

# “Principalled” Leadership in the PDS School: Enhancing the Field Experience for Pre-service Teachers

Laura Klenk, State University of New York College at Buffalo

**ABSTRACT:** In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the Holmes group (1990) laid out a blueprint for leadership in PDS schools, positing that effective principals could foster leadership roles for all participants. Since then other scholars have explored the challenges of establishing strong principal-PDS relationships. This qualitative case study reveals how one elementary principal used her leadership role in very intentional ways to enhance the field experience for Junior Participants (JPs) in a PDS program. Findings reveal that the principal’s direct engagement with the JPs, her instructional leadership, and her actualized vision of shared leadership with teachers and children in her school created positive experiences for the JPs in the following ways: by maximizing the amount of direct engagement between the JPs and the children; helping them see the complexities of teaching; and allowing them to view the children as responsible, competent leaders in their own right.

*NAPD Essentials Addressed: #3/Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need; #4/A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; #5/Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants*

## Introduction

*“Principals of professional development schools need to understand they can build a culture empowering leadership from everyone and from any place within the partnership.”*  
(Fulmer & Basil, 2006; p. 145).

The desire to create strong partnerships between principals and college or university teacher education programs has been a focus of the Professional Development School (PDS) model since its inception. Defining leadership for principals in this model is an ongoing pursuit. Terms such as “shared,” “democratic,” “team,” “horizontal,” and more recently “distributed” have been applied to forms of school governance that recognize the value of spreading responsibility for school leadership beyond the principal’s office.

The existing research literature focuses primarily on the role of principals, teachers, and university supervisors in leading PDS experiences for pre-service teachers. The purpose of this article is to present a case study of a highly effective principal in one elementary PDS school. What makes this case unique is that leadership is the *core value* around which the school operates. Leadership emanates from this principal but it is shared in significant ways, not only with teachers but also with children. In this paper I present examples of this shared leadership model and its impact on field experience participants in the PDS program. Pseudonyms are employed for all participants and the school described in this study.

## Literature Review

In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the Holmes Group (1990) laid out a blueprint for leadership in PDS schools, positing that

effective principals could foster leadership roles for all participants. Since then, other scholars have explored the challenges of establishing strong principal-PDS relationships. In their study of PDSs in Texas, Bowen, Adkison & Dunlap (1995) found that participating principals saw benefits to the partnership in that it was helpful in bringing resources to their schools and even improved teaching in some cases. Yet the principals’ leadership roles remained limited as they spent much of their time dealing with management and coordination tasks (such as making arrangements for time and space, and serving as a school liaison to coordinate pre-service activities such as field experiences and student teaching) rather than developing more effective approaches to leadership.

These problems persist, but Brady (2006) and Lecos (1997) among others have documented additional significant constraints on school-university partnerships. These are by now familiar to anyone involved in PDS programs in the U.S. and in other countries, and include: differences in institutional cultures, the inability to reward teachers for assuming greater responsibilities, the lack of time needed to form a working partnership, and the perceived division of emphasis on theory vs. practice, among others.

In the current climate of increased accountability for achievement – for school children, pre-service students, and classroom teachers—and because principals are on the front line of support for new teachers, Varrati, Lavine, and Turner (2009) advocate for increased participation of principals in pre-service teacher education. They also call for further research to document ways in which principals are currently involved in teacher preparation programs. Indeed, missing from the literature are examples of principals who are effective leaders in PDS programs.

## Setting and Methods

### PDS Context

I am fortunate to serve as a faculty member in the award-winning PDS Consortium at Buffalo State College. With over 90 participating schools in 28 districts, our pre-service teachers – hereafter referred to as JPs or Junior Partners – have opportunities for placements in diverse settings. This active Consortium sponsors an annual retreat for sharing action research projects conducted by teachers, faculty members, and pre-service teachers (JPs and student teachers), as well additional meetings each semester to showcase participating schools and to conduct the work of the partnership. There are many opportunities for leadership within the Consortium and participating principals are a valued part of these efforts.

I have supervised 130 JPs in a combined methods-field experience course in Reading and Language Arts over the past eight semesters at Whitman Elementary School. Whitman is located on the border of a major urban area, and serves children from a mix of blue collar, public housing, and middle class neighborhoods. It is a small K-6 school (currently transitioning to K-5) with approximately 350 students. There are two classroom teachers at each grade level, with a full complement of exceptional education, support services, and “special” teachers (PE, Art, Music). Breakfast and lunch are served daily, and a Before School program is available for children who need to arrive early. The population in this community is becoming increasingly diverse, though the majority of children attending the school are Caucasian.

Each semester my class of sixteen Junior Participants meets at Whitman two days a week, for four hours per day, for eight weeks. Our day begins with an hour-long seminar, meeting in the school library before the children arrive. The JPs also use this time to meet with their cooperating teachers to plan for the day. Throughout the semester they complete typical field assignments such as planning and teaching lessons, conducting a child study, formally observing and conferencing with their peers, documenting visits to “special” classes (Music, PE, Art, etc.), accompanying classes on field trips, and in general becoming as involved as possible in daily classroom activities. They are required to keep a reflective journal in which they document their day-to-day observations; in addition, I assign topics for a weekly “Focused Observation.” These topics include classroom organization and management, motivation for learning, home and school connections, and literacy instruction routines, among others. For the final focused topic the JPs write about the ways in which leadership is manifested in their classrooms, both in their teachers and the children.

### Teacher-Researcher Stance

Research on teaching is highly valued at Buffalo State. When I was first assigned to supervise the combined literacy methods/field experience course, I began to consider ways that I could

extend this work by systematically studying a) my own role as a teacher and b) the development of pre-service teachers as they progressed through our initial literacy coursework.

My primary initial interest was in documenting the connections JPs make between the college methods courses and their experiences in elementary classrooms. Would they recognize conformity with and diversion from the principles of balanced literacy instruction that our coursework promoted? Would they document not only the formal curriculum but begin to take note of the informal and hidden curricula in their assigned placements?

A second interest was in helping JPs begin to develop an understanding of schools as communities with their own unique cultures. To this end I required formal, written observations of a variety of grade levels and special classes, and I invited support faculty and staff to meet with us during our seminar. On our first day in the school, as we toured the building, I encouraged the JPs to take photos and to note items that are posted on the walls and in display cases. This includes student work, historical and contemporary information about the school and community, awards, student art, service project information, and inspirational items.

Finally, I expected JPs to develop the habits of reflective practitioners who continuously evaluate their work and its effects on the children in their classrooms. In addition to the reflective journal entries, I required the JPs to observe each other as they teach lessons, following Gitlin’s (1981) model of horizontal evaluation. Prior to scheduled observations, JPs shared their plans, goals, and concerns for their lessons. The peer who would observe took notes during the pre-conference and the lesson, and initiated a post-lesson conference in which the teaching peer reflected on the lesson and listened to comments (praise and suggestions) from their partner.

Because my interest extended beyond the teaching obligations, I entered the school with the eyes and ears of a qualitative researcher, taking note of both scheduled and unscheduled events. I initiated and maintained professional, friendly relationships with classroom mentor teachers, children, support faculty and staff, and my own students.

### Data Collection

The two primary sources of data included entries from the JPs reflective journals, and my own field notes in which I documented my observations and pertinent interactions. The journal entries were photocopied and organized by date and by the assigned weekly focus topics. During morning seminar the JPs shared their reflections from observing and teaching lessons; they shared as well reflections from their general and focused journal reflections during this time and received feedback from the group. I “thickened” my own field notes with summaries of these seminar discussions.

I found it helpful that my “space” at Whitman, when I was not in classrooms, was in the teacher’s work/dining room. Here I was able to meet with mentor teachers during their planning

periods and lunchtime, and I was able to interact with other members of the staff during their brief coffee breaks. The frequency of these interactions allowed me to hear news and stories from within the community and to gain a more intimate knowledge of the culture of the school.

Interactions with the principal were another source of data. I met with the principal at the beginning of each school year to learn about changes in staffing, curriculum, and scheduling and to plan for the incoming cohort of JPs. We visited informally during the semester and at times, more formally if needed to deal with situations that present concerns. We met again at the end of the school year after the principal had met with the JPs and listened to their impressions and concerns. I recorded notes from these meetings to keep track of important dates and events that would impact the JPs.

Preliminary findings from this work have been shared as action research presentations at annual retreats for the PDS Consortium.

## Data Analysis

This qualitative, action research project was presented as a case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009) of an elementary PDS school and the role of the principal in the PDS experience. The unit of analysis was the dated journal entry or field note entry, rather than a line-by-line coding (which was not possible given time constraints). I followed a process of open coding, initially numbering each journal or field note entry. Next I created memos for each entry, followed by a more focused coding in which I sorted and resorted the memos as ideas and definitions emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss, 1987).

Prior to the open coding, I expected to establish themes based on my primary interests and concerns—the connections JPs made between their methods courses and the field experience, their understanding of the school community and culture, and their development as novice reflective teachers. While I did find evidence for each of these, as the sorting became more focused I found that references to leadership—both direct and indirect—were more salient and occurred across those initial topics of interest. Based on my assumption about schools as communities with their own unique cultures, I began to construct a view of leadership within the school that extended from the principal to encompass the teachers and children. After several iterations of focused coding, I began to recognize patterns in the principal's leadership style and to form nascent theories of how these patterns of leadership impacted the experience of the JPs.

At this point, to facilitate the sorting process, I physically cut the numbered references from the photocopied pages of the JPs journals and my field notes that seemed to describe some aspect of leadership; I then sorted and resorted these references by emerging definitions and themes.

The validity of the findings is established through data triangulation and theory triangulation (Patton, 2002). Triangulation of the data is achieved through multiple sources – the JPs

reflection journals, my own field notes with observations and summaries of conversations with the principal, teachers, and children; and notes from seminar discussions and conferences with JPs. In addition, the length of data collection, spanning four years (eight semesters) and the number of JPs who participated (130) lends credence to the substance and validity of the data analysis. Mrs. Morris, the principal, read drafts of the manuscript and did not report any misperceptions nor did she request any changes. Finally, I employed theory triangulation by examining the data in light of current and past models of leadership in PDS schools. I examined the data for references that illustrated the definitions of shared, team and distributed leadership.

## Findings

I identified three aspects of Mrs. Morris' leadership through this coding process; these form the organization for the findings of this report. Before discussing these facets, I offer the following definitions with the caveat that these are applicable specifically to this case study only.

- *Welcoming leadership* – ways in which the principal used her leadership role to welcome the PDS students and me to the school and to continuously support our experience.
- *Instructional leadership* – ways in which the principal worked to effect pedagogical improvements that impact PDS students.
- *Shared leadership* – ways in which leadership was shared with the teachers and children, and how the PDS students perceived this.

## Welcoming Leadership

The principal of Whitman, Mrs. Morris, was a self-described teacher-leader. She extended herself to me and to our PDS students in ways that were common to all principals in our Consortium by helping to coordinate our schedules, hosting a get-acquainted breakfast on our first day, arranging space for us in a crowded building, and encouraging teachers to participate as mentors to the JPs. Mrs. Morris went beyond these typical measures, however. Before the semester began she and I communicated via email and phone to ensure that all necessary arrangements were in place. She scheduled a time for me to meet with cooperating teachers in order to review the requirements of the field experience and to give the teachers an opportunity to share their concerns and changes in their schedules with me. This opportunity fostered strong lines of communication that continued for the duration of the course.

Throughout the semester Mrs. Morris remained available and open to hearing my questions and concerns, and to share her impressions and suggestions. We met again at the end of the school year to review the field experience and to trouble-shoot or plan for the following year. Based on previous experiences as a

supervisor in other schools, I did not take this level of engagement for granted.

With respect to the pre-service teachers, Mrs. Morris met with the JPs on their first day for an orientation to the school and provided each JP with a packet of information about the school district and Whitman Elementary. Mrs. Morris shared with them her own history as an educator and encouraged the JPs to follow their dreams. Mrs. Morris gave each JP time to introduce themselves; she asked them questions, listened to their personal school stories and answered their questions about Whitman and the teaching profession in general. She extended an invitation to come talk to her in the event that difficulties arose or if they had concerns about their experience. For most of our JPs this was the first time that they have had such an intimate, friendly interaction with a school administrator.

Because I wanted our JPs to understand that every school is a community that reaches beyond the classroom door, I requested that we have time to meet with faculty and staff who were not usually in the classroom. Mrs. Morris agreed, and with her approval and direction we had weekly visits during our seminar from a special education teacher and speech therapist, the school nurse and guidance counselor, the PE and Music teachers, Librarian/Media Specialist and Reading Specialist. In addition, we welcomed the custodian, school cook, office clerks, and a paraprofessional to describe their responsibilities. Through these visits our JPs gained a perspective of the school as a community that was served by a wide variety of people. Learning how to deal with head lice and food allergies, to clean up after bathroom accidents, take care of attendance routines, an up-close introduction to Response to Intervention (RTI), and understanding the need for confidentiality are a few of the practical topics addressed in these sessions.

When I initially made the request to engage the non-teaching staff in our PDS seminars, some of these individuals were hesitant - they felt that they had nothing important to share. Others seemed intimidated because, as they told me, they did not have college degrees. Now, if I forget to remind them that they are on the schedule, they will seek me out to verify their turn to meet with us. Another benefit of including the school staff was that they and the JPs were more aware of each other. It was rewarding for me to report to the JPs that someone on the staff complimented them for being friendly and professional.

What effect did these welcoming practices have on the JPs? Because they have already been introduced, the JPs felt free to seek information from community members throughout the semester. When the children in their assigned grades were out of the classroom for specials, the JPs followed the support teachers to observe the work they did. A JP with a dual elementary/special education major reported in her journal the following: "(The special ed. teacher) is sooo nice! She has a really great sense of humor. I got to watch her work on reading with a group of third graders and then we went to fifth grade to work with a couple of kids on their science project. In between she filled me in on her schedule. What's really neat is that the kids are happy to work with her and it doesn't seem like they feel singled out

because they have trouble in school. I hope that someone like her will be around to help kids in my class."

Occasionally JPs were assigned to grade levels or classes where the children were scheduled for back-to-back special classes on the days we were in the school. This meant that they had hour-long gaps to fill. The special teachers gladly cooperated to fill in these gaps by letting the JPs work with them. The following observation of a JP assigned to the fourth grade was typical for this situation: "I learned so much from (the reading specialist). She showed me how to administer the DRA and I got to do it with a couple of second graders. She let me teach a phonics lesson for the kindergarten literacy intervention too. I feel more confident about my teaching now. It's weird cause I was bummed out about the fourth grade and the kids being out of the room so much but in the end it was a good thing because I got to do extra lessons." The strong lines of communication I was able to establish -with the support of Mrs. Morris - made it possible for me to approach these teachers with requests for additional support for the JPs.

The first day orientation session with Mrs. Morris was not the last time the JPs see her - she was almost certain to pop into their classrooms over the course of the semester. I could count on her to share with me her impressions of how the JPs were being integrated into the classrooms. If she saw JPs who were not fully engaged, she alerted me and I could talk to the JP and the mentor teacher, if need be, to make sure the JP was not merely observing but fully occupied with the children and their work. When the principal saw JPs who were teaching lessons, she gave them encouraging comments and suggestions. Her role as a principal added a unique perspective and feedback to the JPs.

On our final day in the school, Mrs. Morris met with the JPs once more so they could share their impressions of the school with her. This information was used by Mrs. Morris to implement changes, when necessary, or to explore more in-depth any issues of concern that they raised. During this exit interview she also shared advice on the process of searching for a teaching job, including resumé preparation and what to expect during job interviews. Her practical suggestions, encouragement and advice were greatly appreciated by the JPs, and this final meeting with her capped a memorable field experience for them. As one JP wrote in her reflection journal at the end of her field experience, "The one thing I really appreciate about being in Whitman is how welcoming Mrs. Morris and all the children and teachers are." This sentiment is repeated many times over each semester.

## Instructional Leadership

One of Mrs. Morris's primary goals when she accepted an administrative position was to improve reading and literacy instruction at Whitman. As a reading teacher herself, Mrs. Morris recognized that the traditional model of whole-class reading instruction, the norm at Whitman, could be improved with small-group and differentiated lessons. Due to her encouragement, and with the support of formal in-service and

teacher-led study groups, I observed additional teachers each year take on the challenge of developing small group Guided Reading lessons and implementing Writer's Workshop.

The positive effect of these changes for the PDS students cannot be overstated. When whole class instruction was the norm, only one teacher was engaged with the children at any moment. Guided Reading and Writer's Workshop routines allowed the teachers to create small groups and individualized instruction; in turn, this allowed our JPs to become more engaged with the children, creating a field experience that went beyond classroom observation with an occasional opportunity to teach lessons, to one in which the JPs had significant interactions with students each day they were present. This model of shared teaching was especially crucial for our students who were preparing to take the *edTPA* (Teacher Performance Assessment) during their student teaching semester.

### Shared Leadership

Because Mrs. Morris viewed herself as a teacher-leader, she understood that positive change could not be imposed from the top down. Besides her concern for improving reading instruction, she knew that changes had to be made at Whitman to reduce discipline problems both in school and on the school buses. Character education programs had been tried in the past but were found to be disconnected and ineffective. When she learned about *The Leader In Me* (Covey, 2008), an approach to character education for children based on *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989), Mrs. Morris asked her teachers if they would be interested in pursuing training to introduce it at Whitman. The teachers agreed; Mrs. Morris solicited funding for this purpose and in 2009 Whitman became a *Leader In Me* school. By the end of the school year every student, from kindergartners to 6<sup>th</sup> graders, could name and explain the 7 Habits: 'Be Proactive,' 'Begin With The End in Mind,' 'Put First Things First,' 'Think Win-Win,' 'Seek First to Understand, Then To Be Understood,' 'Synergize,' and 'Sharpen The Saw.' The first year implementation was so successful that Whitman was named a "Lighthouse School," a status that normally takes three years to achieve.

It is not my purpose here to explain in detail *The Leader in Me* (TLIM), but rather to highlight ways in which the adoption of this approach—by extending leadership to the faculty and staff, and, more importantly, to the children at Whitman—had an impact on our Junior Partners.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of TLIM approach was its introduction of a common vocabulary for talking about and dealing with school-related issues, both instructional and non-instructional. The PDS students and I frequently observed the use of this language by teachers and children in talking about their learning, dealing with behavior management, and how they accomplished their school and personal goals.

The adoption of and continued adherence to TLIM was a shared responsibility of all community members at Whitman. Teachers took on various roles for planning school-wide events,

extra-curricular activities, and staff development. In turn, they continuously sought new ways to share leadership with their students. Mrs. Morris frequently spoke of the fact that Whitman School belonged to the students. The task of developing a school motto was given to students and they came up with a concise phrase that encapsulates both the spirit and the reality of this community: *We Care, We Learn, We Lead*. Children took the lead in selecting the focus of their classroom and grade level service projects. A 1<sup>st</sup> grade student spearheaded the collection of expired coupons for people in military service and raised more than \$10,000 in coupons for use in base stores. The JPs assigned to his class assisted him in developing a PowerPoint slideshow to describe the project to the audience at that year's annual Leadership Day. Other students have chosen to raise funds for organizations that serve people with health-related needs, based on their concern for family members or friends who suffer from rare illnesses.

Whitman Elementary has become known within the school district and the surrounding region for its improvements in reading test scores and school discipline. Based on my observations, this reputation was primarily due to the dedication of its veteran teaching staff in pursuing Mrs. Morris' vision of excellence in both instructional and non-instructional pursuits, as well as the implementation of TLIM. By examining specific examples from teachers and students, the concept of shared leadership became even clearer.

### Teacher Leadership

Our JPs were witness to the many extracurricular activities that were led by the teachers. In addition, the teachers assumed responsibility for planning the annual spring Leadership Day during which the community was invited to a celebration and demonstration of the culture of leadership in the school.

In the years since I have been at the school, a teacher-guided Technology Club has progressed from having students report morning announcements over the intercom to having them produce a daily televised Morning News show, complete with such regular features as the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, birthday greetings, words of welcome to visitors and substitute teachers (and the JPs), introduction of the "leadership word of the day," and the daily schedule. They also included special features such as a weekly "Lost and Found" segment and guest interviews. The children were trained in using the equipment and they assumed most of the responsibility for the daily production. The JPs and I were invited to watch the show "behind the scenes" and have been featured as invited guests.

Another teacher took responsibility for training children to be greeters. Visitors to Whitman were met at the main entrance by designated greeters who also led them on guided tours of the building. Children who wanted to be a greeter had to apply for the position and memorize a script for the tour. The JPs helped them out by acting as visitors for their "dress rehearsal" tours. This past year the greeters took responsibility for training new

Table 1. JPs Observe Teacher Leadership in the Classroom

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Evidence of Leadership</i>
Teacher 1	"writes out homework on a dry erase replica of the student's agenda book. She is practicing being proactive."
Teacher 2	"sharpens the saw by having the students get active and they do this by walking around the school during recess."
Teacher 3	"encourages her students to synergize with the class teams. The students must all do their best in order to help their team succeed. They must work together with people who may be different from them."
Teacher 4 & 5	"have mentioned on many occasions the importance of depositing emotional bank slips by simply saying something nice to someone. They are leaders by being positive role models!"
Teacher 6	"demonstrates habit #2, 'Begin with the end in mind.'" She encourages all the students to set attainable goals each week and reviews them with the students. She always gives them a reason for learning the lesson she's teaching and how they might use it in the future."

members of their team; they even created a computer-generated handbook to describe the responsibilities of greeters.

When the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Whitman School was approaching, teachers worked with a group of 5<sup>th</sup> grade "History Detectives" to locate historical information about the school, and to identify community members who had been present at the opening of the current building. These efforts led to a special anniversary celebration that included a Skyped interview with the first principal of the school, a gentleman who had recently turned 100 years old. Projects such as the greeter's handbook and the history club presented the JPs with premier examples of authentic literacy instruction and practice.

Back in the classrooms, the JPs observed their cooperating teachers through TLIM lens and they shared these observations in their reflective journals. From this perspective they paid close attention to the multiple tasks and sometimes mundane responsibilities of teaching that often go unnoticed by the uninitiated. Several examples are posted in Table One, above. These are representative of the observations the JPs share in their journals, not only in the focused reflection assignment, but also throughout the semester. The JPs, like their mentor teachers and the children in their classes, learned to use the language of the 7 Habits.

The teachers' role as leaders also appeared in my field notes. For example, I observed that Whitman teachers took change – even major changes – in stride. In our second year at the school Mrs. Morris decided to disperse the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes throughout the building in order to minimize the peer pressure that fueled some persistent discipline problems. To make this happen, several teachers were asked to move out of their long-held classrooms, away from the next-door convenience of their same-grade colleagues. Upper grade classes were moved to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building and intermediate classes were shifted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This change happened smoothly and without the complaints that would be more typical in settings where participants do not have a sense of shared responsibility and leadership. When I asked the teachers about the change, all focused on newfound benefits; they minimized or dismissed any inconvenience.

Another example involved extraordinary dedication to all students. When the parents of a chronically ill child were looking for a school that would accommodate his attendance via

a remote-controlled Vgo "robot," the faculty enthusiastically embraced this opportunity even though it meant added responsibilities for them. The JPs assigned to this student's class were required to include him in their lessons, preparing materials ahead of time to be sent home so the child could participate as they taught. One of these JPs noted in her journal, "I am so grateful that I was able to work with a V-Go and see how the students interacted with (the child)." And because this child accompanied his classmates to special classes and lunch (via the V-Go), all of the JPs witnessed this phenomenon, not only those who were assigned to this class. During seminar we discuss the responsibility of including him in the school with this innovation, and each semester the JPs who are assigned to his class share insights. "I realized after I started the lesson that (this child) could not see me, so I had to stop and rearrange some desks and chairs. I didn't "begin with the end in mind" and that created some disruption in the lesson." A classroom aide interrupted another lesson because she realized that the child could not hear the directions given by a soft-spoken JP. "Having (this child) in the class means that I have to be extra prepared and I have to think about my voice and make sure that everyone can hear me," she wrote.

The Whitman teachers' dedication to this leadership model was publically and prominently displayed on a hallway wall, where they posted anonymously, on sticky notes, their personal and school goals and where they marked the achievement of these goals. The JPs were invited to add their goals to this display. By the end of each semester many of them had made a contribution to the "goal wall," indicating that they truly did feel as if they are part of the school community.

## Student Leaders

The children at Whitman Elementary were inducted into TLIM from the first day of kindergarten. They practiced songs and hand gestures to learn the 7 habits, which were then integrated into discussions throughout the school day and across all activities. All students kept notebooks in which they recorded both personal and school goals. These notebooks were updated and went home each week so parents could review them. Parents were encouraged to write messages to their children in response to the goals.

Table 2. Example of Book Discussion Responses Based on the 7 Habits

Habit	Children's Responses
1. Be proactive	<i>The witch didn't wait for her friends to help. She did the work by herself.</i>
2. Begin with the end in mind	<i>The witch knew she wanted to make a pumpkin pie so she planted the seed.</i>
3. Put first things first	<i>The witch took care of the plant instead of having fun with her friends.</i>
4. Think win-win	<i>The friends decided to help get the pumpkin out of the ground so the witch could make pie and they could eat it.</i>
5. Seek first to understand	<i>The witch knew her friends liked pumpkin pie so she did the work even when they did not help.</i>
6. Synergize	<i>All of the friends decided to work together to pull the big pumpkin out of the ground.</i>
7. Sharpen the saw	<i>The witch got a lot of exercise trying to get the pumpkin out of the ground</i>

JPs were often asked by their mentor teachers to check the notebooks. This task gave them added insight into the lives of the children:

Today I went over goals with (my child study student). For his school goal he said he wanted to get a 100 on his timed multiplication test. For his personal goal he wants to stop arguing with his little sister. I was surprised that he was honest about this. I don't think I would have admitted this to other people. I asked him how he could stop arguing and he said "Habit Five. Seek first to understand and then to be understood." Then he thought of another one. "Habit Four. Think Win-Win. Like, if she wants to watch one movie and I want to watch a different movie, I can say well, we can watch your movie today and then we can watch my movie tomorrow!

JPs discussed the goal notebooks during seminar time as well as writing about them in their reflection journals. They appreciated getting these glimpses of the inner lives of the children. They were frequently touched by the supportive and loving messages that some children received from attentive parents. Conversely, they reacted negatively to parents who did not respond to their children's goal notebooks. As one noted, "Here it is already November and (this child's) parents haven't written anything in her notebook. I feel so bad for her when the other kids read the messages from their parents. Why can't they take one minute to write something to her?"

Sentiments such as this generated seminar discussions about the difficult circumstances that surround many parents and children. I encouraged the JPs to brainstorm ways that they, as teachers, could give extra encouragement to children who lived in the midst of chaotic and sometimes physically dangerous or emotionally challenging environments. A few JPs shared memories of their own, such as this one:

When I was in fourth grade my parents got divorced. My mom and I had to move to my grandma's house and I started crying a lot and doing real bad in school. The teacher would send me to the bathroom so the other kids wouldn't see me. I think it's important for teachers to be understanding when kids are going thro (sic) things like this. I hope I will be that teacher that

the kids know they can go to. But sometimes you don't know. It's like what (the guidance counselor) said about confidentiality, because even if he knows there is a problem he can't really tell you unless it effects (sic) something related to school.

Another student recalled his favorite elementary teacher. "My mother died when I was in kindergarten. My teacher would let me sit in her lap when she was reading stories to the class. I will never forget how kind she was to me that year. I want my future students to have good memories of me, too. I will practice Habit 5, seek first to understand, then to understand others."

One particular aspect of instruction that frequently led to talk of the leadership habits was discussions of books that were read in class. For her storybook read aloud lesson to a class of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, a JP chose *The Little Green Witch* (McGrath, 2005), a Halloween story based on the familiar plot of "The Little Red Hen." The children were given time to discuss and write about any of the habits they thought were illustrated by characters in the story. Table Two below shows that they found examples of all 7 habits.

This was not unusual; even kindergartners were able to recognize subtle character traits by applying the language of the habits. After reading "The Rainbow Fish" (Pfister, 1992) a JP assigned her second grade students to write and illustrate the habit they thought the Rainbow fish demonstrated. An ambitious youngster came up with a cogent example for each of the seven habits.

Oftentimes as JPs planned lessons they wrote goals that required the children to focus on one particular habit. I encouraged them to give more open-ended directions, because the children were usually more creative than adults expect them to be. The JPs frequently expressed astonishment when the children interpreted stories in ways they would not have considered. As one commented in her journal, "I've learned not to underestimate the ability of my students. They are far more capable than they may have come off." Another noted, "The life lessons that Whitman teaches, along with the 7 habits, has allowed these students to flourish." Another JP put it this way: "Sometimes I forget that (my class) is only 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A lot of them carry themselves and interact with each other with a sense of maturity." Yet another wrote, "The truth is, all my second graders are leaders in one way or another. Maybe it's in (our

class), or music, or gym. They all have it in them to shine like a leader.”

The most visible – and often the most surprising – way that children were expected to show responsibility for themselves and respect for others was that, on entering the school building each morning, the children greeted faculty and staff members with handshakes and eye contact. When visitors entered their classrooms, the children repeated this practice (often one child is designated the class greeter for the day). Here is what JPs have to say about this: “I think this is by far the best field experience I have ever had. I love how everyone talks to you when you walk in or just when you are in the hallway. I was waiting (in the doorway) for a class to pass by and on more than one occasion a student has stopped to let me come out of the room so that I was not waiting. It is just so polite and respectful.”

Many other JPs, including one who wrote, “The children are so welcoming,” affirmed this sentiment. “This morning (a child) walked past me and said, ‘Good Morning, Miss G.’ It was the highlight of my morning. Not too long after that (another child) asked, ‘How is your morning?’ I answered, and asked him about his day and he said, ‘Good, thank you, how was your weekend?’” At first grade, six years old and I can hold a longer conversation with him than I can with some adults. It just amazes me how comfortable the children are with adults.”

The children did not simply absorb these lessons in politeness by osmosis– they were explicitly taught how to interact with adults and other children. These lessons occurred in the classroom, as the teachers prepared them for the role of class greeter. Mrs. Morris reinforced these lessons during Morning News. For example, one Monday morning she gave examples of how to politely ask another person about their weekend. Clearly, these lessons were not lost on the children.

My own field notes recorded numerous encounters with the children that mirrored those of the JPs. In fact the most delightful aspect of pre-service teacher supervision for me was maintaining contact with school-aged children. I was greeted formally – with a handshake and words of welcome – when I entered classrooms to observe the JPs. And every day I found myself engaged in conversations with children. The older children remembered me from previous years, but even the youngest children recognized and acknowledged me. One day I was in the hallway as the Kindergartners were on their way to the dining room. One child stopped me and pointed to the JP who was escorting her class. “Are you her teacher?” she inquired. I nodded and the child continued, “Well, you are doing a GREAT job!” I could hardly wait to relate this incident to the kindergarten teacher with whom this child was repeating the grade. I remembered her from the previous year as a youngster who had a personal classroom aide to help her stay engaged with the class.

The children addressed me by name and I frequently heard interesting stories from them about their out-of-school interests and classroom events and incidents. After observing a JP teach a lesson in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, I left the room accompanied by a child who was on his way to band practice. I asked him what he

thought of the lesson. “Well, it was interesting. But,” he added, pounding the air with his fist for emphasis, “she needs to be more stricter!” Indeed, several students seated at the back of this classroom had been talking to each other throughout the lesson, and the JP did not address this disruptive behavior. With her permission, she and I shared the incident and this child’s comment in the next seminar. The JPs were gratified to know that children expected them to be in charge. Once again I believe that the leadership climate in the school contributed to the children’s forthrightness with me and other adults. This in turn allowed moments such as this one, when the JPs were able to consider the informal or hidden curriculum along with their planned lessons.

Students at Whitman were given innumerable opportunities to practice leadership. All children were eligible to apply for positions of responsibility – as a tour guide for visitors, servers for lunch guests, leading the Pledge of Allegiance, being a birthday greeter, working with the Technology club, and a host of others. Even those children for whom school was difficult were eager to take on extra responsibilities. One morning a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. It was obvious that this child struggled with a severe articulation disorder yet he gave the most enthusiastic, deliberate recitation of the Pledge that I had ever heard. The speech therapist told me later that he had been working for weeks to prepare for his moment with the intercom.

Another episode that demonstrated the leadership ability of the children concerned a time when the upper-grade children’s behavior in the dining hall had devolved into shouting and throwing objects at each other, with frequent verbal taunts and physical skirmishes. Instead of having the lunchroom aides yell at the children (which is not atypical in many schools), the principal decided to hand over to the children the responsibility for identifying and correcting the problem. A group of 6<sup>th</sup> graders volunteered to videotape their peers in the lunchroom; they took this video into each classroom to let the children view themselves and brainstorm ideas to change their behavior.

One boy in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was astonished to see the effect his very loud voice and aggressive behavior had on other children. He recognized that he was agitating others and contributing directly to the problem. As a result he made it his personal goal to change his behavior. He asked his teacher if he could apologize and so, during the Morning News one day he took his place at the intercom and gave a shaky yet heartfelt apology, followed by a promise to be more respectful of others. One of the JPs who was assigned to his classroom wrote:

I knew that (this student) had trouble paying attention and staying on task, but I didn’t know anything about the trouble in the lunchroom because 6<sup>th</sup> grade goes (to lunch) after we leave. It seems like he is trying now to settle down in class. I was totally surprised to hear him on the announcements. I think it takes a big person to admit that you are doing something wrong. I would

never have done that when I was this age. I would’ve been too embarrassed.

Another day, a teacher who oversaw the Morning News production entered the workroom just after the announcements were over. With tears in her eyes, she asked if I had heard the Pledge. I had, but it had not registered as out-of-the-ordinary with me. As it happened, a youngster with selective mutism had applied to participate on stage for the upcoming Leadership Day. Since most of her classmates and teachers had never heard her voice except in nearly silent whispers, Mrs. Morris met with her to find out if she truly wanted to do this. She was insistent, so the principal suggested that the child practice by leading the pledge. She did so admirably, and a few weeks later delivered – flawlessly and without hesitation – an original spoken part for an audience of 300 at the Leadership Day program. JPs assigned to this child’s class raised the issue of selective mutism, which most of them had not heard of, during our seminar. I invited the speech therapist and the guidance counselor to share with us ways that they found useful in their efforts to support this child and make her feel welcome in the school.

Many of the children at Whitman participated in leadership activities in spite of dealing with more serious issues. Parents, business members, local politicians, and teachers from other school districts (and other countries) were guests for Leadership Day. On one of these occasions I recognized a former graduate student who I had not seen for over ten years. She taught in a neighboring school district, and had come with several colleagues to learn more about TLIM at Whitman. With tears in her eyes, she relayed a touching experience from the day. On their arrival she and her colleagues had been met at the entrance by one of the Tour Guides. She recognized the youngster as a former student of hers who had transferred to Whitman the previous year. This child had been removed from her school after a frustrating experience, both scholastically and behaviorally. At that time he appeared to be firmly on a path to school failure. Now, less than one year later, he greeted visitors with poise and confidence. His former teacher was stunned – and of course greatly pleased to see the progress this child had made.

Incidents such as these helped convince the JPs that even very young children are capable of taking responsibility for their decisions and actions. The major event of the school year offers further evidence of this. The JPs observed firsthand the effort that the teachers and children contributed to the Leadership Day program and activities. Children rehearsed for their roles whether these were spoken or musical parts, tour guides, servers, greeters, color guard, or a myriad of other tasks. The teachers planned the transitions from classroom to auditorium, and prepared activities to engage the community guests who spent time in their classrooms following the program in the auditorium. The JPs noted that children were supportive of classmates who took on special leadership roles. One wrote, “Today a little girl from our class was on the morning announcements. She did a great job and when she came back to the room everyone clapped for her.” Similarly, a kindergartner

was selected to be the emcee for the most recent Leadership Day. He was dressed in a miniature top hat and tails to welcome the guest audience, and the JP in his class reported that his classmates were very excited for him and clapped enthusiastically as he practiced in the days leading up to the event. “I thought the other kids would be jealous of all the extra attention that (this child) got, but they were just very happy for him,” she wrote.

Indeed, JPs often focused on the relationships between children. As one stated, “Many of the students are quick to help those around them. They seem very aware of the needs of others; this is an important quality of a leader. (My teacher) also does a good job of creating an environment that is infused with leadership. It will be interesting to see where many of these students are in ten years!” Another added, “In all my years of education, I have never seen a more caring and respectful class. Everyone talks to each other. They never fight or say negative things to each other. The class is very well managed and I’m always impressed with their attitudes towards each other and their attitudes towards learning.” Yet another observed, “The children are so well-behaved and respectful. I think this makes teaching the children easier and I think it makes the children more eager to learn.”

It was common for pre-service teachers to develop a warm attachment to the children in their classes. The JPs at Whitman were no different in this respect. Beyond that attachment, however, the JPs were learning to see even the youngest children as competent, responsible and caring.

## Limitations

I recognize three main limitations to this study. First, my observations and those of the JPs were limited due to the fact that we were only in the school for eight hours each week. Furthermore, we were always there on the same days and only for the morning. Thus we did not see the full school day and the complete range of instruction and activities. It is possible that our observations and reflections would have been different had we been there for the entire school day. Balancing this limitation is the fact that I supervised the JPs in this school for four years, and thus have a substantial amount of data.

Second, I was not privy to the regular faculty meetings or in-service sessions with the teachers. I cannot make certain claims about the principal’s leadership style without having seen more of her interactions with the teachers. This was beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, I have done no systematic follow-up with the JPs. A few of them have spoken about their experience and their views of leadership at the annual PDS retreat, and those who have since found employment in schools do report ways in which they incorporate some of the 7 Habits in their classrooms. However it would be ideal to follow many more of these teachers into their own classrooms in order to document which of the lessons learned and insights gained during our time at Whitman continue to influence our (former) JPs.

## Conclusions and Implications

The model of leadership as fostered by Mrs. Morris at Whitman had a definite and positive impact on JPs, at least for the short term. These include: recognition of the contributions of all faculty and staff; changes in pedagogy that allowed for greater JP participation in the classrooms; focusing JPs attention to see beyond the surface level of teaching activity and to get a glimpse into the personal lives of children; and finally, helping JPs envision all children as capable of assuming responsibility for themselves and taking on leadership positions. In retrospect, most of my original goals for this literacy field experience have been met to some extent through the leadership model. My concerns for the literacy methods content was addressed in part by the deep discussions of literature that centered on the leadership habits, and the opportunities for authentic literacy engagement connected to TLIM activities. In addition, the JPs had numerous opportunities and interactions with all of the faculty and staff, thus seeing the school as a community with its own unique culture, not just a collection of independent classrooms. Finally, the leadership model added an extra, deeper dimension to the reflections of the JPs as they began to pay attention to the informal and hidden curriculum.

Throughout this report I have referred to the leadership model at Whitman as “shared.” In ruminating on which label would best describe it, I was tempted to use the more contemporary term, “distributed leadership.” But this term connotes more than shared responsibility or leadership roles. In a distributed model, according to Spillane (2005) and others, changes occur in the patterns of interaction amongst participants, creating various forms of interdependency. Participants go beyond role sharing and become true partners in the enterprise. Timperley (2005) refers to this as “mutual collaboration.”

While I could make the case that I have observed strong evidence of interactional changes between the principal and the JPs, and between the children and adults, it was outside the scope of this work to study the interactions between the principal and the teachers. My hunch is that, here too, we would see evidence of a move from shared to distributed leadership. However, the evidence from this data set is not strong enough. I offer this comment only to explain the terminology employed in this analysis, not to imply that this leadership model is somehow lacking. Indeed, the distributed model, at least in the scholarly literature on PDS, still excludes the children. This aspect of the leadership model at Whitman was what made the school so unique.

A word of caution is in order, too. During the past four years at Whitman Elementary several significant changes were taking place. The teachers there and our JPs were being introduced to the Common Core standards and a new Common Core curriculum offered by the state. The children were being introduced to new state achievement tests based on this curriculum. The teachers were adjusting to a new, state-mandated evaluation process (Annual Professional Performance Review or APPR). They were also making the transition to a K-5

school, losing the long-time 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and adding sections of kindergarten. Even the kitchen staff faced major new regulations from the federal government.

At Downtown State College my colleagues and I were studying the Common Core standards and the state recommended curriculum, too. We were also being trained to prepare our JPs for new and revised state-mandated certification exams, including the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). It is truly remarkable that, in the midst of these changes the leadership model at Whitman was held intact. Not all schools would be able to sustain a positive trajectory in light of such significant changes.

It must also be kept in mind that the small size of this school was likely an advantage in terms of the principal’s ability to be as engaged with the PDS program as was Mrs. Morris. In larger schools, PDS responsibilities may fall to an assistant principal or even to teachers. Another point to consider was the role of staff development for The Leader in Me. This approach required investments of time and finances that may not be available to many schools.

Still, there are lessons to be taken from the leadership model of Mrs. Morris and the teachers and children at Whitman. Most of the leadership opportunities practiced were not dependent on adoption of TLIM. Principals or their designated PDS liaisons can welcome new JPs or student teachers, provide an orientation session for them, and introduce them to their colleagues. Support faculty and staff can be invited to share their work during seminars. Supervisors can encourage JPs to conduct mini-ethnographies of their schools, directing their attention to items and activities that display the values of the school community. Special interest groups such as the technology club or greeters need only faculty members who are willing to provide support and guidance as the children learn to assume increasing responsibility for these activities. Principals or their designees can foster strong relationships between the supervisor and the faculty by arranging beginning of the year meetings to discuss mutual expectations and to troubleshoot and problem solve issues such as scheduling and placements.

Fulmer and Basile (2006) concluded:

If there is to be an increase in the density and distribution of leadership in schools and school districts, it needs to be an intentional part of the school plan and goal of the partnership. Principals need to be able to look at the resources of the partnership and become knowledge and experience managers—managing the leadership potential, and therefore the intellectual capital, within their schools. Principals of professional development schools need to understand they can build a culture empowering leadership from everyone and from any place within the partnership. Being the principal of a PDS means more than just hosting student teachers. Rather, this requires that principals facilitate the distribution of leadership activities over time, place, and subjects.

Honoring a practice of distributed leadership must become a core value of the partnership, an integral and intentional instrument used by all participants in the partnership, and an intentional leadership strategy of school and district leaders (p. 145).

Mrs. Morris and her colleagues have, through intentional effort, achieved some of the goals of distributed leadership within Whitman Elementary School. The results of this leadership model have been unequivocally positive for the children at Whitman. Based on the responses of our JPs, there have been important, positive outcomes for our pre-service teachers as well. Hopefully further research will point to ways in which these outcomes can be sustained and spread more widely through the PDS movement. <sup>SUP</sup>

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**Laura Klenk** is a former elementary and special education teacher. She is a faculty member in the Elementary Education and Reading Department in the School of Education, Buffalo State College. In addition she is an advocate for play-based early childhood education.