or her colleagues, or to have the mentor teacher come in and observe that teacher in the practice of teaching to offer constructive criticism. I know that’s the one I’m most familiar with maybe because they were the most visible to me. The lead teachers, I know that they worked on some surveys and they were pulling together some data, beyond filling out some specific surveys, I’m not familiar with that data and what was done with it. I don’t recall specifically what their action plans were. I believe the mentors more than likely had the intention of continuing the same strategies that they had during the one semester we had it here but I don’t recall specifically what the lead teachers were going to do.

Administrator CA1 said:

We were given specific directions of how to implement the pilot in terms of putting a team together, etc., to do the screening and the interview, etc. The whole process I delegated to one of my assistant principals. I felt that he probably had more of the time to put into the program. We followed specifically the guidelines for the pilot program which gave direction on how to select the team that would do the actual interview of the applicant, etc. When the pilot was implemented, it really didn’t get implemented until I think pretty much about the second half of the year, and we made all of the decisions to get the leads and mentors in place, so it kind of ran separately. It was a pilot and part of the pilot was to look at how those people could function in the overall organization of the school, so we were certainly looking at how to incorporate them into our leadership structure for the next year, in terms of a total leadership team which actually meant looking at some of our current roles and probably blending some of those roles together like we had specific team leaders for learning communities, we had team leaders for departments. For some of that we were looking at blending, so we thought that if the pilot stayed in place that we would totally reorganize the whole concept of the leadership team where would we have, depending on how many lead teachers or mentors we had, they would have assumed different responsibilities that were currently under the direction of team
leaders. It gave me an opportunity to identify those individuals and probably to define what their roles would be as a lead or a mentor. At our site a lot of that came under the responsibility of the assistant principal who is trying to figure out to best use those people. Once the group was accepted by the staff as a resource, it gave them a functional purpose. It was a pilot, but a lot of that we were hoping to take the good from that and apply toward the following year. One of the biggest aspects I think that was a sales job which had to be done was that staff actually see these people as a resource, so that was one thing that had to be done so you were conscious putting them in positions that they could really be used as a resource. Some of the tasks that the assistant principal came up with was taking some of the lead teachers and some of the mentors who became a specialist in terms of, okay, I do this really, really well, I have an instructional program that has strong emphasis on technology so I will model people who I want to gain expertise and use of technology to apply for an instruction program can come to me. They kind of set up model classrooms and then they would advertise these within the school, this is my expertise as a lead or mentor if you want help in this area, come and see me. You want to stay away from the perception that these people were all knowing and all seeing, that we don’t want them to go in and step on people’s toes and be too authoritarian in their approach so there’s more of let’s put out invitations. These are the resources we have and if you want to improve in this particular area and know something more about this or how to use a piece of equipment in the classroom, or I’m really good at doing research, these are my areas of expertise, you can sign up. You can come into my classroom, I’m demonstrating this technique on these particular days, you can sign up and come in. One of the things that helped was setting up a library of good research, a professional library. That was one of things that they assumed some responsibility for. One of the other areas that they took some responsibility for was in the area of data analysis. There was an area when the Pasco Star was being promoted as an instructional tool in the classroom, letting them not only do some data analysis of our specific school data, but doing some training for staff on how to access data and use data in their own classrooms. Somehow, if we kept the lead and mentor program, that would to have blended in terms of numbers, so we’d have to look at some cross roles, which means if you have four lead teachers, we’d probably have one lead teacher of each of the learning communities. And maybe even some of the mentors may assume some responsibilities for being in charge of textbooks or this and that. We were working on just how to best incorporate them in their role, while not overburdening those people. They would probably have to assume some responsibility because we knew we weren’t going to be giving them any more resources. The program itself costs a lot of money. The amount of money just those eight or nine individuals would be receiving.

Teacher CL1 remarked:

There was some talk amongst the faculty that we would somehow be in a leadership position amongst the faculty, perhaps as department heads or
something of that capacity. That never really happened. It may have happened down the line, there was some talk of restructuring the school hierarchy if you will, but in actuality, for the spring we were equal to other teachers, we didn’t see ourselves as superior or anything of that nature. Our current leadership structure and these positions operated concurrently, maybe almost independently. There were times we met together as a group and we tried to sell things to the faculty, ways of improving our methods of instruction and such. We were working as mentors especially, somewhat independently of each other and there were times that my assistant principal would give us permission to move ahead with something. For example, we talked about targeting the ninth grade. Another lead in the program got together with me and we decided the ninth grade ought to be targeted because they are the ones that most directly impact the FCAT scores of the school and the ninth grade year is such a pivotal time in a young man or woman’s life, so we looked at that and created a program we called SHIP, which was targeting the ninth grade as sort of a mentor within the students, having clubs or organizations mentor these ninth graders and bring them up and show them the right way and what happens of they don’t follow the right path. So there were times that we did that, also creating methods of instruction, or doing inservices and things like that. We had a teaching practices calendar that we worked out where qualified teachers would use methods of instruction as examples in class. It could be anything from classroom management to a totally different practice like a group strategy that other teachers hadn’t seen. The idea was to put that in the faculty lounge so if you wanted to see something modeled you could go to that teacher’s classroom and all the leads and mentors were encouraged to sign up for that and do some of that. Another teacher in the building worked with me on a method of instruction that we both used this year and we were trying to sell as a method for teachers in the future. We did a cooperative learning inservice and a lot of teachers came to that and adapted that into their classroom and all of that was supposed to be followed up into this year.

Lead teacher CL2 stated:

Yes, we had eleven lead teachers and three mentor teachers and so the three mentor teachers would meet quite often, once a week in what was Mr. Letvin’s office and sometimes we decided we didn’t need a meeting and sometimes we would take turns on different jobs where we would divide up discussing things with the other lead teachers. Mr. Letvin would ask us to do such things as walk through the building and so the mentors sat down and divided up the building and we divided up who would take what parts of the building so that we could do it quite easily and quickly. And then there were other jobs where Mr. Letvin presented us with data and we would either volunteer to do it or he would request certain people to take it and work with it. Of course the mentor teachers had the additional period to work with beginning teachers so we were assigned brand new teachers to work with and also people who were novices but perhaps not a first year teacher and so we were assigned them to touch base with and just gently approach and offer our services. We worked with data and look at what areas
needed to be strengthened and then we pulled together and worked on what areas needed to be concentrated on. For example, we found that math was an area of concern. We found that writing was going quite well for the FCAT testing here at our school and we were actually above average in the district and we were very proud of that. Our reading, well it’s always going to be an area to work on because you have the lower core child trying to push them upward and what more kinds of things can we do to help them improve and then ideas to see what we could do with math to try to get that going and of course the continuous improvement plan and discussing a lot of things to do with that. I was on the School Advisory Council last year as I am this year and have been for a number of years, and so Mr. Letvin recommended that mentors and leads start attending more leadership meetings like the School Advisory Council to see what are some of the behind the scenes things that people aren’t aware what happens and they can view the big picture. The mentors would get together and discuss different things that Mr. Letvin would present to us and we were looking raw data from each teacher as to how many students were passing and failing and trying to get a feel for the whole school and we divided that up by lead and mentor and the mentors did a lot of planning more with Mr. Letvin and then we would have a large meeting every week with all the leads and mentors together and talk about different projects and things we had been working on together. We had a very nice meeting toward the end of the year, just prior to the announcement of the end of funding for the program where we met at Safety Town. Mr Letvin brought up some things and we worked with him on it. One thing was to make it more obvious what’s going on with learning communities. A lot of students aren’t even sure what learning communities they’re in or what’s the meaning of it or why I’m in this learning community, so to make the communication more obvious to, let’s say visitors coming in, that we have learning communities, what’s going on with them so students are more aware that things are actually going on with learning communities, so visually coming into the building and having some things that show you there are learning communities in this building and what they mean. Just something quick and easy to do. Also we talked about the display case in the front and I think this came from a meeting where Pam Robbins came and talked about emotional intelligence, about how many schools have got a trophy case full of trophies and it becomes the athletic trophy case and she talked about Columbine and how students who felt left out, hated athletes because they’re the ones who are the heroes of the building and what about other people who do wonderful things. So we talked about having different displays in the trophy case according to learning communities and perhaps changing it quarterly and having each learning community come up with some sort of display in the trophy case and make it a learning community display case and have the trophies boxed up in the gym somewhere, because some of them have been there for a very long time. We talked about each quarter having some kind of a major program in the school, lets say a day where something happens and each learning community plays a part in what does it mean and what is it about. Is it an art portion to it, is there a math or scientific portion. So the whole school is somehow tied together and they’re not so separate. Of course the idea of a learning community is to make a smaller
school within a school, but a lot of students are crossing over between community to community and then they have these mixed identities of what they are, so somehow pulling the school together into one community and yet having each separate learning community play its part in some sort of activity days.

Lead teacher CL3 explained:

People were asked to submit whether they were interested. We then received as I recall almost like an application that we could fill out asking us various questions about various inservices, what training we had taken. There was some miscommunication at the beginning about whether you did or did not have to have a Masters Degree to serve in one of the positions or not. We filled those out and from what I understand there was a screening process because there were certain requirements for inservice and so forth to be either a lead or mentor teacher and there are some people that although they had a lot of experience, and were very good teachers, had not had those specific courses or that specific inservice and they were eliminated. There then was an interview process and that interview process was done with an administrator and two teachers who were elected from the faculty and there was some confusion at that point in terms of whether those three people actually made the decision or whether they would make a recommendation to the principal, and the principal would finally make the decision. It was realized that these three were supposed to make the decision. Then the people that got elected didn’t want to do it anymore, but they were kind of stuck at that point. We were asked whether we were applying to be a lead teacher or a mentor teacher or both and my understanding is that if you were going for both there was a different set of questions that came from the district. Quite honestly because I didn’t fall into that category I don’t know whether they did that at one interview or two separate interviews. I only applied to be a lead teacher, and so I went in and answered the questions. I know that when the decisions were made they tried to balance it throughout the faculty so we did not have say all of them from language arts, or all from social studies and so forth and so on, but they filled the slots in terms of x number of mentors and x number of leads. We met as a group, the leads and mentors, and we met at first it probably wasn’t every week, it just felt like it because of all we were going through, but it was at least every other week and it eventually became every month and one of things we did is we talked about what we were doing in terms of working with teachers. We also talked about things that we were trying to target and we tried to refer that back to the school improvement plan. We wanted to try to work and help teachers who had very high failure rates. We wanted to work with improving reading scores and that kind of stuff. There were people who, obviously the mentors because they had extra time, took other things on their shoulders, that they were working with, but it was the general goal of reducing failure rate. We were all going to present or co-present during one of the inservice days. That was one of the things we tried to do and everything tried to come back to the school improvement plan in terms of what we were trying. We were also trying to earmark some new teachers or teachers in their first couple of years and seeing if
we could help them in that transition. We had one meeting, it was late in the year and that’s when it was all up in the air whether would it be continued, if it continued, who could apply because we were starting new information and criteria. And we did have one meeting and as I recall it was not very well attended. But we did have a meeting where we tried to get together and organize what we’ve done, what would you like to do? But that was again built on the presumption that those of us who were leads or mentors would reapply and if we did reapply, would be accepted into the position and of course we were hoping to be funded. So it was very iffy. We had heard rumors that it was a guarantee, it was a lock, it was definitely going to happen for at least the first semester, so that they would have a year’s worth of study. We’d also heard rumors that the money wasn’t there, that there’s no way it’s going to happen. So I don’t think anybody really felt secure that it was going to happen. There were some people who knew they were not going to reapply. There were many of people who were talking who had not applied who were going to apply. But like I said we heard rumors, we were going on so we tried to gear it towards working with new teachers, trying to get together with those people during the summer or during pre-planning. I did work on failure rates as I remember everything came back to the school improvement plan.

A teacher not assigned a role as a Lead or Mentor teacher stated:

Initially a group of teachers had volunteered to participate in the program and they were accepted at face value in the initial program and were interviewed and selected by a group of two teachers and I believe one administrator at that time and that’s how the pilot program took off.

I was not aware of any meetings or action plans. Occasionally, they would speak at a faculty meeting to let the staff know about something that was to be set up in the teachers lounge.

Lead teacher BL1 said:

There were administrators assigned to the lead teachers and to the mentor teachers. Administrators were assigned to the mentor teachers and we met once a week to discuss what the needs of the school were that we could probably focus on and be helpful for and then we went out and observed, offered our assistance, came back and reported, adjusted our focus, went out again the next week. I know some of the tasks that were assigned to lead teachers, but I don’t know exactly how they met and what their meeting schedule was. I know the mentor teachers met once a week but of course we had the periods off in which to do that, the lead teaches were harder to corral. I think there were fourteen of them. So it was hard probably to get a common planning time for them. I know the lead teachers were given certain projects that were short term activities, like that, sort of lay the ground work for things they were going to do the next year or that would make more efficient things like scheduling and graduation check and attendance and things like that they really did things in the summer time, I know the lead teachers
came in and checked to see if students were placed correctly in whatever content area they were supposed … they went through all the schedules, I mean that’s two thousand schedules and made notes for students who were misplaced according to the criteria that we use and that information was handed to our assistant principal who reviewed it and then turned over to the guidance department to implement the change. Nobody else was doing that yet theoretically or technically guidance counselors were supposed to check that. Then again a math teacher could be verifying math placement. That’s a lot more effective than a guidance counselor. And then we all got on the phone in the summertime. We called parents to ask “we noticed a discrepancy in the scheduling. Do you want to think this through?” It really was, I thought great communication with the parents. The mentor teachers during the school year focused primarily on co-teach situations and then reading enhancement, intensive reading classes and we collected information, observed the classes, worked with the individual teachers, and the new teachers as well. The new teachers and the co teacher situations and the intensive reading teachers and we observed them and then we tried to find their strengths and point out some obvious inefficiencies and how to address them. That something like charm school and then we made some presentations to the faculty about some things that we just wanted to remind them of and if they’re working in a co-teach situation or if the situation arises and how they can handle a certain classroom management situation or who they can ask if they need help, and then we just re-grouped and discussed this out and then charged ahead. In terms of action plans when we started looking at the intensive reading teachers, we have a literacy plan and we tried to get sort of a global picture of what our school was doing with the …literacy and it wasn’t just about intensive reading and tried to make some recommendations. Several of us are on the literacy team so we tried to carry that through because the literacy plan that would extend itself to the next year. Also, with regard to scheduling and that whole thing, we tried to make recommendations that would improve the efficiency of the procedures for the following year. So, yes an action plan for the next year theoretically impacted for the next year.

Lead teacher BL2 explained:

Basically all the lead and mentor teachers were invited to attend all the leadership team meetings so that’s something that we did together and then individually we were divided into groups and asked to complete various things. I was asked to look at the failure rate in the math department specifically for the ninth graders and also look at the attendance and their discipline record and look for a correlation. We were working toward a plan for how that information could help us as a teacher but we ran out of time.

Teacher BT1 said:

As far as I saw I know that there were several lead and mentor teachers that were trying to get information from the faculty regarding what we did need and what
we didn’t need. I know that did happen. I didn’t personally have any contact with that, however. There were no workgroups or action plans that I was made aware of during the pilot.

Lead teacher BL1 stated:

We had four mentor teachers, and I can’t remember if it was twelve leads and 3 mentors. So the mentor teachers met with administrators we identified areas that we needed to concentrate on. One of those areas was reading. We would look at how the reading classes were set up, the students themselves, what they were doing, how they were performing. A couple of those mentor teachers, two of them, took that on and really focused on that. Then we also looked at beginning teachers. How can we help them, what kind of resources can we provide for them. And many of the beginning teachers were having problems with this, so two of us really focused with beginning teachers and tried to enhance their program, whatever subject they were teaching. We worked on technique rather than having to know the subject. And so we worked with them and the reading and we all did that. We helped Mr. Knobl with scheduling. There were so many things we did at the school, but my major focus was with beginning teachers. We met with administrators and we sat and brainstormed and we prioritized what the needs were for our school. Okay, what do we really need and then we listed them and we each took something that interested us and also for instance I may be working with several beginning teachers, so if I needed help I’d ask somebody else and they’d come in and they’d go through the same thing and another set of eyes and we look at it. It wasn’t that we just had one day set up that people visited us. We didn’t do it like that. We were out. We were visible.

Administrator BA1 remarked:

All of our lead and mentor teachers were already on our current leadership structure, on our current leadership team, with the exception of one, the foreign language teacher. A lot of the choices were real easy to make, most of the people applied that we expected to apply. They were doing obvious leadership type things for us here at school. In terms of organization, they basically were our leadership structure which is a horizontal structure that we have, we have a lot of committees here at the school, those committees feed to the leadership teams and present and the leadership team makes the decision, so they just carry the title, that they were lead teachers or mentor teacher during the pilot. Our leadership team meets every other Thursday, twice a month. It was very hard to meet because of our schedule with ten periods. We had some lead teachers that were late start teachers, so I found myself depending on projects or different things I needed them to work on, I would need to meet with three, four, five of them at a time, after school, or during a common period I could get them all together to work on projects. We wanted to look at our lead teachers. We wanted those teachers to be vocal leaders with the faculty. We wanted them to run our
committees, to really perch the school in the direction that the administration saw that the school should be going in.

Some of the projects the lead teachers were involved with our lead literacy team, the majority of the twelve lead teachers were members of that team. In the AIP process, a lot of our teachers were involved with that through our parent meetings and our Lexile testing and those types of things. Many of them had been trained prior to the lead/mentor program, we did some learning community projects, we did a Career Night, we did our Gator Festival and a couple of other school wide projects that hopefully I’ll remember before we’re done here. We assigned our mentor teachers along with a lead teacher to our new teachers on staff. We already had a mentor program in place, but we assigned, if we had twelve new teachers, let’s say we gave each mentor three teachers, that during those two periods when they were not instructing their own classes they were not only in classes within their department, but classes of those three new teachers that they were assigned. Then those mentor teachers did some staff development training for our teachers and because it started so late in the school year, around Christmas time, they missed the November staff development day, but some of them were already doing trainings for people, for staff, but we had I don’t think all four, but I know two or three of them were involved with training. I think we didn’t get to that point, because I think we knew pretty early on, at least I did just through conversations between administrators, that because it was a pilot and the funding wasn’t there, after the March Legislative session, that we weren’t going to have it again, that they were going to cut it, so we really just focused our attention on maximizing what we could get out of those staff members for us to just make school improvements. We just tried to maximize those people at that time. I think if we didn’t know as of the Legislative session that they tabled it or something like that, then the leadership team along with the administrators would have sat down and we would have had a focused action plan for the next year with those people. We would have taken two or three basic school initiatives and ran with those for the next year with those people.

What was the overall reception to working with the Lead/Mentor teachers at your school by the faculty and staff?

Respondents to this item indicated that there was concern among staff members concerning the pilot program and the assignment of roles. A Lead teacher AL1 remarked:

As a lead teacher, I can only say what I heard from people. I don’t really know what their reaction was because I really don’t have a lot of contact with the lead teachers. The mentor teachers I’m not sure how they were received going into the peoples’ classrooms. You know at first I think it was a very quick process. I think people were upset, people who had been in the school system a long time hadn’t been chosen to be lead/mentor teachers. I think they were a little put off by the selection process, whatever the issues were. But I think overall, I never really
heard anything incredibly negative about, oh you’re a lead teacher, or you’re a mentor teacher. No one I think ever assigned any more extra work, in their minds they didn’t say you’re not doing enough, I don’t think anyone ever thought that. It was a job, they did it. I didn’t really hear a lot about it. I know people were upset. Certain people, but I don’t think by what we were trying to do, we were trying to make our school better. I don’t think people were upset.

A Lead teacher AL2 said:

There was a lot of frustration and resentment. I think in the beginning, from people who feeling they should have been able to apply for these positions and were’nt eligible, or just the process of being chosen, being chosen and then what role they would have and how it would impact the other teachers in the school. I would say the most positive impact was the mentor teachers. Even though at first people were resistant to allowing them to come into the classroom, that they could help them. I thought that those people really developed a plan that would encourage everyone in the school to participate and be a part of, either as an example to others or if they had troubles or struggled with anything, they would allow them to help them. And that just increased over time, I would say after about a month or two months into the program, people were very receptive to mentor teachers and what they were doing and having them in their classrooms.

A school administrator AA1 explained:

It wasn’t received well. Some people on the faculty did not feel that certain people should have chosen, and maybe certain people shouldn’t and that was more in the lead area and not in the mentor area. I don’t think anyone really had a problem with who was the mentor teacher, but I do feel that there were some people that felt that they should have gotten it, and we did not use all the slots that we had allocated. And people went for those that were not used. There was a rubric that was sent out through the district and the selection team actually went by the rubric and they didn’t vary at all. Either you hit it or you didn’t. And in all actuality we had one extra mentor but the school could only have four mentors, so one of the mentors got placed in a pool and was never utilized, but she unfortunately only went for the mentor so she never got a lead.

A Lead teacher AL3 stated that were negative comments in the school:

It was very positive as a whole. There were some negative comments. Obviously you’re going to have that. Most of the negative comments that I heard came from people who resist any kind of change. It didn’t ever have to be geared toward lead or mentor teachers. It had to do with change in general. But most of the comments were positive ones because I think they understood that the lead and mentor teachers were part of a team that were actually trying to make the school better. I don’t think it was looked at in a negative view, like they were getting
ahead somehow, or they were better than anybody else. I think it was looked at like maybe some positive change could occur throughout this team.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 insisted:

I didn’t hear a lot of feedback from other teachers. For me I thought it would have been a beneficial program overall. Personally, my reception to the mentor teachers, I thought what they were trying to do was excellent, and I just read an article this morning, about being able to retain teachers, and how there’s a huge percentage of teachers who leave teaching within the first five years of starting their careers, and that teacher retention is an issue that is only going to be solved or improved by making sure that we have those mentor teachers in place, that we have a really good and effective and for brand new teachers when they come in, thorough orientation, there’s a specific word in the article, it’s that escapes me now, but that we do a really good job with new teachers to make sure that all of their questions are being answered, all of their frustrations are being addressed and that they don’t feel that they’re being hung out to dry. I think that was kind of in their minds and I’ve probably gone off topic here, but I think that was in the minds of the mentor. With regard to reception for the lead teachers, because I know that we saw surveys coming, that we were asked to fill out, I think there was some apathy on the part of some of the staff, and it happens when there are extra things they’re asked to fill out, people hate extra work. I don’t know that the staff saw immediate value in what the leads were doing. Yes, I think maybe it would have caught on had it gone on longer, but in the one semester I don’t think there was enough time, positive or negative reception with the lead that I’m aware of.

An administrator CA1 remarked on the hesitation and skepticism of the staff:

Initially it was rather tenuous. I think there wasn’t a real clear picture from the staff on what these people were willing to do. The pilot came along quickly. There wasn’t a real opportunity to sell the benefits, we applied for it, we got, we put it together. In retrospect, one would like to have had a lot more opportunity to kind of build support for the program, but we didn’t. So the distant perception of what this thing is all about and why are we paying these people all this money. The other problem I think we had to deal with was in the selection process. The people had to fill out the application and had to meet the criteria. Initially I think there were some perceptions from staff that why this person gets selected and this person didn’t, because I think this person’s more qualified, but then you were dealing with a specific rubric that was developed for the program. On the first go round I’m not sure we got the most qualified people for the roles that were defined for leads and mentors. They were selected basically because they met the criteria and there were no allowances for any other deviation from that. So I think those were some of the issues that we had to solve in the first pilot. The positive thing was that you had your initial selection committee from the first part of the pilot was staff members. So they spent a lot of time with the assistant principal.
interviewing everybody. I think that lent itself a lot of credibility, it removed administration from, I want this person to be included in that, so having the faculty involved in that decision was a very good thing. But I think the difficulty really arose initially because of they had to have x number of hours of leadership development experience in servicing this, that and the other. And some things that hadn’t been done in the last couple of years, they wouldn’t go back any further than that. So it made it difficult in terms of, like I said earlier maybe not getting the most qualified initially into the pilot, but after the pilot then we began to look at the change, and some of those things did change.

A Lead teacher CL1 stressed the possible impact this program could have on new staff:

I would say at first there was some resistance just because people are not real receptive to change, but once they realized that we weren’t going to be barging into their rooms or threatening them in any way in their profession, I think it was really welcomed. A lot of teachers I worked with were young and they really wanted to hit them hard, but there were other teachers in the building that just said, hey I know you’re good at this and I’m not. Would you mind coming by and or working on a lesson plan, or anything like that. So we did a lot of that. It was well received by the end. I didn’t see myself as anything above a regular teacher just trying to help, so they came to me, and we would put the word out. We would use teaching practice calendars as a way to get into each others rooms and try to model effective teaching and help each other. I learned as much as a professional as I did giving any information out. Speaking of the calendar itself, I don’t think it was given enough time to really catch on. I found that we went to each others’ rooms as lead and mentors but we were hoping that the culture of the building would change and have more of an open door policy. That was really the objective; to have teachers share with other teachers. I’ve always said there’s no problem we can’t solve within this building. We have teachers that have been here thirty years. I’d loved to know what they’re doing in their room. But until we create a culture where that’s acceptable, we have a closed-door culture in this building currently, so we are trying to open doors.

A Lead teacher CL2 explained the plan to have an impact on the staff:

It was mixed. I think for the most part many people wondered what it was. It was recommended to us by Mr. Letvin that we make ourselves visible so people could actually see what it is we’re doing because if you’re always writing reports or behind doors then it doesn’t look like you’re as productive as you’d like it to have people understand that you are. I think the walk through made people very open to it. They seemed nervous at first, like we were going to evaluate them and it would effect them. They eventually realized that we were there just to gather data and we’d make sure to be positive and point out all the good things we saw in each room, that seemed to open them up to welcome us and start talking about themselves and what they were doing in their curriculum and on a few occasions I walked around with the group. We had someone ask about rubric and I had done
a presentation on rubrics so I pulled out several things and handed them to her. So I found that when I approached some people and said “I’m here for you and what can I do to help you, and I’d like to be of assistance to you”, and I was responded to with “I’m fine, I’m good, I don’t need anything”. “Bye” So I asked Mr. Letvin what did he want me to do and he said well you’re there, you’re available for them, if they’re not going to make use of you, then go with the ones who will. We had a brand new teacher who didn’t even have any education classes or student teaching experience at all, so I spent a lot of time with her and some of the other mentors would pop in. There were teachers who were very experienced who were asking for help with discipline. I started spending sixth period with one science teacher who was doing ESE and I was covering it almost every day and coming up with ideas and I showed her a project to do and she was very excited and the kids liked it and she told me that she didn’t feel welcome in the media center because everybody was afraid of what her kids would do. I said well if we give them something to do and we’re standing right over them, watching them, I’m sure we can handle, between two media specialist and their computer check and everyone else, and we never had any problems at all, so she felt good that doors were open for her, that people could see that they were capable of being able to do some things that maybe some of these kids may not have had the opportunity to do.

A Lead teacher CL3 discussed hesitation on the part of veteran staff:

That’s a tough one. There was a lot of reservation on the part of some of the more experienced faculty. I’m talking about people who’ve had a lot of years of experience and are very good teachers. And I’m not sure it was resentment. I think they misinterpreted the role, of particularly the mentor teacher. Once you’ve been teaching twenty, thirty years, you don’t take all the new inservices, you’ve got your stuff together. A lot of these people, as soon as they saw what it was supposed to be, wanted nothing to do with it. They did not want these people in their classroom. Whenever you work in a faculty, people have legitimate or illegitimate opinions about people on the faculty and it’s like “what is this person going to tell me that I don’t already know”. So there was some real resentment. The other side of that is I think for a lot of the newer teachers or younger teachers, here was somebody who was designated, that they could go to and ask for help without it being directed by an administrator. And I think it’s always easier to go to a peer, another teacher and say you know I’m having a problem with disciplining, or how do you get all your stuff done, I just can’t get it all caught up. I think it’s much easier for them to do than going to an administrator. You know if you go to the person that’s observing and say you know I’m having problems with discipline, is that going to cost me my job. We’re in the transition period right now, where we have an older faculty and a younger faculty. I think the older faculty was a lot more hesitant about accepting any advice or any help or anything from these people, and the younger teachers I think were much more opened. I think when a school goes through that kind of catharsis of losing its older …I think that’s going
to happen. I noticed that there were a lot of older teachers that as soon as this was announced wanted nothing to do with it. And once they decided they wanted nothing to do with it, that included they did not want these people interfering. And a lot of it I think had to do with the way it was presented and I just think it’s so difficult to go into a position like that, it’s almost becoming an administrator in your own school. You know you’re never an expert at home. “I saw this guy frantically on Monday trying to throw stuff together and now he’s going to tell me how to plan a lesson plan.” I think that was good and bad both ways. But the biggest thing I think there was acceptance, but more so by the younger people.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 commented:

I don’t think it was very well received for a lot of reasons. I believe that most of the faculty thought that it was fairly subjective and that the process was not done in a way that was either relative or had any basis in some kind of professional need. It was just a question of who wanted to be a lead/mentor and they went before a board of their peers and one administrator. I don’t believe it was accepted that well by the faculty. I can’t think of one person that said that something positive was done as a result of that initial program.

A Lead teacher BL1 talked about the positive impact on teachers:

Everybody was nice to me. I heard about all this dissent, grudges and everyone miffed that they didn’t get more money or whatever, but I never heard that personally. There were times I went to a new teachers’ classroom where we really just tried to establish a non threatening situation. We weren’t evaluators, we were just, “gosh, heres’s what I know about your situation and if I were doing this here’s what I might try”, even though I was coaching you might try that as well and it was just something that we tried, without imposing our wonderfulness, we tried to offer them some suggestions that would be helpful and ….I didn’t get any negative feedback. Every now and then I’d get things like jokes, like you know you better get busy, you’re getting a lot of money for this, just teasing things from colleagues. But as far as grumpy people and resistance, I didn’t get a lot of that. Of course people we were working with really wanted the help so that’s another issue. And we asked them if we could come in and observe. Offering some suggestions and they were all willing to do that so it wasn’t as though they were annoyed that we were there and felt that we were intimidating or anything.

A Lead teacher BL2 said:

I think mainly positive. I think some teachers were resentful but at the same time the teachers that I can think of who were resentful of the financial part of it, they didn’t apply to the program either. So they really weren’t willing to do extra stuff, but resented the fact that the people who applied and got it were making some extra money. Well, you know the money issue is big for teachers. But I would say overall it was positive.
A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 stated:

From my perception, being a first year teacher last year, I was looking forward to working with the lead and mentor teachers, I thought they had a lot to offer, especially an individual in my position. It’s a lot easier to speak with a member of the faculty who is also a co-worker who has spent a lot of time and the necessary required materials to help people out. That would be very beneficial for me. So I thought it was a very, very good idea. Aside from the politics involved in any situation like this, I talked with several of my co-workers and the general consensus was it would be nice to have someone in a position like a lead or mentor teacher to go to for questions, concerns, everything from difficulty managing your classroom to “I don’t know where the heck this form is”. Somebody that would be there to assist and lead and that we could rely on. I had a mentor last year as a first year teacher and she was also in the lead or mentor program. I utilized her very much the way, from what I understand, the program was to be set up for the lead and mentor teachers and she was beneficial beyond the definition of the word last year, she was very, very helpful in all aspects. We were all excited about it.

A Lead teacher BL3 remarked on the positive reception by a school:

The people that I worked with were very receptive. They would seek me out to ask questions. The other teachers, I do know that some of the teachers, what are you doing? They’re in class. If they don’t see you in a classroom, what are you doing? But I was very visible in teacher’s classrooms so they knew what I was doing. They didn’t know what the lead teachers were doing, I think a lot of the faculty, but they would always question, what are the lead teachers doing? But they were working. They just didn’t see it. In fact, if we had to do it again, I think we need to publicize it a little bit more. What the responsibilities were for each person. Overall the reception was good. People would ask questions. I think it was a new thing, so people were apprehensive. I kept reminding them, it’s a pilot program so we don’t know where it’s going to go. We’re piloting this to find out where the bugs are and all of that stuff.

An administration BA1 commented on the skeptical reception observed:

We didn’t have a very good reception initially at the school at all. That’s an overall reception. We had some teachers that were just thrilled because of the monetary attachment that came with it. But we had a lot of teachers who felt like depending on who the teachers were that were going to be on that group, that decision making group and who the administrator was, was going to either seal their fate or there were just too many loopholes within the rubric that they felt they would get, that they would not make it through for the school. Like I told you earlier, I think the majority of people that represent the school on our leadership team that are already supplemented as department heads and learning
community chairs, those were the people who were in those positions, so a lot of it caused a whole lot of shock throughout the faculty. I think there was some dissension initially because when one of our goals was that one of those positions would be hopefully mentor teachers would be in classrooms, not as an administrator but just somebody to help. Whether it was a beginning teacher or an experienced teacher. One of the things I wanted to happen that we didn’t have enough time to do was to have a step type program or have teachers that would do a model lesson or model units that people could have been able to go in and that just wanted ideas that would have had a schedule that was up. That when people who had planning or lunch, because they’ve got those full 100 minutes a day to eat and have planning time that they could utilize that time maybe by once or twice a week going into a colleague’s class and try to get some tips or ideas about a different way to present something or a different way to structure the lesson or something like that. So that’s disappointing that we didn’t get to do that, but I think the overall reception was pretty negative initially. I think the overall consensus in March when it was stated that we weren’t going to have it again, a lot of naysayers that we have here, that just said oh well I knew it wasn’t going to be funded, that’s why I didn’t get involved with it. I’m not so sure that’s the type of people that would have gotten involved with it anyway whether or not, they’re just naysayers and that wouldn’t have happened. I think the mentor teachers and the new teachers really took the most out of this program. I think they made a lot of connections and they formed a lot of good relationships and I think it strengthened the school and it strengthened those teachers, their teaching styles and how they develop units and everything that goes with it, planning, instruction, etc. It wasn’t a confrontational situation, it wasn’t intimidating like it would be for a lot of teachers when an administrator comes in to do an annual evaluation where teachers do a “dog and pony” show for forty minutes and they leave and it’s back to business as usual. I think out of twelve, maybe three or four were pretty active with the staff, so that’s just kind of just were not real, I mean they’re great teachers here they’re good for the school, they do their job and they do it well, but they’re not aspiring to lead anymore than they already lead, and as department heads, a lot of teachers feel overwhelmed already with the time barrier and what they’re already able to do.

*Do you believe that the Lead/Mentor program has benefited you or other individuals at your school? Explain.*

A Lead teacher ALI remarked on the benefits of the program:

Yes, I would say it’s definitely benefited me and if you are a department head or on a leadership team which I wasn’t at that time, and I really needed a leadership role. It was a perfect opportunity for me to experience that and be involved in school based decisions and leading the school in a positive direction, so it was an incredible opportunity for me not only to make more money, but also to actually have my hands in something that I wasn’t able to be a part of before. I think it was
a great opportunity for others for the same reason. It gives more people an opportunity to have a say and to understand what’s going on in the bigger picture. You know you get caught in your little room as a teacher and you don’t see what’s going on in the school around you. I was a self-contained teacher at the time, so it was really eye opening for me. But even if you’re a regular teacher, I think you don’t really know everything that’s going on. I think it was very eye opening for a lot of people.

A Lead teacher AL2 stated:

I would say it benefited me only to see the opportunity to restructure. I thought that the restructuring of leadership in general could be very beneficial to any school involving more people in leadership roles, specifically to address areas that never get addressed at schools. As far as the school as a whole, I would say the only real impact would be mentor teachers and their work with newer teachers. Most people I would say didn’t feel any impact by the lead or mentor program. I felt that if they wanted to do that program then they should have invested the time and money into it, at least eighteen months. They start in the middle of the year, allow those teachers work the rest of that year and then through the entire next year. I think if that were the set up originally then people would have dove in and done all kinds of things, that they knew that they had eighteen months to put into place. Most people, because they didn’t have time to put it into place, just backed off and said can’t do this, not going to be here to finish it, not going to start it. Their first question was well what about next year? And the answer was always, we don’t know about next year, so then it became so what could we do right now. What could we do quick fix or help basically, and we chose the FCAT program which honestly is not necessarily, that could have been done by any group or any one, it didn’t have to be done by lead or mentor teachers.

An administrator AA1 explained:

I definitely feel that it could have been a dynamic program if it had been utilized properly and if it had continued. I think it was priceless as far as the new teachers were concerned, and I think that’s where we would have steered that whole program if it had continued, was with the new teachers and probably using our lead teachers to go into classes and help. Definitely it would have been worthwhile, but I think had it also been in the fall rather than the spring, we would have really had an impact.

A Lead teacher AL3 gives a clear example of the positive impact the Career Ladder can have on teachers:

Absolutely. I’ll use an example. A mentor teacher who brought another teacher into my classroom to observe a lesson that I was giving in the same subject and the mentor teacher wanted this teacher who was struggling in the classroom. To
see how I would go about doing the lesson, not necessarily the lesson itself, but the techniques that I used in the classroom to instruct the students in their lesson. And I think it not only helped the struggling teacher see what he could possibly do a little bit different the next time he gave the lesson, but it also helped me refocus on what I needed to do in the classroom to get that lesson across. So it helped reinforce my skills and it helped him build some skills that maybe he didn’t have before. Through pre and post observation conferences. Pre lesson I explained what I was going to do, I explained the techniques that he was going to see and why I used those techniques, and then gave him an overview of the lesson itself so that he could see the material I was covering and what I was going to do. Then a couple of days later he and the mentor came in and sat down in the back of the class while I was giving the lesson and then following that we had a short, impromptu meeting afterwards so that he could ask me any questions that he saw about the lesson that he didn’t understand why I did certain things the way I did them and he even had a suggestion of how I could improve the lesson the next time I did it. So when you’re talking about how it improved me as a lead teacher, that was one thing, the feedback that he gave me actually helped, the next time I do that lesson, I’ll change it a little bit. I’ll use his suggestion.

A non-Lead or mentor teacher said:

Definitely and I think with regard to helping teachers, both new and experienced teachers to improve their skills. I think the choice of the four mentors for the most part they were really not just very capable educators but really good people who cared very much about the students, but about their colleagues as well and really had a desire to see teachers be successful and do the best work they could do. I think the fact that they were willing to go into classrooms and offer advice and offer assistance, that’s always going to be a benefit.

An administrator CA1 remarked about the leadership opportunities this program presented to teachers:

I think that some of the benefits I saw, it really gave people opportunities to assume leadership positions that had not opportunities previous to this. It gave those individuals an opportunity to see the other side of the coin and to get out of the classroom so to speak, and see some of the other issues that we deal with outside of the classroom. So I think there was a lot of leadership growth and development for those people during that time. I think it gave them an appreciation for the administrative side of education which I thought was a big benefit. From the benefit to the administration it really freed us up to do some other things, like doing the data analysis, setting up a good research library, those are things that you wish you had more time to really get in depth, but I’m not sure that shouldn’t be a teacher’s responsibility. When you’re looking at the finite details of data analysis I think that should be a function of faculty development
and growth. So I think it was good. I thought there were some really good benefits coming out of it.

A Lead teacher CL1 stated:

Specifically it has benefited me, there’s no doubt. Everybody has things they do well. I’m not a perfect teacher, nobody is. But getting in other people’s rooms and helping them and discussing ideas, all the programs I came up with I usually worked cooperatively with other people. Sometimes I was the leader of a committee, sometimes not, but it was the opportunity there to bang heads with the professionals and come up with some real good stuff and I feel we did. On the other side of that I worked with a lot of young teachers especially. They need the most help during that survival mode. I think watching their performance this year having not been invited in their room so much but just watching the way they interact with kids and the talk amongst the others of the faculty, that there was an impact there and these young teachers are now surviving an beyond. They’re getting more creative in the classroom, they’re handling their classroom management issues which was a lot of what we were asking them to do is helping with classroom management, so I think overall it was a huge impact on my life and a big impact with the faculty.

A Lead teacher explained:

Absolutely. I believe that this program was pretty much tailor made for me and I really enjoyed mentoring teachers. I love working with new teachers. I don’t know why I like to share so much. It just gives me a good feeling, so that’s a benefit to me to feel that my many, many years of experience not just being used within the confines of my own four walls in my classroom, but can be shared with other people and I feel bad when I hear or see chaos or lack of education going on in other places where a word, a phrase, a couple of ideas for projects could smooth things out and make things go better in a school and I like to see everything working as a finely tuned engine. So I enjoyed it very much and I know that some of the people that I worked with as I mentioned the English teacher who was not experienced I was asked to go in and do a blitz on FCAT writing in her class because they suddenly realized, oh my gosh, FCAT’s in two weeks and she’s not prepared and she came in second quarter too. So there was a crossover of teachers so I did a five day blitz in her class where I just took over her class completely and she got to observe me all day long and sometimes she said she felt inadequate after watching me and I said no, no pick up and take notes, listen and learn and keep a copy of everything I hand out and add to your files and then just try to emulate what works for you because learning to teach is like going to a cafeteria, and picking out what works for you and what you like and discarding what doesn’t work.

A Lead teacher CL3 observed benefits for staff explaining:
I know it’s benefited people at this school. I know that there are people that I can say without a doubt have benefited from this program because of the leadership and the guidance and in some instances the hand holding that they got and the fact that they were able to get perhaps somebody to come in and model. One of the greatest disappointments that I had, I did not apply to be a mentor because I did not want to leave two of my classes in the middle of the year. I just couldn’t do that. That’s just me. There was an inservice I had to take which I hadn’t taken. So I took this inservice which was supposed to tell me how to be this kind of collegial coach and I kept looking for that to be happening here and it didn’t, where a teacher would invite somebody to come in and they would do some kind of analysis and then sit down with that teacher and say here I see there’s an issue we have something we can work on here, and let me get you something.

It really was more of a coaching situation. Most of what I saw was, somebody runs to me because they’re having trouble with their sixth period. Sixth period is out of control, come help me or that kind of thing. So I don’t think, it never reached its mission in terms of what I think it could be. Me personally, I think it benefited me because that was one more, I almost look at this as that this is more key of experience that I’ve picked up. I learned a tremendous about working with people and not forcing myself on people. I’ve always worked with the young teachers in my department and so forth, and I think I learned more from observation than actual participation. If we went through this process again I know I would be much more vocal from the very beginning in terms of what I thought we could and should do.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 remarked about the lack of impact the Career Ladder had in the spring of 2004:

It hasn’t benefited me directly in a way that I can pinpoint and I’m not aware of anything. It may have occurred, but I’m not aware of it and I would have thought that if something positive did occur it would have been brought to the attention of the faculty at large.

A Lead teacher explained:

I know it’s benefited me because I don’t care how much you think you can handle what’s going on at school, when you get out and get into classes, I also, because I had the periods off, I went and visited all my members of my departments and even though I modeled lesson plans and talked about what they were doing. There’s nothing like getting into a classroom and then letting people come into your classroom. We offered that as well, sometimes we’d go into a classroom and model what we would do. It’s really a hard thing to do because someone has to have your teaching styles to benefit from your modeling, because what works for one person doesn’t necessarily work for another, but I think that if they see enough examples they take can pick the one they like the best. It’s helped me sort
of gain a new awareness of what’s going on and sort of digs in and works them together, and lots of good things are going on so it helps boost me up a little while we still came up short but we’re all on the right track. I think, and I don’t know if it was unique to our school, I can’t imagine that it is, but in our school in the departments were pretty helpful, so we’ll get a new member and someone will say ask him, he’s done that and they get together and they share their activities or their understanding of the situation or whatever and we teach each other. So when I wasn’t a mentor teacher if someone wanted my help I would give it anyway and the same if I needed someone’s help myself I’d ask for it and I’d usually get it as well, so I don’t think everybody in our school is pretty much would say well I’m the mentor.

A Lead teacher BL2 expressed the benefits by saying:

I know that it benefited me because I have a clearer understanding now of failure rate within my own department and I was placed on the literacy team and learned some strategies to explore literacy in the math classroom and we came up with some great ideas, the math department just forgot to order new textbooks and so we gave away the old textbooks once the new ones came in. That’s a rare thing that a kid has an opportunity to take home an actual textbook and I told them that they would make great Christmas gifts. And I looked at the placement of students, from the grades from the prior year and where they were supposed be placed and looked for discrepancies there and that was very interesting. I don’t know that I can speak specifically for other people. I know that the other lead in the math department, when she and I worked together, we were grateful, we were also ordering varying textbooks at the same time, we were thankful to have each other to work with because ordering textbooks for an entire department is a very big job. We worked the end of the last school year and some of the summer, trying to get numbers, like how many Algebra I books do we need to order, but all that paperwork is due, really early before you actually know the numbers. And we’re still waiting on materials to come in, from the publisher too.

A non- Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 offered:

Aside from myself, I believe there was another young lady, she wasn’t a first year teacher but last year was her first year here at this school, and her department head, I believe he was a lead teacher. And he was very helpful to her as far as getting materials for her classroom, above and beyond the average department head for the situation and he was more of a facilitator for her in getting some things that she needed. Technology based, especially. Aside from that I can’t think of any specific examples beyond my own involvement.

A Lead teacher BL3 discussed the collegial nature of the pilot period:

Yes I do. I think it’s benefited me because I had the opportunity to see my colleagues and talk to them and actually to help them because I do think there’s a
part of the teacher, when they get to a certain level, they have a lot of experience, and they just need to share that experience with others. And then, as far as the teachers that I worked with, everyone was appreciative. There were two teachers that we thought we were going to lose, and they’re back this year. So I really felt that it made a difference. They really did open up. Teachers talk to you. They ask you questions, they want to know how you do it. I’m a beginning teacher, how do you do it? And then you can provide them suggestions. It may not work and you tell them that, you know it might not work for you, but we’ll find them something that does. So we worked through all that and I really do think it helped the people that I worked with.

An administrator BA1 explained the benefits from an administrative standpoint:

Yes. Personally it benefited me. Both the lead and mentor teachers have been involved with the master schedule and that’s the main job in the summer. I used all sixteen people for different things. Some of it was grunt work that I would have had to do, or a volunteer would have done or a data entry operator would have done, but to have people that placed kids for example in a foreign language, incoming freshman, I used two Spanish teachers that were, two foreign language teachers, one lead, one mentor, had those two teachers pair up for the four days and one of their jobs was to look at the current eighth graders coming in and placing them in intensive reading in either Stage A or Stage B as opposed to being in a foreign language class, because why should they have to struggle and then we have to move them. So that was a direct benefit. Two math teachers that were both lead teachers, had those teachers come in and look at program and study and placement of kids and looking at their academic history screens and making sure they were signed up for the right courses and if they weren’t, it was still early enough, they did those days in early June, the first week of June, that we started on time to make adjustments with sections and do all the steps, at least some of those things before teachers really knew what they were going to teach, beyond just the title of the course. So those types of things really benefited me as an administrator, not to mention but all the little things they did revolving around committee work and things like that not necessarily would be my jobs to do, but things that I oversaw, or things that I… And I think personally, I benefited the most in the curriculum position here from the use of all sixteen of those people more than any other, other than the principal maybe because it made some of our jobs easier. But, a lot of the other AP’s that are isolated and doing different things, facility and IB and some of those things, it was real hard to utilize them. One real good thing that I think that was enhanced here, and that’s your next question, I think. The one thing that really benefited our school was not only that things were planned out a little bit better, but they had a direct hand in our SIP Plan implementation for this year and they hadn’t done that in the past. That was the mostly an administrative thing that was done and then it was shown to the department heads before we restructured our leadership group and they just rubber stamped it and it was done. If there was any input it was taken down and written down, but it was considered for the following school year, so I think they
felt more comfortable and felt like they were more involved because they had a buy in into what our school were going to be. The other I would say would be our combination of our lead and mentor teachers. I had them develop a new teacher packet they did first year teacher or a new teachers to Pasco county. They did sessions with those teachers weekly for the first quarter of the school year and then it went on to once a month after that, and they came in right around those induction days and one of those half days, I had two, we hired two mentor teachers for the afternoon. They formed a packet, they taught them how to write out admits, how to work the referrals, how they do that, how they got their training from a text specialist on our grades, on the computer, they learned what terms was, they learned the vision of the school, the mission of the school and some history behind Land O’ Lakes, so all that kind of stuff, that was positive things that we probably, every year we’ll be able to do that half day training for new people because it benefited them and they walked in and had an idea of what needs to be done from policies and procedures but all the other things we don’t have the funding to do that now, so that was a benefit.

Do you believe the Lead/Mentor teachers have enhanced programs at your school? Can you give an example?

A Lead teacher AL1 mentioned:

I would say for the FCAT I think that one of our groups really learned a lot about data and about understanding students that you’re working with at your school and what their needs are. You have a great percentage of students that are passing FCAT math but they’re very low at reading and if your staff doesn’t know that then you are out of the loop and how are you helping the students. So we looked at the Pasco Star that was something that we really looked at and how that could benefit the teachers and how you could look at the program and know immediately the kids that are in your class right in front of you where they would perform in the FCAT and what you could do in your own classrooms and if you see trends and you focus that in whatever part of your lesson you wanted to, so I think it was very beneficial in that sense.

A Lead teacher AL2 concluded:

No. Actually I felt that the opportunity was there with that brainstorming list, but because it was short term, we picked things that were easy, that need to be done all the time. There were many things that were listed there, that had they been worked on, they could have made a tremendous impact. I felt coming into this year, losing the lead or mentor program put us back to where we were one year ago. It is exactly the same as where we were which means then that program really had very little impact. It had potential, tremendous potential but little impact.
An administrator AA1 commented on a departmental impact:

Well, the one did work with the history program. She went in and she did a whole history section on Pasco County, did a video and the kids did a video power point presentation with the students and showed them how to come up with information and work on the textbooks that were available and they also had to come up with a video and present something of interest from Pasco County and that worked really well. And a couple of other history teachers adopted that and it was about a two-week program.

A lead teacher AL3 gave a specific example:

The existing program that I can think of goes along with that same example would be the step program and that would be the mentoring of the teachers and showing them actually going through observations in the classroom. Right now I can’t think of another example.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 commented on the success of Mentors in the Career Ladder:

Sure. Not to be redundant, the mentor program I think could have been the most effective tool we have with regard to teacher retention and with regard to acclimating new teachers to this career field. With regard to the lead teacher I think that it could have been, had it gone longer than one semester, I think that could have been a really effective tool to build unity across the curriculum, to be able to have teacher oversight of what all of the different subject areas are doing and get some uniformity. You know it’s always an issue when we have students coming from another school, if they don’t have the same course, if they come from Hudson to Mitchell and they’re in one class there we don’t even offer it here, or they’re in one class there and up to this point they should have covered a b and c but in our class they’re already up to g h and i. That’s going to be a problem and I think that that’s where the lead teachers could have been most effective on building that continuity of curriculum.

An administrator CA1 stated:

I don’t believe we developed any specific programs as an outgrowth of that other than utilizing the resources of each those individuals as a resource tool and a research tool for the staff. They weren’t given a task, okay, go out and develop this program or that program in the short time that we had. They didn’t do that. They did some specific data analysis, they did some training of that with the staff on how to access and look at data, as I mentioned and then using their own expertise as a model classroom approach.

A Lead teacher CL1 explained:
We were asked to do a variety of things, from coming up with a whole modern discipline plan to helping with attendance issues that we could see the county changing it’s ten day policy. It’s hard to say how much those programs affected the building in that we had a change in administration, number one and number two, the program was dropped, so when the program was dropped a lot of the momentum we had created for change dropped with it. Now some of the physical things we did to this building like creating the teachers’ resource library and some of that, there’s a teaching practice encounter that still exists in the faculty lounge, we remodeled the faculty lounge, we remodeled the library, some of that obviously is still there, but for how long?

A lead teacher CL2 said:

If given more time yes, it was just barely starting to scratch the surface. As I mentioned we were very excited about the plans that we were coming up with at the end of the year and not every lead and mentor was able to attend that particular meeting, sometimes when you have too large of a group you just get bogged down and you can’t get anything done, so we had I’d say six or eight people including Mr. Letvin, he did a masterful job of helping guide and direct us so that we would have ideas of where to go, so I was very excited about what was going to come out next and working with new teachers as they come in. Of course we do have the plan where one teacher works with one new teacher for the beginning teacher program, so it’s not like they have no one over them, which is a double negative. . It was terrific and I think also the fact that an experienced teacher came to me and said I need help with discipline and I feel very strong in handling disciplinary problems in a non-threatening way. I think that one of the best classes a person could take by the way is teach, teacher enhancement and classroom handling and I think everybody should have to take that and that should be an undergraduate class actually and then take regular updates on it. It had the possibility of doing great things and maybe it will be funded again someday by the legislature.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 commented:

No I don’t believe it has at all. Well I would have liked to have saw something done along the lines of technology and integrating technology into the daily lesson plans and curriculums of the teachers. I think that would have been an excellent program. I found in my experiences and I’m sure other people can support it, that teachers today do not get the training that they need in the ed programs at USF and other schools where they come into the classroom and they’re not ready to go ahead and merge technology with the curriculum, so I would have liked to see the mentors and the lead teachers model that aspect and I think it would have been a benefit to the students. . I think they should have been. I think that should have been part of the selection process. We are a technology based educational system today so I think that should have been a high priority.
A Lead teacher BL1 said:

Yes because we tried to develop some guidelines for each program. Here’s what you should do if you’re a co-teacher. Here’s what you should do if you’re a content teacher and work with a co-teacher in the classroom. These are just common courtesy things that aren’t brain surgery but they sometimes think that when you’re in the heat of bodies everyday in your room.

A Lead teacher BL2 explained:

I do. I have to speak for myself, personally that I do have a greater understanding and appreciation for what goes on administratively and what a Masters schedule is like and then also looking at my own failures within my class and I think I’ve come up with better strategies for those kinds of kids and then being on the literacy team there were some really creative ideas that came out of that.

A non-Lead or mentor teacher BT1 said:

Again, going back to the first question, I’m not really aware which programs they were targeting. I honestly do not know if they have enhanced any of the programs. It did enhance a lot of spirit within the community of teachers and a helpful atmosphere and a teamwork atmosphere, and I found them very helpful. As far as programs go, I couldn’t comment specifically.

A lead teacher BL3 gave a clear example:

I can only give you an example of what I did and some of the other teachers. Yes, I think we enhanced the reading program, because we saw what was going on and what the needs were and we helped the students. That was really a big thing. Actually I was teaching high level students and I saw the need for teaching some of the lower level students and this year I’m teaching them because I wanted to. I go into the classrooms and I see these kids struggling. And I say you know what, there’s an easier way to do this and there’s a better way. So I’m thinking to myself, wow I could really help them and I know some of the other teachers thought the same thing. So an enhancement of some of the programs could be your experienced teachers in the classroom teaching the lower level students and I love it. My co-teach class, I love that class this year, and I don’t think I would ever have taken that opportunity to have a co-teach class, because you know you basically volunteer for it, and I don’t think I would have unless I’d seen that last year. What we should do and I think that some of the teachers, I know I can speak for myself, but they did kind of agree, because you’ve done it so long, you’re so experienced doing what you do, why move onto something else. But after seeing those students succeed I really walked into those classrooms and I taught the classes with the teachers. And so with beginning teachers, I would teach the class, it was math, I’d teach science, I can teach math. I would teach the class a different way and the teacher would watch me. And the students got to learn and
there’s a difference in the way they reacted to the teacher, their teacher and we worked together as a team and I loved it. And from that I said wow I really would like to teach these kids. I don’t think I would have ever done that. But the program, the lead or mentor teacher do those kinds of things, that would enhance the classroom, it would help those students so much. It really would. I think that’s one of the biggest. I saw besides helping the teachers, the students, the impact on the students. I got to know those kids like they were my own, and when I walked down the hall, they’d say hi to me. They’d wave their hand and say please help me. They knew I was a science teacher but they understood I could do math too. That was really neat. I really enjoyed that a lot.

An administrator BA1 responded to the question emphasizing the FCAT administration and the assistance the team of Lead and Mentor teachers offered by stating:

I used two or three of the lead teachers for FCAT, during the FCAT process. Again, it helped me, I mean and overall it helped the school. With over 80 boxes of FCAT material coming in with just unpacking and organizing and helping design the exam schedules, since we tested in the morning and then again in the afternoon with the ninth graders, assigning specific tasks, like snacks, and making sure the teachers got snacks to kids, a lot of logistical stuff around testing, I had three or four. What I did was I assigned each lead/mentor to a monthly task and for some group, three or four people for a task, for some people, they did it in one afternoon, and in others it took them longer to do. Later in the Spring when data started to come back in, one of the things they did in the summer days, they did the data analysis of the schools and tried to draw connections to what we were doing, what the sip plan since they had some buy into that. But in terms of specific programs our literacy program, we didn’t have any literacy team, we built that team up to make sure every group was represented, we had a latte, we did like a coffee shop type atmosphere, we did that in February, some of the mentor/lead teachers were involved with that, with designing that, it was the second year we did it, but we made some changes with their help, our Gator Fest, they were involved with that, that’s a big learning community activity, one of our learning communities. So I would say some of those types of things that they were involved with the school.

Specifically, how were the Lead/Mentor teachers at your school given the opportunity to lead teachers?

A Lead teacher AL1 stated:

A specific example would be an extended-day group that I was working with. We touched our entire faculty basically by involving them in the process, the nine/ten period day, whatever it was going to be, is a huge change. First of all people wanted to know what exactly that it was. A lot of people didn’t know. Then
letting them know what it was and saying do you have any suggestions, can you see any problems with this, what are your specific problems to your area, really trying to get a handle on the different areas of the school, language arts, everybody, chorus, band, athletics, what are the issues you see, what are the problems that you see that we might address. That was the way that we touched the entire faculty in trying to get their opinions and get people involved. We’re going to be going to this so what do you think.

A Lead teacher AL2 explained:

No I still think only the mentor teachers really had direct impact with teachers. Most of the other things that the rest of the teachers dealt with were either paper work type of things, whether it’s implementing, it wasn’t directly working with teachers. Work with the department directors wasn’t something that was being done without lead or mentor. It would have been through department heads or things like that. Even the goal areas that were worked on were more so rewriting and evaluating goals and restructuring the goals not necessarily direct contact.

An administrator remarked:

Actually it was very open ended. They were given really whatever they wanted to do. I think maybe that was a negative. I think it was looked at originally as a positive thing, but you and I both know that if you don’t have goals and they’re concise and whatever, it’s too random. And I think that was a problem, that we should have focused in on, hey this is what we need you to do. I think that it was given to them as here you have this position and go ahead and create it. And I think there needed to be some guidelines.

A Lead teacher AL3 described the assistance the Lead and mentor teachers were able to provide:

The lead teachers were put in a position with other teachers, especially in the learning community that had questions or concerns about policy or about the way they were to run things in their classrooms, the responsibilities they had, they knew they could go to the lead teachers to find out what the policy was, what was expected of them. And that was a big bond I think, in terms of being actively involved with the other teachers in the learning community. It helped me get to know the people who were working in the community and I think it added a little bit of the leadership element to the lead and mentor positions and we knew we were responsible for certain things and we knew that there would be other members in the community who would need our help and support in certain areas. Knowing that they could come to us was a big responsibility because you have to be aware of what’s going on and you have to know which directions to point people when they come to you. But I think that just added to the effectiveness of the lead and mentor positions.
A non-Lead or Mentor teacher said:

No. I don’t know that the administrators would have had the time available to go into the classrooms the way the mentor teachers were able to. So, I don’t think it would have been done had the mentor teacher program not been in place. As far as the lead teachers it’s my opinion that we just entered this program maybe without all of our ducks in a row because it was my understanding as well that it was mandated that we jump into this program and perhaps if we had a better understanding before jumping into it of what people could do and how best we could utilize these individuals maybe they would have had the opportunity to make more of a difference. But I don’t know how much the lead teachers had the opportunity to lead or to impact curriculum which I believe was their responsibility. I think it was a time thing. I think it was also that, and again because I wasn’t involved in the program, I’m talking to you about this is my opinion somewhat from heresay, and what I observed, but I don’t know that everything was put in place and that it was really thought out fully prior to jumping into this.

An administrator CA1 concluded:

Yes, but only from the standpoint of providing training for staff. In terms of other administrative roles, I can’t recall any. As I remember the way it flushed out in the pilot, we didn’t have an equal distribution in terms of all the content areas, I think we had several in the science area, I think we may have been short in math areas, though you didn’t have them spread out as much as you would like in terms of that respect. But we had several people in science, they had responsibility for staff development and being a lead teacher within the science department and doing modeling of good lessons, etc., best practices.

A Lead teacher CL1 explained that the organization of the leadership group by stating:

The assistant principal that was in charge of us gave us a whole lot of freedom. Certain members he seemed to favor. The leads were very difficult to meet with and were difficult to motivate in that they didn’t have the time off. The mentors seemed to work almost independently, but there were times that we did meet and share ideas and what are you working on. The mentors worked independently, and then from time to time, maybe once a week we would meet with each other, at least two or three of us. Now, once a week, we all met and our assistant principal tried to give us some direction but I think he was expecting people to be self-motivated, which we know is not practical. Some of us were very motivated and worked very hard and some of us didn’t.

A Lead teacher CL2 said:
No, I really don’t think that the Lead or mentor teachers had the opportunity to really lead teachers. I think they just lacked the time or direction on how to do that kind of thing.

A lead teacher CL3 explained:

I’m not sure about the question. One of the things we hoped to do was work and try to improve the communication between the learning communities, because we were in various learning communities and that was something we could hopefully try to facilitate. What we found was it was so hard, even when we were meeting once a week, to try to coordinate one community’s material along with everything else, it was something that we kept talking about and kept talking about but I don’t think we ever saw anything concrete come out of it, other than when we got together people from different learning communities would talk about what they were doing or trying to get done in the community and I think there were some instances where people said well that would tie into what we’re doing over here, but it was never something that came as strongly as we had hoped.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 reported:

Well, I could be mistaken but I believe it was on a volunteer basis. If you felt you wanted to have a mentor or lead teacher, you approached them and then they would come into your classroom. I don’t think they were assigned anyone, unless perhaps maybe it was a new teacher or something of that nature. But most of it was the individual had to originate the request and I don’t know what the result was of that.

A Lead teacher BL1 said:

A lot of the lead teachers that I know assumed tasks that were previously designated to department chairs or team leaders and that’s true of the mentors as well. We assumed tasks that were traditional, that existed in our school before were handled by somebody else. So as a person who has a responsibility of leading a department or leading a team, that’s your opportunity to assume some leadership roles without being an administrator.

A lead teacher BL2 described how they looked at failure rates school-wide:

I guess we were leading teachers because I was on the team and we looked at the failure rate and we put it all into a spread sheet and discussed it within our math department and such so we led our teachers to be aware at least in the department that I’m in that the failure rate and the attendance weren’t really correlated at the rate you would think and to get on that phone and make the parents aware when those kids are failing and because I think for the most part if you have a child who is making straight F’s and are coming to school everyday I think there’s definitely a gap there as far as the parent communication is not in place the way it should be.
A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 stated:

I recall at a faculty meeting that was discussed that the lead/mentor teachers were going to be given less actual class with the children, the students, and more time to go into the classroom and observe other teachers not as an evaluation but as “I’m here, what do you need? Do you need this time to do something, do you need to talk to me?” Definitely, that was discussed.

A Lead teacher BL3 discussed the efforts of the Mentor teachers:

The mentor teachers were invited into the classrooms. The lead teachers, that was a little bit more questionable. It was a pilot program and I could honestly say that I even saw it as, I don’t know, because they really did meet with Mr. Knobl and our paths didn’t cross except if they were supposed to work in teams but that didn’t happen until the end of the year. I guess the lead teachers were given opportunities, but again I didn’t see that because I didn’t see them in the classroom. But I’ll tell you who I did see was Penny Garcia. She would come into classrooms and help teachers that we’re struggling. So we did have some veteran teachers that invited us into the classrooms to help them, and I did see her visibly in classrooms helping teachers. But I think the opportunities were there, believe me the opportunities were there, but I didn’t see some of the lead teachers. I really don’t know the direction. I’ll be honest with you, I just don’t know.

An administrator BA1 remembered:

A lot of our committee work, where we already had chair people, it was just kind of funny that most of chair people were lead or mentor teachers, so I don’t know per se if it would have been any different without the mentor program, but certainly when we revamped the district changed its attendance policy we had one of two lead teachers who started a attendance committee here at the school and those two teachers led that committee that created the policies for Land O’ Lakes and then they presented to our leadership group, and one of them presented to the faculty. That’s another example. I’ve asked two or three teachers to create maps each period and color code available rooms that were opened because this building is used ten hours a day, adult ed is here and district people are here at night for training and different things, we needed to have an easier way to know what rooms were opened, so that was one that a mentor and lead teacher grabbed and formed a committee and looked at not only what rooms were opened, but were there ways that we could maybe move some people around to free up a wing lets say or free up some different areas and to minimize floating and things like that. But a lot of those teachers, it was recognized by the faculty when they came back in August, some of the nice things that they had been able to implement and put in place. Like I say, a lot of the things that revolved around the master schedule, the teachers, it was very noticeable this year, that there wasn’t as much movement with kids as my first couple of years of being here, there was a lot
more. This year they noticed a lot less kids were misplaced because that extra set of eyes, and those extra hours for twelve to sixteen people to look at fifty to one-hundred kids apiece. Those lead/mentor teachers we had them plan, we did a second evening registration that we had them really heavily involved with that, to plan that, and get volunteers to cover that. I think we’re going through stats right now, we had a couple of our lead/mentor teachers kind of spearhead that process along with me and another administrator, we kind of went in the right direction but let them lead and run those different sections and we were just kind of there as participants, they asked us questions, if they weren’t sure of something, or they needed clarification, but we let them go and lead the group and develop the agendas and do the different things that needed to be done.

*Do you believe that within the Pilot program there was an effort to reward teachers for their students’ high performance? Can you give an example of what might have occurred?*

A lead teacher AL1 stated:

Other than that I don’t really know how teacher were rewarded except with being able to participate in the bigger picture of the school. I don’t know of any ways that teachers had been rewarded. How could they have been rewarded? I guess if we had continued our focus on the FCAT, and at the end of the year only when the students celebrated, the teachers were not included in that, if we had raised our scores in whatever areas, if it had been a bigger project then we could have started at the beginning of the school year then we could have seen a great amount of success with it. Unfortunately it started in January and we had a few months to put everything in place, so I think rewards for teachers could be involved with that, but most teachers got help from mentor teachers I think that’s a reward in itself. Its kind of an intrinsic reward really that you got from this short implementation of the Career Ladder Program. Besides money, people that were in the mentor/lead group benefited financially. People that weren’t got help and hopefully improved school a little bit.

A Lead teacher AL2 remarked:

None I can think of. That is one of the areas that we felt should have been addressed, that teacher recognition along with student recognition, to recognize teachers for the good job they’re doing in the classroom with their kids. Although, we did come up with ideas, actually several different things, either nominating teachers, more like index cards congratulating teachers on a good job on this, just acknowledge that people are doing things, and they talked about a luncheon once a month, with all the different teachers that were chosen, but it wouldn’t be pick one teacher a month, it would consistent of all the little things they do all the
An administrator AA1 explained:

There was some discussion in regards to that. I’m trying to think of what it was. Oh I know what the discussion was. We were looking forward to that part of it because we thought that it would be difficult to say, okay here is money because your kids did good, because we were told the money was coming from the teachers that didn’t do well, so how could we justify that and what would it do to our morale at the school. Is that how you understood that the money was coming, it wasn’t additional monies. We had X amount of money so we would be taking from one and giving it to the other so we thought that would be a really bad idea. We didn’t have to because at that time it was just a pilot and we didn’t know if it was going to continue, but we knew that we were going to open up a huge can of worms if we ever got to that point.

A Lead teacher AL3 said:

I’m not aware of any outright reward or recognition or anything the teachers were given on their student performance. I do know that when we looked at the goal of student performance in Goal 3, we looked at ways to add incentives for the students, not so much for the teachers. So I think the teachers were more concerned with providing more initiative for their kids rather than reaping the rewards themselves, if that makes any sense. They were more concerned about the kids.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 stated:

I don’t know. I think in theory, sure. Quite honestly I think in the initial pilot program, with it being such a brief experience, I think people got the paper work they were trying to understand and decipher the paper work, they were looking at the bottom line, okay if I do this I will get this monetary reward and I think ultimately because, if there was a buy-in from the top down. My perception is that district was told this is what you need to implement. District told administrators this is what you need to implement, administrators told staff this is what we have to implement, but I didn’t get the impression that from all of the administrators that this is something that they believed in, that they were ready to invest in, beyond what was required of them, so that’s why I say in theory, sure. In fact I don’t know, because when it came right down to it, if a teacher is told you’re going to get a $750 check if you do this, okay I jump through that hoop to get that $750. Whether or not student performance is actually impacted, I don’t know.

An administrator CA1 concluded:
The concept was there and I know with the pay structure and how it was broken out was a part of that has to do with student achievement, but that part of it given the current state of where we’re at, I thought was very difficult to assess. Because getting the immediate feedback in terms of the data that you had to show that the student actually did achieve. What we tried to move towards was having the teachers select some quantifiable measure that would give them more immediate feedback. By the time they get that, your students are already gone, so it’s difficult to do that. I’ve been looking at overall approach. So we try to get teachers, what measure can you come up with so you can say to the kids learn more in your class from beginning to end. So we have to begin to look at things like are there pre and post test measurements that you can define. If you’re going to get paid a portion of that, and to all teachers on this achievement pay, how do you measure that, so we try to get teachers to look at things like pre and post testing. If I’m an English teacher doing a pre-writing, you know post writing over time, doing math, we have a lot of good pre and post tests that come with the book series, or devising something yourself, so we ask them to do that as part of their professional development plan, to look at more short time or quantifiable things that you can do. The other measure is that you still want to use the FCAT data and that kind of test data, and get it back to teachers, so we did a lot of that during that period of time. The assistant principal in charge of this program worked with the lead or mentors who would look at that data and disaggregate it so that it would get it back to the specific teachers, this is how your kid did for the reading or the math or whatever, but then you’re only looking specifically your English and math people and a little bit later the science people come aboard. That was the piece I think that we had to move away from some of the more traditional kind of data in the classroom, here’s an English teacher: how can I demonstrate to my kids, so it was helping them to look at that specifically and incorporate that into their professional development plan. That part we looked at and we became conscious of it because of the pay structure and the fact that you’ve got to show that your kids have increased their growth.

A Lead teacher CL1 explained:

Not really. I know that part of the program involved hitting your PDP goals which was fairly easy. Other than that I didn’t see a whole lot of effort in that way. You know change it really slow. Having somebody change the method of instruction within their room instead of going from a teacher dominated room to more of a student oriented room for example which is part of the best practices of teaching, that’s a hard change to make and that’s not going to happen in a two or three month period. That has to be worked and developed maybe over the better part of a year or longer.

A Lead teacher CL2 explained:

Well, yes, besides the fact that as a mentor teacher I was given career ladder money which of course I was very grateful for, teachers were able to write their
PDP with the approval of the administrator and then meet the objectives they set for themselves and then if each teacher, whoever did that was able to gain monetarily.

A Lead teacher CL3 talked about the process:

They put out a paper, a form, asking if anybody wanted one of the leads or mentors to contact them and what they wanted to help them with and they could either ask for a specific lead or mentor or they could just say anybody, and those would be turned into the administration and then funneled back to us and then we would go back and make the contacts that way. We talked about it in one of the meetings about the form, I know we did a rough draft on it and one of mentors worked on that and we came back and made a couple of changes and that’s where it came from because it would be good – someone comes up to you and says do you need any help, I can help you. So we did it that way. Unfortunately a lot of what we got was my sixth period’s a disaster, can you come in and help me or it was not just I’m having a little problem with discipline, but sometimes I have chaos in this area, come help me. Giving them lead or mentor positions. No I don’t think that was the case. I think within the framework or the rubric of the answers that they were looking for based on what they got from the district but I would not automatically say that it was your kids have done well on tests so we’ll reward you by making you a lead or mentor. Some of the best teachers you have maybe working with kids that are not going to make great advancements and they could make wonderful leads or mentors. In this school I would not say that was the reason.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 said:

I’m not aware of it.

A lead teacher BL1 mentioned:

I know that there were some tasks that were suggestions based on the data. I know that people were looking at that based on data. As a matter of fact we have a pilot program in the English department for the FCAT writing and we scored some sample papers from our district and then we actually documented those on the report card forms at the end of the year and those are being used by research and evaluation in the district to compare with the FCAT scores and so we were involved in providing data for the district to use for to improve our schools and there was a committee in our school, there was a group of lead and mentor teachers who worked on compiling and evaluating, analyzing data.

A Lead teacher BL2 explained:

No, that was such a good idea though and I have asked for, because I struggle with writing a PDP every year and this is I think my eleventh year teaching but

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that’s definitely something that could happen and be a good that thing could come out of the lead or mentor program saying here are just some examples of some really great things that you could do, and word for word a PDP gives. I hate PDP’s. I don’t think I know of anyone who really enjoys writing a PDP but I do know that there’s some people at the school and I know that some of them were lead or mentor teachers who are excellent at writing PDPs. I mentored a teacher last year, it was her very first year, because I have that certification, whatever that was for that clinical thing, I don’t know that the lead program helped me help her last year but I think that if it was continuously going on that would have helped me help her more.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 said:

Yes, based on the fact that we were given the opportunity to utilize other individuals on the staff that only furthers our ability to have our students succeed.

A Lead teacher BL3 remarked:

That’s how I feel. With the Career ladder, at the end of the year if you did you PDP, you had certain things for students, like for instance, I would have something where they would improve, called a pre test or post test, like this year, working on reading and plans or how to progress and to chart if they’re progressing and that would be attached to my PDPs. If their performance was higher than they would be rewarded at the end of the year. I see it apart from that would be AP funds or IB money where students’ high performance is rewarded with money in this program, but our career ladder was because of the PDP and if they did meet the higher standards they got better scores.

An administrator BA1 discussed the rewards:

I would say that the, that just the surface answer would be yes, that they were funded via stipends and part of that stipend was for them to not only to help improve student performance, but just overall school climate would be improved by the extra hours, the extra efforts with projects. Certainly if it was utilized correctly, it helped administrators run the school. It ran a lot smoother than before you had this program. But I think in terms of like rewarding teachers for student high performance, if you look at it more in depth they probably weren’t funded for that purpose. I think initially the stipend was given because they knew they’d be doing a lot of things outside their contract, projects, night, evening, literacy night and things like that that were going to take up a lot of their time to plan and to me for student performance we would be rewarding those teachers for not only what they do in the classroom but how a mentor teacher helped a reading teacher get eighteen out of twenty kids to pass the FCAT reading when the year before that teacher only had eight or nine. So I would think that would be some stronger data for you that that would be what was going on. Our lead teachers generally teach upper level kids, a lot of them did anyway, not all of them, we had
some Drop Out Prevention people and stuff like that, but I think generally the consensus around the county was a lot of the lead teachers were department heads and the general perception is that department heads teach the best that you have and I think for those people to be compensated truly for student performance then they should have been working with lower level kids. I think it’s a double-edged sword. I think they were definitely rewarded and compensated for their efforts, but in terms of it being strictly for student performance I don’t think, we didn’t get to that point.

*What will be the long-term benefits of a Career Ladder program at your school?*

*Specifically, which areas of your school or district would be addressed?*

A lead teacher AL1 reflected:

I think the benefits would have been great, and if they kept it I think they would have been incredible. I think it’s just another way to involve a lot of people. I tend to feel that an elected position is a little better than an appointed one because you have people at your school saying okay we’ve interviewed these people who are wonderful educators and we want them to be part of the leadership at our school, so I think that people will really respond to that. It thought people were responding very well to it by the end of the year. We were making progress in doing a lot of things. We had a huge list of things we wanted to accomplish. If we had been able to work on those types of things I just think it would only improve our school. And it’s issues that the lay community can’t ever get to, the way that it’s set up. The lay community can’t really focus on those goals and a leadership team can’t really focus on all of those issues and they were issues that were real and true to the school that I think a Career Ladder Program would really help solve and improve. I would say the first thing that we looked at was the FCAT. I don’t think anybody ever really had time to sit down and say “what if we have a group that can focus on this is what our school needs, this is what our kids are lacking”. If you had a group that could work on that, and then filter out to each set of department heads that come up with some ideas about how you are going to implement strategies to help in this area that we found we need help in. I just don’t think that we have time to do that. I think we meet at the end of the year, when we have our faculty meetings, we get basic information out, we have a timeline set up, this is what we are going to do, and I don’t think we really take the time to follow-through. Teachers are left to be individuals and to understand their students, how they understand them and to try to teach them the best way they know how. I think teaching should be more of a group effort. I think that what schools should look at and I think that we should definitely collaborate more at the school to help each other, teach our students, there’s more effective ways to teach then just what you know in your little tiny classroom, and I think that we just don’t have time to pull all that together with all of the things that at a school that we have to do. Just to run the school, on a day-to-day basis and maintain the
safety and integrity of the school. There’s just not time for the leadership at the school level without something like this to even focus on those areas.

A lead teacher AL2 explained:

There needs to be more people than just the administrators involved in the operation of the school so I think if there were big restructuring then administrators could utilize teachers and their strengths of their schools to help them with things to make their schools better. There’s just not enough time for administrators to do some of the things teachers and students feel need to be done. This is one of the things that are a high priority. I think what would have to be completely restructured, some things need to stay in place, we still need certain people in charge of certain things, you cannot be a general if you are a lead or mentor teacher. I think there needs to be specific rules that need to be set. That may need to adjust to different schools and I think that teachers should apply for one of those lead or mentor positions with a specific description, whether it’s somebody in charge of grant writing for your school or somebody in charge of communications within your school, a parent, student, anything. Whatever the school feels they need to meet the needs of their school. If were specific you could target individuals or you could interview for specific things that is their strengths instead of feeling like you are a group of twenty people not really knowing anything specifically you need to do, but there’s a lot we need to do. Because sometimes people don’t know they can help out in certain areas yet if they know their strengths, and that was their job to help their school, I think they would dive into it, really put some time in. I think a lot of people left lead or mentor meetings doing nothing different than between that meeting and the next meeting, so they would leave the meeting, go to the next meeting and they had done nothing in between because they really had no specific responsibility, which means basically they just attended meetings, provided input, feedback, but nothing specific that they had to do. And that was frustrating for many people. They felt like they needed to have something to do and they didn’t. If I were organizing this program for a school I could list fifteen jobs, because in my mind that’s what I did. Thinking that if I were to do that I would have had all of these people. This is who I would have given jobs to, if it were long term. Whether it be a grant writing person, a communication person, somebody in charge of student recognition. They would be the ones who contact newspapers about whatever is going on in your school, recognizing things that are happening in your school. It would be the person who would in charge of open house, anything that would be dealing with the parents, whether it’s the newsletter that goes out, putting together the newsletter, getting communication to the staff whether it’s minutes, general e-mails that need to go out on information that they need to know, anything that they feel the staff needs to know or the students need to know or the community needs to know that person would be the person to go to. So that the person being in charge of it, instead of everybody trying to do different things, anybody needing to get any information would go to that person. That person would contact newspapers or be that person to notify, or send out letters to parents
that need to go out, not really physically to send them out, but they’d be the person in charge of organizing that. So everyone would know who to go to. I think in a large school, that is key. You would always know whom to go to for certain information so communication would be one, grant writing, and recognition. Time is an issue, so student recognition, like honor roll, programs in place that are constantly recognizing students for not just grades, not just sports, but just anything they do well. If learning communities continued, you’d have people working with learning communities depending on how large departments were, I think you’d need more than one person working with departments, whether it’s on curriculum issues or it’s just mentoring the people in your department. I don’t think that there needed to be four or five mentors that were all there all seven periods, I think some of the mentorship could have come through the lead teachers.

An administrator AA1 discussed the collegiality and how it can impact student performance:

I think the collaboration between the teachers and the students. I just think it would increase student performance. Definitely, if you have these teachers working together and really working together and helping one another and working for the best of the school. I think that you’re going to definitely see an improvement and even the morale of the teachers because I know that like the one mentor that had done the project with the other teachers, there was a trust and a relationship that was built between the three other teachers and the other mentor that had never been there before. Almost a go-to person which was very interesting. I think that people like that idea of, hey this is a person that I can go to for help, not even help but resources, and I think that would be a great collaboration for any school. I think that the mentors and the leads had to prove and validate themselves to some extent. And not to all teachers but the skeptics. I think the biggest discrepancy that you had is the time factor. The mentor teachers were given additional time and they were able to do that, where for the lead teachers still have their five period day and their planning and where given that opportunity, that window of opportunity anyway.

A Lead teacher AL3 explained:

I think in terms of actual planning and curriculum and teacher development as professionals the lead and mentor positions were extremely important. I think in terms of long term goals and long term expectations for the program the county could only benefit by having a group of teachers whose job it was to provide support for the rest of the people around them, for their colleagues. I don’t see how that could be viewed as anything but a positive experience. Again it goes back to one of the other questions you asked me, but I don’t think there was any form of resentment or jealousy from any of the other teachers, I think it was more about having ownership in the school and the lead and mentor teachers gave them
that ownership. It was as though they actually were a part of the decision making process and it gave them a stake in what was going on and what was happening and when that occurs they tend to take policy decisions more seriously and they took them more seriously because it directly affected their professional procedures and their jobs every day that they came to work. I don’t think that can be understated. I thought that was a huge bonus for the lead and mentor program.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher stated:

Not to beat a dead horse, here, but I keep going back to the new teacher and teacher retention. I think that it’s a key area because it isn’t just a matter of getting with a new teacher in the first couple of months they’re in school, that’s the honeymoon phase as everyone knows. I would like to see them carried through up to and including the third year of teaching because in the first year it is a honeymoon, by the second year they’re still a little bit of that, but you’ve been through the first year, you know you can do it, that second year is almost like, okay, I’m there now, I know I survived the first year, I know I can do better, the third year something starts to kick in that, wait a minute, I tired of hearing the “f” word when I go outside, I’m tired of students disrespecting me, and I think that’s where the honeymoon begins to wane and people start to see, you know what, kids don’t care, the administration may or may not care, I think that this program can be really effective as a significant support to new teachers or teachers within their first few years of teaching. Long term benefits in the Career Ladder program, if you’re talking about incentives to improve as teachers, I think the best chance that has of impacting the schools in a genuine way is if the staff knows that no matter what, the administration buys into it and if the administration believes in it, they can easily sell it to their staff. But if it looks like the administration is going through the paces and just wants the staff to do the same thing, no teacher needs one more thing thrown on the plate, to say okay now you also have to do this. See what I mean? But if I know that I’m going to be recognized for improving my skills, if I know that I’m going to be appreciated for trying to be the best teacher I can be, or do the best job I can do, then that’s incentive, most definitely.

An administrator CA1 talked about the benefits of teacher to teacher relationships:

I think there’s a real benefit for teachers teaching teachers. I think just the teacher to teacher relationship removes the stigmatism that it’s teacher-administrator, it’s this administrator, it’s my evaluator but I think it kind of frees up more of a relationship of benefit from teacher to teacher, if it’s done correctly as long as it’s not part of the evaluation process and the faculty see these people as true professionals, worthy of being someone they can listen to and learn from. I think there’s a tremendous benefit. We’ve tried this I think for years in the state of Florida we’ve had varying kinds of degrees of the career ladder, but it’s always been a difficult piece. To identify these people who are really key leaders and have that expertise and then to pay them commensurately to their ability. The
other thing that I think is needed is giving these people adequate relief time to perform the task. Remember you have two periods of relief time for the mentors and the leads get one or none. That didn’t work. You can’t expect people to take on more responsibility if part of their time needs to be done during the school day. They’re mentor people, they don’t have time to do that. I think it can be done and the initial pilot had some weaknesses in terms of the selection process but I think we realized, not only we the generic, but the district realized there were some problems with the selection process, those that were being firmed up and opened up. There has to be some allowances in that for I think a category where you can read beyond just a, b, c and d, to select a person and try to determine. You’ve got two people who may have the same credentials but from their experience, what they’ve done in the school, their perception by faculty in the school, it may weigh one person being selected as opposed to the other so I think there needs to be some, just like when we’re hiring, teachers have that, well how’s this person really going to fit in, deal with this faculty and you get this by working with people and see how they’ve interacted with staff, so there’s got to be some allowance, some category that you can get some points to make a quality decision.

A Lead teacher CL1 stated:

The main benefit as I see it, is there is no answer that we don’t have as a faculty. I really believe that. There are answers to every problem the school faces within these hallways. What we lack in education is the ability to meet with each other, we lack that ability to discuss, to sit down as adults and come up with ideas. We don’t have that. There was a wide range of ideas within this program within a very short time, just the ability to sit down with another professional and say what do you think about this, let’s fix it. We attacked every single flaw we saw within this building that we could possibly deal with in a short time. One of the flaws of any school is the administration being disenfranchised from the faculty in that there isn’t a go-between. You can talk meetings all you want, but that informal sit down in a circle, let’s see what we can both do, what’s practical. The administration doesn’t have a real grip sometimes on what is happening in the course of a teacher’s day, and vice versa. The teachers expect the four administrators in the building to be miracle workers and solve every problem and they just can’t. Everybody has a lack of time on their hands. The Mentors, especially with three periods off, were that go-between. We became the liaison between faculty, part-time teacher, part-time administrator. And I thought that was a very comfortable fit. I had a lot of teachers that would come to me and say next time you’re sitting down with those guys, can you pass this on. And because it was an informal nature and the whole program was in a state of flux, people seemed comfortable to do that, where they would not do that in a real meeting or a teacher/faculty meeting environment, they won’t do it.

A lead teacher CL2 explained:
Well certainly if it’s developed let’s say at the beginning of a school year, when everyone has a good explanation of what it is, I think that would be a fresher way to begin rather than mid term in January that maybe a little bit awkward changing subjects and students around. I know that we do need to work obviously on math and reading. We have some students whose reading scores are just not coming up and we’ve tried so many different ways between sustained silent reading and rewarding them and I still think that will come up as well, as long as all teachers work together on it. Our writing is good and we need to not let up and let it drop. Keep it where it is. There’s some areas in math where some students are still working. I’d like to see some more areas of work with inclusion of ESE students where they have a chance to earn a diploma through FCAT. A lot of students I think give a low image of themselves and if teachers are working with them to show them what they can do and mentor teachers who can show other teachers what kinds of things you can do to achieve more normalcy with the ESE students, I think that’s a good area to be effective.

A lead teacher CL3 remarked about staff perception:

CL3: Long term I see a couple of things. There are people, teachers, that have an incredible amount of talent and that talent can be shared. Now during this first semester, and there were a lot of people in the school that said this will be gone, it’s never going to happen. But if they knew it was going to continue I think it would be very possible to have some of that expertise shared. Now I know that this whole project was thrown together in a very short period of time, between the district and the union and so forth, but I think that the best way to improve teachers is with teachers. No offense to administrators, no offense to college professors but you people are not on the line anymore. You have a totally different paradigm than somebody who is doing it in the next room. I think constructive criticism is much easier to accept from those people. The other thing that I think would be very important for this is I think that the possibility of really good teachers, and I’m using that based on my thirty years, you have peaks and valleys in terms of your performance and there are times when I have been in one of those valleys, because I have been ready to leave, that I could see where if you were a really good teacher doing this for a short period of time could really rejuvenate you, and then you can come back into the classroom, and I could see that extending the life of a really good teacher. I don’t think, and I don’t know if anybody’s thought about it, somebody should be a mentor teacher for life or a lead teacher for life. I think it’s something you do, it takes you out of the classroom it gives you a different perspective, well, if you’re a mentor teacher, it takes you out a couple of periods, and it gives you a different overview in terms of how this living thing that we call a school works, but I personally would disagree with the program for people who would be a mentor forever or be a lead forever. But I could see where if you have a great teacher and they get burned out, can this be a way, because just to say we think you have something to give and giving them some time so they’re not grading all the papers and dealing with all the parents, that I think that would kind of rejuvenate and allow those people to
stay in the career a little longer. I don’t think that any of us thought, this is ridiculous, why am I doing this, I can go somewhere else, make a lot more money with a lot less hassle or different hassles. But it’s also recognizing people, we think you have something to share and that’s the benefits that I see.

A non-Lead or mentor teacher CT1 stated:

Well, if it’s done properly, I think everybody needs to know some sort of modeling and someone to compare to. I think in the long run, since they’ve done away with a lot of the programs that were in place for new teachers, I think overall it would be a benefit, but I think a lot of work has to be done in laying out the ground rules, the people, the procedures and the policies and I think all of that was done too haphazardly to make it effective as it exists right now. I think the time line shouldn’t have been the problem because they were aware that something had to be in place for a couple of years, I know it was at least two years, that they were going to have to come up with some way of pairing out funds relative to teacher raises and performance and I don’t think enough was done initially where it could have been a smoother transition. So I don’t think the time line was the problem at all. I think that perhaps maybe they were hoping it would go away, but it didn’t, and I don’t think they were ready for it and what came out was probably just whatever they could do in the amount of time left to meet the mandate. I think a lot of teachers need some maybe refresher, and some of the new teachers need to understand how classroom management can be implemented more effectively. It’s easier to start up with title rules, and then loosen them, than to open up on an easy boat and then try and figure out ways to tighten things up. Classroom management as well as just the ability to maintain the flow of the lesson from the beginning of the period to the end of the period. How to time their lessons so that there isn’t dead time. There are lots of things. I think that teachers with a little bit of work could improve it for both the students and themselves, in the long run they’re not aware of it. So I think that those things that they’re not aware of, you know practices and policies that the teachers that are out there have been affected. That could be something that could be done in inservices but certainly if this program continues I think the lead/mentor, certainly the mentor part would be an effective way to do that.

A Lead teacher BL1 discussed the staff resentment:

I think that if there was any resentment initially. The mentor teacher created some problems because it was begun in the middle of the year when we already had established a rapport and we were kind of a mentor to students and so I know how hard it was going to be but I had to leave them. I don’t think I’m unique in this, but I would not accept the mentor position until I know who was getting my students, so that I could feel comfortable in the fact that they were being handed off to someone who would give them the same care that I gave them. That’s just probably being arrogant I guess, but I think that if the program were established, and started at the beginning of the year, people would have been in another class, they got paid for it, but it’s a part of the teaching experience. I’ve done that. I can
tell you that it’s hard. And so we had to accommodate each other just to make the program run. And I think that if it started at the beginning of the year and nobody ever was impacted by the change and people began to realize that we weren’t a pipeline to the administration, as far what you do in the classroom, we’re really there to be helpful and they began to trust us with the efforts of the lead and mentor teachers then that would have been immeasurably effective and helpful to everyone, to the program in general, to the people who were helping.

A Lead teacher BL2 commented:

We weren’t leading teachers as much as we were… well I guess we were leading teachers because I was on the team and we looked at the failure rate and we put it all into a spreadsheet and discussed it within our math department and such so we led our teachers to be aware at least in the department that I’m in that the failure rate and the attendance weren’t really correlated at the rate you would think and to get on that phone and make the parents aware when those kids are failing and because I think for the most part if you have a child who is making straight Fs and are coming to school everyday I think there’s definitely a gap there as far as the parent communication is not in place the way it should be. I think it’s best organized within departments, simply because there’s such a commonality among the people in the department that within the department you could maybe assign lead teachers as mentors to students that they don’t teach and you’d say “hey, you know you’re not doing well in Algebra I and I know I teacher Geometry but I’d be happy to help you, tutor you for thirty minutes on certain days and match the kids up with different teachers, because maybe there’s a way that I can explain it to you, that you can get it”. You know maybe not. And also I feel like, especially in math, if the extra money was there for something like a tutoring program I think that’s something that would really work well, especially, although Land O’Lakes does have it. Have to throw that in there. Eighty percent of our kids who were in the lowest 25% made learning gains last year. We’re not an A school because of our reading. One point or two points or something like that. Although 25% didn’t make their learning gains in reading. So that’s something else, I did a drop everything and read day in my classes. The other day was the end of the quarter, perfect timing and I’m going to also have my kids read “Automatic Millionaire” so I’ll do something with that based on the fact that we didn’t make our grade of an A. Strategies that I got from being on this literacy team as a lead teacher.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 remarked:

I think long term there’d be a number of benefits. Primarily for me I’m a very team oriented individual, and I think it fosters more team work, less bickering, less dissention in the ranks, and less fissures in the faculty and the more unified that a faculty can be and the more goal oriented as a team that we can be, the better off our students are primarily but the school as a whole. That’s where you get more funding because there’s better performance, because there’s less animosity. Not that there’s a great deal of that here, but there’s some everywhere,
from what I’ve heard. So that would be probably one of the biggest benefits for me. There’s a conflict whether the teachers or the individuals are responsible are just overloaded and could use an extra set of hands or they require more training, specifically our literacy department and our literacy team definitely needs more hands, and I think a program like this our literacy specialists could approach the lead and mentor teachers and say “hey, we need some help with this” and then when the lead and mentor teachers are in the classroom they can help facilitate that and get that going and there’d be more hands available and technology as well. I think as a lead/mentor program would provide people the opportunity to be trained, to get some information from peers and coworkers which a lot of times is easier to take information from a peer and a coworker, than it is otherwise, especially the technology department, so more training, more time, more people available to help out and to address issues would be very, very beneficial.

A Lead teacher BL3 stated:

Well the long-term benefits of the career ladder program, it will help you so much with your beginning teachers. That’s first. You make a better teacher, you produced better students, so by having teachers that feel comfortable in the classroom their first year and even struggling teachers, you enhance their performance and then they’re better able to disseminate the information. You’re focusing on the teachers, making them better teachers. You’ll increase the performance of the students. Ultimately it will be there. Also I think it helps if you have lead teachers rather than administration doing this kind of work. Other teachers are more apt to come ask for help from teachers than they would be the administration, and I did see that last year with a couple members from my department were struggling. It wasn’t because they were bad teachers, the classes they had, they had some of the weirdest combination of students in their class, so when I walked in and I saw this that they shouldn’t be together and we moved some students, it made all the difference. The administrators don’t have the time to go into every single classroom, hear a teacher’s complaints, and deal with the students. Well maybe it is, but we don’t have the time to go in and check sixty teachers that are telling you it’s the students. But a teacher could go in, look it over, evaluate the situation, if there needs to be a change, you can recommend that change to the administration. I would say a teacher knows students, so a lead teacher, a mentor teacher walk in their classrooms and know the combination of students and I think it means a lot more coming from a teacher that has experience, that can go back to the administrator and say you know that teachers not saying to get rid of Johnny, the teacher’s saying it because you have Johnny and Steven and Lisa that all are together and are ganged up against the teacher and you need to break it up. And so when another set of eyes walks in there and that has experience and sees that combination, they’re more apt to identify when it comes to students. Another thing is attendance. If you can give a lead teacher or mentor teacher the responsibility of looking out for students that don’t come to school, that just fall through the cracks. They could actually take those students and say look you need to be here, these are the reasons why, I care about you.
Follow them to their classrooms, look after them, kind of thing and really focus in on some of those kids that really it. All they want is a few words of encouragement. They’ll do anything for you. So that’s what some of the lead teachers and even mentor teachers need to work on in this position. And I know everybody’s so busy doing everything, one of the lead teachers could do it.

An administrator BA1 concluded:

Well I think the benefits would have been huge. I think it’s a shame it only lasted one year because our perception at school changed not quite 180 degrees but a lot of people are coming around to the fact that these people are doing things and at the same time the argument that is made every day that this teacher does nothing and gets paid the same thing that I get. Why is that and why are they held accountable? I did have some issues with three or four lead teachers that if we had the program next year I would have needed a mechanism to remove them and put three or four other people in because for me as an administrator these are people that got high enough scores that it wasn’t even an issue. They made the cutoff. They were within the top ten for lead teacher, there wasn’t a whole lot of discussion, maybe three or four minutes, about good things that we do and how they benefit us for the program, and I think that’s the hard part, is out of the sixteen people involved there are probably four or five that probably shouldn’t have been because they were milking it, they were picking up that five grand or that eight grand and they were just going through and doing what they normally do with the department heads and nothing more. They weren’t go-getters and they didn’t initiate contact with me or any of the administrators to say, “hey I’ve got this idea about this project, it’s school wide. I have this idea about this program that we can get involved with,” or “I’d like to plan this school wide activity,” or “what do you guys think about that.” Those five people in particular I’m thinking of did nothing. I asked all teachers to document what their activities were during the pilot because I figured if they had break out sessions to discuss the pros and cons, they would have some documented evidence of what they’d done. So some people took that to heart and typed all their notes and everything was real meticulous. Other people I could tell just hand wrote it the night before, these are some things I did and turn that in and then I put it all in a folder that I sent with two of our representatives the day that they did the review of the program. I think that the benefits, if you know you’re going to pilot a program I think the state should have, I think they chose five districts or six, they should have chose two or three and they should have funded it for three to five years and they should have given more directions as to what their expectations were as time went on and then you would have seen some evolution of the program, you would have seen some schools do some things that other schools would get excited about, that “hey, we want to be able to do this” or I think some districts would say, “hey Pasco is doing all these great things with staff development within their schools and at the district level, how are they doing that? How do we get this program?” They are new teachers and they’re paying them at a much higher rate than we are then why are they doing all these neat things for teachers, they do
these break out sessions, they do study groups, they do support groups, they do all these other things that these teachers plan and follow through on and it’s successful, so I think with planning and with a longer structured time to be funded as opposed to stretching it out to five, six or seven districts, the funding, if they would have kept it to two or three and said this is a two year pilot off the bat, or a three year pilot, teacher, student, staff, the faculty, the administration, the districts really could have figured out how to make it work and try to catch buzz, it would have given the state a extra year to try to figure out how we’re going to fund this.

Do you believe the Career Ladder will affect the way in which schools are organized?

Explain.

A lead teacher AL1 suggested:

Yes I definitely think they could. We want these learning communities. We kind of force these learning communities now in our county and I think it is exactly what it does, it’s forcing people to be together and then the scheduling doesn’t work out that way and I think that we’re seeing that you can’t try to group in that manner. I think it doesn’t work and I think that this program could make this school a big cohesive unit whether it’s broken down into learning communities per se. I don’t know, but I think it could make the school a more cohesive unit. If you knew you had a group of strong teachers working for you on issues and relaying this information to you and as a group you could take this information and run with it, I think that would be just incredible and it would help people to really work together which is a thing I think teachers lack in some respects. They don’t like to work together. I mean they do but it’s very difficult for them to find the time to do it. I think it probably starts from your first year of teaching. I think when you walk in you’re kind of left fending for yourself. When you’re in your new teacher meeting you have to be really with it, if you’re going to survive, if you’re a going to be a good teacher. You have to go ask questions and if you’re not that type of person then you’re not going to know. It could take you years to learn different things that you could have known your first year if you’d asked. I think teachers do help but I think teachers also know okay I was in that position and I had to fight for what I am so they’re kind of selfish in a way. I don’t want to let you borrow them borrow them because I’ve been burned before, so and so borrowed them. It’s that whole mentality and this is my classroom and people just take over that classroom and they don’t want people coming in and they don’t want people intruding or interfering with the way that they teach. They say “that’s not the way that I teach”. There’s some that are very willing to collaborate with other people, but I don’t think there’s time for teachers to collaborate. I don’t think it’s possible to make time unless teachers want to make their own time to collaborate. So I think that doesn’t add to it. It’s just a very individualized profession. You can look at the some schools where, you know, everyone here works together. Well that’s not necessarily true. You go to your meetings, I’m not really sure if many people are. The Career Ladder, I’m really very upset
about it. I thought that it really could be a worthwhile project and get more people involved in helping maybe foster that.

A Lead teacher AL2 said:

No I don’t think there should be two. There was a lot of confusion because of there was overlap of people who were on both that I think as a member of both and as an administrator it got confusing as to who you were speaking to and who you saw last and who you gave that information to, were any decisions made, which group would make any decision and things like that. I think the reason we kept the old ways one because, which I think was the right idea I guess now that the program didn’t continue into the fall, and those people had things to do to finish that school year, and ideally it would be one group that shouldn’t be anymore than fifteen to twenty people. They’re in the same position that the lead or mentor teachers were in the spring. There are some who know what they have to do, whether the department or learning community coordinators, but there are others who are on the leadership team that don’t really have any specific responsibilities that they need to deal with during the year. So the equity issue comes up all the time. Money wise on those positions they’re all equal but responsibilities are not equal.

An administrator AA1 explained:

I think that the mentor lead were different people, to some extent but I don’t think that you can get totally rid of the our team leaders because you’re trying to hit different department and you want to have input from all your different departments and all your different areas and I don’t think that was true with the mentor and lead teachers, we didn’t hit all our different departments and I think that’s really important when you start making choices, real choices, that everyone in the school has someone there speaking for them. So I think that you almost have to have some type of a leadership team, but a change in the dynamics because you still have somewhat of a crossover but you have to include some of those other groups that do not have representation and a lead mentor. I think you would have different responsibilities. I think you definitely need the representation from all the groups. We didn’t have anyone in our ESE department in the Lead/Mentor and that was a problem. Especially when we have a huge student body of ESE people. They need somebody on their behalf, and we didn’t that, so somewhere along the line we’d have to make some concessions and get these people in to the same field.

A Lead teacher AL3 responded:

Absolutely. I don’t think that there are any negatives with regard to structure. If you take the learning community leaders, you’re looking at department heads, you look at assistant principals for each learning community and all of those people have different roles. If you put in place of these mentor programs, in place of the
community leaders, in place of department heads, and allowed these people to be in a position where they were not only helping to facilitate the way the school runs, but also in a position of support for the rest of the community. I think it would be a huge bonus rather than having fragmented positions, each responsible for this task or that task. If you consolidate things into lead and mentor teachers, it just makes it more organized and more convenient and much more productive.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 said:

I don’t believe it would have an impact on the way in which schools are organized.

An administrator CA1 concluded:

The program did it to a degree, but defining the specific job the people are going to be doing, I think it gave them more opportunity to be leaders within the school than our traditional concept of leadership teams. So I like it in that perspective, because it gives them more functional things to do within the school, a communication vehicle with a lot of time for planning the utilization of the leadership team. I think the concept has a lot of merit and they would have to be integrated. And it’s probably a good thing to be able to look at your leadership team by a lead and mentor and these people should be leads and mentors within the school. I think it would have a benefit to continue to investigate that in the overall reorganization of the school.

A Lead teacher CL1 explained:

I’m not so sure that that’s even necessary. Like I said earlier, there’s some talk about replacing department heads, and things like that. If it’s a money issue, shifting the money around, fine. Me personally, I think they should take the whole money out of the program and make it practical. Forget the money and set up a situation where teachers can have time to meet with other teachers and meet with administrators and do that. We don’t have time when you take away our planning and take away our morning and afternoon duties and all that. We don’t have time in the day to come up with ideas and concepts and creative stuff. So to me the main benefit of the program was the time off and the ability to act as that go-between. I think those that really want to affect change in the building are here in the building. They asked me in my interview to become a mentor, what opportunities I’ve had to lead. As a thirteen year veteran teacher I’m still one of the youngest in this faculty and the ones who are department heads and at leadership meetings and all that, they’ve been there for twenty years, how am I supposed to replace them, where is my opportunity to lead? If I didn’t step out of the mainstream and try and find some opportunities to become a mentor and find opportunities to lead, it never would have happened for me. I would be here fifteen years later and still be just a regular teacher. You don’t give teachers the
ability to become leaders. Lots of us have great ideas but we just don’t have the opportunities. This program for me was that opportunity.

A Lead teacher CL2 commented:

Well, first off we’re going to have to speak hypothetically, because unless it’s reinstated, it’s unfortunately a moot point right now, but I believe that the career ladder was an excellent plan and it gave people a place to grow and achieve and try to live up to a lead teacher and mentor teacher. I was extremely honored to be a mentor teacher and I think it did give me an experience where I got to see more of a big picture of the whole school so I would like to see it continued and I think it can improve things in a positive way. We didn’t have a lot of department heads in lead and mentor programs. We did have some. Ron Eckstein is a social studies teacher, an excellent teacher, he’s Teacher of the Year this year and he’s only teaching department head and then science we had a department head who was a mentor and then there were a lot of people who were in the lead and mentor group that did not have any part with their leadership and that can be good, but there has to be a time when they meet together and collaborate or just like you say, two separate entities running at the same time, so there has to be a way to put them together or select one over the other.

A lead teacher CL3 explained:

We almost had to struggle between a administrative driven program and a lead teacher driven program. And there were a number of us who felt that what we did and how we did it should be driven from within rather than from the administration’s perspective. If we were going to be effective I think we had to be independent of the administration. Once you’re perceived, rightfully or wrongfully, that I’m going to be in your classroom and I’m going to go tell somebody it doesn’t work. I think it’s far too easy for teachers to come up and get a routine that works and then run on automatic pilot. This has always worked for me, they’ll change the books, but they really don’t actually make any dramatic changes in the way they teach and in what they present. And I think that if this program over time, and I think it would really take some time and some refinement, I think there might be some idea and some methods and some philosophies that would kind of break in, this is how it’s going and it’s working well for me, but if I notice that you’re working with somebody and suddenly your life is easier then I might be interested. Bottom line is what’s in it for me. Granted, the first thing should be what’s in it for the kids, but if I can give my best to the kids, and do it smarter not harder, then certainly I would want to do that. I think over time I think that would be a very good thing and something that could definitely happen. My great fear is that there are people, I’m the lead teacher, I have all the answers, I will give them to you. You’ve come to the mountain-top and I will give you truth. That’s why I say I don’t think you should go on for long periods of time. Some kind of rotation. I think there are people who would want to go back to it and I think there are people who wouldn’t. You know, I’ve done
it. I think it would depend on where they were in their career. But I can certainly see people at ten, twelve, people who have decided they’re not going to become administrators, they don’t want to be administrators, what do you do. If you’re in a school and there’s an established department head, there’s not a lot of movement there, if the people who are in charge of the learning communities, have been there along time, there’s really nowhere for you to go. If you want to do something else, and yes you maybe elected teacher of the year and it’s wonderful and they give you the plaque and stuff, but it doesn’t give you the feedback and the reward that I think a program like this could give you.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 stated:

I think it could, but I don’t think it will. I think it could, but things have to change relative to the ability of administrators, in particular the head administrator of the school, in accepting committee input and be willing to make changes based on the committee rather than the typical autocratic system that’s in place. That’s just the way it is. You know the principal is the end all decision maker in the school and I think there’s a hesitance on the part of a lot of faculty to even give some of their opinions as a result of the way that the school system has been run in the past. And that’s just not here in Pasco County. I mean that’s just part of the problem in education in general. There have been some cases where systems have totally replaced administration throughout the United States and have tried a committee kind of administration rather than a single person, and I’m not saying that that’s the way to go. But I’m saying is that things need to be changed and support has to be there from the district and all who are stack holders in education in order for it to work properly.

A lead teacher BL1 said:

I couldn’t think of areas of the school that would get more assistance than they normally would, but never being able to get there. Well, the thing like the scheduling checks. That really saved a lot of time at the beginning of the year when all those problems would have arisen and the kids would have had to have schedule changes and all that sort of thing. That was amazing I thought that they could get in there and do that, and then as part of that, the phone log and call the parents up that has never been done, and the fact that we got them this year, you’d have to check with the people who know about the of schedule, but I think that was a huge help. I’m not sure, I think we do that, we don’t do it to the extent that we did it this past year, but sometimes that sends us an message, people hear, yeah, yeah I don’t have to work on the idea, whatever. I just think that they and I’m talking about myself, sometimes that goes in one ear and out the other. It’s another pie chart. Someone hands you a job and says this is real important and I think those are things that we know are important so I can’t answer how effective that was. Bases that we can cover that can make our school run more efficiently when the year starts. And I know there are more things that we did, that’s the only example that I can think of at the moment, but I know that we’ve never done
before that is check every schedule, to see, to check placement. That was amazing. Nobody has time to do that now.

A Lead teacher BL2 explained:

I think so, because I think the more teachers you have involved that understand how the Master schedule works and how placement works where our weaknesses are and strategies to overcome them, I do think that it could affect the way in which the schools are organized.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 concluded:

I would think, from what I understand of the plan it’s kind of intended to be an organizer, just my take on it. I would think it would definitely reorganize it because there wouldn’t be such a division between the administration and the faculty. There would be a connection that through a lead or mentor teacher there would be less of a confusion as far as what would the administration expect, there’d be more clarification. It isn’t that the administrators aren’t clear, it’s that they’re busy as well and sometimes that clarification does get lost in the shuffle and if you have people devoted to fostering this program, fostering the sense of community and the sense of teamwork that I see in this program, then it’s going to definitely restructure things for the better. I don’t think it’s going to take a group of teachers and put them on a pedestal. I think the people in the lead/mentor program, if it were to work, would be working a lot more and a lot harder and they would help the administration a lot more and then help the teachers and it would be… I don’t know that there would be any problem. I think everyone would be pretty much on equal footing with everything working together.

A lead teacher BL3 said:

Yes, I think it can affect it because when you look at your administration and then you see the next level, maybe the lead or mentor teachers and then the teachers, there is another level there and the teachers can feel more comfortable. Let’s say a teacher is struggling they’ve been here two or three years but they’re still having problems they see an administrator walk into their classroom, giving them some advice. So will it affect the way the schools are organized? Yes I think it will eventually do that. The Lead/Mentor could act as a buffer. At our school last year it was almost the same, all of the teachers except for maybe two, were department heads on the leadership team, and that were not the lead or mentor teachers, so our leadership team were the lead and mentor teachers basically, except for maybe two people. So when I think of it, I think of it as the same, basically. And we do that informally now, without that name. That’s what ends up happening, because the first thing is the department members go to the department heads, and they talk to them about the problem and then the department head brings it to the administration. We do this. Last year I heard from all the departments. It wasn’t just mine, it was everybody’s. English would come to me. Business would come to me. Right. So it wasn’t just science stuff
or even student things it was a lot of different things that they might ask and invite me into their room. I was invited into the English department, in the Business department, in the Math department, so they were just so totally different than if you were a department head, or even on the leadership team. I look at the leadership team as one, they are the same people. It was the same people that were the lead and mentor teachers, but I do see the teachers in the school acting a little differently in that respect.

An administrator BA1 explained:

I think if the Career Ladder was going to be implemented and it would stay, whether it was for a three to five year pilot or if it was funded or it was fully implemented, I think this district would be smart to do away with certain terms, like department head, learning community or grade level chair, senior project sponsor, those types of things would need to go away, not so much because it would be confusing, but I think there would be some disparity with who is responsible for what. You would see people who were getting their supplements for a period of time that you have a teacher at your school who is the senior project coordinator, who is a senior class sponsor, who is a learning community head and who is the PE department head, and earning those four supplements that totals, lets say three thousand dollars, and they kept all those responsibilities, as a lead teacher and here comes another lead teacher who is just an English department head and didn’t pick up any other new responsibilities school wide, I would think you’d have some dissension and some disparity with the faculty that people would say where’s the equity in this. Just because I want to do these things, and I’m interested in them, I thought that’s why I was doing this because I wanted to help improve the school and I don’t know why I do these things, yet someone says getting the same $5000 or $8000 that I’m getting and I’m doing all these things, so I think if you did away with all the old adage names than you just had lead teachers and mentor teachers you could hyphenate those titles with lead teacher of the business learning community and within that that would be the leadership team of the school and that leadership team would design and structure each of those positions, depending on the needs of the school and the strengths of the staff.

Describe your feelings regarding the supplement amounts for Lead Teachers, Mentor Teachers, and achievement pay.

A Lead teacher AL1 recalled:

Personally I thought the achievement pay was difficult to get. I thought there was a lot of work and you weren’t really a part of anything. Again it was an individualized situation. That really didn’t appeal to me. I wasn’t interested in it,
so I didn’t really research much of it, but it appealed to me at first glance but it was a lot of work for not a lot of money. The mentor and lead pay I thought was very nice. I had no problem staying after and working more, and I felt a responsibility. You’re on a committee, I have a responsibility to go to those meetings, but I don’t have a responsibility to stay after longer. Most teachers stay after, but when you’re getting paid that money I think it fosters a responsibility in you. Okay, I’m being paid, I’m going to do a good job. I’m being paid for this and I need to make sure I’m doing it to the best of my abilities. I just think it makes people work harder. I think it’s nice. Teachers don’t every get paid for anything extra that they do. I think it was a very nice motivator, but your real motivation is to really want to perform and participate.

A Lead teacher AL2 said:

No. I didn’t think it was balanced at all, actually, and only because the mentor teacher not only received more money, but received release time. So it was actually not necessarily double the amount, but almost triple the amount of money because now the responsibilities in their classroom were cut tremendously and they were able to do their mentor work basically during the school day and did not require a lot of outside time. And even their planning time became outside time, they were only planning for a few classes compared to the five classes, whereas lead teachers kept all five classes and received less money and were required to do more of their work outside of the regular school day. I do think the mentors needed to be paid that much but because they had to request it, I don’t think they needed as high a supplement. Their responsibilities I thought were greater and impact could potentially be much greater. I think that if the supplements were equal and they still had release time it would be fairer. I think there were more problems with the people who were all lead teachers receiving the same amount and not having the same responsibilities. I truly believe it was because it was a pilot program and that only lasted one semester, that there was really no time to get into the whole part about having specific responsibilities, so a lot of people just did it because they knew that and there was nothing they could do about it but there was nothing specifically that they could do, and because there was no structure. It was really, lets all work together at these meetings and that was about it, yet you had other people who had many responsibilities that continued that role as well as having those discussions that occurred in groups. I think again because it was not going to reoccur in the fall, as a matter of, there was really no criteria for meeting it or not meeting it. I think that if they’re going to do that achievement pay it needs to be specifically measurable and that’s very difficult to do. The other plan I’m really not sure the name of, Pay for Performance, so many hours of in-service, most people think that’s completely unattainable, and that those that have tried to do that are actually the one who either have done national board certification in which their papers are basically finished and the others are the kind of teachers that if you’re spending a lot of time developing things for your classroom, you don’t have time to do that or that you have an intern and you’re able to accomplish that because you have an intern
and I’ve heard a lot of that with national board certification that oh yeah, thank god I have an intern, because I was able to do that, it allows you to have time, so are you willing then teaching. I don’t really agree with that part of the ladder. I don’t agree that the whole thing is a ladder. I think there are different opportunities to make money. Different types of money, but I don’t see it as a ladder, because a career ladder to me means you can move up in a position by doing a good job and you are supplemented like a coach is supplemented. Those are not career ladders. I think that there could be positions at schools that may be not even a teacher teaches classes, but that they’re teacher paid but that there are other positions at schools that could be available. Actually I think that’s probably better use of that money than adding on to teacher’s day and responsibilities. Instead of having twenty people have different pieces to do, there might be three to five teachers who in a half-day or all day, that’s what they do. It’s an administrator without the administrator title. Much like we were do for literacy specialists, and we used to have reading specialists and we have those positions and places. If there’s a need then that should be what we do.

An administrator AA1 suggested:

I thought it was fair as long as they were willing to do the work and they were given the time to do it, because I think in the long run, not in the pilot program, but if it had been a long term program, that there would have been a lot of extra work involved. I mean, if you’re really doing what we thought as a district thought needed to be done, you’d be putting in a lot of extra time and I think that that would have been fair.

A Lead teacher AL3 said:

I honestly don’t think too many of the teachers got into the program because of the money. Let’s face it, I don’t think any of us got into the teaching profession with the expectation that we were going to get rich. I understand that the bonus for the position was the extra pay that you receive, but as for the money I received as a lead teacher, that wasn’t my motivation for being a lead teacher. It’s nice and it’s nice to be recognized, and compensated for the extra work that we put in, but I don’t think that was a motivating factor, and I’m speaking for us as a group and I don’t mean to do that, but I don’t think that in many of the cases that it was motivation for lead teachers to be lead teachers or for mentors to be mentors. I don’t think the money had much to do with it at all. Because there are teachers on the staff who obviously could use the money and chose not to because they did not want to be lead teachers and there were teachers who became lead and mentor teachers who didn’t need the money and so I don’t think financially it entered into the decision of too many members of the staff to either be a member of the team or not. It wasn’t for me. I think that the mentors probably should have been compensated a little higher only because of the responsibilities that they had to take on. The requirements for the mentor position were a little more rigorous.
They had to have a little bit more training in terms of clinical education and being able to relate that knowledge to teachers who needed their help. So in that respect I guess the mentors pay structure probably was justified. But again I don’t think the people who applied to be mentors did that based solely on the extra dollars they that they would earn above a leadership position.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 remarked:

I thought the mentor supplement was amazing. Wasn’t it $8000? Because I think the only person who gets a bigger supplement is a teacher who has National Board certification, and mentors are not National Board Certified teachers. That’s quite an incentive. For lead teachers, was it $5000? or less than $5000? It was $2500 for half a year. Again, I think that is a large sum of money as well. To tell you the truth to have that kind of money out there as an incentive, yes, it’s a nice thing, but I’m not sure I saw opportunity for enough effort to warrant that kind of money. What I did see was people seeing the dollar signs and presenting themselves in such a way that they could make it attractive for those kinds of positions. I also saw people such as myself who even though I hadn’t been teaching that long, according to the guidelines that were set for it, I didn’t qualify to apply. That was frustrating to a point. I see the wisdom in it, because I only had three and half years under my belt, and regardless of the point at which I came into education, experience speaks loudly, that’s a good thing to have and I don’t think I had the experience necessary to do this. I think maybe I would have felt better about lesser supplements for the positions because for the mentor teachers for instance, teaching three classes instead of five, having three classes to teach, and a planning period and then two mentor periods, to take care of the other responsibilities. I think having those two extra periods can be considered a form of supplement. Not that it’s time off, it isn’t time off, but I know for the most part, the individuals we had, had been working diligently during that time. I think it was a huge leap to take for what I saw being required. Maybe if there was a scale for people…With regard to the achievement pay, again that was very attractive and it was nice to see that if I accomplished the goals on my PDP then I was going to earn an additional supplement of I think $1500 a year, because it was $750 for one semester, but there again I don’t think that’s a true reflection of whether or not I accomplished those goals. I think that there’s going need to be more checks and balances if the program’s going to be really effective.

An administrator CA1 explained:

I thought that after we finished the pilot that I would rather have, I am almost feeling that you could probably put leads and mentors together and just call them all leads. We had some issues with time for mentors to do their job. They were really reluctant I thought, a lot of them were reluctant to do some of their tasks after school, outside their time and that’s really what they were being paid for. I would like to see, and if the pilot continues to move forward, I think you get more out of people by giving them relief time during the day to do those jobs. If
they’re going to be leads and mentors and they’re going to be seen as a resource to the faculty, they need to be doing it in the instructional day. We were only given maybe three leads at a time. I’d rather have four or five leads and no mentors and have them do some of your role and give me enough time to do the real work, in the high school with all these learning communities, to have one for each learning community with adequate relief time, and then pay them the $5000 or $8000, I think you’d get people to do that.

A Lead teacher CL1 said:

I think that’s where the program got in over its head. I think it was a real financial downfall, to throw the money down the way they did. Just provide a teacher an opportunity to lead, give them the time to do it and the money is irrelevant to me. I don’t know, I can’t speak for others but to me the money wasn’t about it.

A Lead teacher CL2 suggested:

I think it was very good that people were given a chance to move ahead because many times the department chair positions are locked in by people who stay there for decades. There doesn’t seem to be much chance forever moving into that. If they’re doing a good job I guess the administration wants to keep them there and not change, but it doesn’t give other people a chance to have a position of leadership in the school. So for lead teachers to get extra money for the work that they did was helpful to entice people to even want to do that, because they did not get an extra planning period and I think some of them felt less than excited about extra work to do without time to do it and the mentor teachers, you had to have the supplemental time to be able to work with teachers and even though that’s not money in your pocket, if you don’t have time to go around to actually physically visit a person during an additional period or two, and the additional money, well of course that’s a feeling I had, a very warm, fuzzy feeling.

A Lead teacher CL3 explained:

It’s never enough, not for what you do. I think there were instances where people were overpaid and I think regardless of what they did they were underpaid. There are leads and mentors and there are leads that did a lot more than they got paid for and there are mentors who did the same thing and vice versa. The problem that I have with achievement pay, is I don’t know and I’ve never been able to find out, or think about a way of fairly giving it out. If it’s going to be based on a test then I’m going to teach the test to get the money which may not necessarily mean my kids are learning more. If it’s determined by the amount of my education, you get more pay for plus 18 hours, and a masters, and plus 18 hours Having the advanced degree does not necessarily make you a better teacher. You can’t necessarily do it on failure rate because they’ll give the grades away. I think the people in a school know who the good teachers are that includes the
administrators, if they’re good administrators, and it’s not necessarily the ones that don’t have problems, the classroom is always quiet, it’s so easy if you leave it up to that objective criteria, or that subjective criteria, that there are too many factors. Do I get achievement pay every year whether I have a good year or a bad year? What if I have a horrible group of kids and they may not advance as far as my last year’s kids did, but I moved those kids. That’s my fear with achievement pay. I really don’t know how to base it on a fair set of criteria. The leads and mentors pay was based primarily on the time they put out, kind of like coaching, if you break it down for the hours you spent outside of your regular day from what you got it wasn’t worth it, at least not here, because we spent a lot of time after school getting together and working on things, we were here sometimes for a couple of hours after school and this was sometimes weekly, sometimes biweekly, there were a lot of hours put in preparing lessons, to give demonstrations for other teachers. I mean it was nice and I think if you’re going to put somebody in a position like that I think there has to be some kind of differentiation. Unfortunately we live in a society that if you don’t pay somebody more, nobody thinks what you do is important. That is one of the reasons that teachers are not looked at as being very important because they’re not paid that well.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 remarked on the supplement amounts:

I think that the supplement amounts were more than adequate. In fact in some cases I think it was too much, but I think the supplement amount was more than adequate. I think that if it were possible to find people who would have been willing to do it for free, if there were that blend where I would do this for free, just because I think it’s important, I think that program would have been, probably have more merit to it, and I don’t know if that’s possible. Some of the other inequities relative to pay and other issues that I think if you truly feel that you have something to give back to the system and to your colleagues, then I think those people would consider it for either free or for a lot less money than $4000 or whatever it was, I don’t know. I don’t think money should be the driving force because and I don’t want to just beat a dead horse to death here, I think for the most part a lot of it was going on and would have continued however I think this program actually put things back little bit. Several people, myself included, said hey I don’t think it was done right and I’m not about to give as much as I was willing to give before, before the lead and mentor teacher when it was done in this particular manner. That’s my personal opinion.

A Lead teacher BL1 said:

I don’t know and I don’t know if I’m cynical. I don’t think the pay was an issue. I really don’t. I think initially sure, I need to pay my mortgage and we have loans, and sure I’d jump at that. But you don’t think you’re willing to do that for the money. It’s a lot of work and it’s the kind of work that money doesn’t really pay you for. I know initially a lot of us were, we have ten periods every day and we work more than our normal allocated time and really so we wouldn’t appear to not
to be doing anything and we didn’t want to give the program a bad name, so we wanted to make sure that we were covering all the bases and not that I was in the least bit intimidated if somebody would accuse me of doing something wrong. I think it’s fair to do more than I would normally do because I was getting more money. But I think without our normal salary I know a lot of people would be willing to do that same sort of mentoring because the issue is with the time. Sure it’s nice to get more money, shoot, I’ll take more, but I don’t think that’s the issue. I mean that I think that the lead teachers, if they got more money for extra responsibility, I don’t care how much money you give them, they’re teaching 150 kids, plus another task, they needed that extra money. You know, the two periods off was part of our pay, I think, it was freedom to go out and give them assistance. I think the virtue was more time not the money. Money was the virtue, I liked it, but I don’t think that it was the only motivation. I don’t think that you if would get more money you would dive into that job. I think you would always be able to find people to do it. I don’t think that you would find as many people to do it if they didn’t have the additional enhancement of those few extra bucks. But you know teachers tend to be, oh well budget cuts, so we make due and we try to behave in such a way that the kids don’t have to feel that budget cut or whatever, so I think that’s sounds very noble. But I’m really convinced that we don’t do our own PR, we don’t go out and teach for that reason we don’t get any good PR, but I think because of that element in our nature there are plenty of us who would be willing to do that for time off not the money or maybe a little money.

A Lead teacher BL2 stated:

Achievement pay was based on attending the inservices or something like that? I felt like there was enough asked of me that I was earning the extra money that I was being paid. And so many times I’ll go above and beyond and not be recognized financially. So, yes I thought the supplement amounts were great and I think that teachers should be, and if inservices are going to be provided I think that we should be attending inservices and I think that lead or mentor teachers probably could come up with great inservices that people need. I know that within the math department our next inservice day centered around our brand new textbooks that we just got and the publisher brought textbooks that were going to come in and meet just with the math teachers and say “what questions do you have?” , “Can I show you how to make the software work?”, “what are you missing?” , things like that. They say you’re making this extra money then you can take that twenty minutes out of your day and you can organize it, get on the phone with them, speak to that person, put it in place, things that can be broken down departmentally.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 explained:

I think it’s warranted. If the program’s implemented the way I understand its intention, they are taking on a lot more work, never not having as many classrooms full of students, however dealing with other teachers is far more
difficult than a classroom full of students and the work involved is increased and I
don’t see any difference between that and a supplement for coaching or a stipend for coaching. I also don’t see any difference at all. So I would think that it would
be more than appropriate. Achievement pay, I think it was very nice. I think
maybe more stringent guidelines on it would be a little bit more beneficial
because everybody got something across the board and achievement and rewards
for achievement should be warranted based on performance not just signing in
and signing out, because everybody else does, that kind of thing. I did see a
division there, but as far as my perception goes they were both working towards
the same goal and working with each other to maintain that goal. It’s a ladder and
as you go up the ladder you step, that’s the best way I can think of to look at it
and I know it sounds trite, but every step below you’ve got to get up another step
and you have to step on that step to get there so you’re using each other all the
way up. The person at the top isn’t necessarily the person at the top of the ladder
even if they’re the most important because they use all the other steps in between
to get there. Yes, there was a division there but I didn’t see them behaving like a
division, I saw them behaving more as a team.

A lead teacher BL3 suggested:

Yes, I think it can affect it because when you look at your administration and then
you see the next level, maybe the lead or mentor teachers and then the teachers,
there is another level there and the teachers can feel more comfortable. Let’s say a
teacher is struggling they’ve been here two or three years, they’re still having
problems they see an administrator walk into their classroom, giving them some
advice. So will it affect the way the schools are organized? Yes I think it will
eventually do that. At our school last year it was almost the same, all of the
teachers except for maybe two, were department heads on the leadership team,
and that were not the lead or mentor teachers, so our leadership team were the
lead and mentor teachers basically, except for maybe two people. So when I think
of it, I think of it as the same, basically. we do that informally now, without that
name. That’s what ends up happening, because the first thing is the department
members go to the department heads, and they talk to them about the problem and
then the department head brings it to the administration. I was fine but I also think
that there should be like a merit pay somehow for teachers. But that if you’re
doing a good job, students are learning, I mean you’d have to set up some kind of
system where you show that, what the students are learning. Teachers do need to
be rewarded for that because if you’re just going in there and doing the same old
thing every day, whatever it is, you’re not doing anything for the kids, really.
Those teachers that are out there everyday, discussing things with their students,
giving them the information, students are on task, the teachers are on task, why
shouldn’t they be rewarded when their students are doing well. Really, there
does need to be some kind of merit pay. This affects me, but my AP classes
everyone that makes a four or above, I get $50. It’s not a lot of money but I feel
that I’ve accomplished something with those students. You want all of them to
pass, not for the money, for the sense of you want them to pass, but the money is
a nice little bonus, it’s like a pat on the back, well you’ve done well. AP does the same thing, and I think the teachers appreciate that. They work hard, everybody in this program works really hard, but so do other teachers and they also need a pat on the back. So I do think there does need to be something in there for people that are doing a good job.

An administrator BA1 commented:

I think if the Career Ladder was going to be implemented and it would stay, whether it was for a three to five year pilot or if it was funded or it was fully implemented, I think this district would be smart to do away with certain terms, like department head, learning community or grade level chair, senior project sponsor. Those types of things would need to go away, not so much because it would be confusing, but I think there would be some disparity with who is responsible for what. You would see people who were getting their supplements for a period of time that you have a teacher at your school who is the senior project coordinator, who is a senior class sponsor, who is a learning community head and who is the PE department head, and earning those four supplements that totals, lets say three thousand dollars. If they kept all those responsibilities, as a lead teacher and here comes another lead teacher who is just an English department head and didn’t pick up any other new responsibilities school wide, I would think you’d have some dissension and some disparity with the faculty that people would say where’s the equity in this. Just because I want to do these things, and I’m interested in them, I thought that’s why I was doing this because I wanted to help improve the school and I don’t know why I do these things, yet someone says getting the same $5000 or $8000 that I’m getting and I’m doing all these things, so I think if you did away with all the old adage names than you just had lead teachers and mentor teachers you could hyphenate those titles with lead teacher of the business learning community and within that that would be the leadership team of the school and that leadership team would design and structure each of those positions, depending on the needs of the school and the strengths of the staff.

(Teacher) If the Career Ladder program were permanently implemented, would you choose to participate? Why or why not?

A Lead teacher AL1 concluded:

Yes, I would definitely. I would participate because it is a great experience. It made you a part of a bigger picture and I like that. I don’t want to be stuck in my room. I want to be a part of the bigger picture. I want to see what’s going on. I want to know what the issues are everywhere in the school, whether it’s ESE or regular education or testing or whatever the issues are. That team of people could work on that. And I just think it’s nice. You’re getting opinions from people who are from all different backgrounds. It’s not just all administrators, it’s not just all
the ESE teachers, it’s somebody from every community, really is what it turned out to be. You get that representation of well, you might think you have a great idea, then the ESE teacher will say that really offends me because of such and such, that teacher might not realize that. Wow, I never really thought of that. I just think it’s such a powerful tool to have all these educators from different backgrounds in one arena, not as a leadership team like these are the decisions to make for the school, but these are the things that we’re choosing to work on for our faculty to help them to help our kids become better, to achieve more. I think it’s a really powerful thing. I absolutely would be a part of it. Whether it was mentor or lead teacher. I think it would be absolutely great.

A lead teacher AL2 said:

It would depend on how specific the structure was and the vision of what those people at the leadership group. What impact would they have on student performance.

A Lead teacher AL3 stated:

I would definitely choose to participate only because I think it provides a sense of worth that you don’t necessarily experience all the time as solely a classroom teacher. There’s an element of responsibility that you gain from these positions and an element of pride that you get out of seeing a program put in place that you worked on, seeing students’ success because of that program, those are the kinds of rewards that teachers were looking for. Those are the get rich items that we look for. So, I would want to participate. If this started again, I would be first in line.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher AT1 confirmed:

Yes, I would choose to participate. Maybe because I feel so strongly that new teachers and veteran teachers need to have that support. It’s essential. This job is not getting easier. It’s getting more difficult simply because the population that we teach is finding it less and less necessary to demonstrate respect and submit to the authority that’s placed over them and so on. So I think that is something I would be passionate about. That is in trying to help equip teachers to be effective from the beginning and as far as if I choose to participate in the lead program, that would of course have been the mentor, in the lead program I would really like to have and streamlined is the wrong word. I would like to see consistency in curriculum. I know as a teacher it’s a nice thing to have my autonomy in my classroom, but the fact is I’m not here to take up space and I’m not here to be an island unto myself. I’m here for the benefit of these students and what is in their best interest I think would be to make sure whether they have you for a teacher or me for a teacher they’re having equal opportunity to get the best education they can and I really think that part of getting to that place is going to be that we require the same thing out of each teacher. And we may in theory do that but
because we’re saying here are the broad guidelines of your subject area have at it, do what works. We can have that autonomy with regard to the how, but I think we need to be covering the same stuff and we need to make sure that the students are exposed to the same thing, whether they go to Mitchell or Gulf or River Ridge or Ridgewood or Hudson or wherever, so the kids here have the same advantages and opportunities as the kids in any other high school. And the curriculum’s got to be the key to that too.

A Lead teacher CL1 verified:

I would absolutely participate because it enhanced my performance as a teacher and I think I had an impact on the school. I would love to do it again. I enjoyed it. I thought it was the best of all worlds, being with the administrator, working longer and working into the summers and all of that to me doesn’t excite me because I like to be in the classroom and I like my professional life the way it exists that way and I wouldn’t want to lose that interaction I had with the students. In this capacity as a mentor I had the classroom part of it which was huge for me. I didn’t want to be out of classroom, but I also had a little taste of administrative life. I had a lot of programs I had to create on the computer and all that and had time to think and manage my day in a totally different way and it really was an awakening for me, that there’s so many good things that were happening in this building that I would not have been aware of otherwise.

A Lead teacher CL2 stated:

If we had it re-implemented I would definitely want to participate. I felt very good about it. It infused me with a new excitement that I hadn’t felt in awhile and I enjoy teaching and I tell my students I enjoy teaching and I’m a lucky person to have found a career that I like and I like being around young people, so even if I’m not making the kind of income that somebody else might make with the amount of education I have completed. It’s nice to know that every day is a new and exciting day and you never know what to expect day after day in education, but I do enjoy working with peers and making a difference in education in my own school and feeling that I’m contributing in a valid way. But I would definitely participate.

A Lead teacher CL3 hesitantly said:

I would have to look at that very carefully. I’m a teacher. I like to think that I’m a good one. But I’m a teacher. To teach teachers is something that I would like to do if for no other reason than I think that I have some things that I can give them that can help them help kids. If a program came into affect and I felt that I could make a contribution without taking myself completely out of the classroom, so it would almost have to depend on how the program was put together. If it goes into effect and I choose not to apply for one of those positions, if there was somebody there who I thought I could learn something from or I could get
something from or I could better what I’m doing with my kids, I would certainly participate in that criteria, in that vein. Whether I would apply for a position would depend a great deal on what the expectations were, what the time constraints were and what the goal was and I would have to be pretty … One of the reasons that I got involved in this last one is that I wasn’t totally convinced it was the perfect model but my concern was that if it continued another semester, the model would be modified and I hoped to have some input into doing that. But I would probably have to look at it very, very carefully. I’m going to tell you there are people in this last group who probably don’t have the best reputation of being good teachers, but I thought they were great mentor teachers. Maybe like being a tennis coach, I may not be able to hit a hundred mile an hour serve, but I can tell you how it could be done or I could show you how to do it. I just can’t do it myself. And I think there are people like that out there. Likewise, there are people who could do it for themselves and can’t transfer it to other people. So I’d have to look at the program. I’d have to look at the ins and outs. I would definitely not say no I would never have an interest. I’d have to look it. The other thing I’d have to look at it as I’m winding down my career. Even if they said they were going to make something permanent, it would never be that permanent. I don’t have that many more years left. I don’t know how many I’ve got left but not that many. But I’d have to look at. I would not say no, but I wouldn’t say yes definitely.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher CT1 confirmed:

No. I’ve sort of changed direction. You know, my interests lie more with the students than in trying to teach other teachers how to teach, and I think part of it was the career ladder program that did that. I think I can do more for the students and the programs I want to develop are more student oriented and that’s what I want to work on. I would like to develop new programs, work on fine-tuning programs that exist and work more with the students at this point in my career.

A Lead teacher BL1 explained:

Yes, I would choose to participate. Because I’m arrogant and like to believe I can make a difference. It is kind of an ego boost when you realize that your years of experience actually can give you that collection of suggestions that you can offer to somebody else. So it is a wonderful thing that it’s something you can realize about yourself, but also that you can provide that, what doesn’t seem to be difficult, assistance to somebody else. It’s just that they are so appreciative. “I never thought of that. Holy smoke.” Well of course when I had that revelation, I had people come and tell me something and I’d say never thought of that. But it’s so hard to manage everything especially when you’re a new teacher, just taking role and starting class at the same time can be a monumental task and then having to do everything else, like homecoming, whatever else, just really can be overwhelming, any scars from my experience that I can share to give them assistance. I think is just worth it.
A Lead teacher BL2 verified:

I would do it. I would do it again. I thought that it was very positive. I learned a lot and the money was great. I really felt like I earned the money as well, because, especially gathering all the information on the ninth graders, looking through their schedules, counting the number of kids that have one F, two Fs, three Fs, four Fs, five Fs and then correlating all that with their attendance and then looking at discipline, I mean that took a lot of time and it was organized in like a spread sheet kind of way and everything, and also I definitely learned something from that. The literacy team, I was like why was I chosen for a literacy team, I’m a math teacher, I teach an IB program, my kids for the most part are very literate, but also we need to continue to make these kids do the best they can not only FCAT but SAT and ACT and in all their classes with honor writing and AP and everything and strategies and I think I’m going to have these kids read this “Automatic Millionaire” book, I think it’s going to be wonderful. I have high-hopes for that.

A non-Lead or Mentor teacher BT1 said:

Right now I would say no, given a few more years of experience I would say yes. Honestly, going for my Masters which is something I’m doing, so once I would achieve that, yes I would look to be in it. I think it’s important that we all help each other and that we work together and a program like this facilitates that and so I’d be more than supportive of it.

A Lead teacher BL3 stated:

Yes I would. I had a good experience with it. I feel what I did in that program really did make a difference and it changed me. I didn’t decide until the last day, because I was apprehensive. Do I really want to do this, take this on? But after doing it, and I really loved the students too. I didn’t know if I really wanted to leave the classroom for two classes, but if it had been at the beginning of the year, I think it really would have really been sad for the other students that I saw. It was a time in my life and I saw that they needed me. I think as a pilot program the impact wasn’t as great as it could be.

(Administrator) If the Career Ladder program were permanently implemented in the district, what changes would you make given the opportunity?

An administrator AA1 suggested:

I think that you’d be giving them a lot more responsibility, both the mentor and the lead, at our school anyway. You’re getting this extra money you definitely need to be doing something to get that money. One of the things to go and work
with teachers who are having difficulties or are new teachers, a program where you are in there and helping them, collaboratively teaching with them, I mean that to me, you couldn’t get a better program than that. And what we do to the new teachers now is really a disgrace. Even when we’re trying to support them we’re not supporting them by being in there a couple times a week, and really helping them with difficult areas and I think that the payoff to that would be having the teachers stay and not the turnover that we’re seeing, and that would be important. That would be worth the money. I think that you have to be a role model. You have to be out there and you have to make a concerted effort to be out there, to be seen, to be public, to take that hey come into my class attitude, not as a critique because you don’t want them to think you’re going in to critique them, have them come in, have them want to come in to watch you teach, to see the best practices in action. I think it’s going to be a slow thing. Any time you have change it’s going to be a slow process. But if one of the nay-sayers says “hey, this is working”, that kind of catches on like wildfire. Like our mentor that I was saying went to a naysayer said hey let me do this for you. The original teacher was very negative and the mentor was very positive and upbeat and said hey let me work with you and not because he wasn’t a very good teacher. It wasn’t that he needed help in that way, it was just the extra time and putting it in and actually going into the classroom and demonstrating and there was that connection then and there. And if he goes and he talks to a couple of his buddies and all of a sudden it’s becoming a halfway decent program. I think that you have to work for it. You’re going to have to work for that respect.

An administrator CA1 recalled:

I mentioned this a little bit before, but the selection committee I think is a good idea. School is extremely time intensive so finding somebody not so involved. The second round when we had to get staff to serve on a committee we didn’t have a whole lot of volunteers because they saw in the first go around how much time it took, so there needs in some way if that continues, for the selection committee their time commitment I think has to be a little bit less. And they were doing this for no money. They were selected by the faculty to serve on that committee. Their time commitment came into question. The other area is you’ve got to continue to look at the criteria by which you select leads and mentors, the initial screening process in order to make sure you don’t exclude really quality people and that may be like coming up with that other category, the perceived ability to lead or contributions to the school affect some of those other things. If leads and mentors aren’t looked at highly and respected highly within the faculty then they’re not going to get much accomplished other than getting a paycheck and continuing to try find something for them to do. Those are probably the big areas I would look at.

An administrator BA1 stated:

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I would make it a, the structure of it, I would have out of all sixteen people, lead and mentor teachers, all with the same stipend in a school. I would have the mentor teachers still teaching three classes. Of those three classes, I don’t know if it was required but we had all of our mentor teachers teaching one lower level class of the three. I would really strongly look for people that would want to do that again. And then my lead teachers I would have those teachers all, one of the requirements to be a lead teacher would be to teach one lower level class because I think those are your, again, your department heads your best teachers, not your best teachers per se, but your experienced teachers and the reason they’re department heads is they’re respected leaders and they’re disciplined and generally they determine almost what everybody in the department has to say and what everybody in the department is going to teach and everyone in the department looks to them for advice and for direction and I think having them teach one class of a lower level kids too would help school grades, would help AYP status, would help everything if that was happening. So those would be two majors that I would do. And then I think a district committee would need to look at standardizing some of the things that go on, not so much county wide, or state wide, but looking at specifically elementary, middle, high, that when you title it, your people, you may have the discretion to title them a certain way, and not have the autonomy to give them certain jobs but to be able to say your lead teachers are responsible for a, b, c, d, e and f. School-wide, along with the administration, whether it be testing, AIPs, literacy implementation, SIP plan implementation, any kind of school improvement programs, and after school programs, tutoring programs, all those types of things that the lead teacher would be in charge of and would help the administration develop school wide. Your mentor teachers; same thing. They would have a prescribed list of things the advantage of that is that all my high schools in the county would all be on the same path for what a lead teacher does, so when you would vary that school based on the needs of the school and based on the values of the school and every school got some different needs, but this school here allowed the teachers to spent summer days working on ten period day stuff and schedule stuff because nobody else had it. So we needed the extra hours and it worked out to help us get through it all, to do extra registration night, to have not more kids necessarily than other schools but just some other situations and issues to work through. But every school would be different with that, but I think that’s something that has to be thought through, but I like the idea of standardizing to a degree so that whether you’re a lead teacher at Gulf High School or Land O’ Lakes or Mitchell or anywhere else in the county, at the high school level where lead teachers taught. These seven, eight, or nine projects are things that they spearhead, they’re the committee chairs, they’re the go-to people on staff that when faculty have issues, questions, they design the discipline plan for the school. They coordinate parent conference night or something that’s initiated, that they’re the go-to people and that principals don’t have issues, school, I just think it would make life a little bit easier. Then you could branch off of that, like I said, if your school has a need, that has fifty percent of its kids that failed the FCAT and you need to do an after school tutoring program and you put the relief teachers and a mentor teacher in charge of
that program to get it up and running and form committees and do anything that you need to do, now that’s something above and beyond what the initial job responsibilities that are going to be there.

Follow-up Interviews

The following results were collected in the fall of 2005. They are an effort to collect any residual data from the Career Ladder program from teachers and administrators that had previously been interviewed in the initial post program set of interviews.

*What was your role during the pilot in the spring of 2004?*

**AA1:** I was an administrator.

**AL1:** I was a lead teacher at Mitchell High School.

**AL2:** I was chosen as a lead teacher.

**CA1:** I as the principal of this school.

**CL1:** I was a mentor.

**CL3:** I was a lead teacher which meant that I would help people when they specifically asked for help, working specifically with new teachers and also with the general instruction as well, meeting on a weekly or bi-weekly basis with the mentor teacher and the administrator who was in charge trying to coordinate the things that we were doing and the things that we could be doing in terms of making ourselves available to say demonstrate a particular or a particular technique that might be used in a classroom either our own classroom or another teacher’s classroom.

**BL2:** I was a lead teacher.

**BL1:** I was a mentor teacher.

**BA1:** I was basically the administrator in charge of the program. I did all of the planning and all of the interview process of the teachers selected for the team. Basically figured out who was going to be the lead and mentor teachers, had a short discussion with the principal, but it was basically left up to me to make that decision since I was doing curriculum master schedule, all the those types of things were my job responsibilities. Also, one of my roles was to have them, to fulfill there requirements, they had to do some hours, I had them do some hours in the summer, they assisted with scheduling reading students, they assisted with math placement, they assisted with calls to students about their schedule, so they did some curriculum work for me in the summer. I also had a few work on a new teacher orientation program for Land O’Lakes High School. So about eight or ten different little projects that they helped us take care of. We also met biweekly throughout the term of the pilot.
Are there behaviors or approaches that have changed in your classroom, from planning to daily instruction that have come about because of your experience in the pilot program?

An administrator AA1 explained:

Here at Mitchell there’s been a lot of residual I think from some of the mentor programs. We have a lot of teachers, first year teachers that we let go into other peoples classrooms, the model classrooms that a group of teachers have come up through our staff development, and said okay these are model classrooms and we’re going to let these other teachers that are struggling in different areas go in and observe and they do it, this is kind of interesting, they do it in groups of two so they may take their mentor, we have two different mentors here in Pasco County which I’m sure you’re familiar with. We’re taking their mentor teacher and the person that’s struggling, and going into the actual classroom and doing an observation and then the two people are coming out and discussing what they see and what they do, which has worked out really well. And also we’re tweaking that with these “lunch and learn” sessions, so I think they’re all kind of going together. I think that as a group we hated to see the pilot program end. It’s a literacy team that’s running it and the literacy specialist and a literacy coach, but we also have them working on our literacy team that goes around into each classroom doing walk-throughs. Along with those groups are the groups from the staff development that are actually getting the mentor program going, so they’re all talking to each other. They’re communicating.

A Lead teacher AL1 said:

I don’t really think there are any approaches. There’s probably some information that I gleaned from being a lead teacher. Information about how the school is run that plays into how I view what administration can do for me, how I view my approaches to administration asking for things and trying to get more for the students in my classroom. But other than that, no.

A Lead teacher AL2 stated:

None that are present today. I think that there was good intentions on implementing programs, we discussed in that spring, but once the school year started again it went back to what it had always been.

An administrator CA1 said:
Not really.

A Lead teacher CL1 remembered:

I think one of the best attributes of the program from my point of view was the ability to get into other classrooms, to witness other teachers, to witness the learning environments in their classrooms. I think that had an impact on me because you should be self-reflective if you go through that process. And so I considered some of the things I was doing and got to pick from some of the best and some of the worst and sort through all of them and it had an impact on me in the classroom for sure.

A Lead teacher CL3 concluded:

Personally, not really. Most of the practices and the stuff that we were talking about and that we were trying to get across. I was pretty much doing them already so it really wasn’t a matter of bringing new things to myself personally. I think I became a little more mindful of some of the things. I think if you’ve been in the classroom a long time sometimes you lose sight some little things, minor things, but there was no drastic change that I could say was directly related to the program. We kind of developed them as we went along. It was an evolving process. As a lead teacher we were not as hands on as the mentor teachers were because they had the release time. So we were kind of a supplemental level.

A Lead teacher BL2 recalled:

The biggest thing that I remember from the pilot program is importance of proper placement in the mathematics course the next school year. So, yes I am very aware of how I place my kids.

A Lead teacher BL3 suggested:

Yes. I feel that some of the behaviors that I’ve changed is that I critically look at how I approach certain areas of instruction and because after being in other teacher’s classrooms I’ve either wanted to adopt those things in my classroom or I wanted to get rid of them if I saw them in myself.

An administrator BA1 confirmed:

For me personally as an administrator what I found was that the lead or mentor teachers were for the most part the best teachers on my staff, so instructionally, they already run a great classroom, they already do outstanding things with kids, they already do things that lend itself to being successful because they use a lot of best practices. Some of them are very experienced and veterans and there were a few who were younger, but the overriding them was that they were great teachers and so I don’t know if there were any major changes as a result of the pilot.
Has your attitude or perspective toward the teacher and his or her role in the school been modified or changed because of the pilot?

An administrator AA1 stated:

Oh definitely. I think that we are no longer as isolated as we used to be. I think that people are looking for other people to help mentor.

A Lead teacher AL1 explained:

I think my attitude always was that the teachers are one of the most important roles in the school and that we need them to lead each other and to mentor each other and to get out of their classrooms to be able to help each other out and to be able to work together to make the whole school run as a large entity. So I still believe that. I think that the pilot program, being in that, I think it has allowed me to see that really is the way that we should be going is to get teachers involved in the running of the school and the helping each other and mentoring and your sharing of ideas, because they typically won’t do that on their own.

A Lead teacher AL2 said:

I feel that there is a great need for mentor teachers in the roles and responsibilities that we discussed. They’re just not interested.

An administrator CA1 suggested:

Not really. Many of the teachers who took on the lead roles or applied for the lead roles and mentor roles in the pilot program as soon as the pilot program was over stopped doing any type of lead or mentorship roles in our building. The mentors that we have currently serving with our new teachers are not the mentors who were necessarily chosen to be mentors teachers through this pilot program. I don’t know if it’s because of the pilot. It makes you wonder why they’re no longer willing to be in a leadership role. If they only did it for the money, they’re not willing to continue to help the school grow in the right direction. I was very surprised at some of the people who applied for the program.

A lead teacher CL1 explained:

If anything I think it’s been reinforced that the teachers in the school need to be directly related in problem solving, policy implementation, hands on best practices when it comes to teaching methods and such. The teachers in the building are the ones that are getting dirty everyday with the students. They’re in the nitty gritty, they’re in the grime and they have solutions to problems. But by the nature of this profession we tend to close our doors, do our own thing, we
don’t have the forum to share, we don’t have the forum to brainstorm, and so I think in my mind I kind of had that notion going in that hopefully this would remedy that to a degree and it did and I think it reinforced in my mind the role of the teacher in the building is somewhat under used. I don’t think of it as so much in levels because I’m an equal or a peer essentially with most people in the building. I didn’t see it as levels, I just saw it as a forum, there’s an opportunity there to have a free exchange of ideas that I think is really important in this profession. We don’t do that enough. You might meet with a teacher that needs a little help with, like tardy policies not working. What have you got? I had a teacher that didn’t even have a syllabus that I worked with, did not have one and rather than just give her my syllabus, I went and grabbed fifteen syllabus and handed them back and said here sort through this and you come up with one and when you come up with one we’ll meet again and we’ll sift through pros and cons of what you chose and why you chose it. So I got to meet with that particular teacher four times just coming up with a syllabus. She was a new teacher in the building and teachers need help with that. There were other times that maybe I gave a presentation in front of the whole faculty. So there were opportunities to meet in groups, opportunities to meet with administrators and discuss things.

A Lead teacher CL3 stated:

The only thing that bothered me about the pilot and the role of the teacher is that there were times, and I saw this or felt this in the training as well, that the concept of best practices, which I understand and I believe in, I think was being trivialized to being nothing more than a skill. I think that there are some people who are just natural in the way they conduct a classroom, that they don’t have any…and I think that there was an attempt to come up with a model that could be placed in all situation and all circumstances that I thought was an over simplification of what a teacher’s role really is. So that bothered me a little bit. I also felt that, and I know part of this is because the legislators sprung this on us so quickly. I don’t think that the program itself was as effective as it could have been if we had had more lead time going in and I know it was part of a result of a negotiation between the administration and the union but I think there could have been direct teacher involvement.

A Lead teacher BL2 said:

I think that it made me have more respect for the administrator who is in charge of the master schedule because being in the middle of all the scheduling made me realize just what an enormous task it is especially in an overcrowded school with a ten period day. So I have more respect towards the administration as far as all that goes. It’s just something else that you learn, experience.

A Lead teacher BL3 suggested:
I think that I know it’s very difficult to be a beginning teacher. I have a lot of respect for my fellow teachers that are doing it because to me it just came naturally, so I don’t know, I can still remember my first day as a teacher and it seemed like that was where I was supposed to be and I understood what discipline was all about. I think they trained us a little bit better. And now with so many other teachers coming in that have never had an education class I think I look at them differently because some of them are very needy and they need that experience that a person that has been teaching like 31 years can bring to it. I think what I see is that there’s some deficiency in what the expectations are with the person walking into the classroom. They think it’s a different thing altogether that when they actually come in and experience it, like that fellow that walked out this year, three weeks in. He really thought he could get up in front of the room and just start talking and they would all listen. And they didn’t and he didn’t know how to handle it because he had never been in a situation like that. He was in research and he thought he could just do it. Where we tried to explain to him, all of us that were experienced, that these are some of the things that you need to do but he just didn’t believe it. And so I think that my perspective, I kind of look a little bit, my eyebrow is raised, oh will this person make it if they don’t know what to expect. So I think having somebody there that helps them to know what to expect is a lot better than being out there in the cold.

A Lead teacher BA1 recalled:

I think some of the teachers, I got to see them in more of an administrative or more of a leadership role, because most of the people were part of our leadership team that were lead and mentor teachers. During the pilot, those meeting are more, just informational, short discussions, there’s not a whole lot of interaction that one person can have, because there’s twenty five people sitting at a conference table, the administrators do fifty percent of the talking and everybody else probably says one or two things in an hour meeting. So it gave me another outlook or another perspective on them as instructional leaders, what they bring to the school, what they bring to students, how strong many of them are in terms of curriculum development and alignment of their curriculum if they were department heads, stuff like that, so I thought that was valuable.

*Has the pilot program had any impact on the culture of your school?*

An administrator AA1 remembered:

Oh again yes. And again I was involved in the pilot and I can see the effects here at Mitchell from the program. They’re very involved. Tracey (science teacher) would be a perfect example. She got involved now that we’re starting a new program with mentoring for the district and she’s very involved with that, and she worked with the other program also. And they don’t want to let it go. I think that’s really the culture of the school, is that they liked it, they liked working together as a team.
A lead teacher AL1 suggested:

I don’t know. For the people that were involved in it and I think there were lead and mentor teachers or had experience with the lead or mentor teacher coming into their classroom and helping them, I think that they remember that and they like it. I think that it was a positive program in a lot of respects but I think we have so many new teachers here, nobody really talks about it any more. I think the older teachers that are still involved in leadership that were part of that lead or mentor group, they’re still involved in leadership now, whether it’s on the lead literacy team, which is the new thing now, leaders in the study groups, the facilitators of our new study groups that have popped up this year, those people that were lead and mentor teachers have taken on those roles, so in that respect it’s still the same people leading. And some new teachers are leading as well, but yes I think that’s the only impact that it’s probably had.

A Lead teacher AL2 stated:

That’s hard to answer. I would say no but only because we’ve had such growth and turnover that I don’t know that enough of the people who were even present that spring are here. I would think in a school where you didn’t have a lot of change in faculty, I would imagine there would have been some effects. Probably some negative effects that lingered on at that time. Just changed so much. For example, in our math department alone, we have eighteen people and six are new this year. In addition to the ones that were new last year, so more than half of the department was not here even then.

An administrator CA1 recalled:

It had somewhat of a positive impact in that some of the people who had not ever taken on a leadership role are now applying for and taking on a leadership role and that was very surprising to some peers and they rejuvenated some of them. On the other hand it had a very negative impact when people weren’t chosen because of the rubrics that were used. We had in particular one teacher who got very angry because he wasn’t chosen. He ended up resigning from all of his club sponsorships, his leadership roles. He stopped doing everything that he was doing for the school and ended up eventually leaving the school to go somewhere else because he was not chosen for a position in the pilot program and it was strictly due to the way the rubric was written that he was not, and the way the state chose who could participate in the pilot program had nothing to do with what was happening here at the school level. He got so upset about it that he chose to retaliate I guess against the school. And his negativity ran rampant through the school and caused a lot of problems. So in a negative way it probably had a larger impact on the school.
A Lead teacher CL1 stated:

Here I think at Hudson we didn’t have that opportunity. Right as it was ending there was a huge shift in administrative personnel, new principals, new APs coming in and a lot of what we had done was either pushed aside, or not appreciated or forgotten or overlooked because there was a change in leadership. I think here, in this particular scenario, there wasn’t a lot of that legacy of the program that there would have been perhaps at other schools.

A Lead teacher CL3 explained:

Yes. I think specifically because we have a diverse faculty in terms of age, experience and the restraints, the requirements to become a mentor teacher. They had to have several years experience, they had to have taken a particular training course. There were some people, and I can only speak of this school, that took the position of mentor teacher when they were not recognized by their peers as being mentors. I know this is not the direct answer to the question, but I’ve talked to people at other schools and in some instances that was true and in some instances the people who were mentor teachers and or lead teachers were truly exemplary people. But there people who were recognized as mentor that were not taken seriously particularly by some of...but it’s hard to be an expert at home. I think it would have been much easier, and again I know they couldn’t do this if those people who were going to be mentors could have gone to another school, because I think you have better, you function better as an unknown than if somebody sees you every day. But I saw that as a negative. People who could really use if nothing else, an outsider observing and making recommendations or not going listen to certain people just because they suddenly had this title. And there were people definitely who carried the title with them as a badge. I’m a mentor teacher. I thought that had some negative impact on the school.

A Lead teacher BL2 said:

I think that the entire math department is well aware of placement and I think some people were resentful toward not being chosen to be a lead or mentor teacher.
I think there was resentment. We’ve got other things to worry about now. I would say that’s gone, but at the beginning it was like that.

A Lead teacher BL3 recalled:

I think initially it did. Now that we haven’t had it for a year, people forget. I know that the teachers that I mentored are so appreciative. We talk about the things that we did, but as an entire school, our school has changed. We have so many new people that weren’t here for the pilot. The older teachers, I think yes. But the newer teachers do not. Some of the teachers that were mentors said oh
you should have had this because it was beneficial to me. I don’t see it as an impact right now on our school because it’s been too far removed.

An administrator BA1 confirmed:

I think absolutely. There were three or four people who applied that did not get a position. Two applied for mentor and lead and did not get the mentor positions and got lead positions and I believe four people applied to be lead teachers that did not make the cutoff, or when it came down to it, when we had only had X number of positions we didn’t consider them, we took them out of the running for the positions. So I think there was a little animosity, a little underlying animosity with some of the staff, especially the ones who didn’t get a position. I think some of the people that didn’t apply for certain positions, especially the mentor position, we had some teachers that would have been dynamite mentors, we had good ones doing the pilot but we had a couple of others that would have been dynamite, but didn’t apply because of some of the restrictions or some of the requirements, like clinical education training. Some of the things that they needed to have that they didn’t. So I think they felt a little short changed, that how could they not be considered as a mentor when they’ve got twenty five years experience, they’re an AP teacher, they’ve taught drop out prevention, they’ve just had extensive, extensive curriculum background and teaching background and looked to by their peers as lead teachers and other mentors in the building and so I think the titles and the supplements and all that type of stuff, there was a little bit of animosity, there wasn’t a whole lot. I think it was still a huge benefit for our school. I wish it would still be here.

_Are there any programs, committees, procedures, activities, etc. that can be directly attributed to the pilot as a “spring board”?_

An administrator AA1 reported:

Oh definitely. Again, like I said we do the “lunch and learns”. I would even say the walk-throughs are kind of a side kick to that and also we have a mentor program where like I said that the teachers go into the other classrooms and then we actually have a new teacher program and I would say they are all culminating. Then we have committees that are involved in organizing those programs and running those programs.

A Lead teacher AL1 said:

I don’t know if any of the new programs and committees this year could be called springboards from that. We have our reading initiative, we have lunch and learns this year and I’m not involved in that group so I don’t know if they’re “springboarding” off of what was happening with the Lead/Mentor aspect, because that’s kind of what it is. With the lunch and learns, it has to do with food
and getting teachers in. It’s having a great response. Teachers are actually coming in and listening to the reading coaches and literacy specialists present items. It’s also because I’m reading, I mean that could be a springboard, but I don’t really know for sure. I don’t if that’s a springboard from what the thought was behind the lead and mentor teachers but that’s making people get together and talk about reading, but it’s also getting them to share ideas and work on mingling with their peers.

A Lead teacher AL2 explained:

The only one that probably is somewhat in place would be the mentoring piece. I would say that the mentor’s role, because there were so few, that four or five of them I think had a more defined role or responsibilities really that spring that allowed I think school to understand and appreciate the importance of mentoring. So I think that there has been an effort to keep those things in place. Now those people are still present at our school. I think what’s missing is the time. They no longer have the time. They don’t get the extra time off or anything like that. I think has stopped people from being able to truly mentor. Unlike the assigned mentor that beginning teachers go to, that’s completely different kind of thing. I think that the other piece of being put into people’s classrooms and really helping teachers I would say the better serving effort to work towards that, but it’s just time. It’s all about time.

An administrator CA1 remarked:

There were a couple of long planning days where the lead and mentor teachers were actually allowed to have pool days for planning and they were actually working on integrated learning community units and they were working a ninth grade mentoring program to try to help our ninth graders have and find more success. We are still doing the learning community units to a certain extent. We’re moving forward with some of that with our movie nights, with our fine arts learning community and we did move forward with some learning community surveys and the videos that we’re doing this year for the marketing of the learning communities and things like that, that all came out of one of those work days with the lead teachers. The ninth grade mentoring, we have been sort of on hold now for a year or so, but we have come back around to trying to put that in place and we’re going back to the work that they did and using that as sort of a springboard or a guide so there were some good things that came out of the work that they did.

A Lead teacher CL1 recalled:

Most of them were dropped. We came up with an attendance policy that the new administrative people looked at, they didn’t use much from, there was a discipline policy that wasn’t used much. The only legacy I can think that really continues today is the redesigning of the professional library and spent some considerable time organizing that to make it more user friendly. That continues and is still set
up. I don’t know if anybody is using it, but it’s still there. And then a ninth grade mentoring program which has recently been talked about that we had created that is sort of being shifted around the office today. I don’t know if any of that will get used or not but there’s not much that carried on I don’t think. It was a committee where we would look at the highest risk ninth graders, that lowest twenty-five functioning group and we would target them and try to nurture them that ninth grade year which is so pivotal. All the research shows that if a student fails I think two or three classes that ninth grade year, their chances of graduating high school drop to eighteen percent or something like that. So they put themselves in such a hole early, they spend the rest of their high school life trying to dig themselves out of it. The idea was to hit those kids early, watch their attendance, watch their grades, pair them up with upper classmates that they could talk to and observe and bond with hopefully. Pair them up with teachers. No teacher was to have more than ten of these students assigned and pull them out of class from time to time and just talk, how are you doing; is there anything we can do to help you, and provide sort of that leg to stand on for those ninth graders. Ironically enough I teach performance-based on Mondays and Wednesdays and some of the kids that we targeted back then are now in my performance-based classes so they did sort of fall down that path and we would hopefully have steered them clear.

A lead teacher CL3 stated:

The one thing that I’ve noticed is I’ve seen a carry over from some of the lead/mentor staff to the program where your working with a beginning teacher, the clinical ed. I’ve seen where some of that has made that program a little more structured. And I’m not saying that that’s always a good thing, but I have definitely seen that whole program, I think has been, the whole clinical education program has been firmed up. And I think a lot of that came out of the lead/mentor program.

A Lead teacher BL2 said:

Just within my own department I know we talk a lot about placement. I can’t think of anything else that still exists because of that.

A Lead teacher BL3 explained:

One of the things that I saw this year is that you have a teacher that is overseeing mentor teachers. I think that’s probably very beneficial. In the long run somebody can keep track, rather than an assistant principal trying with everything that they have to do. I think that’s probably good because if you have any questions you can go to that person. So somebody that really hasn’t been a mentor teacher very long can go and ask questions of another mentor teacher that they know is in place for that particular reason and they are not bothering them.
An administrator BA1 said:

I don’t think we had a whole lot. Like I said the big thing that many of these groups did was they solidified some programs, some committee work, they solidified some school procedures, they helped further develop some of the things that were already in place. There wasn’t really anything that I can remember that we instituted that was completely new other than our new teacher. Anybody who was new to Land O’Lakes High School, we developed a packet with one of the assistant principals who oversaw three or four lead teachers doing that work in the Spring during the pilot. We had a couple of mentors involved with a couple of other big projects, but mostly just extra hands, extra help, extra assistance, which is always great to have with an overcrowded school, with any school. Just to make things run more efficiently and a lot more effectively.

Did the fact that the Career Ladder was discontinued for lack of financial support after the spring of 2004 have negative or positive implications for your school?

An administrator AA1 declared:

Definitely no positives, but you’ll see teachers are willing to work if they think other people are being rewarded and not necessarily monetarily. If they themselves are being rewarded by helping someone else, they seem to do it. Do I as a professional in administration think it’s a negative? I think it’s very negative. I think that they should be rewarded monetarily for their efforts because we have some teachers that really put in a lot of time and effort. They’re the cream of the crop. They’re willing to do what they need to do have consistency, and that means to share.

A lead teacher AL1 explained:

I think initially it had negative implications because we had raw feelings for people that didn’t make it. I think you’re always going to have that with anything. People are upset that they don’t make the cut. But since then I don’t hear any negative anymore. I think people have forgotten about it, but I do hear people talk about it in a positive way, saying yes that was really a good thing and I wish that we’d continued that. I think that people that were involved with it really enjoyed their role and I think that they really felt like they were doing something to promote a whole school leadership atmosphere and I think we try to do that with our lead literacy team now, but the main focus is reading, it’s not really on certain areas, it’s mostly on reading. I think it’s positive because it’s something that we did that I think a lot of people felt worked and it’s a shame there’s no money for it anymore.

A lead teacher AL2 stated:
I would say negative. I think it was negative because it’s just a frustrating piece, that another something that was started and then stopped, something started then stopped, never given enough time to see if could really work or be effective. And of all programs, I thought that that one had a lot of merit and a lot of value and that if given two to three years to work, could have really changed the school. Really changed how schools work. It just wasn’t given the time and so I think because of that things that have even come up since then, the reading initiative and anything else, people don’t want to give it the chance. Because they say okay we’ll just going to pull this also. We’re going to try to do all this work and then it’s going to be pulled again, saying there’s no funding. Now just do it on your own time.

An administrator CA1 confirmed:

Yes, because the ninth grade mentoring was a great program if it could have continued. If the program career ladder provider had continued with financial support with the ninth grade mentoring program would have started two years ago and we would have been in better shape than we are right now, the ninth graders. The new teacher orientation, that part of the mentoring role for our mentor teachers and our classroom teachers who just need a little bit of extra help along the way, an assistant principal has had to take over that role and our teacher leaders are probably not growing as fast as we would like for them to grow, and that put more of a responsibility back onto the administration instead of putting it out there with teachers teaching teachers and helping teachers. If the financial support had continued we would have been able to run that program as an after school type activity. So the lack of financial support is a big negative.

A lead teacher CL1 said:

I think the program was very positive. In your question you mention the financial support for the program, but I was never a fan of that. The money aside, I thought the idea was sound. I didn’t need more pay to do what I was doing as a mentor in that program. I needed the time and there is certainly a financial consideration there because if I’m only teaching three classes or two classes and I’m not teaching five, you have to hire another teacher. I understand that someone’s going to have to cover those classes. But the bonus pay that we got I thought was a ridiculous notion. Teachers want to help teachers and teachers want to help administrators and we all want to make the school a positive academic environment for everyone, so having said that I didn’t need any more money for the program. I needed the avenue that the program provided. So the fact that it discontinued bothered me in the way that I felt we were making real change happen in the building and without that program I don’t know that that change happens. Seventeen hundred kids in this building and four administrators, you can’t expect four people to run a building of that size. It’s just a ludicrous idea in my mind. So there has to be an avenue, or a forum or a program or whatever word you want to use there, where teachers can be more directly involved with
change, enforcement, discipline, attendance, programs, anything. And I thought this program was good for that.

A lead teacher CL3 remembered:

I’ve had both. I think it had positive, and I’m talking specifically this school, because of the animosity that some people had to some people who bought into the program. The negative is I think the best instructors of teachers are teachers. I think the idea of finding people, and I think the hardest part is to find someone who has good teaching practices or good teaching skills. I hate to use sports metaphors, but I can be an excellent athlete but that doesn’t mean I can teach you how to perform as an athlete. You know, the best baseball player does not automatically make the best manager. To be a coach in the true sense of the word is to take somebody with a skill level and improve it. Not everybody who has a high skill level can teach it and there are people, I think, who tend to teach, well this is the way I do it so this is they way you should do it. But I think if you can locate those people, and it’s a very difficult thing to do, but I also think that for people who have in the middle of their career, who are starting to get that burn out. I can see this as a way to rejuvenate them, if they did this for a year or two and then went back. In other words, if it was a rotating thing. I think it was an opportunity that was lost. I think that there were some people that got into it because of the money, solely and primarily. I think there are people that did it for the money and for the fact that they could make some positive contributions. I think that if there was funding at least to release people from class time so that they could work with other people, or if they could spearhead some interdisciplinary planning, I could see that as a real advantage. But, and the big but is, it’s like anything else. You’ve got to put the right people in the right place. And, although teacher A could work great with some people, they can’t work well with others. You’ve got to have an interesting blend. I think it’s very difficult to do that and in an orderly fashion which I know they have to try to do. When you come up with questions and you’re looking for particular answers and so forth, it’s like testing. Some people test well. Some people interview well. It goes back to the teaching. I may be incredible in the classroom with my kids, but it doesn’t mean I can teach you while I do it. Barry Bonds can talk about hitting all he wants, but he may not be able to transfer that spark. So I think it was both a positive and a negative because there was some dissention in the school.

A lead teacher BL2 stated:

I mean I personally liked it because I liked what I was doing and I liked the extra money. But I know that like I said, it makes for people to be resentful if they’re not chosen for it. So I think I would have liked to continue to be involved in the scheduling part of it and so stopping it was kind of a negative thing but then also I don’t like it when there’s animosity among the different teachers.

A lead teacher BL3 explained:
I really can’t tell you if it had a negative implication but I can’t tell you that it had a positive implication either. I think that as teachers we just kind of said well, that’s another thing they tried, we wished that it continued, but I don’t think that it really... I would hear people talking about it and saying the state should have done this or that, maybe I was in the wrong circle. But I do think that if you want to keep teachers in today’s society, you know when I started a long time ago, it was different, because you went in for commitment. I was married there’s a second income there. I did it because I wanted to. Now people really need the money in order to survive, not just to have the luxuries, but to survive, so if there’s a career ladder in place that they know that they can go to a certain step, it might be a good draw.

An administrator BA1 recalled:

I would say overall the career ladder I think if it was funded would be one of the, if it is used right, if the administrative team really understood how important it was, I think that it could be a just an outstanding program if it’s run correctly through the leadership of a school administration and a school leadership team. I think the benefits to new teachers, the benefits to alternative certification teachers, just the young teachers in general or veteran teachers that just are looking for tips, for clues, for different things, but the assistance that those people provide, that team provides, I consider them, the lead and mentor team provided to Land O’ Lakes High School for that spring and that summer, it was really positive for me as a curriculum AP. They did some great things. Now negatively, I think three or four of those folks just skated, collected a supplement, did very little work, the accountability I think comes into question, because as the assistant principal at that school doing forty different responsibilities I relied on them to document and log their activity to justify their supplement. I assigned each of the AP’s during the ESY, during summer school, I assigned them, two or three of these folks, and they kind of oversaw the projects that they were working on and were the go-to people because I was working on master schedules, so I couldn’t juggle everything. I think school to school your answer would be a little different. At an overcrowded high achieving “A” high school that has an IB program, that has AP classes, that has a large drop out prevention and PDIP program, has a moderate ESE population, I think it was very positive. My only negative thought is that it did create a little bit of animosity within the staff, mostly from the standpoint of people that thought they were capable of doing positions and they weren’t selected or didn’t fit criteria, or also in addition to that, the accountability piece, I felt three or four people, if it was continued and was funded, I wouldn’t select them the next year because I know that just from talking with their group that they were put together to do projects, that there were some people who just skated and collected supplements.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author has been an educator for 17 years at the secondary level. He has worked in the capacity as a teacher, assistant principal, and currently he is a high school principal. He is married to Susan who is also an educator for 17 years. They have two children, Eric who is 8 years old and Jenna who is 3 years old.