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Distributed Leadership: Re-conceptualizing the Work of Leading and Managing Teaching

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The Netherlands, October 2016



@jamespspillane

The Distributed Leadership Studies
<http://www.distributedleadership.org>

Funded by National Science Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Institute for Education Sciences, & Carnegie Corporation

**“We have one hunter and one gatherer...
Everyone else is a consultant”**



Preview

- Getting beyond an ‘implementation mindset’, engaging the twin processes of diagnosis and design.
- Anchoring diagnosis and design work in teaching practice.
- A Distributed Framework: Elements and Entailments for Practice.
- Putting a Distributed Framework to work: Designing School System and School Organization Infrastructure.

Diagnosis and Design

- **Diagnosis** = identifying the nature or cause of something
- **Design** = shaping educational infrastructure to achieve particular purposes

Spillane, J. P., & Coldren, A. F. (2011). *Diagnosis and design for school improvement: Using a distributed perspective to lead and manage change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

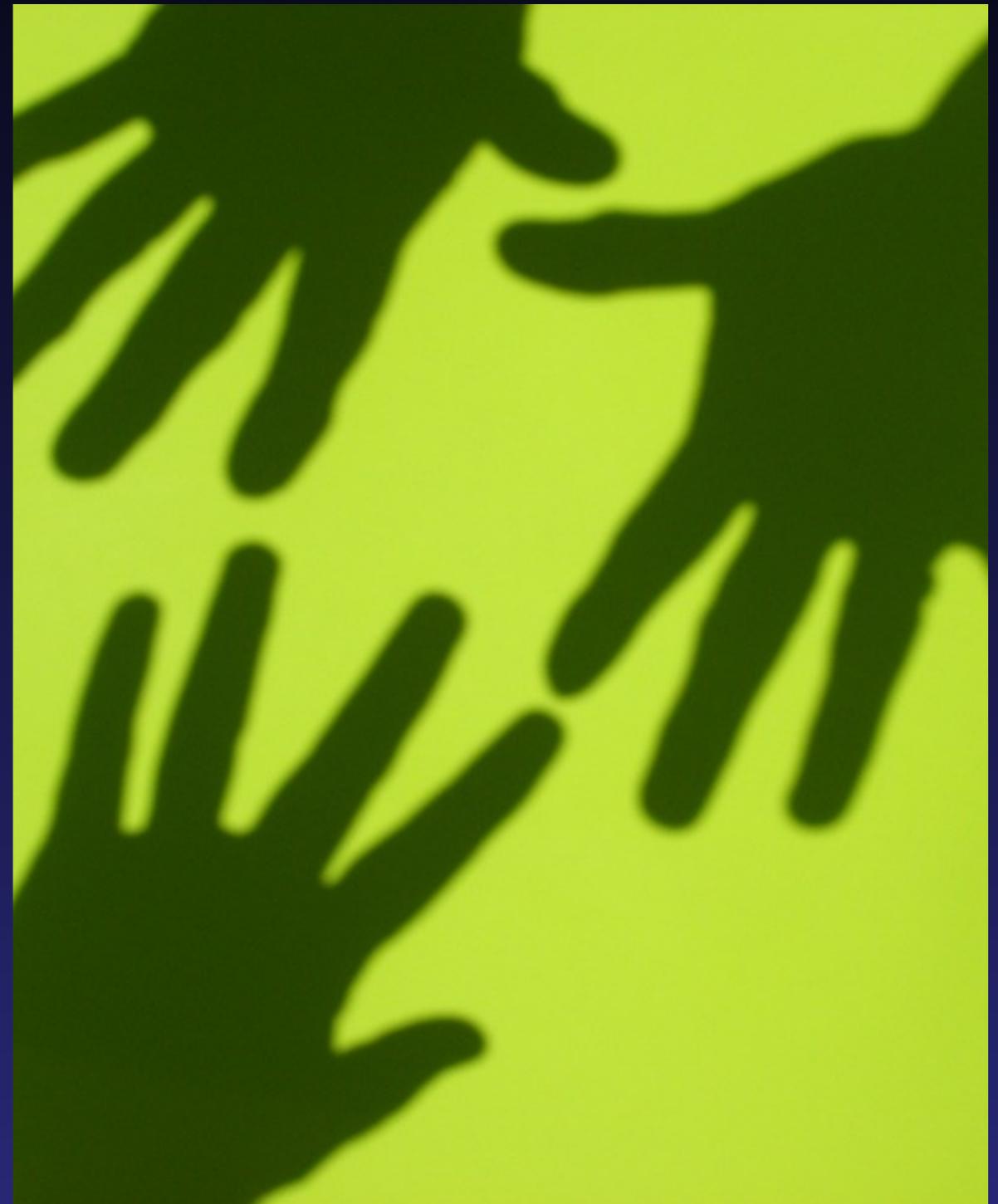
Leadership

- **[Leadership refers] to the interaction among members of a group that initiates and maintains improved expectations and the competence of the whole group to solve problems or attain goals.**
- **[Leadership refers] to people who bend the motivations and actions of others to achieve certain goals; it implies taking initiatives and risks.**



Management

- **Management is about maintenance; maintaining current organizational arrangements and ways of doing work (*Burns, 1978; Cuban, 1988*)**



Teaching Practice

Teaching

- **Contested ends**
- **Uncertain means**
- **Mutual dependency**
- **Unpredictability of practitioner-client interactions**



Anchoring Leadership in Teaching

Students'
Opportunities To Learn



Teaching



What gets taught?

How is it taught?

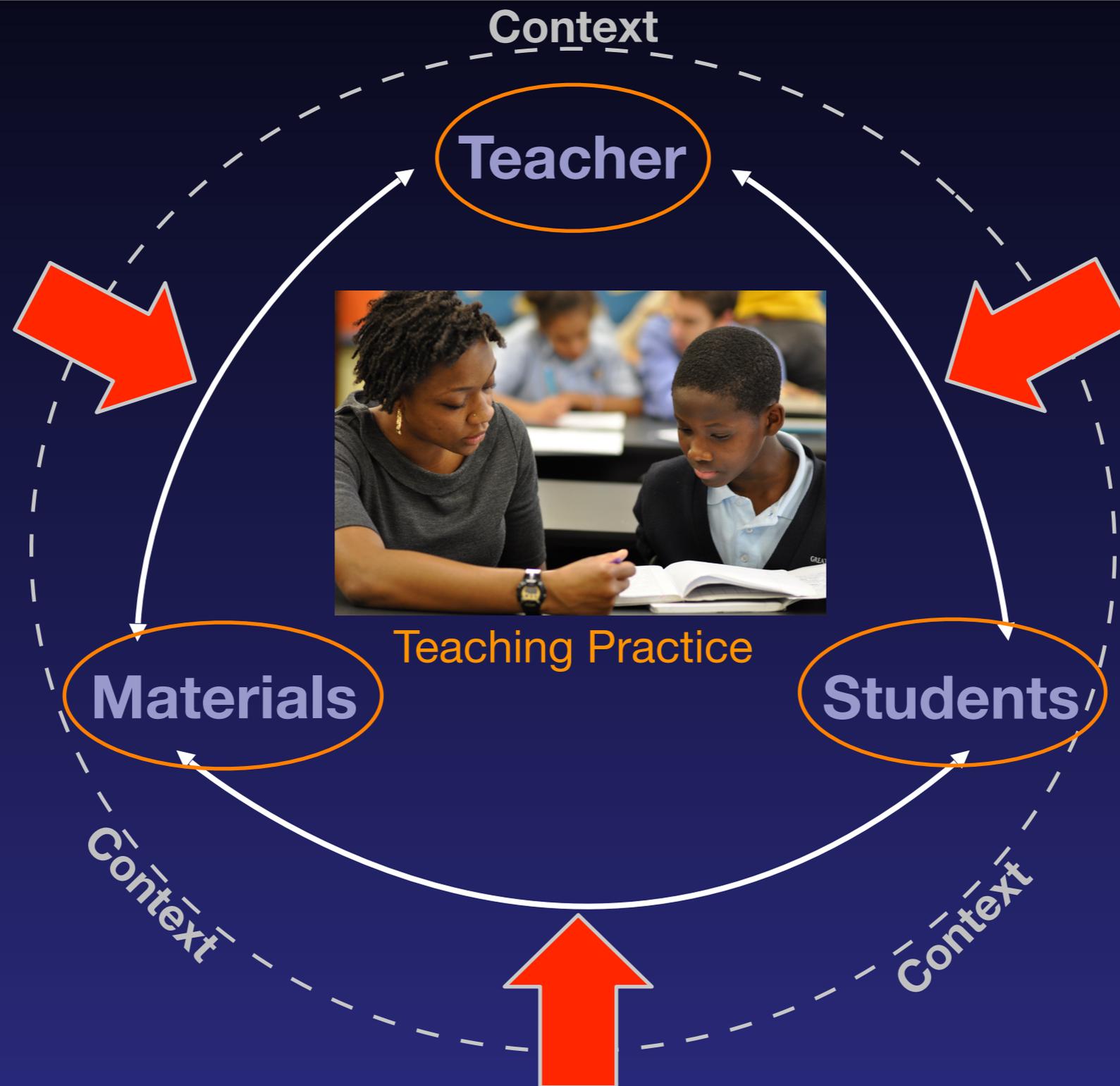
Leading and Managing



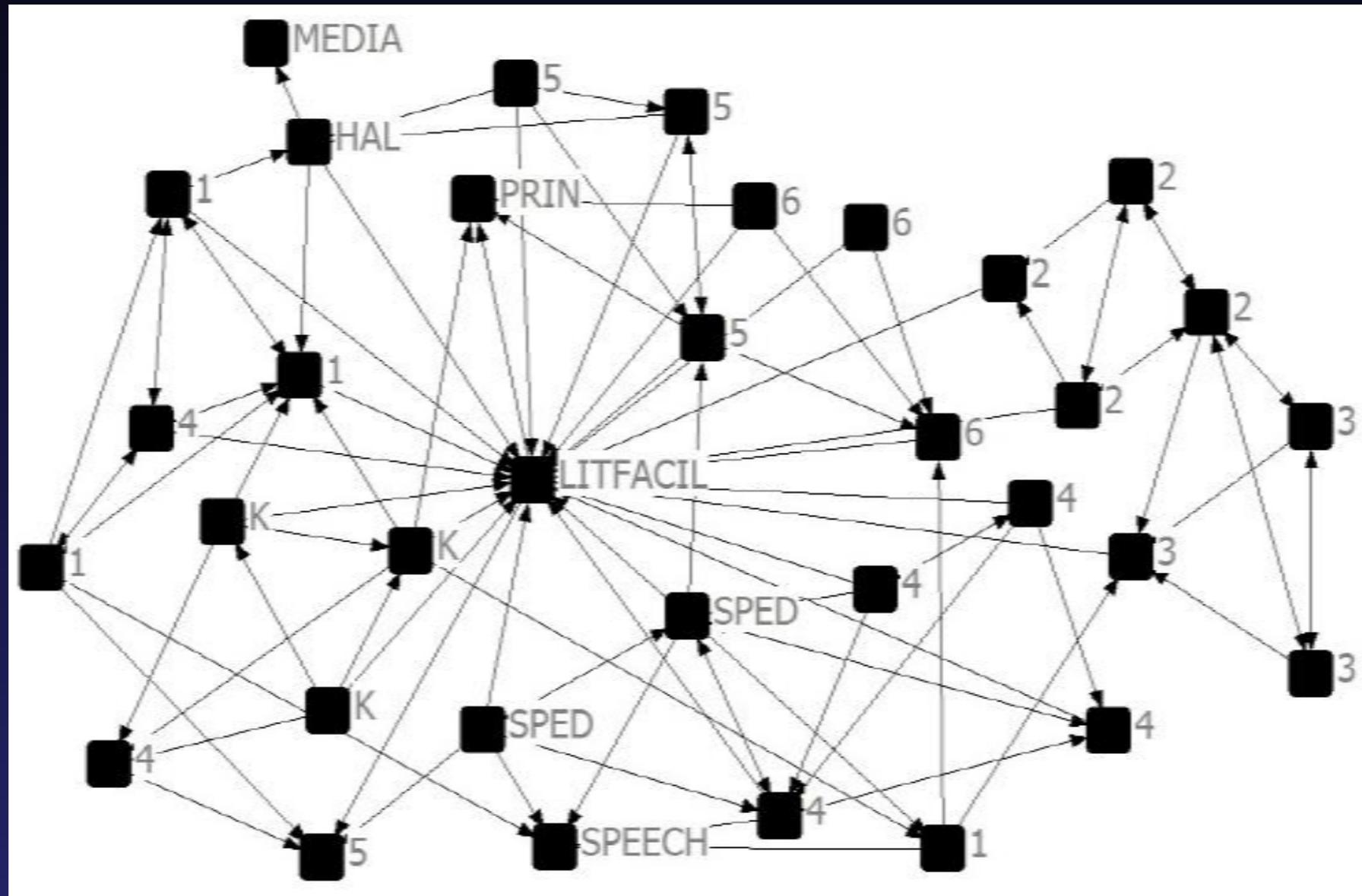
Teaching as a Social Practice



Teaching and Leadership

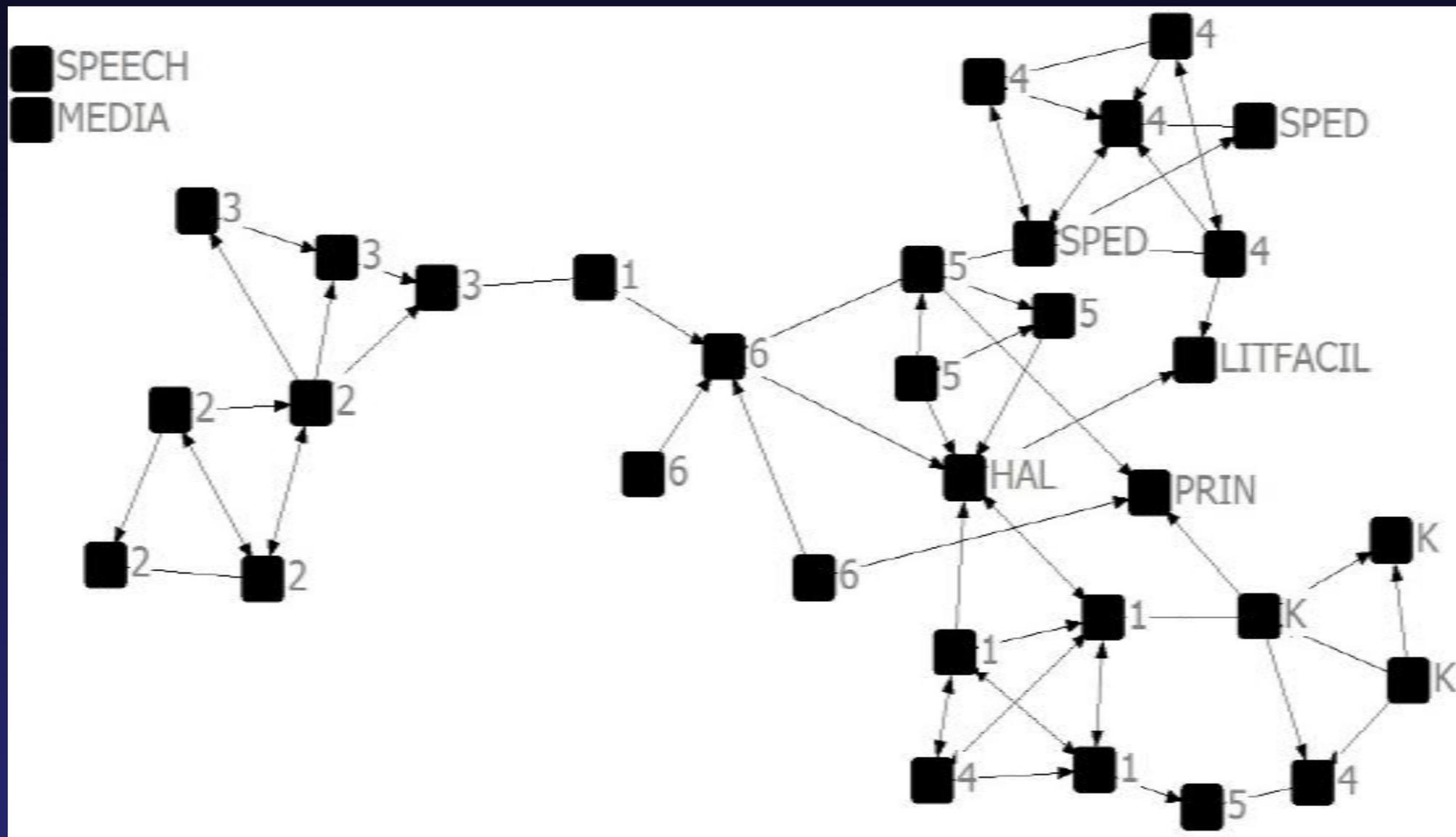


Instructional Interactions about Language Arts

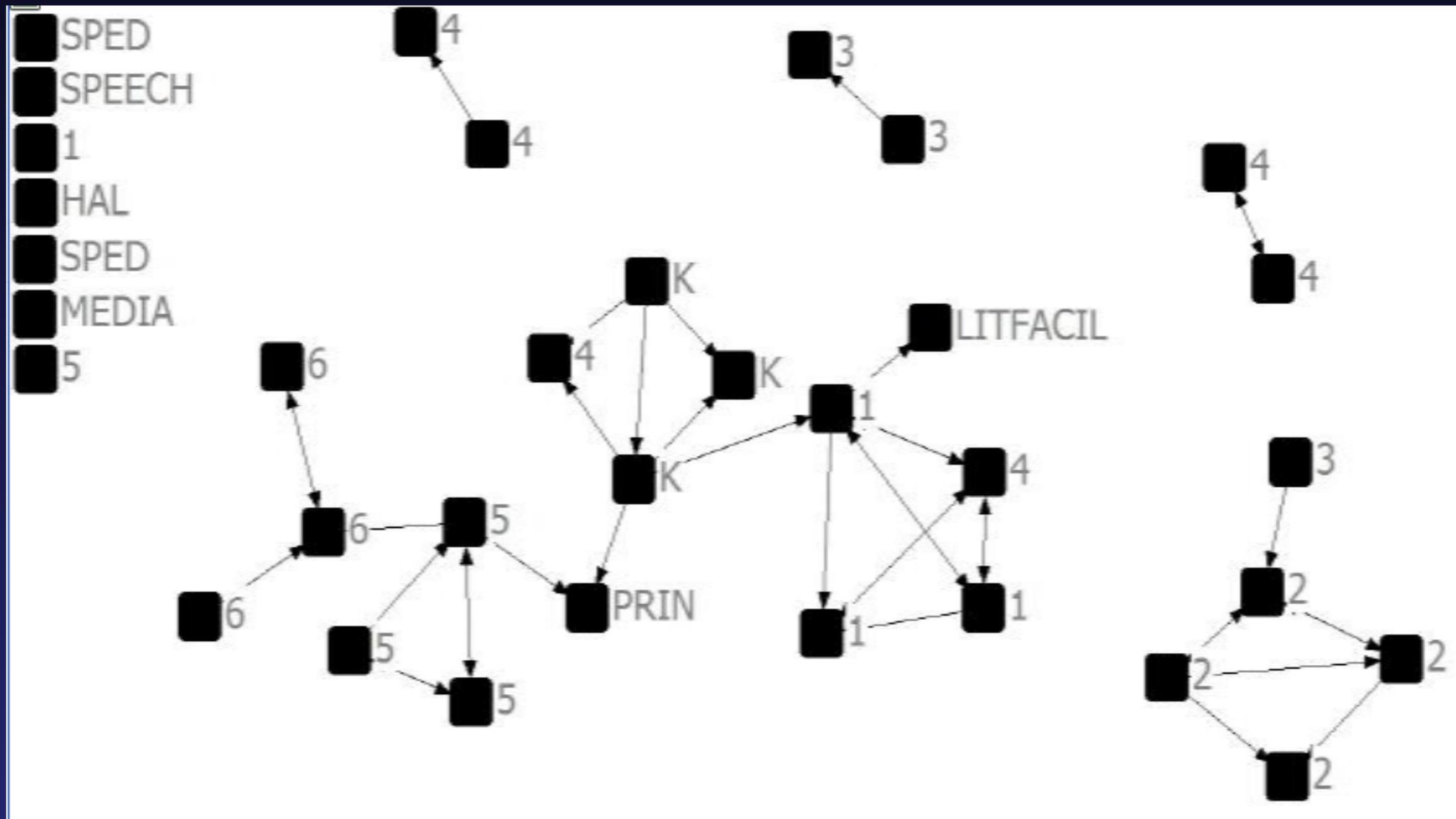


Spillane, J. P., & Hopkins, M. (2013). Organizing for instruction in education systems and school organizations: How the subject matters. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(6), 721-747.

Instructional Interactions about Mathematics

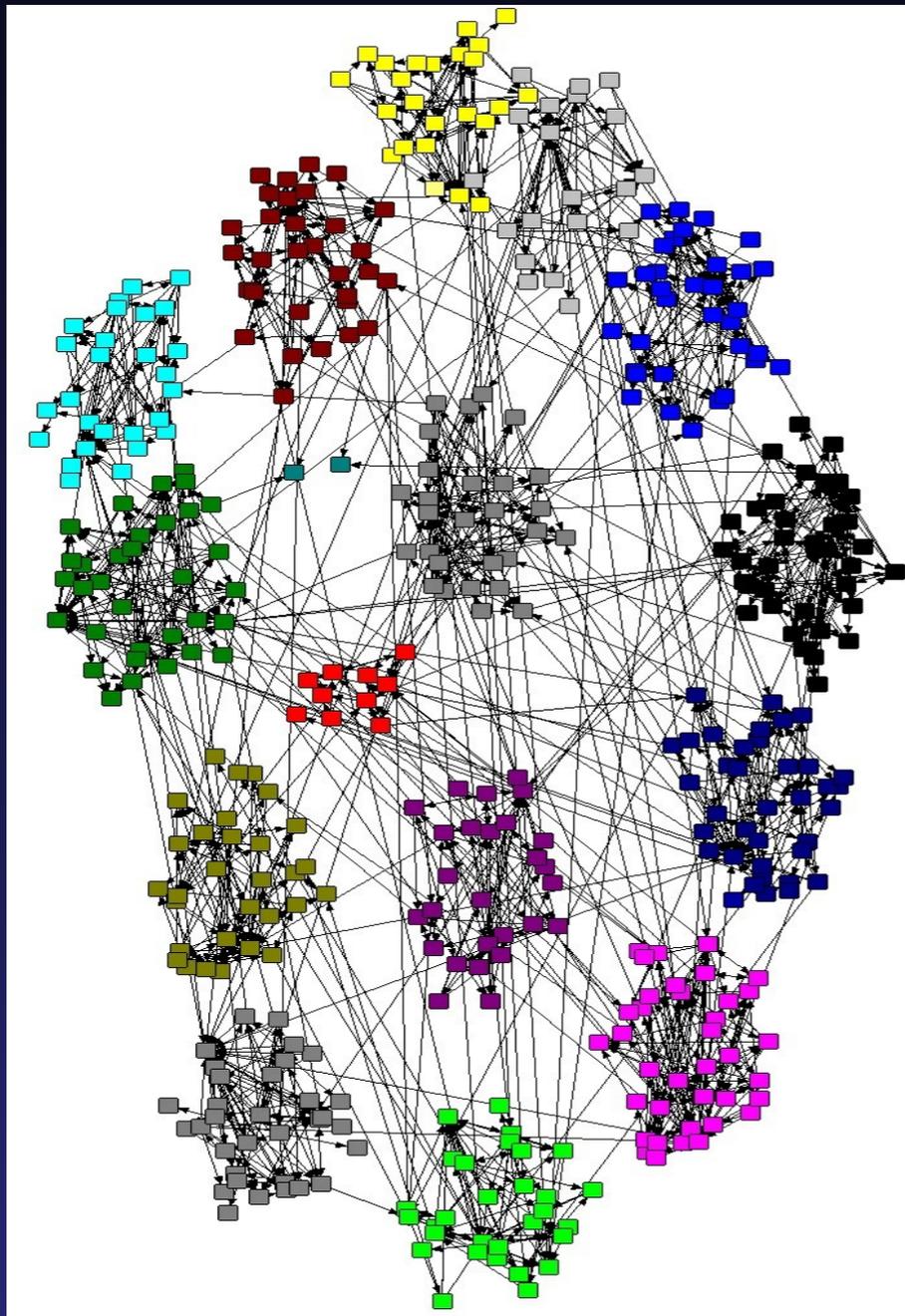


Instructional Interactions about Science

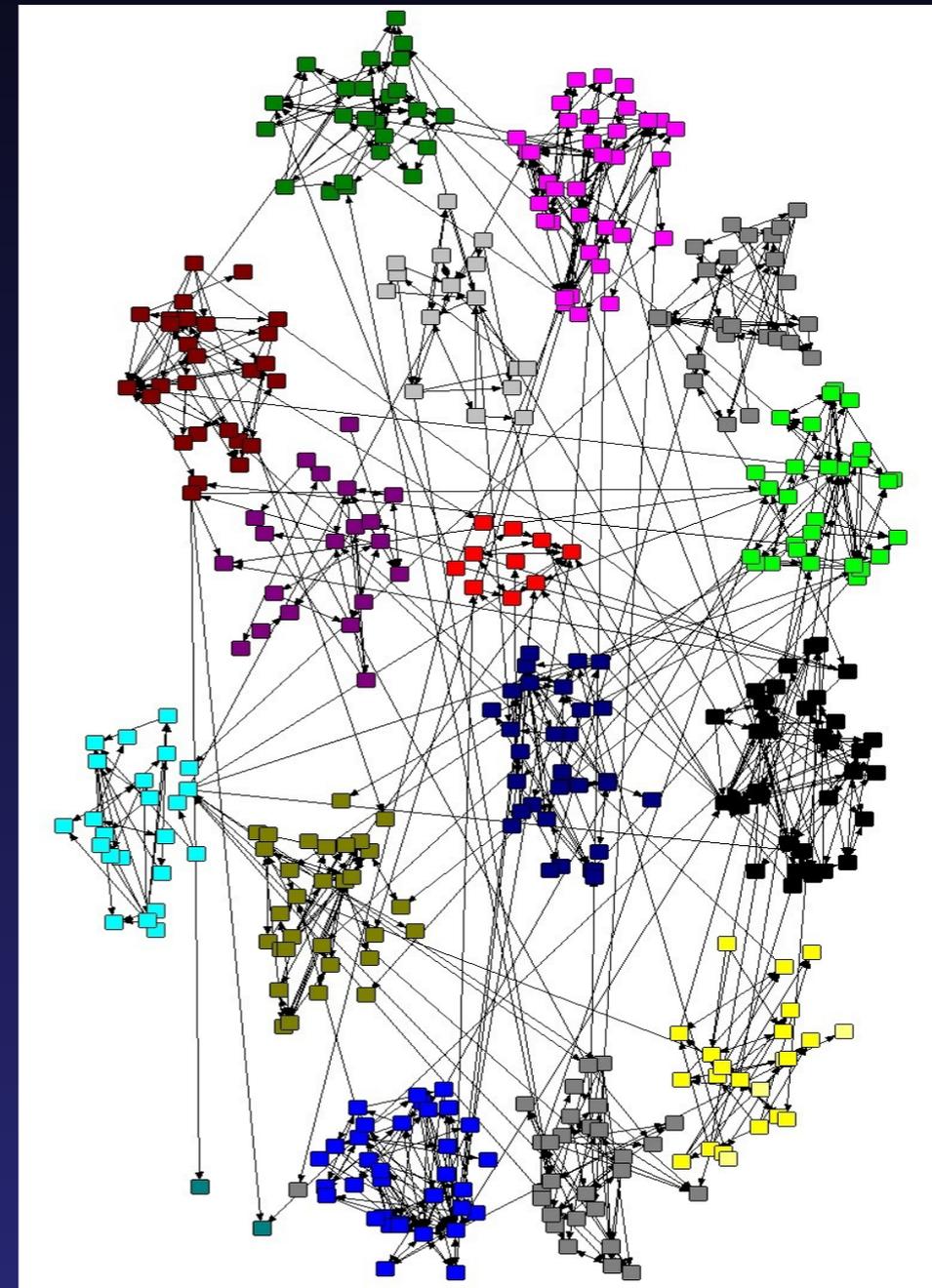


A System & School View: Instructional Interactions by School Subject

English Language Arts

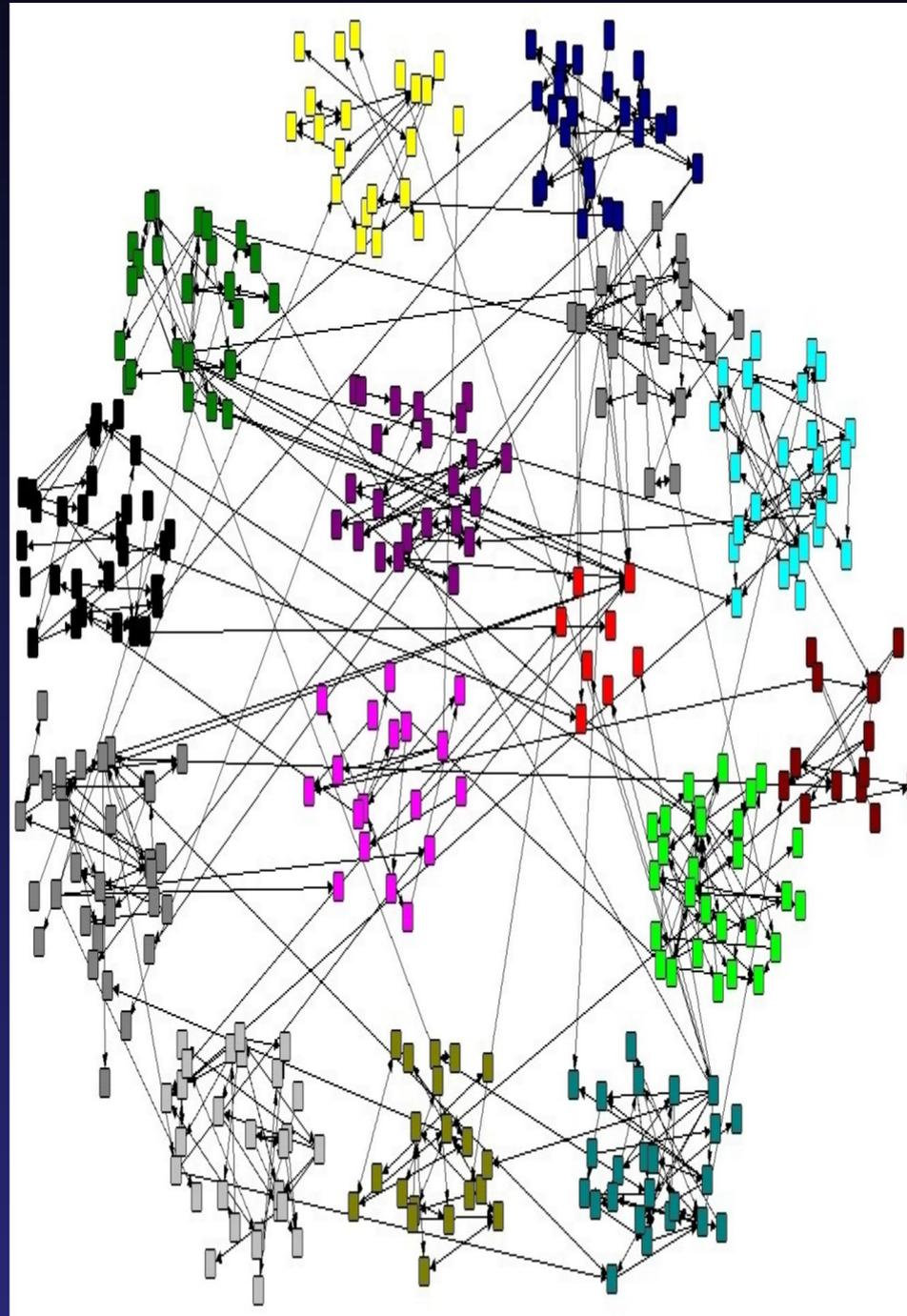


Mathematics



Spillane, J. P., & Hopkins, M. (2013). Organizing for instruction in education systems and school organizations: How the subject matters. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(6), 721-747.

School and School Systems: Science



A Distributed Perspective on Leading and Managing Teaching: Elements & Entailments

Task One

- **What does ‘distributed leadership’ mean to you?**
- **Write a short definition that captures your understanding**
- **Share your definition with the person next to you**



The Principal-Plus Aspect

- **The principal works with others when leading and managing teaching**
- **Other formally designated leaders take responsibility for leading and managing**
- **Individuals with no formal leadership designations have a hand in leading and managing teaching**



An Alternative to the 'Heroics of Leadership' Genre

Dr. Johnson

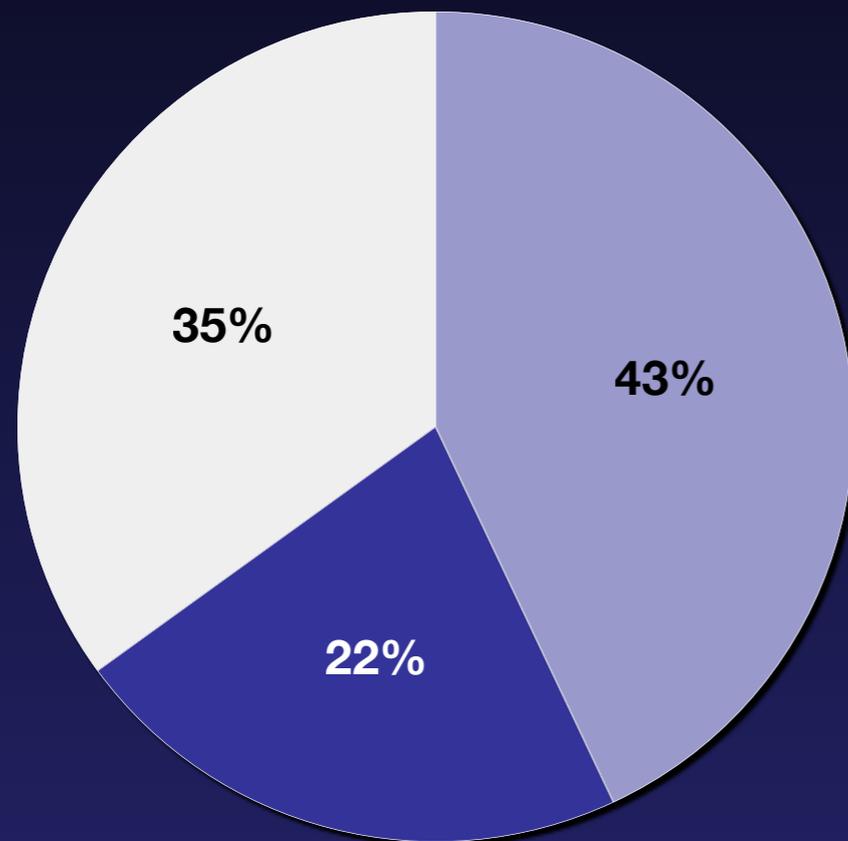
“Initially I tried to do it all. I was trying to do it all and that was impossible. You cannot be all things to all people... I don't know everything about everything.”

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

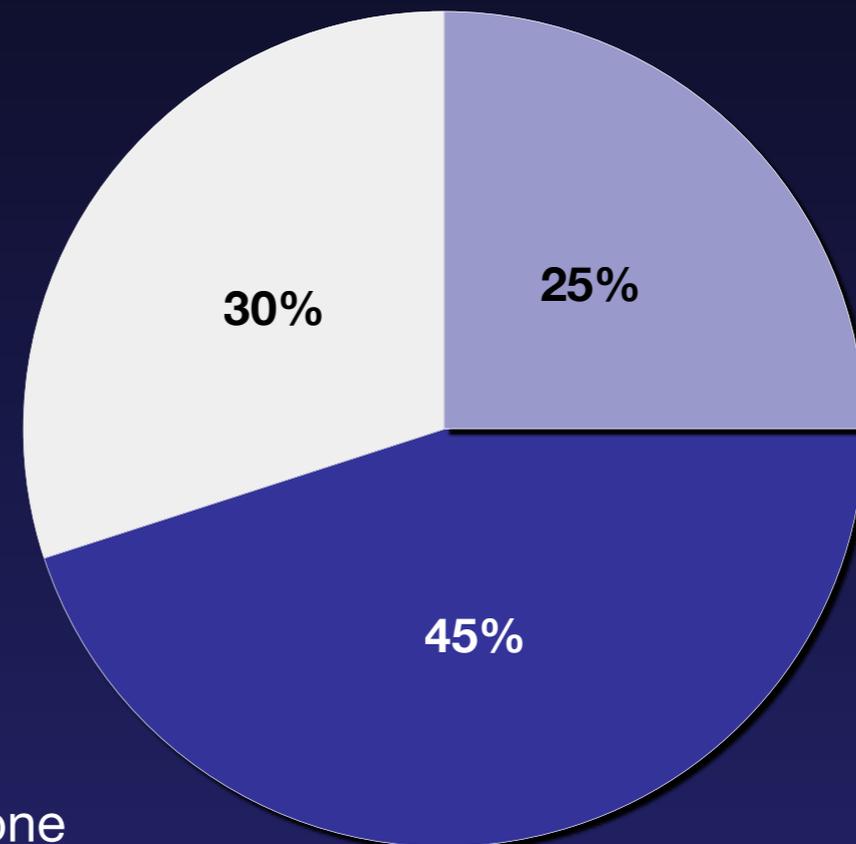
Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 23-28.

The Principal's Workday: The Significance of Others

Administrative Activities



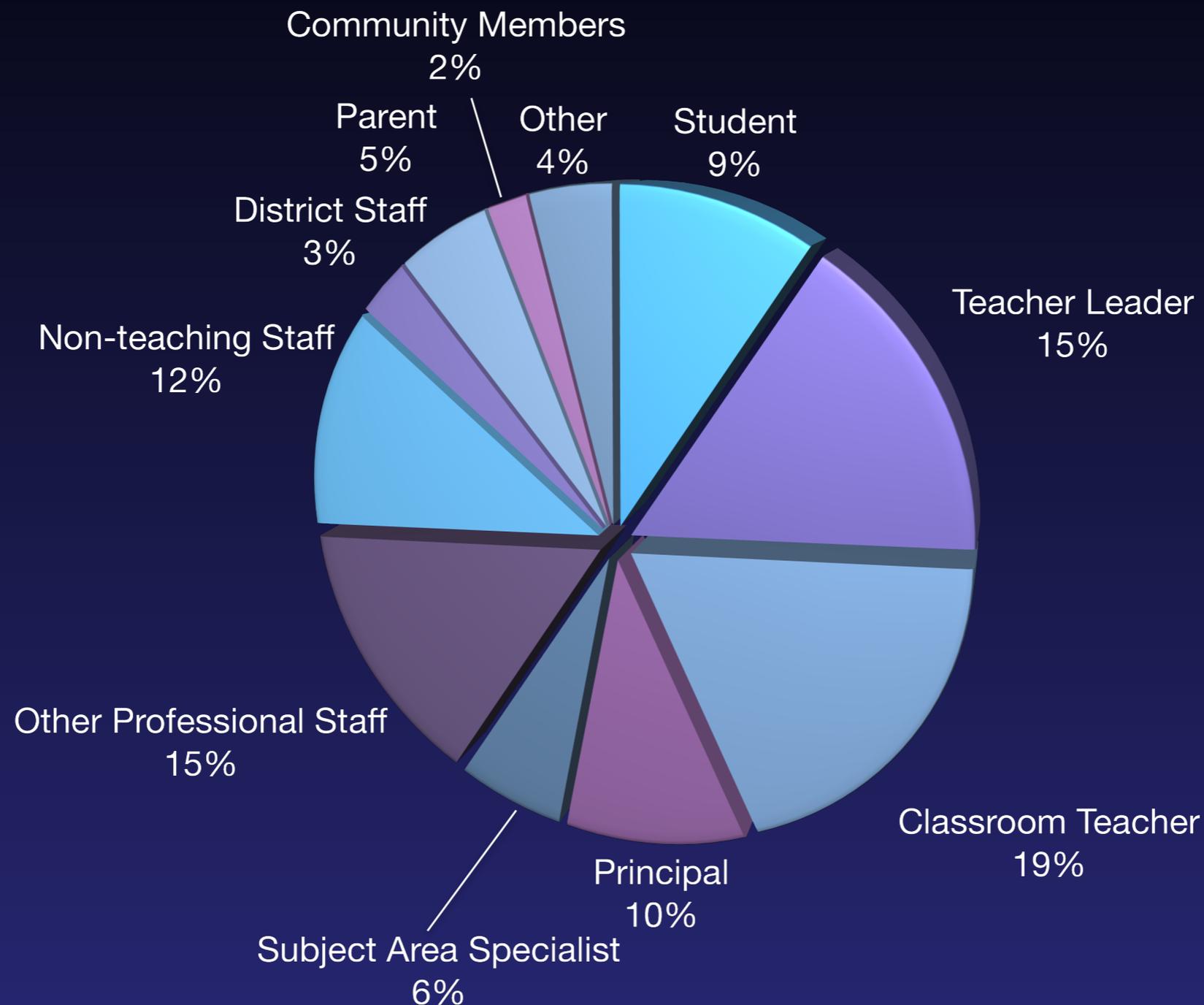
Curriculum and Instruction Activities



- Leading Alone
- Not Leading
- Leading with Others

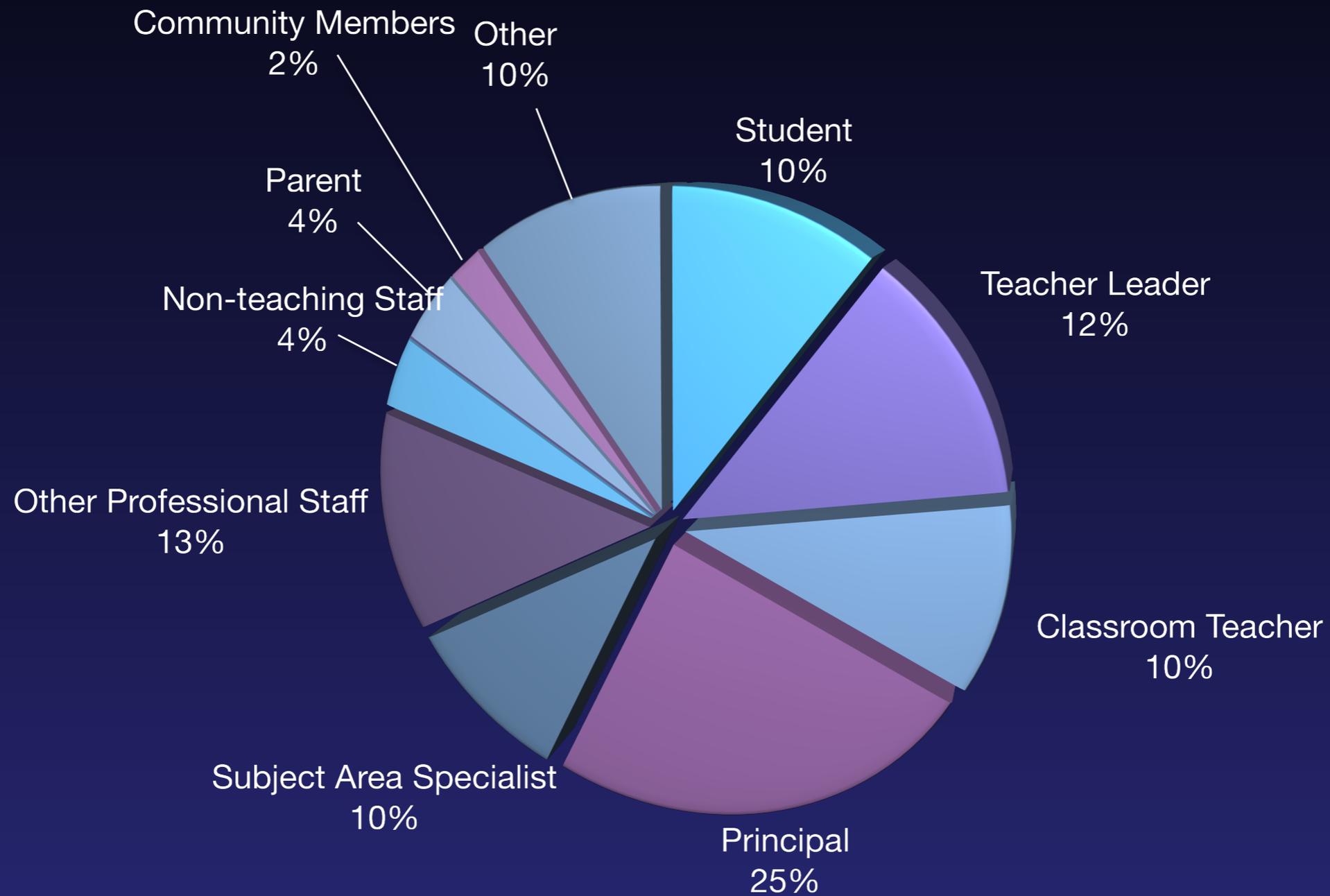
Spillane, J. P., Camburn, E. M., & Pareja, A. S. (2007). Taking a distributed perspective to the school principal's workday. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 6(1), 103-125.

Who Are The Co-Leaders? Primary School Principals



Spillane, J. P., & Hunt, B. (2010). Days of their lives: A mixed-methods, descriptive analysis of the men and women at work in the principal's office. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 42(3), 293-331.

Who Are The Co-Leaders? Secondary School Principals



“Heroics of Leadership” Genre



The Problem: “Heroics of Leadership” Genre

- The lure of leaders and their gallant acts.
- The leader is center stage, while others play follower.
- Setting school principals up for failure.



The Realities of the Leader's Work

“...is like dancing that wonderful tango, blindfolded, yet serving lunch, breakfast, and dinner on skates to 500 people,” [each of whom has] ordered something different” [and each of whom] “brings...their own set of dynamics, personalities, that you have to be acutely aware of in order to serve them.”

Adriana

Spillane, J. P., & Lee, L. C. (2014). Novice school principals' sense of ultimate responsibility: Problems of practice in transitioning to the principal's office. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(3), 431-465.

The Practice Aspect



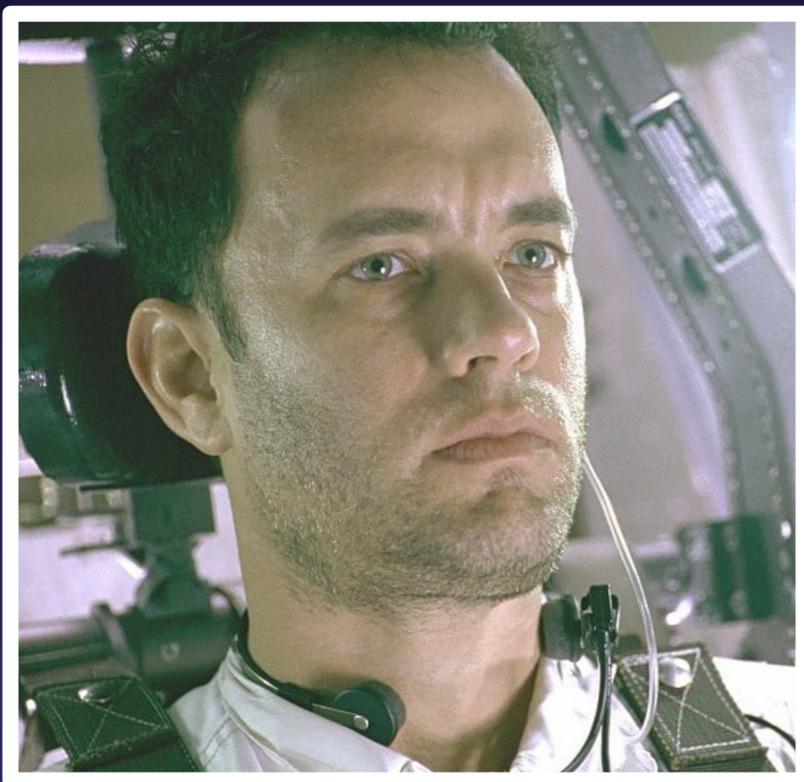
Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 3-34.

Task Two: Examining Leadership in Practice



Task Two

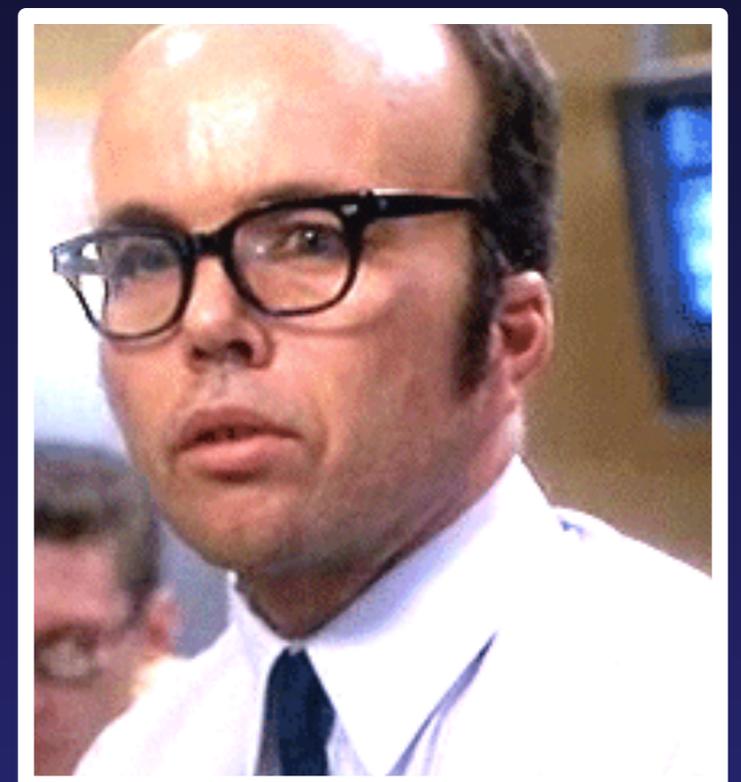
- Watch the scene, keeping in mind the distributed perspective. Take notes about who is leading and in what capacity. Where is the leadership practice?
- While noting what happens in the scene, keep in mind the characters below:



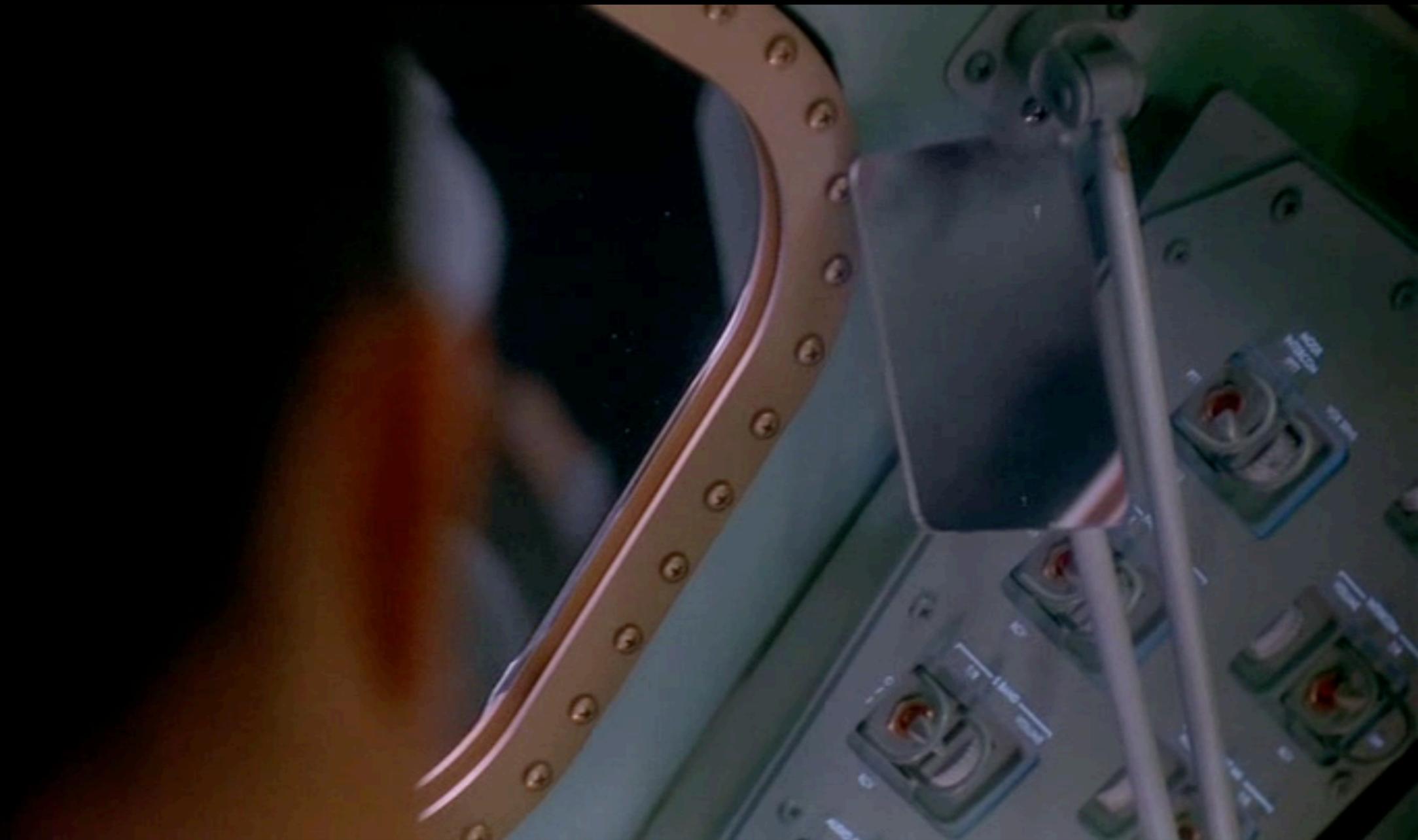
Jim Lovell



Gene Kranz



EECom (Cy)



Practice



A Distributed Perspective

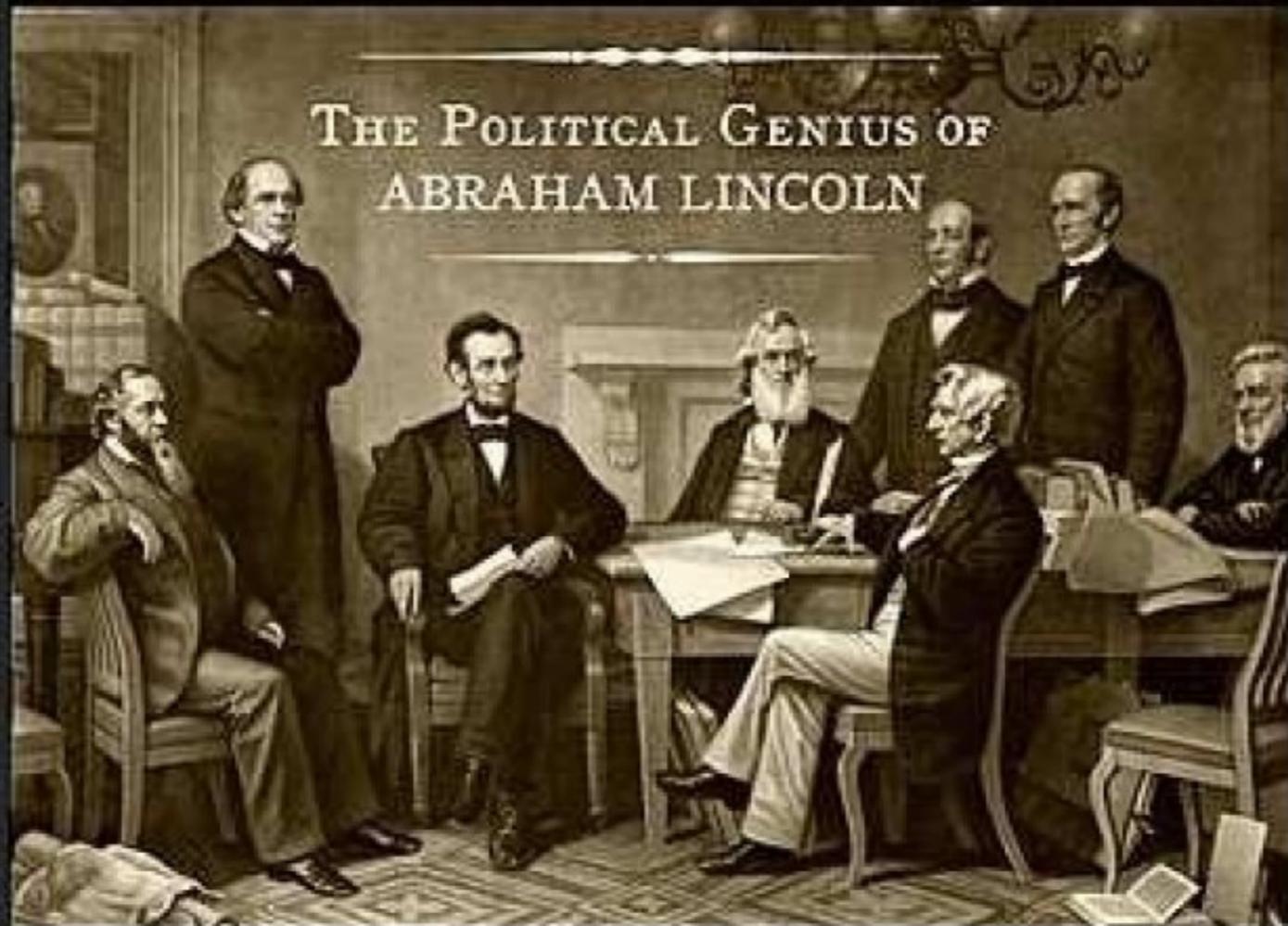
- **A diagnostic framework that draws attention to particular dimensions of leadership & management work**
- **A design framework for guiding leadership and management improvement efforts**



Dispelling Some Myths about a Distributed Perspective

- **Principal somehow less relevant or even irrelevant ...
WRONG**
- **Everyone is a leader ... WRONG**
- **The more leaders, the better ... WRONG**

TEAM OF RIVALS



DORIS KEARNS
GOODWIN

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

Task Three

- **Watch the brief video clip**
- **How many times does the white team touch the ball?**

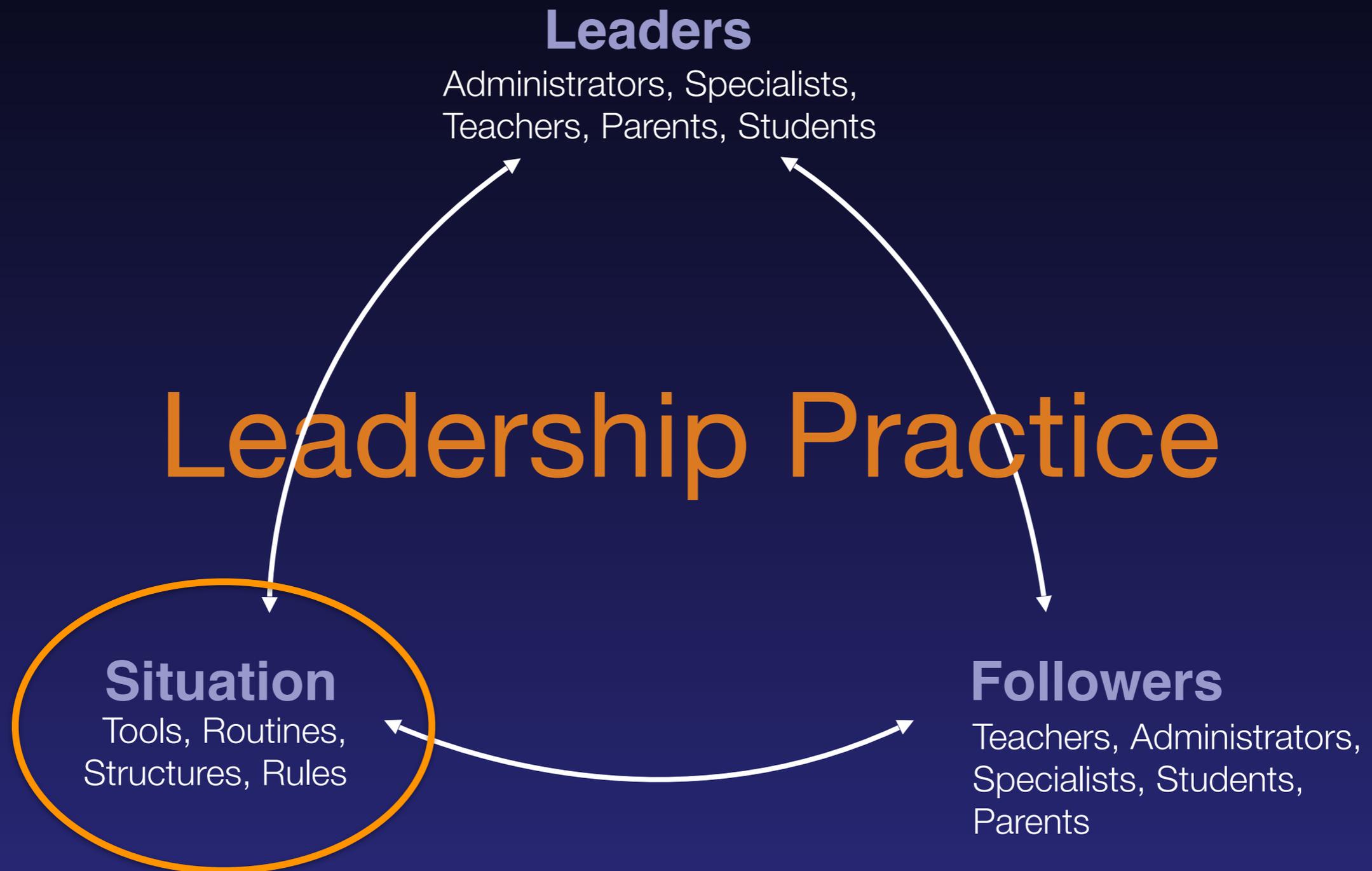


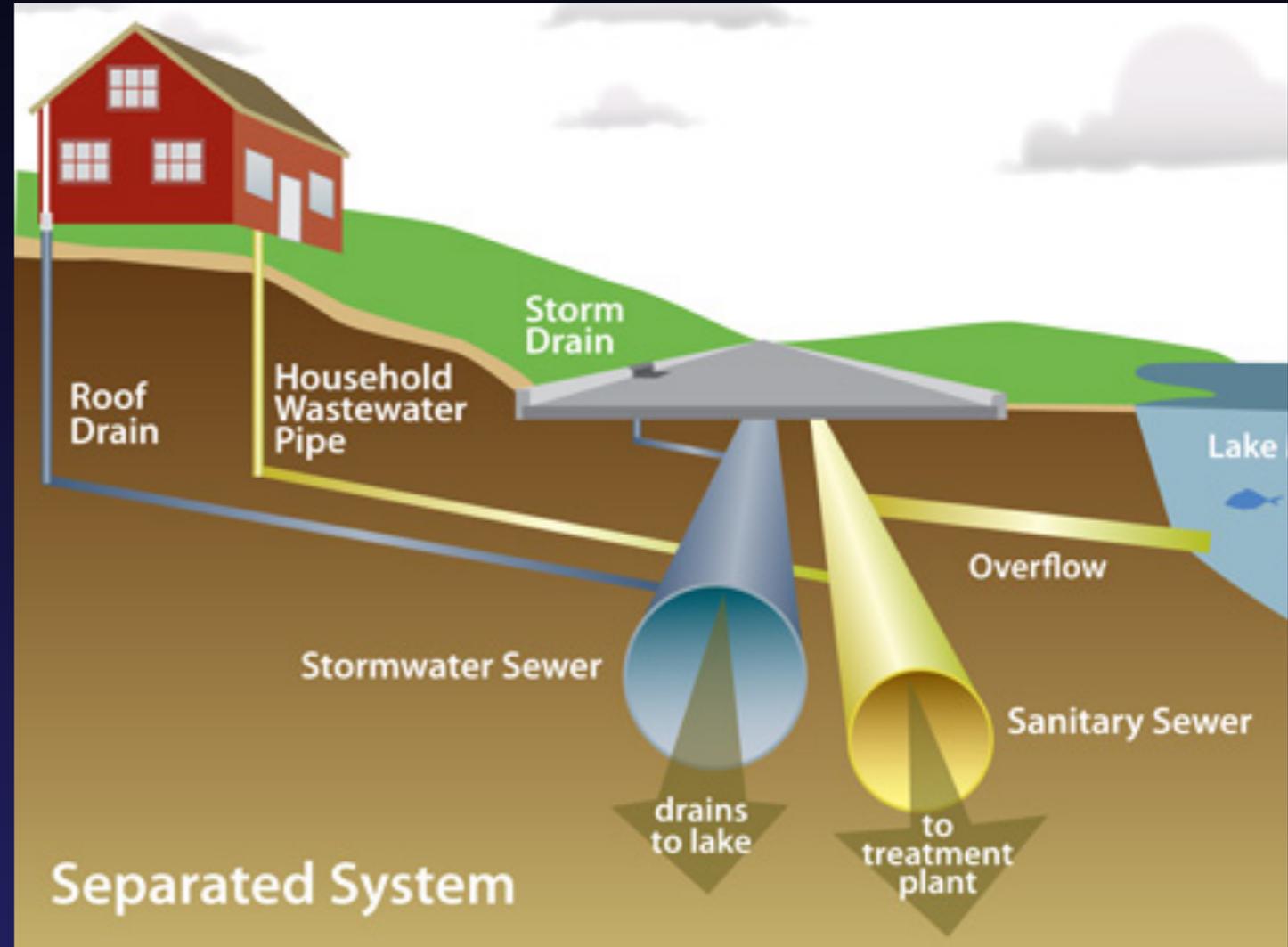
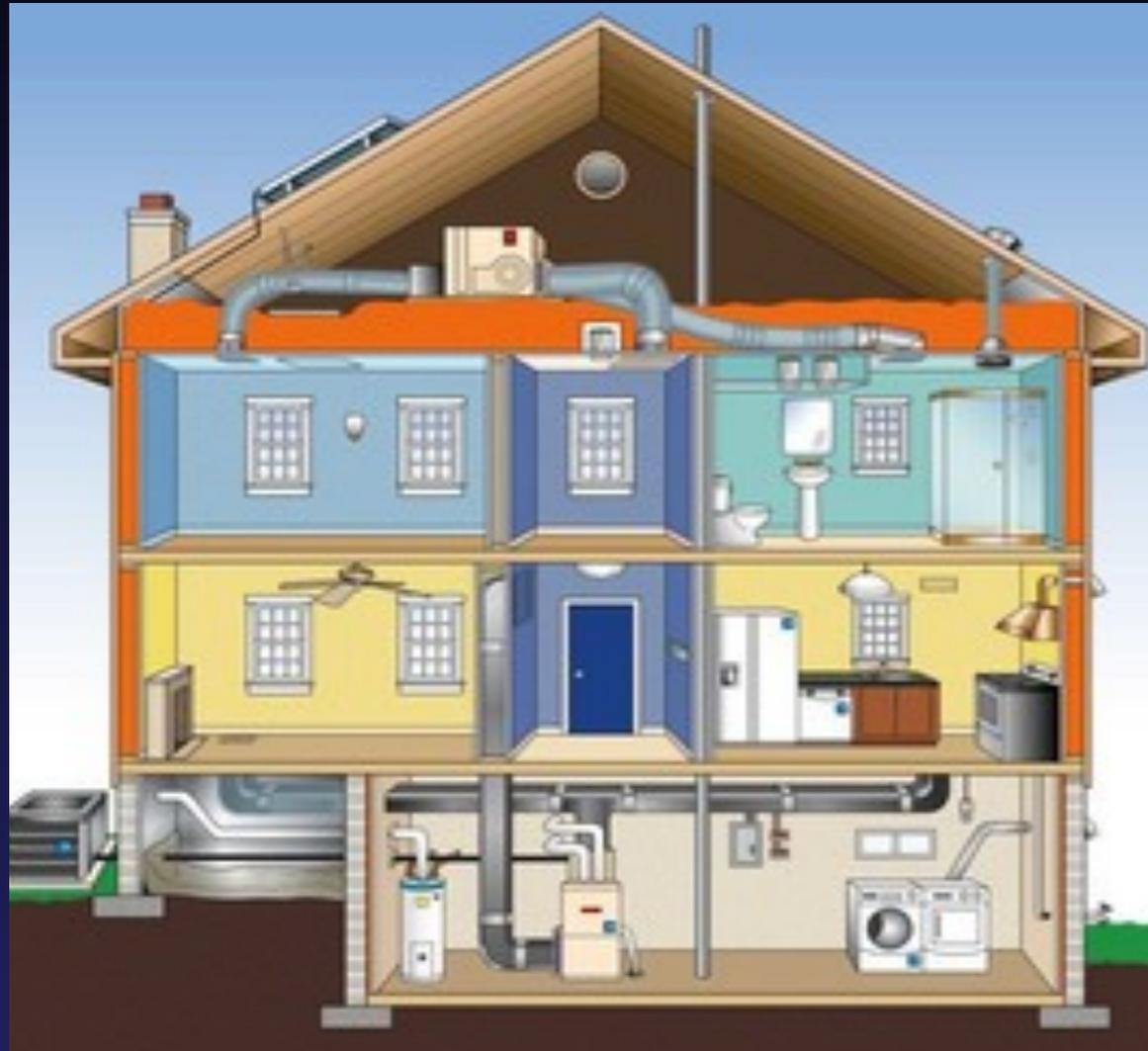
The Situation: The Critical Role of Educational Infrastructure

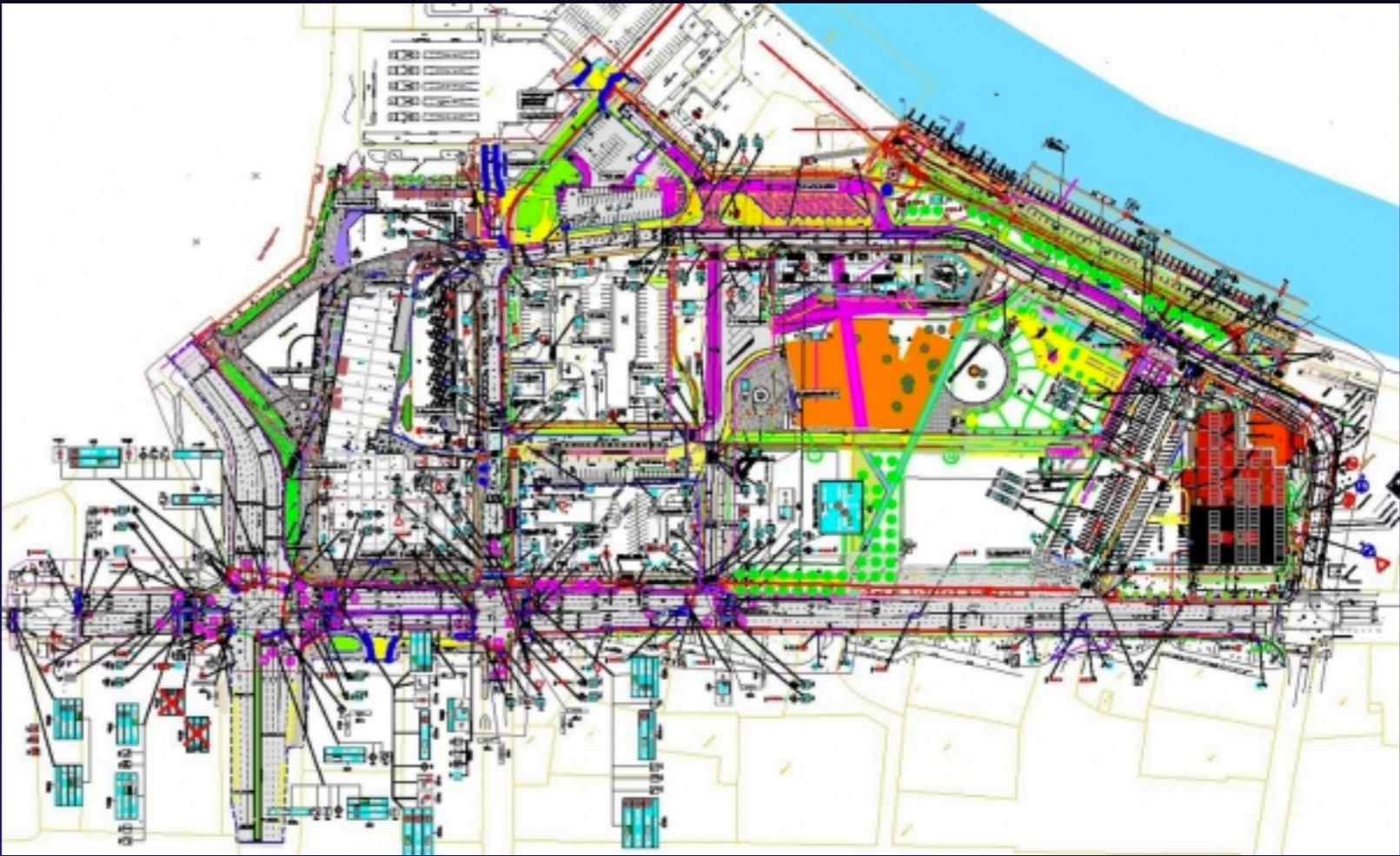
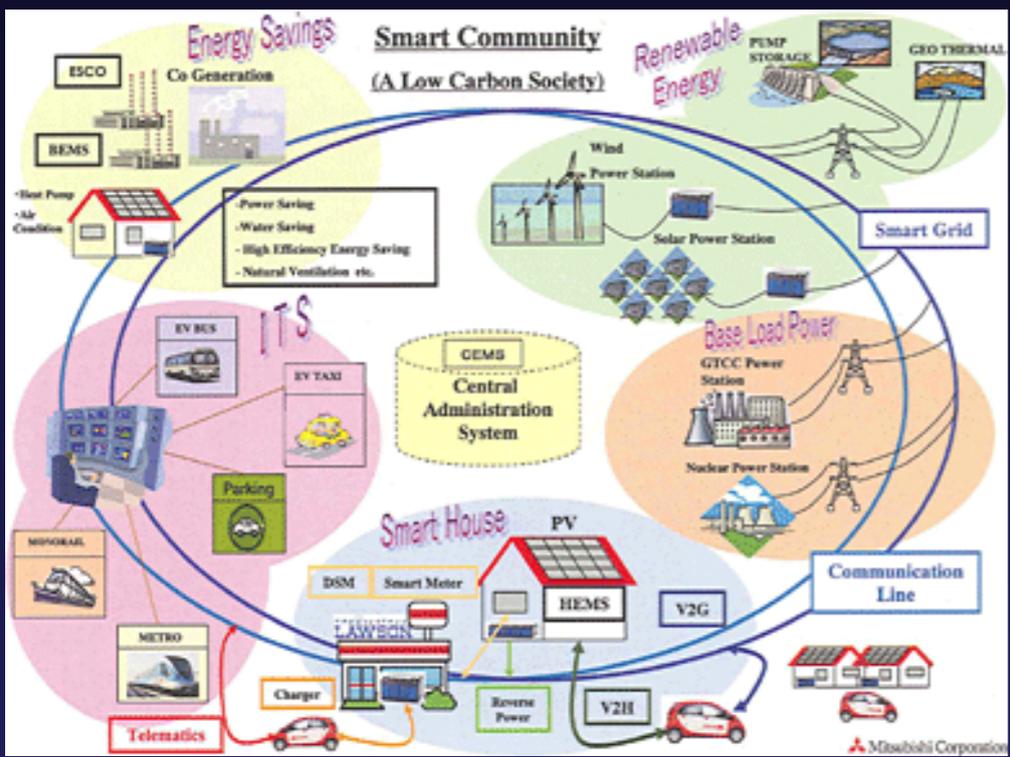
Diagnosis and Design from a Distributed Perspective: Individuals and Infrastructure



Diagnosis and Design from a Distributed Perspective: Individuals and Infrastructure







Educational Infrastructure

- **Educational Infrastructure** refers to structures and resources that school systems (and organizations) mobilize to enable (and constrain) teaching, maintain teaching quality, and lead improvement in teaching.
- **Educational Infrastructure includes:**
 - the instruments and tools that are the materials of instruction ... curriculum frameworks and materials, student assessments, etc.
 - the formal positions, routines, procedures, and rules for guiding professional learning, maintaining teaching quality, and enabling teaching improvement.
 - professional norms, values, and cognitive scripts that infuse the work.

Hopkins, M., Spillane, J. P., Jakopovic, P., & Heaton, R. M. (2013). Infrastructure redesign and instructional reform in mathematics: Formal structure and teacher leadership. *Elementary School Journal*, 114(2), 200-224.

Spillane, J. P., Camburn, E., & Pareja, A. S. (2008). School principals at work: A distributed perspective. In K. Leithwood, B. Mascall, & T. Strauss (Eds.), *Distributed leadership according to the evidence* (pp. 87-110). New York: Routledge Press.

DESIGNED
Formal positions, organizational routines as represented in formal documents and accounts

VS

LIVED
Organization as experienced in day-to-day life of organizational members

The Designed Educational Infrastructure

CONCEPTS NORMS SCRIPTS POLICIES SCRIPTS TOOLS WORK FRAMES
PROCEDURES STRUCTURE WORK
CONCEPTS POSITIONS
ORGANIZATIONAL
FRAMES ROUTINES RULES
TOOLS NORMS REGULATIONS FRAMES
STRUCTURE PROGRAMS WORK SCRIPTS PROCEDURES POSITIONS
PROGRAMS RULES PROCEDURES ORGANIZATIONAL ROUTINES RULES POSITIONS

Organizational Routines

- **Organizational Routines:** “repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions carried out by multiple actors” (*Feldman & Pentland, 2003*)

Embracing Design: Leading & Managing Instructional Innovation by Designing Organizational Routines

- **Adams School:** Breakfast Club, Grade Level Meetings, Teacher Talk, Teacher Leaders, Five-Week Assessment, Literacy Committee, and Mathematics Committee
- **Baxter School:** Cycle Meetings, Leadership Team Meetings, Literacy Committee, Math/Science Committee
- **Kosten School:** Report Card Review, Grade Book Review, Lesson Plan Review, Faculty Meetings, Grade Level Meetings
- **Kelly School:** Skill Chart Review, Professional Development

Designing Organizational Routines to Address Core Organizational Functions

	Functions	Tools	People
Five Week Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formative Evaluation -Teacher Accountability -Monitor Instruction -Teacher Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Standardized Tests -Standards -Student Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Language Arts Coordinator -Assistant Principal -Principal -Teachers
Breakfast Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher Development -Build Professional Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Research Articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teachers -Language Arts Coordinator -Principal
School Improvement Planning (SIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify Instructional Priorities & Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Previous Year SIP -District Guidelines -Test Score Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal -Administration -Teachers (approved LSC)
Classroom Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher Development -Monitor Instruction -Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -School Protocol, -District Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal -Assistant Principal
Real Men Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student Motivation and Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Language Arts Co-ord. -Assistant Principal -Principal -Community Members

Diagnosis and Design Work: Asking the Difficult Questions about Organizational Routines

- **What is the theory of action behind the routine?**
- **What arguments explain and evaluate the routine?**
 - **Why should it work?**
 - **Why might it not work?**
 - **What are the advantages of this routine?**
 - **What are the disadvantages of this routine?**
- **How is the routine connecting with/anchored in teaching and learning?**



The Lived Educational Infrastructure

A (Simple) Model of Teachers' Instructional Productivity

Motivation  Knowledge   Situation

 Teacher Productivity

Focusing on Social Interactions?

- **Knowledge development key to improving teaching**
- **Advice and information important for developing new knowledge**
- **Social relations are a source of resources such as as advice and information**
- **On-the-job interactions can enable transfer of advice and information**

Blau, 1957; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coburn, 2001; Daly & Finnigan, 2010; Elmore, 1996; Eraut & Hirsh, 2007; Frank, Zhao, & Borman, 2004; Hill, 2004; Little, 2002; Smylie, 1995; Spillane, 2004

Knowledge Development Processes

- **On-the-job interactions associated with the transfer of advice and information — essential to knowledge development**
 - **Socialization: Tacit Knowledge — Tacit Knowledge**
 - **Externalization: Tacit Knowledge — Explicit Knowledge**
 - **Combination: Explicit Knowledge — Explicit Knowledge**
 - **Internalization: Explicit Knowledge — Tacit Knowledge**

Choo, C. W. (1998). The knowing organization: How organizations use information to construct meaning, create knowledge, and make decisions. New York: Oxford University Press.

Social Network Instrument

Screen Shot from School Staff Questionnaire (SSQ) – Math Advice Questions Page 1



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During THIS SCHOOL YEAR, to whom have you turned for advice and/or information about CURRICULUM, TEACHING, and STUDENT LEARNING? Please write full first and last names. You do not need to fill all the spaces.

Please consider all forms of communication including face-to-face, via e-mail or telephone, etc., and include individuals across content and school/district/outside roles. You may list people you named as your close colleagues as well.

I have not sought advice from anyone. *Do not check this box if you provide a name(s) below.*

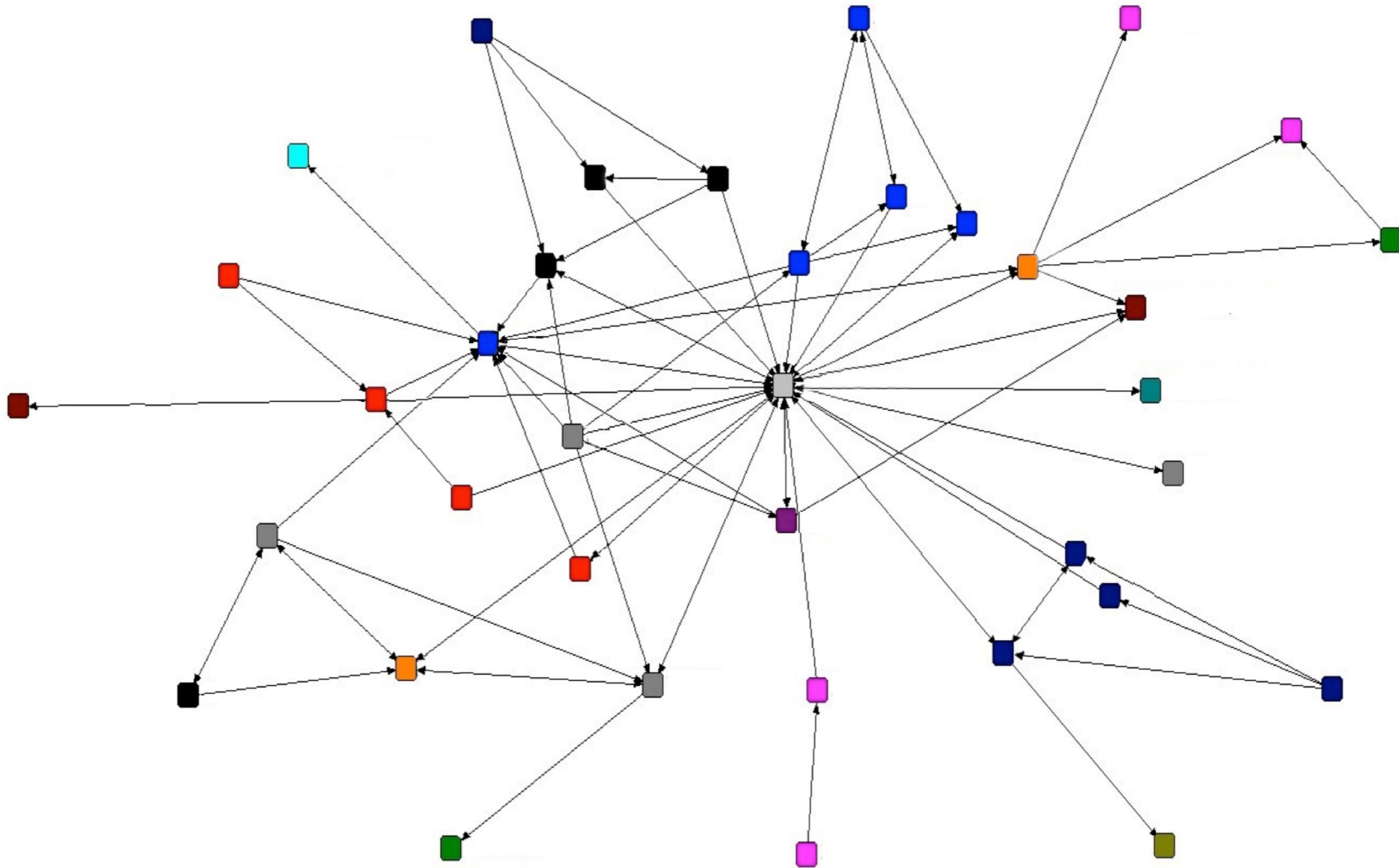
1)	James Spillane
2)	Megan Hopkins
3)	Katie Mertz
4)	
5)	
6)	
7)	
8)	
9)	
10)	
11)	
12)	

Please Note: No names or identifying information will ever be revealed in reports produced from these data.

Progress 



Task Four: What is going on in this diagram?



Study One: Organizational Infrastructure and Instructional Interactions

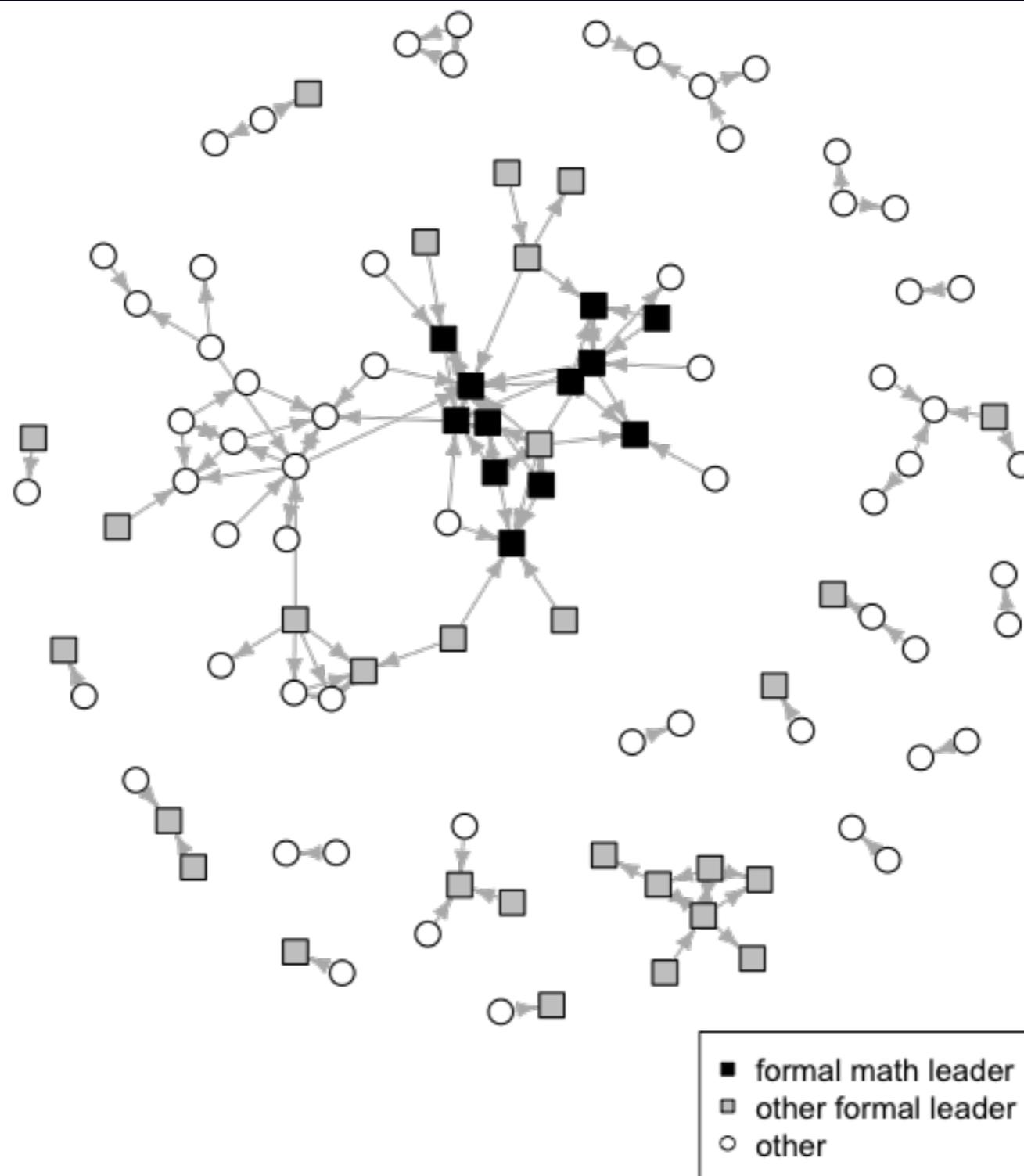
- Teachers more likely to seek advice from others of **same gender and race**
- **Prior tie** strongly associated with having a current tie
- **Formal** leaders more likely to provide advice or information
- Teachers in the **same grade** more likely to receive or provide advice or information
- Teachers more likely to seek advice about a subject from teachers who reported **more PD** in that subject

Spillane, J. P., Kim, C. M., & Frank, K. A. (2012). Instructional advice and information seeking behavior in elementary schools: Exploring tie formation as a building block in social capital development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(6), 1112-1145.

Study Two: Infrastructure ALSO Matters for INTER/BETWEEN School Instructional Interactions about Instruction

- Individual characteristics are associated with advice and information ties in schools
- Aspects of the **formal organization** are more strongly associated with *between* school ties:
 - Formal leadership position: **More likely** to have a tie
 - Subject-specific leadership position: **More likely** to have a tie
- **Formal leadership position** predicted instructional advice and information ties between schools more than anything else

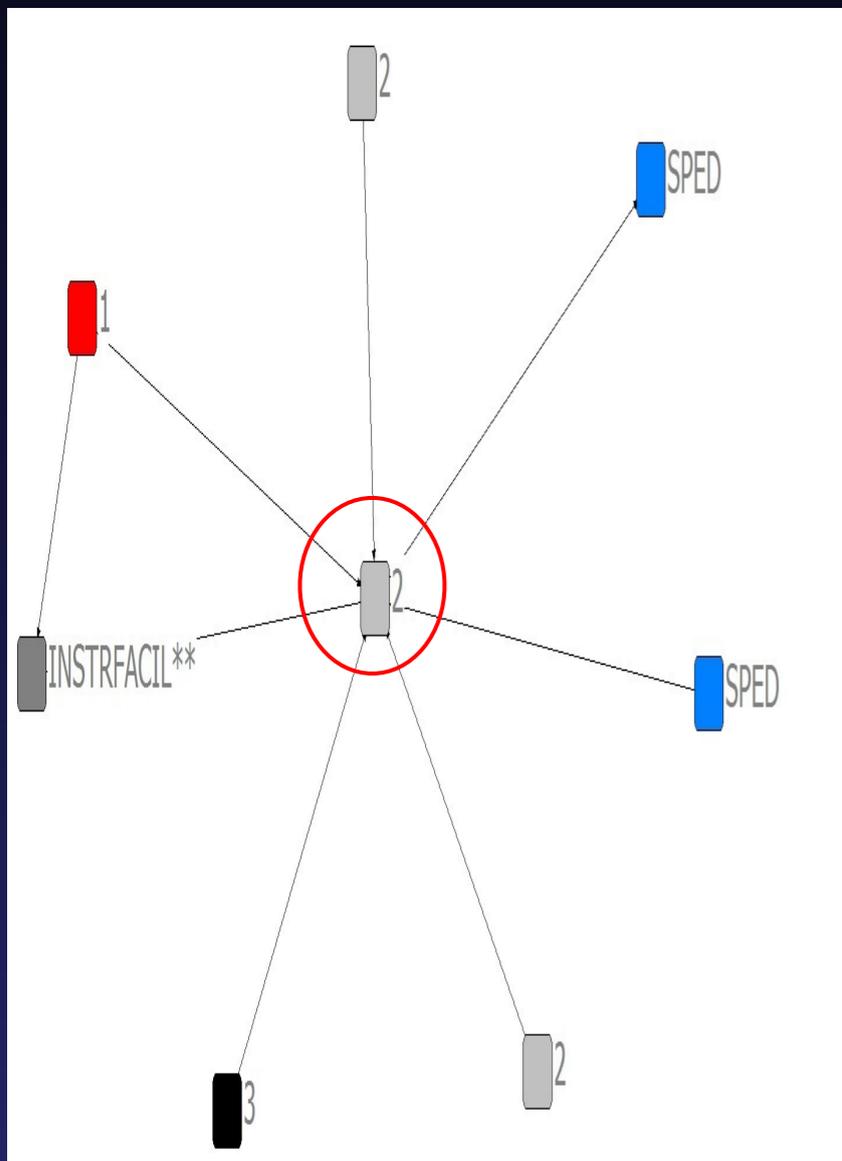
Between-School Brokers



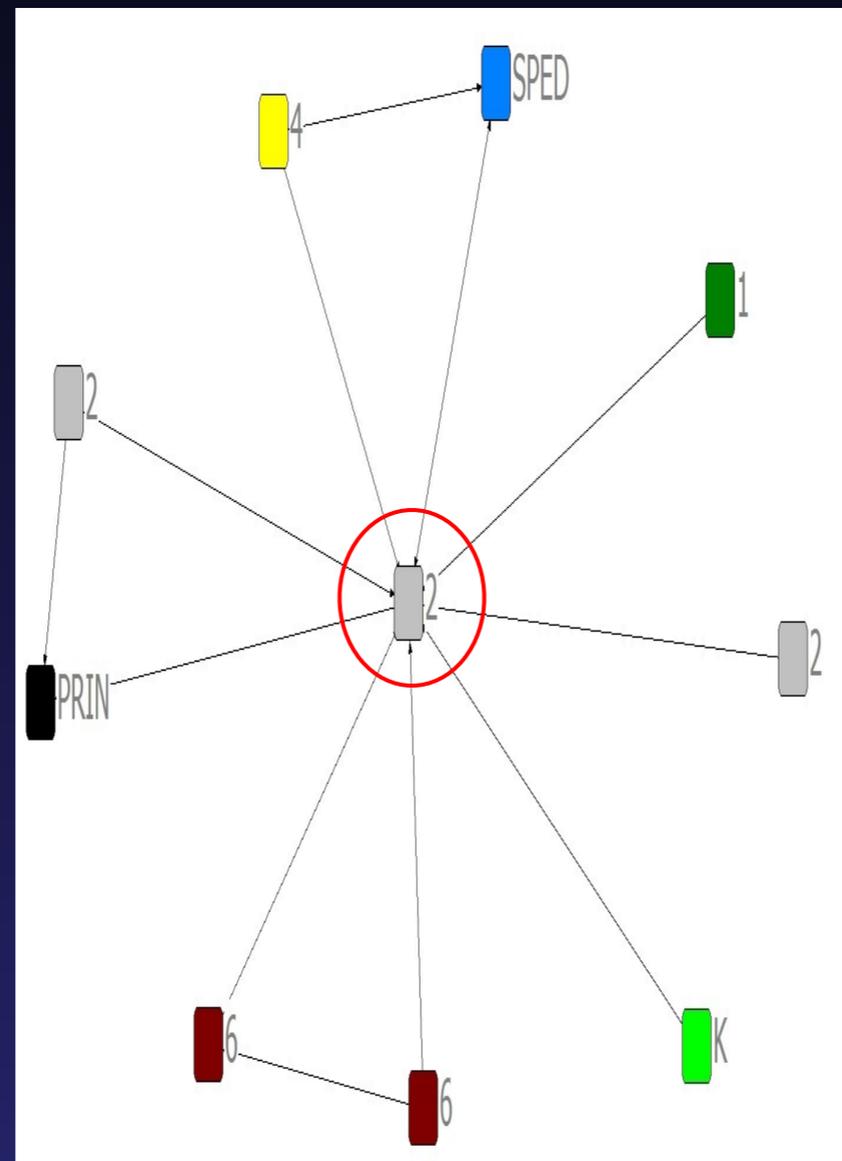
System & Organizational Educational Infrastructure Redesign: The Case of One Local School District

- **New mathematics curriculum**
- **Investing in professional development of teacher leaders for mathematics**
- **Strategic selection of teacher leaders**
- **Creation of math coach position in some schools**
- **Designed system and school organizational routines, e.g.,**
 - **Toolbox for mathematics**
 - **Professional Learning Communities**
 - **Grade level team meeting**

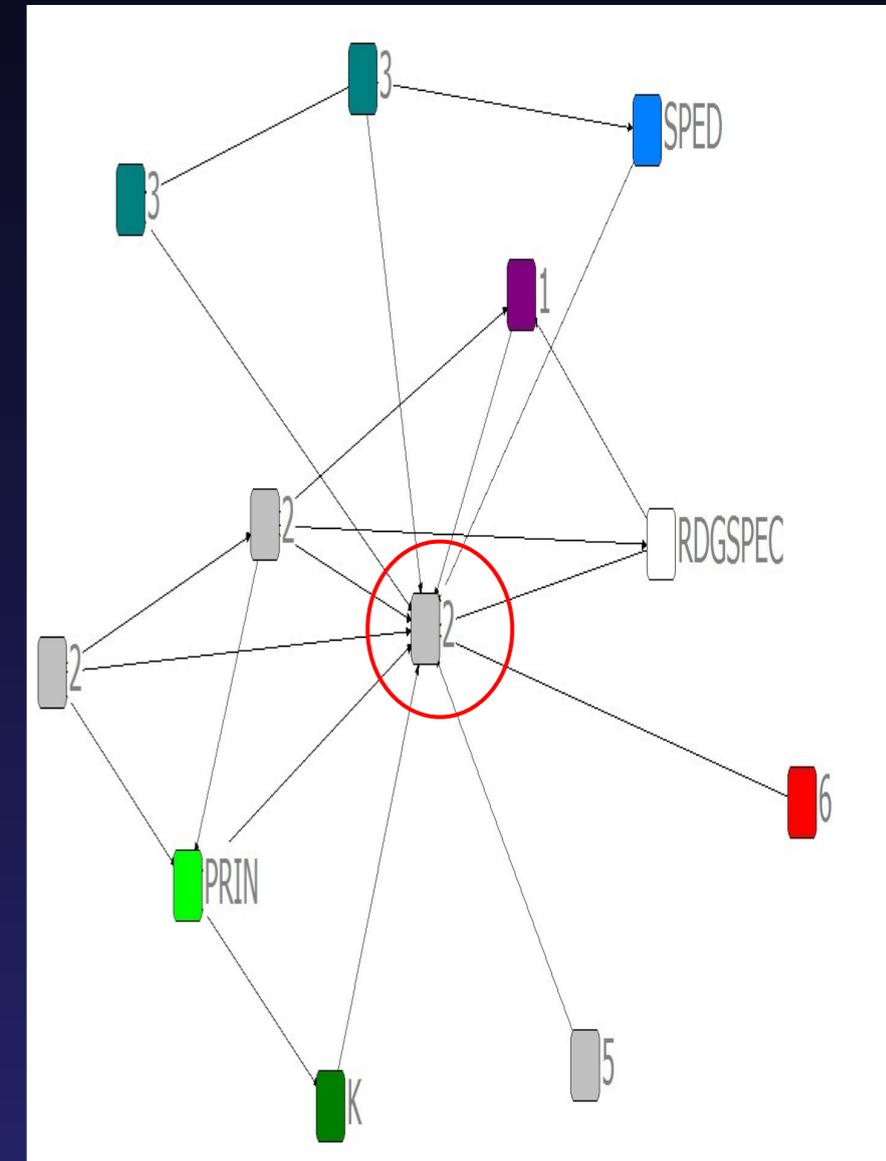
Math Teacher Leaders and Interactions about Mathematics Teaching & Learning



2009-10



2010-11



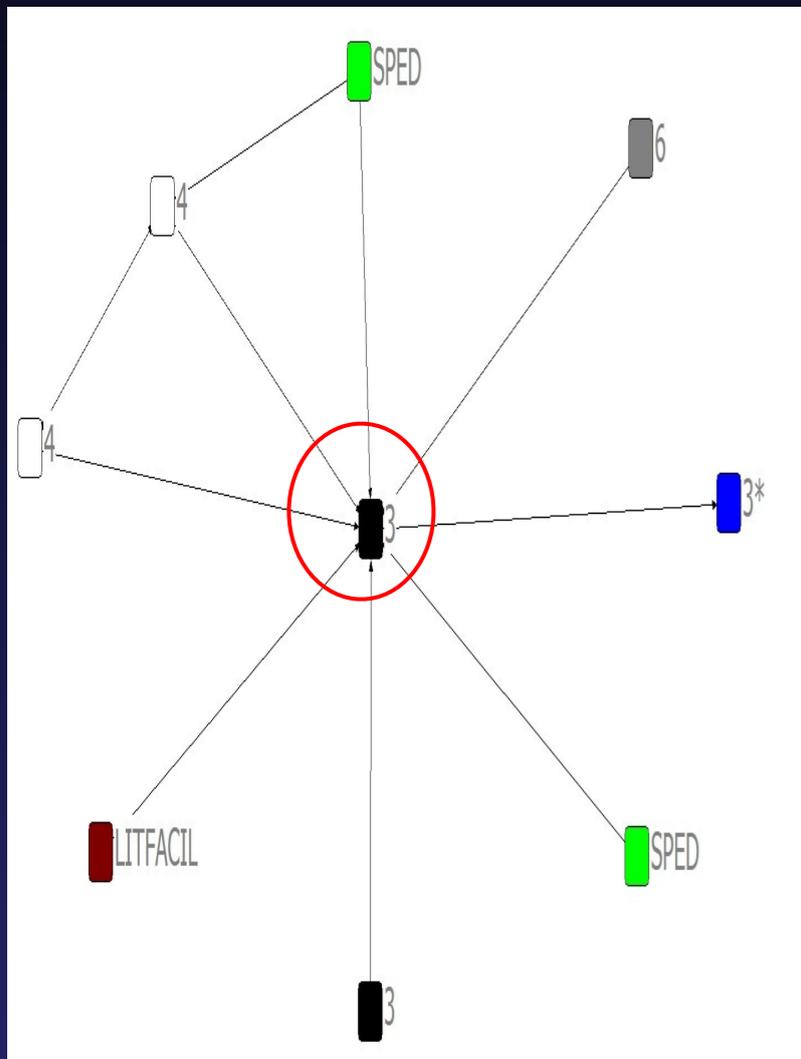
2011-12

Teacher Leadership and Training as a Marker of Expertise

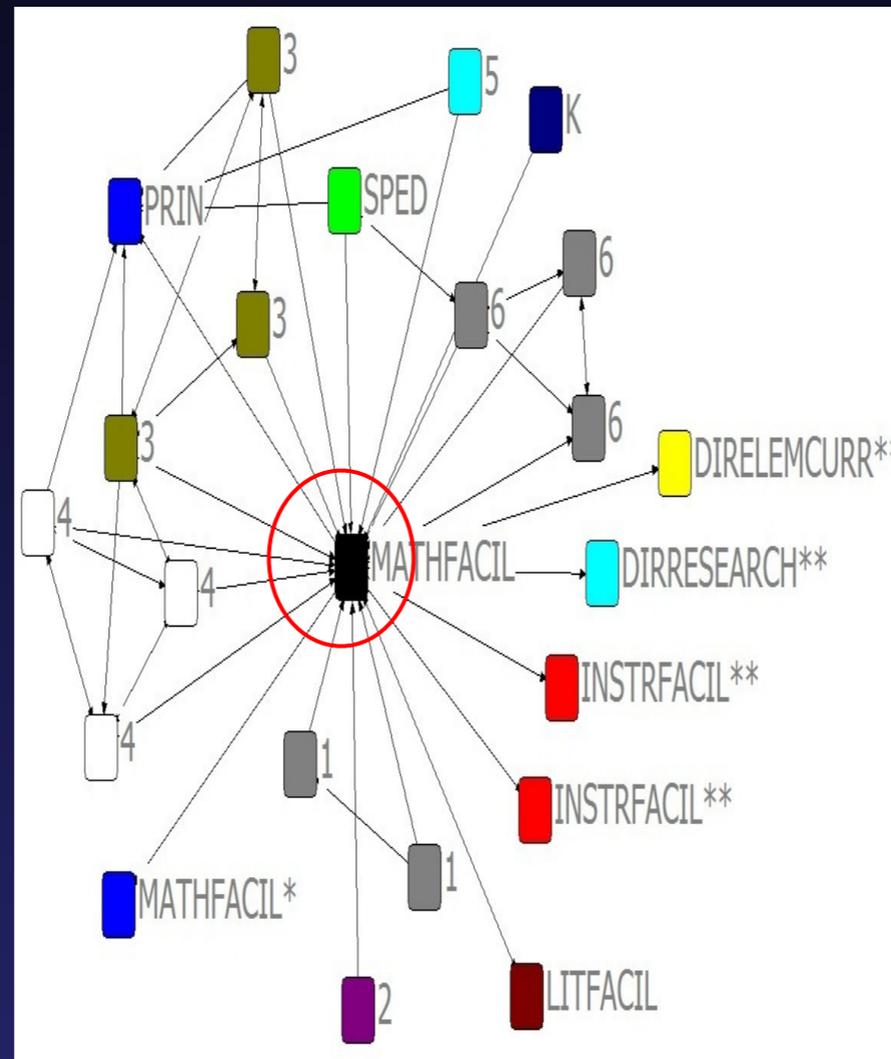
Karen
(1st grade)

“Because he’s a second grade teacher....He’s kind of become the math person to see because he’s taken this extra training that nobody else in the building has done, and I know that he’s interested in math so, he’s just one that I’ve gone to that I know focuses very heavily on, I like his beliefs and the way that he has his room set up and the way that he carries himself.”

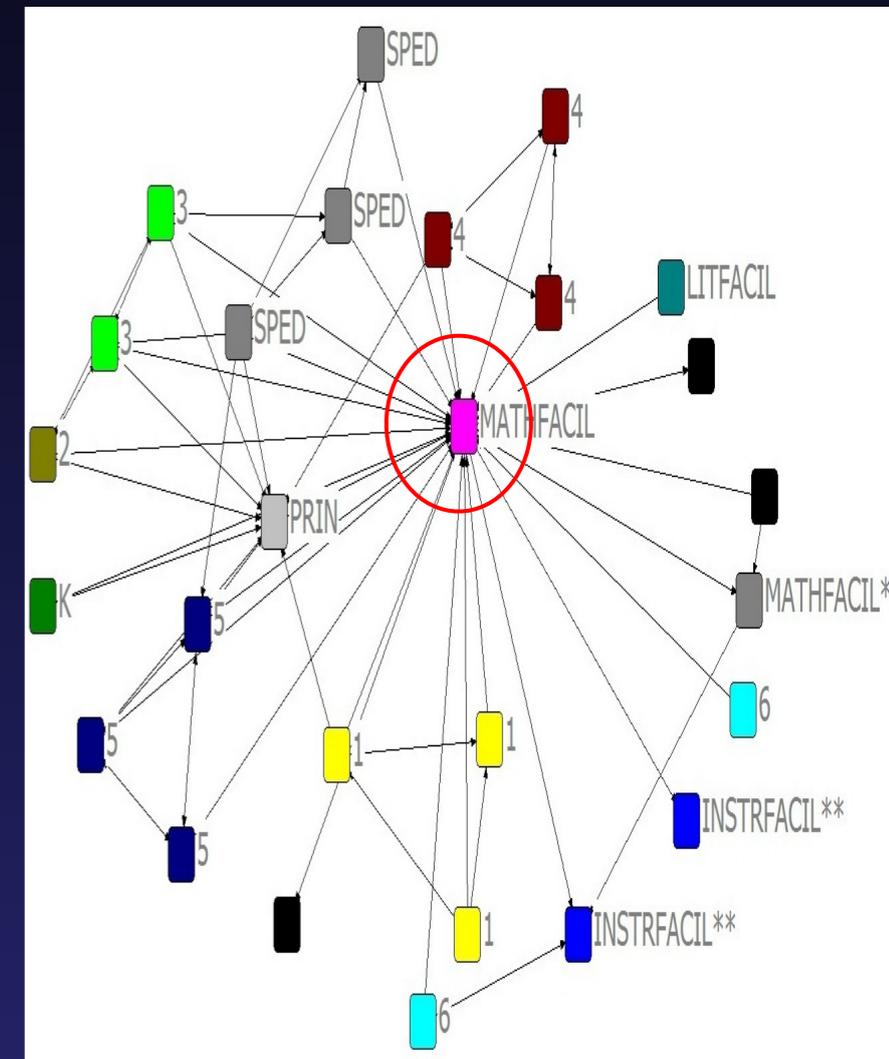
Math Coach Transforms Interactions *about Mathematics Teaching* (Bryant Elementary)



2009-10



2010-11



2011-12

Teacher Leadership and Training as a Marker of Expertise

Angie
(Special Education)

“[Emily] really wasn’t our facilitator [last year], though she was my co-worker, just a third grade teacher. I knew she had a wealth of knowledge, I just wasn’t in [her classroom] when she was teaching math. But, now that she’s moved into this math facilitator position, that’s different...She’s been trained in it. And, she’s gone to school for it and she’s a great coach. She knows a lot about math and I trust her that she has a lot of, a wealth of knowledge... She’s the go-to person.”

Organizational Routines and Expertise

“We have had that benefit of having [Gabrielle] on the [district] toolbox [routine] and so she was looked upon as you know more of an expert. And she would come back and share everything with us...we kinda felt more in the math loop than maybe some of the other teams who don't have that connection piece of somebody on the toolbox in their building.”

Clarissa (1st grade)

“our [grade] team plans and we get to collaborate together... our math coach [Mary]... when we're planning together if we have a question she's always there to help... she knows a lot...”

Rachel (Kindergarten)

Infrastructure Redesign Promoted Advice and Information Seeking in Mathematics

Average In-Degree for Teacher Leaders and Other Teachers, Auburn Park School District

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Toolbox Members (6)	1.60	2.80	2.67
Fundamental Math Participants (9)	4.33	6.00*	6.00
Math Coaches (3)	6.33	16.33**	18.00
Other Teachers (256)	1.54	1.60	1.36

Infrastructure Redesign Promoted Brokering in Mathematics

Average Betweenness for Teacher Leaders and Other Teachers, Auburn Park School District

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Toolbox Members (6)	5.00	75.80*	48.86
Fundamental Math Participants (9)	32.44	144.33*	115.42
Math Coaches (3)	38.67	248.67**	222.97
Other Teachers (256)	10.85	24.81*	11.90

System and Organizational Infrastructure & Teachers' Instructional Beliefs and Practice

Change in Teachers' Beliefs about and Reported Practices in Mathematics

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Beliefs about Mathematics Instruction Mean (SD)	3.35 (0.5)	3.46*** (0.5)	3.51*** (0.5)
Reasoning and Problem-Solving Practices Mean (SD)	2.39 (0.4)	2.52*** (0.4)	2.64*** (0.5)

Notes: Means are based on teachers from 12 schools with over 70% response rates who responded in every year of the survey. Significant differences are for comparisons to 2009-10. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$

Lessons on Social Interactions & Knowledge Development

- **Strong ties - enable the transfer of tacit, complex knowledge and facilitate joint problem solving**
- **Weak ties - enable the transfer of explicit knowledge**
- **Ties that span organizational boundaries allow for new information and minimize 'group think'**
- **Boundary spanners — individuals that connect different subgroups — facilitate the implementation of new approaches**
- **Trust enables learning from social interactions**

Lessons on Educational Infrastructure & Social Interactions

- Think about **Work Practice** in Schools & School Systems – **who** talks to **whom** about **what, how, and why**
- Think Educational **Infrastructure**
- Think about the **Components of Educational Infrastructure Working together, in interaction** to shape work practice.
- Think about the **Vision for Teaching & Learning that Anchors** the educational infrastructure



Concluding: On a Cautionary Note

Putting Distributed Perspective into *Practice*

- Focusing on **practice**, the practice of leading and managing
- Practice is fundamentally about **interactions**, not just actions
- Components of the educational infrastructure working in interaction to shape interactions among school staff
- Looking at the **designed and lived** educational infrastructure in **tandem**.

The Ultimate Responsibility Challenge

“I’m responsible for the whole building of students and I’m **ultimately**—for most purposes—the end all, be all accountability person. **Everything falls on me** ... no matter what One thing that really was smacking me in the gut Sunday night was **the responsibility part**. It’s like **the ultimate responsibility** ...”

George

Nelson

“**the buck stops at your desk.** ... everything stops at my desk **so I’m ultimately accountable** for everything in this building. ... **Everything is your responsibility.**”

“Captain of a ship ... things sometimes are smooth sailing and then in a moment, the winds can turn, and you’re not sure you’re gonna stay afloat ... **I’m the last one out.**”

Kathy

Spillane, J. P., & Lee, L. C. (2014). Novice school principals’ sense of ultimate responsibility: Problems of practice in transitioning to the principal’s office. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(3), 431-465.

Spillane, J. P., & Anderson, L. M. (2014). The architecture of anticipation and novices' emerging understandings of the principal position: Occupational sense-making and the intersection of individual, organization, and institution. *Teachers College Record*, 116(7), 1-42.

The Challenge of Distributing Leadership

“that tendency to ... micromanage, I just felt like I had to keep that in check. ... that was never my style before, but I think just because I would kinda get overwhelmed with the idea of the responsibility that I felt like I had to have my hand in, you know, all the different things going on. So I just had to challenge myself to let go gender differences ...

Kathy

“it was hard to release that, because I like to be in [involved], and some of it is trusting that it will get done, but with this [person] I know it will get done effectively and right. It's also just wanting to be a part of the process whole heartedly, but I can't whole heartedly be a part of everything”

Kara

The Challenge of Distributing Leadership

“If it’s a bilingual, I’ll send them to Evelyn. If it’s a testing question ... I’ll send them to Helen. ... And not to pass the buck, but they already know cause I gave them a sheet on who’s responsible, but sometimes they just want me to hear.”

Carol



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More At:

- <http://www.distributedleadership.org>
- <http://distributedleadership.org/DLS/Presentations.html>



@jamespspillane