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Implementing state initiatives in a PK-1 primary school: a case study exploring instructional leadership

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IMPLEMENTING STATE INITIATIVES IN A PK-1 PRIMARY SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my son, Ryan. You are the inspiration for my work in education. Your patience throughout this process was remarkable!

Acknowledgements

Dr. Jo Ann Manning, Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, and Dr. Shelly Ward Richards were an amazing trio that helped me tremendously. Without their support, none of this would be possible. Shelly- you have been an amazing colleague and friend over the years. I cannot express enough how much I appreciate you.

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To my parents, William and Virginia Pauls, I could not have done this without you. You have always been my biggest cheerleaders and allowed me to grow into the leader I am today. From the day I came home from 2nd grade and said I was going to college, you've always made me feel like anything is possible.

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I would not have been able to finish this work without my dear cohort member, friend, and colleague, Kristen Clark. Thank you for always being a phone call away. Thank you to "the girls." Your support for the past 4 years has been amazing!

Abstract

Jennifer Ryan Baldwin
IMPLEMENTING STATE INITIATIVES IN A PK-1 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
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JoAnn Manning, Ed.D
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this mixed methods case study is to explore the practices that a principal has used to address the individual needs of students through instructional and cultural changes, which resulted in increased student achievement. Using Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Survey, the espoused beliefs of the principal are correlated to the teachers' ratings of the principal's performance. The findings indicate an overall emergent theme that the principal uses broad-based leadership and skillful participation to establish reciprocal trust among the staff by creating teacher leaders. An additional theme of the community's principal illuminates the work the principal's efforts to establish broad-based parental and faculty participation in the change work established to create a child-centered environment aimed at high student achievement. Principals in the field can learn how this was accomplished through the examination of reflective practice, establishing a culture where innovation is the norm, and an inquiry-based use of information.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Chappell (2013) stated the latest assessment results from the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked United States students below average in math among the world's most-developed countries. In addition, the U.S. ranked close to average in reading and science (Chappell, 2013). In math, 29 nations outperformed the U.S. by a statistically significant margin (Heitin, 2013). Furthermore, 22 nations outperformed the U.S. in science and 19 nations outperformed our students in reading (Heitin, 2013). The performance of U.S. students has caused many United States lawmakers, educators, and parents to engage in important conversations concerning what is best for U.S. students and the long-term implications education could have on our ranking in the global market.

The need to improve U.S. student ranking in the world prompted the creation of many federal and state education initiatives. The goals of the United States Department of Education included: increased college degree attainment in America, support implementation of college-and career-ready standards and assessments; improved learning by ensuring that more students have effective teachers and leaders; ensured equitable educational opportunities; supported comprehensive early learning assessments; and enabled evidence-based decision making (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education PK-12 goals could also be found in the public PK-12 schools of New Jersey.

The New Jersey Department of Education chose to embrace the federal goals resulting in several new initiatives effecting New Jersey administrators, teachers, and

students. The initiatives include the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, PARCC Assessment, and teacher and administrator evaluations to drive student achievement (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). The initiatives were implemented as individual parts of a collective vision as each of them are dependent on the others, which are displayed in Figure 1. With the interconnectedness of each of these initiatives, each school administrator must exhibit the effective traits necessary to be an instructional leader, as opposed to someone who manages the surface level responsibilities of their school. Instructional leaders would not only need to understand curriculum, assessments, evaluation, and ways to measure student achievement; but would also need to understand how a school's culture and readiness for change impacts the results of effective implementation (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Fullan, 2007; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner, 2000).

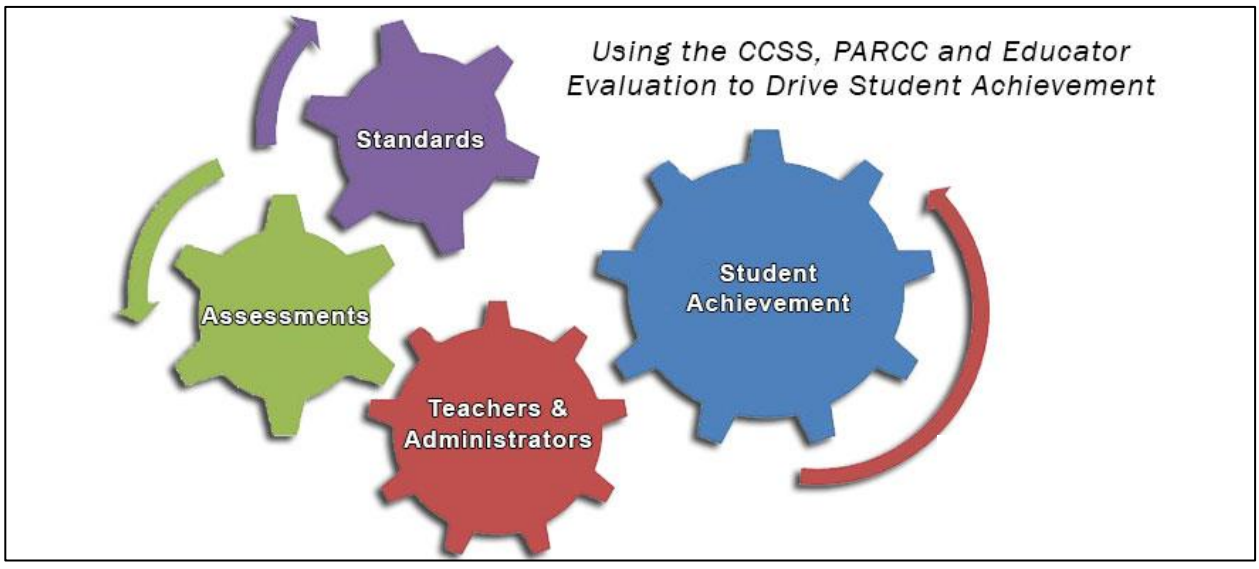

Figure 1: New Jersey Department of Education graphic of current initiatives

The initiatives outlined by the Department of Education had a significant influence on the outcome of increased student achievement. To accomplish this goal, the initiatives had an impact on teacher learning and in turn teacher practice. In 2001, principals were taught the role of a teacher is to be the disseminator of knowledge or the "sage on the stage" (Ubben et al., 2001, p. 125). However, the Common Core Curriculum standards was based on the philosophy that student exploration and ownership creates an opportunity for teachers to become the facilitator by establishing learning opportunities that are complex and require mastery of multiple standards (Bailey & Jakicic, 2013; Common Core, 2014). Effective implementation of this philosophy within the classroom included teachers whom embraced professional learning communities or small groups that worked to unpack standards, properly assessed students, and increased student achievement (Bailey & Jakicic, 2013; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Putnam, Gunnings-Moton & Sharp, 2009).

In addition to teachers work in professional learning communities, principals have assessed their teachers' needs for professional development to be more effective (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Through these assessments, they have learned to embrace a wide variety of instructional styles and provide teachers the professional development they determine through self-assessment relative to their students' progress as opposed to a top-down leadership approach toward professional development (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). By providing teachers with the professional development that meets their needs, they have in turn better met the needs of their students and increased student achievement (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). With high teacher accountability, this approach to professional

development has better met the needs of teachers and prepared them to increase their evaluation performance.

In 2013, Governor Christie implemented a statewide teacher accountability reform program in New Jersey. While schools were still creating curriculum that aligned with the Common Core, teachers and administrators were also being evaluated using one of the State's five recommended evaluation models, which included Danielson, Marzano, Stronge, Marshall, and Pearson frameworks (ACHIEVENJ, 2015). Regardless of the model, another key component to the evaluation was the accountability of teachers relative to student achievement. Christie's education reform committee discussed at length on his website his philosophy of "putting children first, rewarding high achieving teachers, and empowering parents" (Christie, 2015). With this philosophy in mind, teachers of non-tested grade levels or subjects or 80% of the total teaching population were required to create two Student Growth Objectives (ACHIEVENJ, 2015). Teachers of tested grade levels were required to create one Student Growth Objective and would also have 15% of their evaluation comprised of student performance on the state's standardized testing, otherwise known as Student Growth Percentiles (ACHIEVENJ, 2015). Holding teachers accountable for student performance created dismay as well as a negative climate in schools across the State due to the variables that exist in teaching students across various demographics and learning abilities.

In addition to teacher accountability, eleven schools in New Jersey participated in the pilot of a national assessment, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Assessment. PARCC created the State's first on-line assessment tool, which is aligned directly to the Common Core State Standards (PARCC,

2015). While testing students on computers provided angst for many relative to computer availability in all schools, so too did the rigor of questions as well as simple fear of the unknown (New Jersey Education Association, 2014).

In the face of new initiatives, a school administrator's ability to lead their school was being challenged. All New Jersey school administrators are required to have a minimum Master's degree in educational leadership and a demonstrated completion of advanced coursework in the art of leadership, school policies, and budget, as opposed to school supervisors (New Jersey Code 6A). School supervisors often attain a Master's degree in an area of interest and complete 6 credits focused on supervising and evaluating personnel. While many expected that principals and superintendents were ready to assume their roles based on their attained degrees and certifications, the impact the State Department of Education's initiatives has caused many principals and superintendents to search for meaningful ways to successfully implement the initiatives and serve their schools as an instructional leader.

When considering how to serve as instructional leaders, there were three areas are at the core of implementing a host of State initiatives. The first area was conceptualizing the relationship between school administrative practice and instructional practice (Diamond, 2012; Spillane, 2015; Spillane, Parise & Sherer, 2011). The second area was transitioning novice administrators into the principal's office (Spillane & Lee, 2014). The third area was the impact of transformational leadership behaviors and their importance to teacher motivation, affecting whether they believe they could improve student performance in face of accountability practices. Collectively, these three areas provided

principals with an understanding of the depth of their responsibilities and attention to areas of growth in their own professional practice.

While the research identified the problems with implementing new policies, the misunderstanding of roles, the need for recoupling, and the potential impact principals could have on teacher and student achievement (Fullan, 2009; Hallett, 2010; Spillane, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Diamond, 2012; Spillane, 2012; Spillane, Parise & Sherer, 2011;), little was discussed around the topic of how a principal went about implementing New Jersey's new policies of curriculum, assessment, and teacher accountability effectively.

A Sketch of New Jersey State Initiatives and Instructional School Leadership

The many initiatives in New Jersey's Department of Education created a complex task for school administrators. The challenge of delegating and attending to all of the responsibilities was rooted in the interconnectedness of initiatives (Senge et al., 2000). The first initiative was a complete overhaul to the state's curriculum standards, followed by new student assessments aimed at measuring student performance relative to the new curriculum, culminating in the evaluation of teachers and administrators based on student performance on the new standards and assessments (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). The required initiatives also implied the readiness of all school administrators to implement the initiatives in a systemic manner, ensuring student, staff, and the community's active participation and improved performance (Christie Reform Agenda, 2010).

Common Core State Standards

The purpose of the Common Core Standards was to increase academic rigor for students and to prepare them for career and college readiness. The standards were informed by: "the best standards already in existence; the experience of teachers, content experts, states, and leading thinkers; and feedback from the public" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). The increase in rigor was notable in the standards as are the specificity of the standards, which now have clearly defined expectations for students' academic competencies by grade level. Reeves (2002) argued the most effective models of standards implementation recognizes a continuum of performance, ranging from failure to meet the standard, progressing toward standards, proficiency, and finally exemplary performance (p. 15). Student mastery of each standard became critical for the long-term success of the Common Core and has been for any set curriculum in a school.

PARCC Assessments

The PARCC committee stated, "our core belief is that assessment should work as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning" (PARCC, 2015). The PARCC assessment was aligned directly to the Common Core State standards, ensuring every child was on a path to college and career readiness (PARCC, 2015). The assessment intended to inform parents of whether their child was falling behind the standards, since the standards provide a specific set of skills for students at each grade level (PARCC, 2015).

Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems

In addition to more rigorous standards and assessments, teachers and principals were also being held accountable for increasing student achievement toward the demonstration of mastering standards.

Teacher evaluation. In the fall of 2013, schools were required to start using data from the PARCC assessments (Student Growth Percentiles, SGP), internal benchmark systems (Student Growth Objectives, SGO), and on the job performance evaluations (classroom observations) to evaluate teachers (ACHIEVENJ, 2015). This multi-prong approach also increased the number of evaluations completed for each teacher. Non-tenured teachers were observed four times in year one and three times in the succeeding years. Tenured teachers were also observed three times. The sheer volume of teacher evaluations was taxing both to school and district administrators making it difficult to attend to the initiatives required for implementation.

Principal evaluation. While principals focused on implementing new academic curriculum, a new testing format, and the increased demand of teacher evaluation, they were also faced with the challenges of their own annual evaluations. Principals in New Jersey were not only evaluated on their performance, but are now held accountable for the performance of their students on both the PARCC and the SGOs set by their teachers in all content areas. This new evaluation process created more pressure for principals to understand the impact of curricular and programming decisions on student achievement.

Problem Statement

The problem of implementing a host of State initiatives was three-fold. The first concern was conceptualizing the relationship between school administrative practice and instructional practice (Diamond, 2012; Spillane, 2015; Spillane, Parise & Sherer, 2011). The second concern was transitioning first time principals into the principal's office (Spillane & Lee, 2014). The third concern was the impact of transformational leadership

behaviors and their importance to teacher motivation, affecting whether they believe they could improve student performance in face of accountability practices.

Accountability Policy & School Organization: Coupling and Recoupling

While many of these initiatives and policies could be used as a vessel to bring about possible needed change in the district, for many districts, change was being implemented blindly, lacking a vision and the resources needed for the change to improve teacher and student achievement (Fullan, 2009; Spillane, 2012; Steinhauer, 2015). Philosopher Thomas Green (1983) argued policy was better suited to prevent evil rather than promote a positive result (as cited in Spillane, 2012). In addition, Spillane (2012) argued if teachers or principals could imagine alternatives to their current practice, then they may be able challenge the preexisting expectations.

Principal's Readiness and Sense of Critical Responsibility

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and more current state accountability policies such as ACHIEVENJ aimed to transform the motivation and capacity of school staff to focus on student performance and achievement (Diamond, 2012; Finnigan, 2012). Principal leadership was particularly crucial under school accountability policies, as principals interpreted and generated a response to policies as well as supported and facilitated their school community's response (Finnigan, 2012). Furthermore, principals played an important role in shaping the beliefs of their teachers that students were capable of learning and teachers could play an integral role in improving their students' performance (Finnigan, 2012; Spillane & Lee, 2014). In this study, answers to how there has been an improvement in school-level responses that

move beyond NCLB sanctions while successfully implementing state initiatives will be shared.

Fullan (2007) offered advice for effectively planning and implementing by stating that it requires "focus, persistence, implementation, monitoring, corrective action, and humility in the face of change" (p. 121). Leading change that would make a positive difference in the lives of our students and teachers required "care, commitment, and passion as well as the intellectual know-how" (Fullan, 2007, p. 21). However, were all principals ready for leading such an intertwined system of change? Chances were principals were trying to figure out how to implement the quantity of change as well as the depth of the change effectively. While Fullan (2007) reminded principals there was "no silver bullet" (p. 125), this study serves to provide principals with a framework of consistent practices that would help prepare them for leading future instructional initiatives.

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teacher & Student Achievement

There were many changes in New Jersey's education system, including the Common Core, PARCC, and teacher evaluation initiatives. While this change existed, Diamond (2012) argued the content may have changed in classrooms, but teacher practice had not. Hallett (2010) found that the efforts to link the policy environment, administration, and instruction created significant turmoil in schools as teachers and administrators struggled over competing conceptions of their appropriate roles in transforming an environment. The turmoil created was also thought to be a result of implementing policies in such a way that narrowed instructional content, marginalized low-performing students, and increased teacher-centered, didactic pedagogy

(Anagnotostopoulous, 2006; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond, 2007; Lipmann, 2004; Mintrop, 2004 as cited in Diamond, 2012). The role of the principal changed to a more transformational leadership approach as one of the key roles in implementing policy was now centered on student achievement.

Transformational leaders considered the routines and structures within their school when leading policy change. Spillane et al. (2015) argued school principals were changing how they defined their responsibilities to focus on leading and managing instruction, particularly in tested subjects. Spillane et al. (2015) found that school leaders were using organizational routines in an effort to couple government regulation and administrative practice with classroom instruction in math and literacy. School leaders were able to accomplish this through standardizing instructional programming, setting and maintaining direction, and monitoring progress by making classroom instruction more transparent (Spillane et al., 2015).

Research to Address the Problem Statement

While the research identified the problems with implementing new policies, the misunderstandings of roles, the need of recoupling, and the potential impact principals could have on teacher and student achievement (Diamond, 2012; Fullan, 2009; Hallett, 2010; Spillane, 2012; Spillane, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Spillane, Parise & Sherer, 2011), little was discussed around the topic of how a principal should strategically implement New Jersey's new policies of curriculum, assessment, and teacher accountability effectively. The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to describe the espoused beliefs and practices of an instructional leader that created a culture of learning for both students and teachers, while carrying out the mandates required by the

State of New Jersey. The results of this study identified best practices for new principals, as they become instructional leaders.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to describe the espoused beliefs and practices of an instructional leader that created a culture of learning for both students and teachers, while the mandates required by the State of New Jersey were implemented. The results of this study identified best practices for new principals, as they become instructional leaders.

The study took place in a primary school that houses approximately 700 students in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Grade 1 in a suburban southern New Jersey school district. The study relied on input from the school's principal as well as feedback from the faculty. Through purposeful random sampling, both the principal and identified staff were asked to complete a survey of the principal's leadership capacity at the start of the study. Interviews, participant observation, document analysis, focus groups, and field notes informed the research in this sequential explanatory mixed methods research design.

Research Questions

1. How do today's instructional leaders address educational reforms in their role as principal?
2. How do a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leader's actions when bringing about change in their school?
3. How can new principals use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices as instructional leaders?

Overview of Methodology

The research questions listed above were answered through a mixed methods case study sequential explanatory design. The single-case study occurred in a southern New Jersey primary school that is located in a suburban area, which has recently seen a change in economic status partly due to the closure of four casinos in Atlantic City. Approximately 60% of the district's students were considered economically disadvantaged and represented 42 different languages and every racial subgroup identified in No Child Left Behind. The participants in this study included the principal and his staff of 48 teachers, one counselor, one school nurse, five child study and related service providers, and 30 paraprofessionals.

The methods used to conduct the research included the use of a self-assessment tool called the Leadership Capacity Survey (Lambert, 1998). Using the same tool, teachers then assessed the leader's capacity. Using the results of the survey and serving as a participant researcher, I further explored the research questions through observations, interviews, document reviews, focus groups, and field notes. Each step of research was analyzed to identify the layers of the effective instructional leadership techniques required to implement the high stakes initiatives in New Jersey.

Conceptual Framework

There were three key perspectives that informed the conceptual framework of this study: Fullan's (2011) leadership framework, Earl and Katz (2006) theory of action, and Ma's (2004) systems theory. The three frameworks can also be found when exploring the major themes identified as critical to this research study: coupling, principal leadership

through the eyes of teachers, and transitioning novice administrators to the principal's office. All of these areas are further explored in Chapter 2 through the literature review.

Fullan's (2011) leadership framework, Earl and Katz (2006) theory of action, and Ma's (2004) systems theory have been constructed to create a conceptual framework entitled Leadership, Action, and Systems Framework (Figure 2). This framework provided a lens through which the participants in this study were analyzed. The primary framework that guided an effective instructional leader's actions when making decisions as a leader was Fullan's (2011) leadership framework. The leader's actions were then informed through the information generated through the structures that were created in his school using Earl and Katz's (2006) theory of action and Ma's (2004) systems theory. The use of these frameworks is shared in Figure 2.

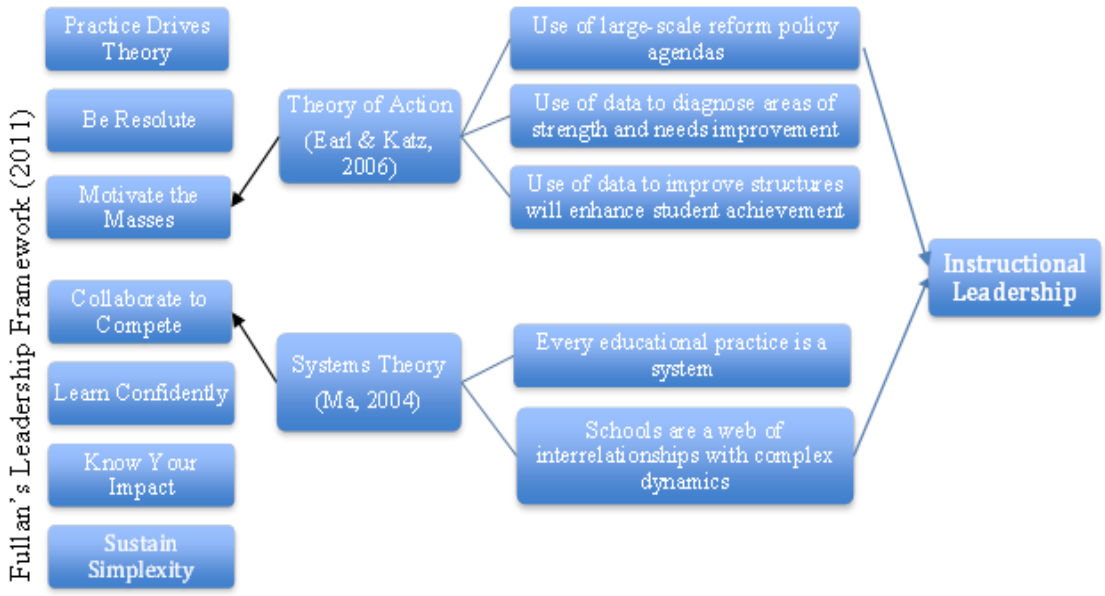

Figure 2: Leadership, action, and systems conceptual framework

Fullan's (2011) Leadership Framework

Fullan's (2011) leadership framework was a foundation for the behaviors of the instructional leader in this case study. The following are the principles of leadership and include a brief description of each element.

Practice drives theory. A leader examines their practices. Through reflection, the results allow the leader to identify what might be lacking in their practices. The leader looks into what other practitioners are doing, build upon steps one and two and then tries the skills in their own practice. If it works, draw own conclusion, create a new theory.

Be resolute. Leaders in sustained successful organizations focus on a small number of core priorities, stay on message, and developing others toward the same end, making corrections when new learning happens. They lead with moral purpose and impressive empathy.

Motivate the masses. The realized effectiveness is what motivates people to do more. It is the actual experience of being more effective that spurs them to repeat the behavior.

Collaborate to compete. The leader establishes elements of a collaborative culture: set a small number of core goals, form a guiding coalition, aim for collective capacity building, individual capacity building, and reap the benefits of collaborative competition.

Learn confidently. Change leaders are more confident than the situation warrants but more humble than they look. As a learner, the change leader uses their brain, cultivates a growth mindset, be indispensable in the right way, and maintains a high level of confidence.

Know your impact. Leaders use data. They celebrate success after it happens, not before.

Sustain simplexity. Leaders are doing all of the steps listed above effectively in their own setting.

Earl & Katz's (2006) Theory of Action

Earl and Katz (2006) discussed theory of action in the following context: "the advent of high-profile accountability policies had likely functioned as an extrinsic motivator, encouraging engagement with an agenda (in this case data driven decision-making) that might otherwise remain in the background" (p. 7). Policies such as No Child Left Behind assumed educators already knew how to engage in the practice of data driven decision-making and have systems in place to process the data and discuss the implications of such collected data (Moriarty, 2013). According to Earl and Katz (2006):

> "The "theory of action" underlying large-scale reform policy agenda…is that once schools have the necessary data, educators will be in a position to diagnose areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. They will then adjust structures and practices in ways that will impact positively on student learning and this, in turn, will lead to enhance student achievement for all students. Thus, the capacity requirement underlying such policies is that educators know how to use data in order to make the necessary consequent decisions (p. 7)."

Ma's (2004) Systems Theory

The complexity view of the world is one basic tenets of the systems theory (Ma, 2004). Systems theory is based upon the idea that the world is a web of interconnected relationships with complex dynamics (Ma, 2004). Human systems are no exception, and nonlinear cause-effect relationships exist in all of the subsystems including educational systems (Ma, 2004). Senge et al. (2000) state, "every educational practice is a system" (p. 78). Grading in a classroom, grade level, and school each has its own system, a system

that is complex and dependent not only on the criteria used to establish grades but also the influence that a teacher's perceptions has on the grade assigned to the student. A teacher's confidence in knowing their students' abilities becomes critical in this grading system.

Scope of the Study

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of choosing a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was to provide validity and trustworthiness to a research topic that can be open to scrutiny based on the highly interpretive nature of the subject if just a qualitative study was constructed. The study was structured in two distinct interactive phases beginning with a quantitative phase followed by subsequent qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2014).

Methodological weakness. Participant observation evolved as a research technique extending the ordinary activity of watching others to an opportunity to meticulously record what was seen and heard and formally analyzing patterns of action and behavior (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In qualitative phases three, six, and eight, I served as a participant observer in the school setting. By joining the school faculty and shadowing the principal during his typical day as an instructional leader, I captured nuanced behaviors, skills, and organizational structures that support the success of the school. This could be considered a limitation to the study because a researcher can never ensure that the participants do not change their behaviors due to their presence.

Limitations of transferability and dependability. Transferability may be a factor in this case study research. Educators in other schools will question whether the

findings in this case study will transfer to their school settings due to concerns of student and staff demographics . Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) defined transferability as external validity of one set of inferences found in the research setting to a particular receiving context (other similar settings). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued it is the researcher's responsibility to persuade the audience that the findings in their research are worth paying attention. Thick descriptions of the findings were used to allow the consumer to see the research in their current contexts (Guba, 1981).

Biases. Mills & Gay (2014) and Guba (1981) suggested practicing reflexivity or the intentional reveal of underlying assumptions and biases of the researcher. In order to demonstrate this within the research steps, I kept field notes about the events. In one column the field notes were collected. The second column was created to share reflections. The reflections regularly recorded provided the opportunity to review that the data is being collected accurately throughout the process. The third column was used to code the data and generate themes identified from the codes.

Participants

The participants selected for this case study adhered to a framework of instructional leadership as shared in Figure 2. This framework was established over a four-year period of time and taught to the principal that participated in this case study while the principal served as a vice principal in the district.

In this study, I relied on a multi-stage purposeful random sampling technique and selected participants at two distinct phases (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The first opportunity for participants to be selected was to complete the Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity survey. To complete this survey, the

staff was selected through purposive sampling or in other words, selecting participants that are familiar with the topic and can yield relevant data (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The second stage of sampling was more purposeful. The participants for the second stage were selected through critical case sampling or those individuals who represent various subgroups of the faculty (each grade level within the building, each content area, and members of the leadership team) (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Significance of the Study

Leadership plays an integral role in the success of schools. Yet, little of the current research provided instructional leaders with "a how to" in the area of implementing curricular change and responding to state initiatives. Understanding this work for the administrators working at the building level can have a significant impact on teacher performance and student performance. This can be achieved through the way they instill confidence in their teachers to be successful during change initiatives relative to instructional practice, student achievement, and teacher accountability (Finnigan, 2012; Spillane, 2015).

The instructional decisions made can have a long lasting effect on a generation of students therefore impacting the future of students and the impact they make on their community. A principal's understanding of planning for change and the roles needed for successful coupling and recoupling become a critical component to their ability to lead (Diamond, 2012; Spillane et al., 2011). Furthermore, the techniques used by experienced administrators that have found success in improving student achievement are critical for

novice school principals to understand when taking on the ultimate responsibility of the principal's office (Spillane & Lee, 2014).

Advancing Practice

This study sought to inform the practice of instructional leaders at the school level, specifically those individuals intending to seek the role of principal. Through discovered effective leadership behaviors and uncovered best leadership practices in the field, current and future practitioners will benefit from analyzing the research and implementing the findings in their own practice. While the educational change initiatives were still relatively new in New Jersey, this research will assist those who may have struggled with implementation of state initiatives in general. Furthermore, little research had been published about New Jersey's integrated initiative plan.

Research

The findings of this study can inform the broader discussion of instructional leadership and implementing change effectively. With the focus on new standards, assessment, and student achievement as accountability for teachers and principals, this research can inform practitioners and administrator preparatory programs of best practices relative to leading these initiatives.

In addition, the methodology used in this study can inform education researchers when using case study in a primary school environment. The research was conducted in a large school community with high levels of diversity. With the context in mind, techniques such as participant researcher, observations, and the analysis of artifacts were further explored.

Policy

The initiatives explored in this case study have impacted school policy significantly, particularly in New Jersey. The findings of this research can help create implementation data for future initiatives; specifically how these initiatives impacted a public school environment where unions establish workday and teacher involvement parameters. Furthermore, the goal of the initiatives was to improve student achievement. Without effective leadership and implementation steps discovered, future policy decisions would be impacted.

Definition of Key Terms

In order to ensure shared understanding of the concepts that are the central focus of the study, I am providing definition of key terms.

Instructional Leader

An instructional leader in this context was a building level administrator that develops the curricular, programming, and instructional philosophy of their school as well as leads the implementation and monitoring of all initiatives. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2001) discuss instructional leadership in the terms of educational forces. The skills identified include: the ability to diagnose educational problems, carry out the functions of clinical supervision, evaluate educational programs, help develop curriculum, implement staff development activities, and develop strong individualized educational programs (Ubben et al., 2001, p. 36).

Servant Leadership

A philosophical foundation for the instructional leader is the belief of working with and for the teachers, faculty, students, and families of the school. As a servant

leader, the principal must believe that they are there to work for others, not the other way around (Greenleaf, 1995; Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005; Smith, 1995). Bolman & Deal (2001) add to this definition by positing that leadership is a relationship rooted in community and the community's leader embodies the group's values and beliefs, emerging from the strength and sustenance of those around them.

Shared Leadership

Instructional leaders understand the importance of working collectively with others to investigate, plan, monitor, and achieve goals for success (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Sergiovanni (1994) observed that a high performing school and the principal emphasizes a connection to outcomes rather than rules. Sergiovanni (1994) asserts effective leadership connects workers tightly to ends, but loosely to means.

Systemic Planning

Within this framework, school leaders develop change with a big picture in mind, specifically how the potential change will impact all aspects of the organization. Fullan (2007) asserts the attention to a number of key, small details can result in the experience of success, new commitments, excitement, and energy for stakeholders.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

While leaders are expected to be data-driven, in this study data-driven decision-making was expected of all stakeholders. The leader guided teachers (and in turn students), parents, and other stakeholders in the use of data; drawing upon data to support the success or lack thereof change implementation has had on the organization. Data-driven decision-making is defined as teachers, principals, and administrators

systematically collecting and analyzing data to inform a range of decisions aimed to improve the performance of students and schools (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007).

Summary

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter sought to position the research problem in the larger context of this issue and education. The chapter reviewed the purpose of the study, significance, the research problem, the purpose, related theories, and the limitations of the research findings. Chapter two explores the literature significant to instructional leadership, including the types of leadership style: transformative/ social justice leadership, shared leadership, and servant leadership. In addition, a look at the instructional knowledge needed in the areas of content and instructional practices was reviewed. Finally, a look at the internal leadership structures that an effective, instructional leader creates to foster a learning culture including: building level autonomy, school leadership teams, and professional development. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology in this study. Chapter 4 discusses the study's overall findings. Chapter 5 focuses on the implications of the findings as well as the contribution the findings have for current and future instructional leaders.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There is an inherent complexity to leadership in general, but building level instructional leadership is challenged by the needs of the school's faculty, students, and community as well as the challenges of managing the local district's administrative expectations that balances interactions between building and district level administrators (Finnegan, 2012; Spillane, 2015). Navigating your role as a building principal in a time of multiple policy changes can be confusing for new leaders while also making it more difficult to lead today's educational environment in a way that is instructionally sound and therefore results in high student achievement (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Before I explore the different facets of effective instructional leadership, it is important to explore the definition of leadership.

Burke (2011) asserts, "defining and attempting to clarify leadership is a lot like trying to define and describe love" (p. 249). We know leadership when we see it or feel it, but putting what we see or feel into words is quite difficult. Burke (2011) found, after universal studies, leadership is about influence but that influence is a reciprocal process. In other words, leadership occurs when followers exist and want direction (Burke, 2011). Furthermore, leadership is a very complex and multidimensional process (Northouse, 2012). Northouse (2012) reminds leaders that each individual is unique, displaying their own distinct talents for leadership. However, effective leaders are known to have the following traits: intelligence, confidence, charisma, determination, sociability, and integrity (Northouse, 2012). While these may be characteristics of leadership, Burke's (2011) definition of leadership provides clear understanding of the type of leadership that

grounds this study: leadership is the act of making something happen that would not otherwise occur.

Schools throughout the country were challenged by the idea of changing their organization to improve student achievement (Fullan, 2007). New Jersey was specifically challenged to improve student achievement through three key initiatives: ACHIEVENJ, the Common Core and PARCC assessments. The key to implementing effective change in schools starts with the principal as the instructional leader (Marzano et al., 2005; Ubben et al., 2001). Various leadership theories can inform a principal's practice, including systems theory, theory of action, and leadership theories (Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2011; Ma, 2004).

This literature review begins with a critique of the current research. The chapter continues with an in-depth discussion of the types of leadership that serve as the foundation of an instructional leader: transformative/ social justice, shared, and servant leadership. The areas of content knowledge and instructional practices through the theory of action, which serve as the foundation for all instructional leaders, are also explored. Finally, a deeper look at the internal structures that effective instructional leaders create is investigated through the lens of systems theory that creates the culture in schools to engage in instructional discourse, which leads to greater student achievement.

Critique of Current Research Studies

As previously stated, the problem of implementing a host of State initiatives is three-fold. The first concern is conceptualizing the relationship between school administrative practice and instructional practice (Diamond, 2012; Spillane, 2015; Spillane, Parise & Sherer, 2011). The second concern is transitioning novice

administrators into the principal's office (Spillane & Lee, 2014). The third concern is the impact of transformational leadership behaviors and their importance to teacher motivation, affecting whether they believe they could improve student performance in face of accountability practices.

The changes to New Jersey's educational policies have been implemented over the past five years. Thus there was little current research on the impact of the reform efforts in New Jersey. With this in mind, I sought to find research in the areas of: principals and educational reform, the Common Core Standards, teacher and principal evaluation systems, and principal readiness for leading change implementation. With each sub-category in mind, I provide an overview of the research identified.

Principals and Educational Reform

Darling-Hammond found that exceptional principal training programs are integral to the development of high-performing principals (Miller, 2013). School leadership is as essential to student achievement as a teacher's instruction (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Walstrom, 2004). However, Miller (2013) found that poor preparation programs and on-the-job training have created a generation of principals that are ill-equipped to handle the rigors of educational reform. However, learning from exemplary leaders can assist novice principals in handling the rigors of educational reform.

Sanders (2014) identified educational reform initiatives must be tied to broader district goals for efforts to be effective. Principals provide leadership through their development of collaborative partnerships between school, families, and local community partnerships (Sanders, 2014). Sanders (2014) suggests principals who receive support of the superintendent and board of education were instrumental while implementing change.

Sanders' (2014) research provides a lens to look through while analyzing this case study: the support of the principal by the superintendent and board of education. While the district has had significant turmoil within the Board of Education, the principal has still been able to achieve success. Could the success be greater or does the effectiveness of reform implementation rely on the principal's shoulders? Provost, Boscardin, and Wells (2010) proved that a principal's effectiveness can be enhanced through a site-based management approach to instructional leadership. However, little was found in research related to connecting a principal's espoused beliefs to their actions throughout a school day.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation

Rigby (2015) states that tension ensues when principals are expected to improve student practice. In her study, she examined six first-year principals in a cross-case study. The significance of her study aligns with the research that argues principals need to create a culture and climate for evaluator feedback to be embraced and respected (Fisher, Frey & Pumpian, 2012; Marzano et al., 2011; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Senge et al., 2000). Rigby (2015) found that most of the first year leaders lacked a focus on social justice leadership and spent most of their time on daily routines rather than improving instruction in the classroom. While Rigby's (2015) research is consistent with much of the research in the field, her research fails to answer the question that is important to new leaders: how do leaders effectively become social justice leaders on a daily basis? One purpose of this research study is to identify specific social justice leadership behaviors and practices for new principals to learn prior to accepting the role of the instructional and change leader of their school.

Derrington and Campbell (2015) identify principal leadership as the key to successful implementation of mandated, high-accountability, teacher evaluation systems. In their research, they found that principals lacked time and deep understanding of the evaluation tool to effectively implement the demands of the new teacher evaluation models. As time progressed in their study, leaders better understood models of effective and instruction and the implementation of the new evaluation models were not as time-consuming (Derrington & Campbell, 2015). Implementing any evaluation model can be time consuming to leaders of all experience levels. However, a commitment to continuously growing through professional development, understanding curricular changes and instructional models, and being a resource to teachers are among the priorities for any effective school principal.

Common Core Standards

Eilers and D'Amico (2012) argue that effective leadership of the implementation of the Common Core Standards requires a shared purpose and vision and the identification of skilled staff to share expertise through professional learning communities and professional development. Furthermore, Eilers and D'Amico (2012) assert that a culture of professional discourse and risk-taking provides ample opportunities for teachers to align their abilities with the change at hand as well as to learn from one another when considering such a rigorous change to instruction and curricula. These efforts require shared and social justice leadership styles that works collaboratively with teachers and leaders that are not afraid to be specific with their faculty about expectations. When new bars of excellence are established, strong leadership is required.

The role of principals as instructional leaders is crucial when high expectations for student achievement are established (Abul Aziz, Fooi, Asimiran & Hassan, 2015). The principal identifies the school vision, motivates staff, and coordinates strategies for the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process (Abul Aziz et al., 2015). The principal as an instructional leader provides the support and professional development necessary to ensure all staff are equipped with the required skills to implement instructional change (Abul Aziz et al., 2015), particularly with the level of change identified within the Common Core Standards. Abul Aziz et al. (2015) stop short in their research to identify for principals exactly how to accomplish this in their buildings. In much of the research reviewed, philosophies are identified, but much of the research fell short of identifying how school leaders should implement the instructional change necessary to improve student achievement.

Principal Readiness for Leading Change

Ishimaru (2013) found that most principals struggle to work with parents and communities around schools to create socially just learning environments. The need for principals to develop a shared leadership approach is essential to successfully leading social justice based change (Ishimaru, 2013). New principals found that their lack of capital within a traditional district context creates opportunities for them to be caught in the middle of doing what they believe is right and the politics of central administrators (Ishimaru, 2013). The important role of principals in sharing institutional resources and information is vital to leading change (Ishimaru, 2013). While this type of challenge can be difficult for new principals to navigate, a new principal's ability to be seen as a shared leader can assist in navigating the political dynamics of their district.

Leadership

Leaders develop a skillset to lead their faculty and communities based upon the knowledge and experience they gain over time. Leadership is considered to be vital to the optimal functioning of many aspects of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). Fullan (2007) stresses, truly making a difference in the lives of students and staff requires care, commitment, and passion as well as the intellectual capability to do something about it; moral purpose and knowledge are the two leading change forces that drive success. Argyris and Schön (1974) define espoused theory as a theory of action that a person is committed to and communicates to others about behavior. The goal for leaders is to become more effective in their interactions and be reflective of their theories in use (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Using this foundation, three major styles of effective leadership are explored, specifically Model II leadership styles, which increase growth, learning, and effectiveness (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Transformative/ Social Justice Leadership

Shields (2010) asserts the key to educational leaders in the 21st century is to incorporate into their practice the focus of offering a more "inclusive, equitable, and deeply democratic conception of education" (p. 559). Marzano et al. (2005) agree, noting the skills of transformational leadership are a necessary to meeting the demands of the 21st century because this type of leadership is focused on change. The role of the principal is to foster new understandings and beliefs about diversity and inclusive practices through a contextual approach (Diamond, 2012; Finnigan, 2012; Riehl, 2000; Spillane, 2015). In other words, the principal and teachers are helping create discourse around topics that are pertinent to the population they serve (Riehl, 2000), while also

providing teachers with the confidence to carry out instructional practices they believe will assist students in academic learning (Diamond, 2012). The principal's role is to create a climate that embraces democratic discourse so the school community can engender educational practices that will serve the needs of their diverse students (Riehl, 2000).

Transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness, while transformative leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequality and discrimination (Shields, 2010). Bennis (1986) defines transformative power as the type of leadership that raises human consciousness and inspires leaders to use their power to implement effective change. Ubben et al. (2001) assert transformational leaders inspire others to work collaboratively and interdependently toward a goal, which the organization is deeply committed. As principals considered the theories and philosophies that undergird transformational leadership, current research lacked a breadth of information in how to transform theory to practice.

Dantley and Tillman (2010) emphasize transformative leaders or leaders for social justice investigate issues and implement change to combat societal inequities such as access to rigorous curricula and well prepared teachers. Leadership must look at the current conditions in which their students live or teachers function and decide how to change them (Foster, 1986). This individual and personal attention assists principals in meeting the challenges of the 21st century (Marzano et al., 2005). This type of leadership becomes more manageable and less exhausting when leaders adapt a mindset of

questioning routines, challenging obstacles, and seeking new possibilities (Hess, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005).

Dantley and Tillman (2010) suggest that social justice leaders permit programs in their schools that are created based on the diverse beliefs and needs of their students. Social justice leaders have a theoretical perspective that deconstructs the leaders that have come before them, provides a new perspective to leadership, and constructs new practices and systems in their schools to review their school community's impact on student achievement (Larson and Murtadha, 2003). When their efforts produce a new reality, different conditions emerge that cause the leader to remain true to their core leadership values that have undergirded the emphasis on socially just practices in the first place and inspire those around them (in this case the school faculty) to follow the same path (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 22; Marzano et al., 2005). In New Jersey, our principals are challenged to meet the demands of the 21st century learner through rigorous policy initiatives. Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) posit transformational leadership is the favored style of leadership in circumstances or places such as New Jersey given that it is assumed to produce results beyond expectations (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005).

The transformational and social justice leadership philosophies align with the theoretical perspectives that have grounded this research. Fullan's leadership framework (2011) provides steps for transformational leaders on how a leader's practice can drive the change they want to see in their school and the steps necessary to be reflective of the impact their efforts and the instructional practices of their teachers on student achievement. Earl and Katz's (2006) theory of action also emphasizes the practice of reflection, specifically when implementing large-scale reform efforts as found in New

Jersey's new educational reform policies. The efforts transformational leaders take are organized in their schools through systems that interact with one another, providing the opportunity for to reflect upon the data available to answer how these efforts have improved student achievement and inform next steps in the implementation of policy at the building level (Ma, 2004).

Shared Leadership

The confidence of a leader becomes integral in their ability to instill the philosophy of shared leadership in their buildings. Teachers look to their principals to confirm their practices, see them as a partner in the process of student achievement, and create a culture of taking risks to meet the demands of their diverse student population (Finnigan, 2012; Spillane, 2015). Goleman (2004) found effective leaders all have a high degree of emotional intelligence or the ability to work with others, including the ability to lead change. Without emotional intelligence, a principal can have the best training in the world, but that still will not make them a great leader (Goleman, 2004). Consequently, when principals and teachers share leadership, teachers' working relationships become stronger and student achievement is higher (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012).

The structure and culture of a school becomes an important aspect for school leaders to reflect upon when considering how they will put people in the right roles and create productive relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A shared leader creates activities with their faculty that everyone understands are meant to influence motivation, knowledge, affect, and practice (Spillane, 2015). While organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives (often influenced by policy), those within the organization benefit further when leaders consider these key aspects as essential for

success. Leaders that establish systems within a school find success when they enhance teacher performance through specialization, systems that promote individuals and units to collaborate, work to meet the schools current circumstances, and are continuously using data to improve their practice and rational expectations (Bolman and Deal, 2008; Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2011; Ma, 2004).

To implement effective organizational structures, the evidence of the assumptions listed in the principal's practice becomes important in considering how to best use the talents of your staff. By stating clearly the principal's assumptions and including staff in the work, a byproduct of higher staff morale is created when less guess work or red tape is created (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Finnigan, 2012). Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012) share that in a collective or shared leadership structure, organizational members and stakeholders exert decisions in their schools. Transforming a school into a community that learns and grows together requires the sharing of leadership, power and decision-making while remaining committed to core values and results (Connelly, 2008; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Finnigan, 2012; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005). Furthermore, the impact a shared leadership approach has on a school influences teacher knowledge and skills, motivations, and working conditions thus impacting the levels of student achievement across the school (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). The behaviors of leaders and examples of organizational structures will be further explored in this research.

Servant Leadership

As I considered my coursework to become a school principal, the idea of servant leadership was not a key point of exploration in the provided coursework. But I cannot

help but think, Why not? Marzano et al. (2005) explain that although servant leadership is typically not embraced as a comprehensive theory of leadership as some other theories (such as Total Quality Management), over time it has become a key component in the thinking of many leadership theorists (Covey, 1992; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001).

Greenleaf (1995) defines a servant-leader as servant first or the natural feeling to want to serve first and then aspires to lead. Another definition includes the idea that instead of occupying a position at the top of the organizational chart, the servant leader is positioned in the center of the organization (Marzano et al., 2005). This type of leader is considerably different from a person who wants to be a leader first because those who want to lead first most often are driven by power or the acquisition of material things (Greenleaf, 1995). The work to create a high-achieving school requires leaders to set aside their personal desires and put the needs of the organization before their own (Marzano et al., 2005).

The desire to build and serve is needed in today's leaders (Smith, 1995). Smith (1995) asserts the more progressive leaders today want to help others around them realize their own power and in this case their ability to impact the next generation of learners. Servant leaders lead because they want to create an environment where people are free to think, innovate, and unite into teams and groups, in order to solve the problems that are too big for one person to solve (Smith, 1995). Much of what is described of servant leaders is intrinsic, therefore, leaders can be exposed to these concepts, but it is their own desire and efforts that will create their ability to develop their abilities in the capacity of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1995).

Marzano et al. (2005) identify five key skills of instructional leaders that help serve to foster and nurture the organization. These skills include: understanding the personal needs of those within the organization, reestablishing homeostasis when conflict occurs within the organization; sharing and providing resources within the organization, developing the skills of the faculty, and being an effective listener (Marzano et al., 2005. The practices of servant leaders provide principals with an opportunity to reflect and round out their leadership capacity and effectively lead their schools to improve student achievement and teacher practice. When considering this type of leadership in conjunction with the other skills needed to implement new policies, current research lacked a focus on how principals balance meeting the high stakes initiatives with the needs of their students and teachers. Current policies have assumed students and teachers are all equal and have historically failed to provide adequate time for principals to build the capacity of teachers and students thus challenging the opportunity for principals nurture their organizations.

Change Leader

Fullan (2007) describes ten key ideas for focusing leaders when considering change and in this case implementing new policy initiatives. The key ideas listed are to be used in concert with one another, not in isolation (Fullan, 2007). By focusing change efforts in this way, the following list creates a "well-balanced reform agenda:

1. Define closing the gap as the overarching goal;
2. Attend initially to the three basics (literacy, numeracy, and the well-being of students);
3. Be driven by tapping into people's dignity and sense of respect;
4. Ensure that the best people are working on the problem;
5. Recognize that all successful strategies are socially based, and action oriented—change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning;
6. Assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem and then work on it

continuously;
7. Stay the course through the continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership;
8. Build internal accountability linked to external accountability;
9. Establish conditions for the evolution of positive pressure;
10. Use the previous nine strategies to build public confidence" (Fullan, 2007, p. 44).

Inherent in the list above are the theoretical foundation of Fullan's (2011) leadership framework, a systems theory approach to change (Ma, 2004), and the theory of action (Earl & Katz, 2006). While current policy initiatives have challenged schools and the leaders within them, establishing change efforts and systems to support the change have not been clearly provided for New Jersey's leaders. The initiatives provided the outcomes desired without a road map to achieve the understood goal of student achievement. While this may have provided flexibility for leaders to adapt the initiatives to their own schools, new leaders may benefit from more guidance.

Douglas McGregor (1960) built upon Maslow's theory of human needs when he explained leaders' assumptions through the Theory of X and Y (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008). Theory X assumptions include a leader's beliefs that their followers are passive, lazy, have little ambition, prefer to be led, and resist change (McGregor, 1960 as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008). Theory Y leaders believe the task of management is to arrange conditions so that people can achieve their own goals toward organizational rewards (McGregor, 1960 as cited in Bolman and Deal, 2008). Fullan suggests that principals as change leaders need to shift their thinking to capacity building among their faculty with a focus on student achievement (Fullan, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006 as cited in Fullan, 2007). More recently, Spillane (2015) provided a distributed practice to change leadership suggesting leaders create systems for

interactions to occur among leaders and between leaders and followers. Through a systems theory approach, principals are creating the opportunities for school leadership teams to reflect on their actions and determine collaboratively the next steps to improve student achievement (Earl and Katz, 2006; Ma, 2004; Spillane, 2015). Overall, leaders are focusing on enhancing the competencies of an organization to engage in continuous improvement (Fullan, 2007).

Instructional Knowledge & Leadership

Sergiovanni (1992) expanded previous notions of the leadership skills necessary for school principals to be considered effective. Early writers organized the skills of an administrator into three categories: technical, human, and conceptual (Sergiovanni, 1992; Ubben et al., 2001). Sergiovanni (1992) expanded the conceptual skillset into a series of behavioral forces categorized as educational, symbolic, and cultural. While Fullan and Sharratt (2009) found shared: 1) beliefs, goals, and vision; 2) distributed leadership and professional learning cultures, and 3) tracking student progress as key areas that instructional leaders must do to sustain their schools for on-going growth. Overall, instructional leadership encompasses a number of leadership areas from articulating a vision, to setting high expectations, and monitoring performance (Earl & Katz, 2006; Finnigan, 2012; Fullan, 2011; Ma, 2004).

Educational forces are the leader's skills that include the ability to identify educational problems, carry out the functions of classroom supervision, evaluate educational programs, help develop curriculum, implement staff-development activities, and develop strong individualized educational programs (Ubben et al., 2001). Using this skillset, principals are able to be the instructional leaders necessary for teachers to feel

confident in their ability to carry out their role as instructional leaders in their own classrooms. The feedback provided in both formal and informal evaluations as well as the decisions that are made to develop appropriate staff trainings become key components to developing structures for improving the instructional processes (Senge, 2000).

More recently, Marzano et al. (2005) further explored this idea of instructional leadership at the principal's level and expanded the description set forth by Wilma Smith and Richard Andrews (1983) and closely relates to this research study. The description includes four dimensions or roles of instructional leadership: resource provider, instructional support, communicator, and visible presence (Marzano et al., 2005). As a resource provider, the principal ensures materials, facilities, and budgets match the needs to deliver instruction effectively (Marzano et al., 2005). As an instructional support, the principal actively supports day-to day instruction and programming by modeling desired behaviors, actively participating in professional development, and consistently giving priority to instructional concerns (Marzano et al., 2005). As a communicator, the principal establishes clear goals for the school and regularly communicates these goals to faculty and staff (Marzano et al., 2005). As the visible presence in the school, the principal also engages in frequent classroom observations and is highly accessible to faculty (Marzano et al., 2005).

Content

In 1916, John Dewey discussed his challenge to all democratic societies: "provide equal educational opportunity not only by giving all its children the same quantity of public education—the same number of years in school—but also by making sure to give to all them, all with no exceptions, the same quality of education" (Alder, 2009, p. 176).

Ensuring the quality of education begins with instructional leaders and teachers knowing what a quality education is and effective approaches to delivering the content. Can every leader know everything about content? The short answer is no. However, they can learn it and surround themselves with content experts.

Jacobs (2010) advises curricular leaders to consider moving to a more essential set of choices for the effective implementation of curriculum: the schedule, grouping of learners, personnel configurations, and use of space. In the district that is the focus of this case study research, the principal has implemented a new approach to the delivery of curriculum, including the district philosophy of content experts. Teachers in this school are provided intensive professional development in specific content areas. Beginning in grade one, the children are taught each subject by a teacher whom is highly qualified in his/her subject area. This approach affords teachers the opportunity to address 21st century goals of education by mastering instructional practices and content knowledge that align with the rigors of the Common Core.

Jacobs (2010) identified three specific goals to be addressed in New Jersey: address global perspectives, employ 21st century digital and networking tools, and identify significant interdisciplinary linkages for real world applications. Furthermore, Jacobs (2010) analyzed these goals and found that they are being accomplished through the rethinking of curriculum standards and implementing them through meaningful principles of practice including: enduring understandings, meaningful, essential questions, mapped vertical articulation, balanced literacy initiatives, use of formative assessment and evidence of the data in instruction, and future career proficiencies. It is

this critical and complex work that requires instructional leadership and the thoughtful process of building teacher capacity to address this work.

Instructional Practice

Fullan (2007) asserts the only way to bring about effective change and leadership within schools is through a purposeful focus on improving classroom practice. Effective schools create frameworks for instructional excellence (Fisher et al., 2012). The effective framework and leader's role will be further explored. Fisher et al. (2012) discuss at length the idea of teachers providing a focus lesson or "I do it" and guided instruction or "we do it." These focused and guided instruction opportunities are followed by providing collaborative ("You do it together") and independent ("You do it alone") instructional experiences (Fisher et al., 2012, p. 104). Through a gradual release model, the students are responsible for their learning and increase their achievement of concepts (Fisher et al, 2012; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Beyond creating this gradual release model in classrooms, the principal has a key role in creating an environment for student achievement. Spillane (2015) argues that experiences outside the classroom around whether and how peers and school faculty respect a student's ideas influence how they interact within the classroom. Spillane (2015) expands this idea to teachers as well stating that how teachers learn about instruction from their peers and training opportunities is significantly influenced by the school norms established by the principal. In essence, the role of the principal in creating a learning environment and school culture that embraces diversity, risk taking among students, and a philosophy of continuous learning has a significant impact on both teacher and student achievement.

Using data to inform action creates significance for tracking student achievement beyond test scores, but more importantly in more formative ways for response (Earl & Katz, 2006; Ma, 2004; Moriarty, 2013). Marking periods whether they are quarterly or in trimesters provide an opportunity to for instructional leaders to gather data on what students are learning or more importantly are not learning. Consideration must be given to how students are graded is another component of the framework for instructional excellence. Determining what we want students to know and be able to do independently is an important part of the learning process (Fisher et al., 2012). Teachers' planning process should begin with the end in mind (Covey, 2004; Fisher et al., 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Three major components of this idea is identifying the desired outcome, determining evidence of student learning, and planning instruction and learning experiences (Fisher et al., 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). By ensuring a student's mastery of content rather than the compliance of completing assigned work, the school is one step closer to academic excellence (Fisher et al., 2012).

Through a strong understanding of student competencies within the school, the principal and leadership team can then make considerations for students who are not achieving at the expected outcomes (Fisher et al., 2012). These considerations include an "all hands on deck" approach, involving the inclusion of all staff, formative assessment to monitor student progress, and staying consistent to the principle of rigor within the school environment (Fisher et al., 2012). Principals whom work with students directly to accomplish their goals establish a tone for the importance of this topic as well as directly convey the message that nothing is more important than student achievement (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Fisher et al., 2012; Fullan, 2011). This success for all mentality creates a new

structure for professionalism (Caldwell, 2000). Teachers with this mindset are able to acquire new knowledge and skills in specific student learning areas, are equipped to assess students to ensure precise instruction, and students are treated as individuals, in reality as well as in rhetoric (Caldwell, 2000).

Internal Leadership Structures

The characteristics of effective schools can be summarized as having: school site management, strong leadership, staff stability, curriculum articulation and organization, staff development, parental involvement and support, school-wide recognition of academic success, maximized learning time, district support, collaborative planning and collegial relationships, sense of community, clear goals and high expectations that are commonly shared and known, and orderly discipline (Fullan, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Purkey & Smith, 1993 as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998). These characteristics can be found in high performing schools, but it is also important to explore the risks involved and key structures that can help foster a leader and schools ability to attain the level of effectiveness.

"People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 11). This quote is a strong reminder of the challenges New Jersey principals faced with the implementation of a host of state initiatives. The changes within the State initiatives were interconnected in such a way that principals must implement the change with fidelity or one aspect could cause failure to the other aspects. Facing the realities of change implementation and the challenge these initiatives have brought has become a distinct reality for many principals in New Jersey. However, when groups look to leaders for easy answers to adaptive challenges, they end up with dysfunction (Heifetz and

Linsky, 2002). The principal's vision plays a major role in how they will influence their faculty and the reactions to their leadership (Fullan, 2011; Northouse, 2012). Without a clear understanding of how your school already functions, an attention to the core values of the organization, and how the initiatives can enhance the school's current practices can be a recipe for disaster.

At stake for the leader in the change process is their future ability to lead. Change leaders risk getting marginalized, diverted from the goal(s), and even attacked within their environment (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). In order for principals to safeguard against these dangers, they must first consider four diagnostic tasks to safeguard against common traps: 1) distinguish between technical and adaptive challenges; 2) find out where people currently stand in terms of the change proposed; 3) listen to the themes and desires that arise in the words of the faculty (what are they really saying?); and 4) read the behavior of authority figures for clues (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). To better consider these four diagnostic tasks, the following structures should be established in the school setting to help facilitate the change process: development of a school leadership committee, professional development to directly support curricular initiatives, and regularly scheduled articulation sessions for both grade levels and content areas (Jacobs, 2010; Marzano & Toth, 2013). These key structures are further explored in the next sections.

Building Level Autonomy

The demands of school level administrators could be found to be taxing, particularly in school systems where budget cuts have impacted the number of administrators to staff and teacher ratios. The demands are made more complex when administrative structures place central administrators at a higher rank of leadership than

the building principals, causing principals to have to answer to the demands of directors of curriculum, for example. It is important for school leaders to structure their schools in such a way that a positive culture is created and open dialogue and learning take priority (Finnigan, 2012; Fullan, 2007; Lambert, 1998; Senge, 2000). Honig and Rainey (2012) state that when building level autonomy is provided schools focus on implementation techniques that are directly related to teaching and learning improvement rather than on creating decision-making structures. When capacity-building supports are created, the potential impact of required mandates is more likely to meet their goal of improving student achievement (Honig & Rainey, 2012).

Argyris and Schön (1996) suggest Model II theory in use for leaders or practices that emphasize an integration of advocacy and inquiry to create an open dialogue, progress, and culture for learning. Fullan (2007) also emphasizes this point by arguing that restructuring commonly occurs in schools when it is re-culturing (how teachers come to question and change their beliefs and habits) is really the need. Finnigan (2012) and Yukl (1994) found that when a teacher feels trust, admiration, and support from their principals, they are likely to do more than the original expectation, therefore improving the organization because they are part of the organizational process. Bringing innovation to a school requires an act of faith from all involved (Fullan, 2007), thus the role of the principal becomes vital for creating the culture within the school.

When building autonomy is challenged, it is important to consider the possibility that an effective principal may leave. When strong principals effect change in their buildings and leave, the schools and people do not entirely return to the way they were before (Lambert, 1998). Each time an effective principal and the small team that works to

support change leaves, the staff remaining is left feeling more disappointed, more cynical, and more wounded (Lambert, 1998). School faculties have a tendency to depend too much on their principal (when the principal is strong) for direction and guidance (Lambert, 1998). With this in mind, school leaders must consider how they will develop a shared leadership approach to sustain the change long after their departure (Fullan, 2007). The systems thinking approach, use of data to inform action, and a leadership framework that embraces others will help to sustain the change long after the principal has departed.

School Leadership Team

Senge (2000) asserts meaningful change and positive results take place through multiple layers of leadership. By creating a school leadership team that embraces the voices of its stakeholders (classroom level staff, school level staff, community members, and administrators), principals are implementing a multiple layer of leadership approach to consider complex tasks within the school (Senge, 2000). By empowering each layer of leadership, the participants are more eager to undertake initiatives they helped to developed and are seeking positive results (Senge, 2000).

Once the principal identifies the teacher, staff, and community leaders to comprise the school leadership team, the emphasis of vertical coordination becomes important to ensure action is aligned with goals and objectives (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Earl & Katz, 2006). The team will create action plans based upon data driven standards or benchmarks that ensure that the goals established are met at a specified level of quality (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ma, 2004). This action planning will specify methods and time frames for decisions and actions defined through goals that are specific, measureable, and relevant to the organization's current needs (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fullan, 2011).

Reflection. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) contend that reflective practice fosters personal growth, behavioral changes, and improved performance. Through systematic inquiry and analysis and as a follow-up to the action planning, the school leadership team can lead an organization to create meaningful and enduring change through changing themselves, one person at a time (Earl & Katz, 2006; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Without the power of reflection (through educators examining and modifying their mental models), there will be no important changes in behavior (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Schön, 1987).

Schön's reflection-in-action notion provides educators techniques to consider when engaging in positive reflection practices (Schön, 1987). Reflection-in-action provides a critical function that creates an opportunity for questioning one's practice and making a choice to change the practice through knowing-in-action the appropriate solution (Schön, 1987). Vickers identifies an "appreciative system" that can be applied to educators (Schön, 1987). This system is the set of values, preferences, and norms in terms of which they [educators] can make sense of current circumstances, formulate goals and directions for action, and determine what constitutes acceptable professional performance (Schön, 1987). It is this practice of reflection that not only allows for educators to be reflective of the goals they have established to increase student achievement, but affords the groundwork for successful professional development practices.

Professional Development

DuFour and Eaker (1992) posit effective school improvement means people improvement. Most school reforms look at curriculum materials, scheduling, grading scales, to name a few, but genuine school improvement means enhancing practitioner

effectiveness (DuFour & Eaker, 1992). Improving practitioner effectiveness includes looking at student learning, classroom environments and instructional practices (Diamond, 2012; Finnigan, 2012). To do this, professional development must also include a culture of articulation, learning while doing, and professional learning communities (Covey, 1996; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2007; Putnam et al., 2009).

Fullan (2007) suggests one area that is both powerful and in the control of teachers is to break down the autonomy or current practices in their classrooms. By doing so, the teacher's focus is shifted to the intense work of learning in context (Fullan, 2007). This focus on learning in context is a motivator for faculty to invest their time, energy, and commitment to grow better at something that has great importance (Fullan, 2007). Ultimately, only the organizations with members that have a passion for learning will have an enduring influence in their environments and on student achievement (Covey, 1996).

In effective schools, professional development is connected to the classroom experience by staying true to the following four principles: fostering ownership and build capacity by giving teachers an active role in determining and focus on professional development, as well as its design and implementation (Fullan & St. Germain, 2006), building skills through purposeful transfer of learning from training to classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002), monitoring progress in order to make necessary changes throughout the process (Guskey, 2000), creating communities of learners to sustain efforts long-term (Borko, 2004)" (as cited in Fisher et al, 2012, p. 164). These principles translate to several practices found in effective schools that are led by instructional

leaders: professional learning communities, learning while doing/coaching, and effective evaluations (Fisher et al., 2012).

Professional Learning Communities

The daily practices of teachers that carry out the goals of the school leadership team can be seen in their work within professional learning communities. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are defined as a group of teachers or educators who meet regularly as a team to formally study their instructional practices to improve student achievement through the development of common formative assessments, analysis of current levels of achievement, sharing strategies and creating lessons that increase student performance (DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour, 2005; Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2009). Bolman and Deal (2008) and Fullan (2007) posit when a team works together that the team consist of a small number of people with complementary skills, a commitment to a common purpose, and who set performance goals to hold themselves accountable.

Fullan (2007) asserts professional learning communities requires teachers to work intensively together in joint planning; observation of one another's practice for several years before work becomes both physically and attitudinally natural for the colleagues involved. While this is true, other dimensions that impact the work of PLCs included: support and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application of learning, supportive conditions, and the physical conditions to support the work (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Putnam et al., 2009; Spillane et al., 2011). The principal plays a key role in creating a culture that is embraces shared leadership and focuses on student learning (Finnigan, 2012; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Putnam et al., 2009). The strength of professional learning communities is a strong predictor of

instructional practices and directly impacts student achievement (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012).

The types of PLCs evident in schools led by instructional leaders can include: grade level, content area, Title I or Basic Skills, new teacher, school leadership teams, and cross-graded content area PLCs (Putnam et al., 2009). Each of these PLCs identify the various groups within the school that should be discussing key instructional content and instructional practices as well as the progress of individual and groups of students (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Putnam et al., 2009).

Articulation. Vertical and horizontal articulations are a subset of effective professional learning community planning (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Putnam et al., 2009). The articulation sessions become an opportunity for the principal and school leadership to advance the established goals. Bolman & Deal (2008) remind leaders when individuals are too autonomous, there can be a sense of isolation when a teacher works in a self-contained classroom with little time to communicate with other teachers, for example. The balance found in developing an articulation schedule is to consider how the organization will be held together without holding it back (Bolman & Deal, 2008). If the parameters created for articulation are so limiting it will create staff members that are wasting their time trying to beat the system established (Bolman & Deal, 2008). While if the structure is too loose, people will go their own way, losing sight of the goals established by the school leadership team (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fullan, 2007).

Learning While Doing

There are two models of professional development that support teachers in their classrooms: coaching corners/lab sites and coaching (Calkins, 2012; Fisher et al., 2012).

Coaching corners, or better known today as lab sites, take a page from the way medical doctors learn in the field. This type of professional development occurs with small groups of teachers learning instructional practices in a classroom with students (Calkins, 2012; Fisher et al, 2012). One teacher will model a technique with their students, the group will be provided a chance to discuss this technique, and then the teacher modeling will then coach teachers who are trying the technique for the first time (Calkins, 2012; Fisher et al, 2012).

Another model of professional development is identifying coaches within your school (Calkins, 2012; Fisher et al., 2012). In the best-case scenarios, this is a full-time job for the coach. Investing in coaching for all teachers signifies the importance of a culture that interacts about practice (Fisher et al., 2012). A skilled coach provides teachers with the step-by-step approaches to implement practices that create a culture of achievement both for teachers and students (Fisher et al., 2012). An instructional coach is the connection between professional development, teacher evaluation, and moving teachers forward to achieve effective instructional practices (Fisher et al., 2012).

Allen and LeBlanc (2005) posit that improvement rarely happens by chance. Through the support of collaborative peer coaching, the support provided goes a long way to provide encouragement and promote forward momentum to the instructional initiatives set forth in a school (Allen & LeBlanc, 2005). Furthermore, when teachers are given the opportunity to learn from one another, the teachers become more serious about improving their teaching (Allen & LeBlanc, 2005; Fisher et al., 2012; Honig & Ikemoto, 2008).

Evaluation

"Inspect what you expect." This has been a mantra among my colleagues for over a decade. In other words, if you have a vision or philosophy for instruction and student achievement, then observing and evaluating teachers in action becomes a vital daily ritual of your work as a building principal. Marzano and Toth (2013) found the research over the decades has presented a robust representation of the relationship between leadership and student achievement. Additionally, the explicit feedback to a teacher through a walkthrough process affords teachers to make sense of professional development in their daily practices (Honig & Ikemoto, 2008). The research connecting school leadership with school effectiveness, including student achievement is more contemporary in terms of concrete actions (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

Professional development, teacher evaluations, and coaching should not exist in isolation of the school mission statements and marginalized as the business of school. These three areas need to be collectively viewed as the tools and processes used to move the faculty and students closer to the mission (Fisher et al, 2012). The work of examining data that is focused on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, a guaranteed and viable curriculum, cooperation and collaboration, as well as school climate are essentials to effective supervision that supports the art and science of teaching (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Marzano & Toth, 2013).

Summary

Hess (2013) shared the former Columbia University Teachers College president, Arthur Levine's portrayal of K-12 educational leaders:

> "Principals and superintendents no longer serve primarily as supervisors. They are being called on to lead in the redesign of their schools and school systems. In an

> outcome-based and accountability-driven era, administrators have to lead their schools in the rethinking of goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum, pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology, and use of time and space. They have to recruit and retain top staff members and educate newcomers and veterans alike to understand and become comfortable with an education system undergoing dramatic and continuing change…Few of today's 250,000 school leaders are prepared to carry out this agenda" (p. xiii).

This sentiment encompasses the demand on K-12 instructional leaders in this study. The behaviors, techniques, strategies, and habits are some of the key facets to this research and explore how new PK-12 instructional leaders will prepare to meet these demands.

Fullan (2007) discusses this in terms of No Child Left Behind legislation, stating fear of not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) and the punitive consequences is not much motivation for leaders to address the change needed to create successful schools. This study is important given the accountability sanctions and consequences for school staff that were in place at the time of the study. DuFour and Eaker (1992) assert it is impossible to legislate excellence. It is not until there are instructional leaders that can recognize the greatest assets in their school are the individuals within them and that by working with teachers to improve curricula and instructional practices, and then schools will really achieve (DuFour & Eaker, 1992). This study allowed a principal and his teachers a platform for their own voices to emerge and provide practitioners with the insight to what is happening in a successful school environment when legislative policy was effectively coupled to improve the school organization and classroom instruction.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to explore the techniques an effective instructional leader/principal has employed when creating change in their school, specifically due to change in State policies. Using an explanatory sequential design the study sought to determine how these practices align with the principal's espoused beliefs and theories in action. The study wanted to provide narrative examples of the principal's leadership practice, the internal leadership structures within the school, and how the principal and teacher leaders broke down the autonomy in their school to improve student achievement. Furthermore, the study desired to explain techniques that new principals can use to develop their abilities as instructional leaders.

Research Questions and Rationale

The following research questions were developed for this explanatory sequential mixed methods case study. A rationale for each question is provided.

Question one. How do today's instructional leaders address educational reforms in their role as principal?

The purpose of this question was to explore through qualitative data the recent reforms in New Jersey and how the reforms influenced a principal's role in their school. With little experience, new principals were charged with bringing about systemic reforms that impacted curricula, instructional practices, the evaluation of practices in action, and student achievement. Exploring the behaviors of an experienced principal provided relevant information that will influence a new principal's approach, behavior, and practice.

Question two. How do a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leader's actions when bringing about change in their school?

The research identified how the leader's espoused beliefs aligned to their actions through qualitative and quantitative data. When leaders think about adopting new practices, it is important to consider their espoused beliefs. Reflection on beliefs will provide the leader with the opportunity to consider if the attempt at a new behavior will be hindered by their espoused beliefs. The leader can then consider next steps in reforming their beliefs and improving their practices.

Question three. How can new principals use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices as instructional leaders?

Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the purpose of this question is to inform the practices of new instructional leaders. The study sought to provide instructional leaders with techniques that are proven in the field to yield success as well as the espoused beliefs and behaviors necessary to be successful.

Rationale and Assumptions of Methodology

Rationale

The purpose of choosing a sequential explanatory mixed methods case study research design was to provide validity and trustworthiness to a research topic that can be open to scrutiny based on the highly interpretive nature of the subject if just a qualitative study was conducted. The study was structured in two distinct interactive phases beginning with a quantitative phase followed by subsequent qualitative data (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2014). The initial quantitative phase sought to have the instructional leader self-rate their leadership behaviors using Lambert's (1998)

Leadership Capacity Survey. Qualitative data collection continued with three additional steps including an interview with the principal, observation and field notes, and a document analysis was used to assist in explaining the initial quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2014). The fifth step of research included using the same survey with teachers to further identify whether my initial findings were consistent with how the staff viewed this leader.

To further clarify the results found from the survey, four additional phases of qualitative data techniques including participant observation with field notes, focus group with identified staff, a follow-up with the principal in an interview, and further participant observations occurred. A final interview with the principal was used to review preliminary data and allow the principal to provide more information to further refine the findings of the research.

Unique to this study is the participant-selection variant or when the researcher places priority on the second, qualitative phase instead of the initial quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this study the initial quantitative results were necessary to identify and purposefully select the best daily responsibilities of the principal, the most accurate documents, and the individuals within the organization that could further explain the principal's leadership style, behaviors, and systems planning when strategies to implement policy initiatives while improving student and faculty achievement.

By conducting these phases of research in a case study design, the research was designed to manage multiple variables of interest and data points which relied on multiple sources of data that needed to be converged in a triangulating fashion and

benefited from investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2014). The case chosen represented an intrinsic case study or a case that was of particular interest for the researcher (Stake, 2005). While this case was of interest to the researcher because the case provides unique circumstances and approaches to leadership, the researcher also intended to build upon current leadership theories (Stake, 2005).

Assumptions

When considering a sequential explanatory design, I have considered how the design afforded a postpositive view of the research followed by a more constructivist approach. Beginning with a quantitative approach, the research is positioned from a cause-and-effect point of view and is trying to narrow and focus on select variables to demonstrate how they interrelate (Creswell, 2014; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2014). Following this postpositive viewpoint, I was able to use a constructivist approach to understand the meaning of phenomena and provided participants a chance to share their perspectives to broad understandings (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Yin, 2014). Through this mixed methods approach, the participants were able to share concretely the type of leadership that is in place within their school while providing additional information that gave a voice to the culture they have created that has been successful in improving student achievement.

Strategy of Inquiry

Research design is a plan that guides the researcher in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations or a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning the causal relationships under investigation (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992, p. 77-78). In other words research design is the “blue

print" that addresses: what to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results (Philliber, Schwab, & Samsloss, 1980).

Yin (2014) argues the relevance of case study selection when research questions seek to explain a present circumstance. In other words, why or how a social phenomenon works in the setting is explored (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, case study is relevant when research questions require an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2014). "A case study is an empirical inquiry that: 1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when, 2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). In addition, a case study inquiry, "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result, relies on the multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (Yin, 2014, p. 17).

This case study was structured as a single-case study that can be adapted once in the field if important revelations present during the research phase (Yin, 2014). The study used mixed methods, sharing the same research questions, collecting complementary data, and conducting counterpart analyses (Yin, 2014). The research design steps and question alignment are outlined in Appendix A: Research Design Steps and Research Question Alignment. The research continued for approximately two months until the researcher had determined sufficient data saturation. Steps one through five of the research were conducted during the first month. Steps six through nine were conducted in

the subsequent month. At the conclusion of the second month, all preliminary findings were reviewed with the primary participant (the principal) for clarification purposes.

Context

This case study took place in southern New Jersey. The school district is located in a suburban area, which at the time of the study recently experienced a change in economic status partially due to the closure of four casinos in Atlantic City. Approximately 60% of the district's students were considered economically disadvantaged. In addition, the cultures represented in the school were diverse with over 42 different languages spoken and a racial minority population of over 50%. The district had approximately 4,000 students at the time of the study. The school where the case study occurred was one of three schools in the district and provides an educational environment for some of the district's pre-kindergarten students and all of the district's kindergarten and first grade students, totaling 700 students.

The principal is currently in his eighth year as a school administrator and fifth year as principal of his school. The principal was in his sixteenth year as an educator during the time of the study. He was chosen as the school's principal when the elementary PK, 2-5 school in the district was facing State takeover. To avoid State takeover, the elementary school's restructuring plan included the identification of a new primary school principal as a means to create a stronger and more cohesive curricular foundation in the district from grades PK-5. The emphasis of the curricular work that still existed at the time of the study was on the three fundamental areas identified by Fullan (2007): reading, numeracy, and a safe school environment.

The principal was chosen for this study as he had had a ten-year professional relationship with the researcher. I served as a participant researcher because I served as the principal of the elementary school during the time of restructuring as well as a mentor to the principal in the case study. Yin (2014) identifies participant researcher as having the opportunity to engage in a variety of the activities as they occur as well as gaining an invaluable viewpoint from "inside" the case. My experience with this professional helped to uncover the practices that we shared, deepening the conversation about key topics throughout the research steps, and providing the principal the opportunity to reflect in a trusting environment. Other area principals were considered for this study, but the principal's purposeful practice, improvement to student achievement as evidenced by the significant improvement in reading and writing, his ability to establish a reciprocal culture where the principal instills confidence in his staff, his role as an instructional leader, and his unwavering commitment to servant leadership confirmed this researcher's decision to select him and his school's work.

The teachers that participated in the study are members of the faculty of the primary school. Their participation was voluntary in nature for the first survey portion of the study. The participants in the survey had the option to engage in the focus group, as well. Their perspective was sought to demonstrate that the beliefs, practices, and turnaround of the school were characteristic of the principal's work.

Participants

Sampling Strategy

In further studying the practice of the principal, there were two points when participants were selected. The technique used followed a multi-stage purposeful random

sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The first point for participants to participate was in the completion of Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity survey. Lambert (1998) indicated this survey could be used for both the purpose of self-reflection as well as to rate a colleague. To complete this survey, the staff was selected through purposive sampling or in other words, those participants who knew firsthand the topic to be explored in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The second stage of sampling was more purposeful. The participants for the second stage were selected through critical case sampling or those individuals who represented various subgroups of the faculty (each grade level within the building, each content area, specialty areas, and support staff) (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Participant Description

The total faculty size of the school included 48 teachers, one guidance counselor, one school nurse, five child study team and related service providers, and 30 paraprofessionals. The total staff had a variety of experience from less than one year to over 30 years of teaching. All staff were provided the option to complete the survey. In terms of the focus group, a sample size of no more than six members was selected. The focus group size of less than six included one teacher from each grade level, subject matter, special education department, basic skills instruction, and unique teacher leader positions, such as the literacy coach. This sample size of less than six was consistent with phenomenological and case study designs (Creswell, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007: Yin, 2014).

Recruitment Strategy

To gain access to the research site, I contacted the principal and superintendent and reviewed the research study proposal. After their review of the proposal, a formal board vote was needed to acquire board approval. After approval was garnered, I then met with the principal to establish the timeline for research. The dates selected were in conjunction with his school's established articulation schedule and calendar of events that included community participation, assemblies, and community building activities.

Once I established dates to begin research at the primary school, I met with the faculty and the principal. I first shared the background of the study, purpose, key literature findings to provide a common language for the study being conducted in their school, as well as an emphasis of confidentiality. This meeting also provided an opportunity for the staff to ask any questions they may have. At the conclusion of the meeting, I provided a copy of the PowerPoint presentation for their further review as well as consent forms for each staff member. Additional consent forms were provided in the main office of the school. A collection envelope was provided for return when I was not in the research site, but all participants ended up submitting their consent forms to me in person.

The interactions with participants through the submission of consent forms provided an additional opportunity for the researcher to engage in conversation with them informally garner more of their input into the research. My role as a participant researcher was solidified in these interactions because I was able to build upon the previous relationships I had with each one of them to establish trust and their interest in the study. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) remind researchers that mixed methods studies

often require greater sensitivity to the nature of the research because it sometimes involves highly personal information. It is important for the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants. This can be accomplished by becoming acquainted with those whom will participate and educate them on the importance of the study while also establishing that as the researcher you will be sensitive to their needs and respect when a participant does not want to provide an answer to a question, for example, in the focus group (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Data Collection Methods

Naturalistic researchers explore complex topics and situations using a variety of techniques, including participant observation, documentary and conversational analysis, and interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The variety in research affords the researcher the opportunity to learn a variety of evidence points to ensure their findings are supported and found to be valid.

Survey

Surveys are a data collection method used "to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behaviors" (Fink, 2013, p. 2). In this case study, a survey began the research process and helped inform the second, third, and fourth phases of qualitative research, the principal's interview, observation in action, and document review respectively (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

At the beginning of the research process, a survey was given to the principal identified in this case study. The survey has been adapted from Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Staff Survey (See Appendix B). The questions were then used to determine how the principal's behaviors align to the espoused beliefs he shared during

our first interview. Argyris & Schön (1974) found significant discrepancies between the espoused theories of leaders and their theories-in-use, which means that individuals' self-descriptions are often disconnected from their actions. The researcher identified specific areas of strength in this principal when serving as an instructional leader in the survey and subsequent interview. The observations served to confirm and clarify the initial findings generated from the survey.

In addition, the survey was used with the principal's faculty during phase 5 of the research study. Lambert (1998) indicated previous use of the survey as both a self-evaluation tool and a tool to evaluate a colleague was successful. In the survey directions, Lambert (1998) states, "it may be completed by a school staff member or by a colleague who is familiar with the work of that staff member. The survey is useful if the staff member completes a survey as a self-assessment and then asks for an assessment [of their abilities] to be completed by colleagues" (p. 100). Prior to completion of the survey, I met with the staff to convey the goals of the task and the data collection process (Fowler, 1995). This was also communicated in writing in the email sent to staff that provides the link for the survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide the faculty with the opportunity to share how they viewed the actions of their principal. The data collected from the survey was used to confirm how the principal self-rated and explore the perceptions of his faculty. Areas the principal's faculty identified as skillsets of lower ratings than the principal self-rated provided areas of further exploration through observation and follow-up interviewing at the conclusion of observation days.

Interview

After the principal completed the initial survey, the researcher reviewed the results and confirmed the list of questions that guided the interview with the principal in phase two of the research design. With the compiled questions, the researcher used the technique of responsive interviewing. Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasize the flexibility of design in responsive interviewing and suggest that the interviewer will change questions in response to what they are learning. By using this type of interviewing, the researcher found new information, candor, and interpretations of the topics surrounding instructional leadership and the role of the principal (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In the concluding interview, the principal and I reviewed the preliminary results of the findings and discussed further where the instructional leader sees his espoused beliefs align with his theories in use or practice. The principal was provided a copy of this paper prior to the interview so that he could think about the results for several days prior to our discussion. When the principal engaged in clarification of the findings, the findings became more specific, providing validity to the captured quantitative and qualitative data.

Participant Observation

Participant observation has evolved as a research technique extending the ordinary activity of watching others to an opportunity to meticulously record what is seen and heard and formally analyzing patterns of action and behavior (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In phases three, six, and eight, I served as a participant observer in the school setting. By joining the school faculty and shadowing the principal during his typical day as an instructional leader, I intended to capture nuanced behaviors, skills, and organizational

structures that supported the success of the school. Additional sessions of observations were conducted as needed to ensure data saturation or in other words that I was able to attend the full variety of events and that I heard the full range of ideas and practices that occurred frequently in the school (Teddlie & Tashakorri, 2009).

To help assist in this process of data collection; I used Swivl technology during the focus group since there were multiple participants. This technology captured the discussion and behaviors in depth. The technology followed those that are speaking and allowed for the researcher to refine the field notes collected. Using this technology helped to provide examples in the findings portion of the study.

Document Analysis

Rubin and Rubin (2012) define documentary analysis as examining anything that appears in the written form. In this study, I reviewed meeting minutes, articulation schedules, professional development schedules and session minutes, planning documents, and the like to explore how the principal planned and carried out instructional leadership in his building in phase four of the research. The findings from the document analysis were used during a follow-up discussion with the principal during each of the observation days. Rubin and Rubin (2012) assert documents are most useful when combined with in-depth interview that allow you to discuss with the creators their contents and how they are prepared and used.

Focus Group

Rubin and Rubin (2012) define a focus group as a group of individuals who are representative of the population whose ideas are of interest. Focus groups are helpful in collecting data as a "supplement to both quantitative and qualitative methods" (Morgan,

1988, p. 10). In phase seven of the research, I selected a focus group of teachers to discuss their impressions of the transformation their school has experienced under their principal's leadership. As suggested by Onwuegbuzie & Collins (2007), the focus group had six participants.

The questions were refined using the data collected from the survey completed by both the principal and the staff. In addition, the data collected during observations and the document analysis phases helped refine the questions to be asked in the focus group. As Morgan (1988) suggests, focus groups are helpful in attaining participants' interpretations from earlier research results. I posed questions and allowed the group to discuss, followed up with additional questions to further explore phenomena and served as the facilitator of the group (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The session was recorded using the Swivl to capture not only what is said, but also moments of agreement that could not be captured using just a voice recording. A focus group protocol is provided in Appendix C.

Field Notes

Field notes were kept during participant observations, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The field notes were organized in a notebook that was kept during the research process. Each page of notes was organized into three columns. The first column captured observations, while the second column was used to capture analytic notes, and the third column was used to code the data collected. Craig (2009) suggests the following questions be used for reflection purposes: What happened during the event? What were the participants' reactions? Did the focus groups go well? Were the protocols appropriate? Did any new patterns emerge? and What interactions took place? (p. 149).

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data strands were analyzed in alignment with the research design steps. Greene (2007) suggests that analysis for each component of the design will occur independently following the procedures for each method. The mixing or connecting of data will happen at the stage of interpretation and inference (Greene, 2007). Analytical notes and memos were generated after each phase of data as a means of increasing rigor and an opportunity for further analysis. The analytical notes and memos assisted the researcher in identifying themes that were emerging after each day in the field as well as important moments from the day to share in the findings.

Quantitative Strand

To begin the research study, the principal self-assessed using the Leadership Inventory in Appendix B. The self-assessment was tabulated using the scoring chart also represented Table 1. The survey served as a baseline of data to determine the leader's espoused beliefs about his leadership style and practice. Halfway through the research study (Phase 5), the teachers completed the survey as well. They used the same survey as the principal, but rated each item based on their impressions of the principal's regular practice.

The survey clusters items by the characteristics of schools with high leadership capacity. To the right of each item asked is an ordinal scale: NO= not observed; IP= infrequently performed; FP= frequently performed; CP=consistently performed; and CTO=can teach others. The ordinal scale afforded participants the opportunity to share the quality of their principal's performance to each characteristic (Fink, 2003). Fink (2011) suggests Likert items are sometimes analyzed as ordinal data, particularly when

the researcher cannot assume the participants perceive the difference between adjacent rating points.

The analysis of both the principal's and teacher's responses occurred by representing the collected data in a table, as expressed in Table 1. The ordinal responses were consolidated to represent results into three categories: limited use (NO/IP), frequently used (FP/CP), and mastery level (CTO). Lambert (1998) expressed that the scales could be condensed for analysis purposes into three categories as opposed to the five scales participants were asked to rate themselves in during the surveys. Coding the data to represent a nominal scale assisted in the process when compiling the staff's completion of the survey. I was able to determine the percentage of teachers that agreed with the principal's self-assessment of his performance. The tool to summarize the data is displayed below in Table 1.

Table 1

Leadership Inventory Survey Results

Domains	NO/IP	FP/CP	CTO
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership			
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership			
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice			
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration			
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm			
F. High student achievement			

Once the survey results were represented in tables, I was then able to identify specific skills that the principal identified as can teach others (CTO). These results became the foundation for developing a list of the principal's espoused beliefs. Since the category CTO has the highest ordinal data rating, the next step was to compare the results from the teachers. The results of the teachers' ratings were converted into percentages. Listed next to each skill was the number of participants that rated the skill, if at all, with CTO. This number was then divided by the number of participants that answered the question. Reviewing the percentages of teachers that identified specific skills as CTO and comparing the list to the principal's results generated a list of seven specific skills that comprise the principal's espoused beliefs. This quantitative data was used to provide a lens for reviewing the qualitative data. The mixing of the quantitative results with the qualitative results provided the opportunity to express how the principal's espoused beliefs aligned with his leadership actions in his daily work.

Qualitative Strand

Prior to the analysis of the qualitative data collected, the data was prepared using coding. Coding is defined as a short word or phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). Charmaz describes coding as the critical link between data collection and the explanation of the data's meaning (as cited by Saldana, 2009). In other words, coding is not just labeling, it is linking (Saldana, 2009).

The data was coded in three cycles. The first cycle of coding provided for descriptive coding segments such as words or phrases to describe what the study is about

and what was going on (Saldana, 2009). The second and third phases of coding allowed for meticulous attention to the language used and reflection on sets of data for emergent patterns to become present (Saldana, 2009). The cycles of coding were appropriate because as additional data was collected in this mixed methods case study approach the additional cycles of coding were used to accurately identify the phenomena within the study.

To organize the codes identified in the each phase of coding, a codebook was created. The list of codes in phase one of coding was created. Using these codes, I attempted to apply the codes to each additional phase of qualitative data. The codes and categories became more refined, including relabeling, subsumed by other codes, or dropped all together (Saldana, 2009). Through creating codes, categories were developed. The categories were used to identify themes and concepts. Within the codebook, several components were included. The first consisted of codes, the second defined the codes, the third created notes and understandings of the code, while the fourth helped track the frequency of the code collection. Through the analysis of themes and concepts, assertions and theory emerged (Saldana, 2009).

Merging and Interpretations of Data

This study followed a sequential design. Each phase of research generated its own data that sought to answer a corresponding research question. Merging data occurred at key points in the research. The quantitative data collected from the principal's survey was merged with the qualitative data collected in phase two, three, and four, which included an interview with the principal, observation of the principal in the field, and document analysis. During the first phase of merging data, the researcher identified areas that the

principal's espoused beliefs and self-ratings matched his behaviors in action. Using a convergence of evidence approach, the researcher identified research from the survey, interview, observations, and document analysis to show how each of these areas contributes to the findings (Yin, 2014). The critical incidents collected provided the opportunity for triangulation or strengthening of the findings (Yin, 2014).

In addition, the data collected regarding the principal's behaviors and dispositions were interpreted to develop a list of behaviors that can be attributed to effective instructional leadership results. The list of behaviors and dispositions were compiled and then merged with the results of the leadership capacity survey completed by staff. Whether these behaviors and dispositions were keys to effective outcomes was explored through active discussion with the faculty. Stake (2004) states in case study research patterns of performance can be observed and through understanding the conceptual frameworks that undergird the study, the findings can be tracked.

During the completion of the staff survey, further observations, and the focus group, the researcher reviewed the results and developed preliminary findings. The interpretations were considered tentative and part of an on-going revision process to seek further clarification (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). These preliminary findings were used for further examination through an additional phase of observations, an additional interview with the principal to review the preliminary findings, and the principal's completion of a post survey to further refine outcomes and findings. The triangulation of data allows the researcher to review multiple aspects of the study to demonstrate the same finding (Stake, 2004).

Overall, the goal of the research was to identify key behaviors and techniques that principals can use to improve their school systems and have a positive effect on teacher and student performance. The researcher exited the field of research once I believed that I was able to define the effective characteristics of the principal and demonstrate these characteristics through rich, narrative examples that can inform principals as to the phenomenon that was occurring and how they could enact these behaviors in their own practice. The goal was accomplished through data saturation or the point in the research when I have heard "the range of ideas and are not getting any new information" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 183).

Rigor/Validity/Trustworthiness

Mills & Gay (2014) and Guba (1981) suggest that qualitative inquiry researchers can establish the trustworthiness of their study by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of their research. In the next few sections, I address each of these topics for the reader to be able to establish validity of the findings.

Credibility

The credibility of a study refers to the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities of the study and use specific methods to address each area (Mills & Gay, 2014). For this study, convergence of evidence using the variety of data sources was used to generate findings (Mills & Gay, 2014; Yin, 2014). The data was converged after step four. A comparison of the results of the quantitative survey and the findings of the qualitative data pieces sought to demonstrate an alignment of how the leader self-rates and how his actions aligned to his beliefs. Furthermore, this same procedure was

completed after the teachers rated their principal, as well as an additional convergence after the final qualitative data was collected or in step nine.

Another technique used to provide credibility to the study was the maintenance of the survey data, collection of document artifacts to demonstrate practice, field notes of the principal in action, and film of the focus group (Mills & Gay, 2014). Lincoln and Denzin (2000) question whether the qualitative researcher can use text to authentically represent the experience of another person. In addition, the biases of the researcher are another consideration to the trustworthiness of the study. Through two cycles of coding, triangulation of both what is said and what is viewed in video collection, document analysis, and confirming the findings with the participants sought to add trustworthiness to the research process.

Furthermore, member checks that test the overall report before sharing this dissertation in final form was completed in step ten of the research (Guba, 1981; Mills & Gay, 2014). In each step of the research, the credibility of the study has been considered and addressed.

Transferability

The setting of the research was selected because it represented a wide variety of students, was located in an environment that while classified as suburban has many qualities of a rural, suburban, and urban community. Each of these types of communities are represented in the largest square mile community in the state of New Jersey. The leadership and teachers within the school used a wide variety of techniques to meet the needs of the individuals representing each aspect of their greater school community. Mills & Gay (2014) assert “transferability of research depends largely on whether the

consumer of the research can identify with the setting" (p. 556). The researcher intended to include as much detail as possible to allow the consumer to see himself or herself in the setting (Mills & Gay, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) asserts a single case study design can create criticism about the "uniqueness or artifactual conditions surrounding the case" (p. 64). The depth of this case study serves to demonstrate how aspects of this principal's skillset can be universal. The diversity of student and faculty populations serve to support the universality of this study's findings in a variety of school settings.

Dependability

To enhance the dependability of the study, the researcher overlapped methods to compensate for the weakness of another method (Guba, 1981; Mills & Gay, 2014). While this was a mixed methods case study, there was already some triangulation of data. However, when qualitative data were being collected in the case of observations and document review, the notes collected and the generalizations of the data were reviewed with the participants to ensure the assertions made about the data are actually true in the environment collected.

Confirmability

Guba (1981) and Mills & Gay (2014) suggest practicing reflexivity or the intentional reveal of underlying assumptions and biases of the researcher. In order to demonstrate this within the research steps, I kept field notes about the events. In one column will be the notes collected. In another column are the codes of the data. In the other column are shared reflections. The reflections recorded regularly allowed me to review that the data was being collected accurately throughout the process.

Reliability

As a participant observer conducting the research, my research investigation was not neutral (Graham, 2010). While asking questions, clarifying procedures, and collecting data, my presence had an effect on how individuals within the organization responded (Graham, 2010). My presence provided a comfort level to gather more information than I believe would have been shared with an outsider. Furthermore, Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest that the more active the observer is in the activities, the harder it is to figure out what would have occurred without my presence. The triangulation of data or when interviews, document analysis, and observation notes converge assisted in bringing credibility and reliability to the findings.

Limitations

Transferability may be a factor in this case study research. Educators in other schools may question whether the findings in this case study will transfer to their school settings. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) define transferability as external validity of one set of inferences found in the research setting to a particular receiving context (other similar settings). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue it is the researcher's responsibility to persuade the audience that the findings in their research are worth paying attention. Thick descriptions of the findings are used to allow the consumer to see the research in their current contexts (Guba, 1981).

The other limitations are in the areas of focus groups and participant observations. The problem with relying on interaction in groups is the researcher never knows whether the group behavior would mirror the behavior if the individual were to share alone (Morgan, 1988; Yin, 2014). Furthermore, while the researcher asked if there were other

topics the participants wanted to share, I could not be certain how the presence of others affected individual responses.

Role of Researcher

The researcher in this phenomenological case study was that of a participant researcher. Through multiple visitations to the field site and thorough interactions with the staff during focus groups and debriefings to observations made, it was the goal of the researcher to use their role to bring specificity to the data collected, therefore, impacting more specific findings to the research study. The researcher was careful that their role did not impact the natural behaviors of the participants.

Ethical Assurances

Researchers should reflect upon the purpose of their study, including the benefits, risks, and reciprocity with their participants (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). As I reviewed the research on my topic and presented the first two chapters in this dissertation, I was able to share how this study could benefit aspiring leaders and leaders who would like to refine their practices to become more instructional leaders for their schools. The research design created an opportunity to provide reflection, for both a school's leader and his teachers, on their successful journey to increasing student achievement and instructional practices. The benefits they received included an opportunity to positively reflect on their practices and areas that can continue to be refined to continue on a journey of school improvement.

As I was new to the research field, I entered this research study with skilled members of my dissertation committee. Each member of my committee brought an expertise to the study that helped to ensure that I was entering the field of research in a

respectful, professional manner. Their continued support throughout my research process helped guide me to ensure that I approached each step with competency.

I was also aware that this study will include participation from human subjects. Rowan University's Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the study's proposal. In addition, I used informed consent forms for those who participated in the study. The consent form included the study's purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality assurances, withdrawal information, and contact information for both the researcher and my dissertation chairperson.

Furthermore, as a researcher I gave consideration to the topics of validity and trustworthiness. As a follow through to this research study, I shared the results with the principal and teachers who participated in the study. At the dissertation defense, I will share how the results of this study can inform best practices moving forward in principal preparation at the university level.

Conclusions

The literature reviewed informed the methodological decisions for this study. Through a mixed methods sequential exploratory case study design, both quantitative and qualitative data sources were used to explore the phenomenon of instructional leadership. The methods and instrumentation selected were chosen to compliment the research questions. Validity, credibility, and ethical considerations were provided for each phase of the research design. Through the research design, the following inferences, analyses, and findings helped to better understand how principals can adapt their espoused beliefs and actions to enhance their ability to implement new initiatives and policies as well as to serve as an instructional leader in their schools thus increasing student achievement.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter is organized to represent the results of a mixed methods case study. This single case study, specifically the principal's role, was the primary unit of investigation. The data collected from each phase of the study has been converged to answer each research question. The findings are organized in a manner that demonstrates the triangulation of data.

Context

This case study occurred in a school district of approximately 4,000 students located in the suburbs of southern New Jersey. The primary participant included in the study is the principal of the PK-1 school, which houses over 700 students that represent a diverse population of more than 50% minority students, 60% economically disadvantaged, and speak 42 different languages. The principal leads a faculty of 48 teachers, one guidance counselor, one school nurse, five child study and related service providers, and 30 paraprofessionals. The principal was selected for this study due to the role he has taken to improve student achievement, specifically in the area of literacy, from less than 40% of the students reading on grade level when he took over to a consistent average of 85-90% of the students reading on grade level as they exit grade one.

Data Collection

Data was collected through ten research design steps. The study initiated with the completion of a survey by the building principal using Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Survey. Once completed, the survey was reviewed by the researcher to identify

critical attributes of the principal's espoused beliefs. Based on the espoused beliefs and the literature review, the researcher developed and refined the interview questions to then be used to conduct the interview with the principal. The principal was then interviewed ensuring all questions were answered as well as questions that were developed organically as the principal was sharing with the researcher. Once the interview was completed, the researcher created a code book based upon the survey findings to guide the coding of the interview. Additional codes were then generated as the interview was transcribed and coded and were then added to the code book.

The researcher then engaged in a series of two observations in the field. During this time, eleven faculty members engaged in completing the survey over a two week time period. The survey was then compiled and compared to the principal's survey results. These results generated additional codes to review the interview and observations in the field.

Additionally, the principal shared with the researcher a file of documents that he believed were representative of his leadership. Upon review of the documents, the documents were coded and then tabbed to align with areas that were becoming apparent in the findings of the survey and field observations. The researcher made a list of additional documents that were believed to further support the principal's work and the principal provided these documents for review.

After this initial convergence of data, the researcher sought to explore the initial findings in the subsequent phases of the research. After an additional day of observation, the date and time were scheduled to meet with the focus group. The researcher intentionally scheduled the focus group at this conjecture to provide additional lenses

with which to focus the upcoming observations in the school. During the focus group, which included six members of faculty and represented each grade level and content area in the school, the session was recorded to allow for the researcher to review the field notes kept during the discussion, provide clarity to the notes, and include when participants agreed with one another.

The subsequent phases included an additional seven days of observations and field notes within the school setting. During each day, time was allotted for detailed conversations and reflections with the principal about that day and the days of observation that had previously occurred. After each day, a research memo was generated as a means to reflect upon the day and correlate experiences of the day with previous findings. The memos included naturalistic generalizations that developed as a product of the lived experiences during the case study (Stake, 1978).

Once the researcher attained data saturation, the researcher compiled the findings. The findings were then sent to the principal for preliminary review. The principal and researcher then met to review the findings. Additionally, the findings were also reviewed with the participants of the focus group.

The data codes were initially generated based upon the results of the principal's survey. The codes included:

- BB= Broad-based leadership;
- SL= Skillful Leadership;
- I= Inquiry based use of information;
- C= Collaboration & Broad Involvement; and
- R= Reflective Practice/Innovation as Norm.

A second group of codes were next created based upon the principal's espoused beliefs and observed theories in action. They included: shared leadership, servant

leadership, instructional leadership, coupling, state initiative, culture, curricula, and professional development. A third set of codes emerged as the observations, teacher surveys, discussions with staff continued to provide new ideas, practices, and behaviors unique to the principal. The correlation of the principal's and teachers' survey responses provided the opportunity for a closer look at key behaviors that comprised the principal's leadership traits. The third set of codes included:

- child-centered,
- continuous maintenance,
- constant growth,
- rigor,
- culture of discourse and inquiry,
- attention to change,
- and community engagement—engaging parents as partners.

As each set of codes emerged, the researcher consistently circled back to the original data sets to additionally code the data as well as used all three sets of codes with each new set of data collected. Through this approach to coding, the researcher was able to refine and ensure credibility of the findings.

The findings are organized to focus on how an effective instructional leader has embraced New Jersey's reforms in their role as a principal, while also maintaining their espoused beliefs and applying theory into action to bring about change in their school. With the lens of novice principals in mind, the findings are shared to assist future leaders in their efforts to become instructional leaders in their school. In conclusion, the findings are summarized from the participant observer's perspective, sharing the most significant findings for developing principals.

Research Questions

The study was designed to investigate how instructional leaders address educational reforms successfully. This investigation sought to identify a successful principal's espoused beliefs and the alignment to their actions as well as how their behaviors and skills can inform new principals to become strong instructional leaders in today's educational climate. The research questions that guided the investigation included the following:

1. How do today's instructional leaders address educational reforms in their role as principal?
2. How do a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leaders actions when bringing about change in their school?
3. How can new principals use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices as instructional leaders?

Quantitative Data Review

Principal's Survey Results

To begin the research process, the principal was asked to complete a self-evaluation of his leadership practices using Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Survey (Appendix B). The results have been compiled in Table 2 to show the frequency of responses in each of the broad categories within the survey including: broad-based leadership, skillful participation, inquiry-based use of information, broad involvement and collaboration, reflective practice and innovation, and high student achievement.

Table 2

Scoring of Principal's Self-Assessment

Domains	NO/IP	FP/CP	CTO
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership	0	1	3
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership	0	9	2
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice	0	5	0
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration	0	2	2
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm	0	3	2
F. High student achievement	0	4	2

Reviewing the results of the principal's self-ratings, there are eleven times when the principal rated his performance in a specific skill as "Can Teach Others." The mode demonstrates that most of the skills are found in the category of broad-based participation in the work of leadership. The principal identified two skills within four of the other domains, including skillful participation, broad involvement and collaboration, reflective practice and innovation, and high student achievement. There was one area that the principal did not rate any of the skills as can teach others: inquiry-based use of information. Table 3 represents a list of each of the specific skills the principal identified as can teach others in the four domains.

Table 3

Skills Identified In Each Leadership Capacity Domain

Leadership Capacity	Skills
Broad-based participation in the work of leadership	Organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members. Shares authority and resources broadly. Engages others in opportunities to lead.
Skillful participation in the work of leadership	Manages conflict among adults. Manages change and transitions.
Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration	Own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession. Observes and is sensitive to indicators that participants are performing outside traditional roles. Gives feedback to participants regarding the benefit of these changes.
Reflective practice/innovation as norm	Demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks. Practices and supports innovation without expectations for early success.
High student achievement	Designs, teaches, coaches, and assesses authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure that all children can learn. Redesigns roles and structures to enable the school to develop and sustain resiliency in children (i.e. teacher as coach/counselor/mentor.

The research design called for a review of the survey data when creating the interview questions for the principal's interview. The questions for the interview were generated with the leadership capacity domains in mind. The data collected from the interview was then coded using the leadership capacity domains identified in the survey. The purpose of coding in this manner was to identify the principal's behaviors as they aligned with his espoused beliefs.

Teacher Ratings of Principal's Leadership Capacities

Lambert (1998) indicated the Leadership Capacity Survey can be used to have other's rate your leadership capacities. As indicated in the research design, the survey was completed by members of the faculty once the principal had self-rated, the interview with the principal was conducted, and observations of the principal had begun. The purpose of surveying the faculty at this juncture in the research was to compare the results between the principal and his faculty and to identify areas within the principal's espoused beliefs and theories in action that could be further explored to inform others of what comprises the instructional leadership skills of the principal in this case study.

The survey was distributed electronically to all staff in the school. Eleven teachers participated in the survey with eight participants completing every question. The frequencies of all sub-questions are summarized under each domain are displayed below in Table 4.

Table 4

Scoring of Teachers' Ratings

Domains	NO/IP	FP/CP	CTO
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership	3	31	10
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership	10	61	28
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice	6	24	15
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration	3	19	4
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm	3	26	16
F. High student achievement	2	33	19

Using the frequency results in the CTO column, I compared the specific skills the principal had identified with the results of the teachers. I began by converting the teacher survey responses to percentages in the CTO column. The percentage was calculated based on the total responses divided by the total number of participants to answer the question. The first review of this data was to provide confirmation to what the principal had identified. The second phase of the review identified additional skills that the teachers identified their principal can teach others. Of these skills, only the skills that the principal rated as consistently performed were then added to the list of skills. A final review allowed for some of the skills to be consolidated into others to highlight the skills that both the teachers and principal identified. The total list included 7 skills. The results are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparison of Teacher to Principal Leadership Capacity Survey Responses

Domains with Identified Skill Below	CTO*
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership	
Organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members	27%
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership	
Manages change and transitions	44%
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice	
Engages with others in a learning cycle (reflection, dialogue, question posing, inquiry, construction of meaning, planned action). **	44%
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration	
Own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession.	56%
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm	
Ensures the cycle of inquiry and time schedules involve a continuous and ongoing reflective phase.**	50%
Demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks.	38%
F. High student achievement	
Designs, teaches, coaches, and assess authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure all children learn.	38%

*Percentage of staff that agree the principal can teach others to perform this skill.
**Skills teachers scored principal as can teach others. The principal scored this area as consistently performed, which is also a high level of performance. Each area was included since the skills were evident during the observation phase of the research.

The conclusions drawn from comparing the principal's self-rating with the ratings the staff made of each skill has identified 7 key skills that are essential to the principal's leadership practices. When reviewing the principal's ratings and the percentages of the

teachers' ratings, the leadership skills are listed below in order of importance for this principal:

1. Own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession;
2. Manages change and transitions;
3. Ensures the cycle of inquiry and time schedules involve a continuous and ongoing reflective phase;
4. Engages with others in a learning cycle (reflection, dialogue, question posing, inquiry, construction of meaning, planned action);
5. Demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks;
6. Designs, teaches, coaches, and assesses authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure all children learn; and
7. Organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members.

While reviewing each skill and considering the percentage rates of the teachers' ratings, you could look at the results and put them in order based strictly on the numbers. However, the two skills that had a higher percentage rate based on teacher survey and not the principal's self-rating (skills three and four in the list above), were given a lesser ranking than when both the principal and teachers rated a skill higher. While these skills were ranked in this order at this moment in time, it is also important to consider that this leader may use these skills in a different order of importance based upon his response to the needs of his school. These skills will be further explored in themes that emerged through the merging of quantitative and qualitative data to provide additional insights into the skills that comprise the principal's theories into action.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The research design for this case study included two layers of quantitative data: the principal's survey and the teachers' survey. Both sets of participants used the same survey, Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Survey. While reviewing the quantitative

results can provide the reader with a list of skills, it is the mixing of the qualitative data that will provide a "how to" for practitioners to consider when reflecting upon their own leadership capacities.

Several qualitative research methods were used to gather additional data to be considered, including: observations of the principal throughout his work day, interview of the principal, a focus group with faculty, a document review, and follow-up interviews with both the principal and faculty members based on emerging themes. The principal interview and focus group were transcribed and then coded using correlating codes to the leadership capacity domains found in the survey. The documents were also coded using the same sets of codes. Field notes were kept of all activities in the research design and were also coded using the same sets of codes as all other qualitative data. A code book was created to define the codes as well as for the researcher to reflect upon the coding, add additional codes based on the literature review and emerging themes. Three rounds of coding were completed for all qualitative data.

A triangulation table was created of the emerging themes (Appendix E). The triangulation of data allowed the researcher to confirm the evidence of each theme in all areas of the research: the survey, interviews, focus groups, observations, and document review. The following sub-sections share the merged quantitative and qualitative data collected to demonstrate the principal's espoused beliefs and the alignment with his actions when bringing about change in his school and how as an instructional leader, he has addressed the current educational reforms.

Broad-based Leadership and Skillful Participation in Practice

Lambert (1998) identifies two axes of the Leadership Capacity Matrix as the essence of leadership: broad-based leadership and skillful participation. Broad-based leadership refers to the structures and framework for participation. Becoming skillful participants includes processes for staff to engage and participate in the school leadership structure. The principal self-rated high in three areas of broad-based leadership which account for the most skills in any domain. These include: organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members; shares authority and resources broadly; and engages others in opportunities to lead. The teachers rated the principal high in the fourth skill of broad-based leadership: assists in the establishment of representative governance and work groups.

In the domain of skillful participation in the work of leadership, there are eleven leadership skills listed. Of the eleven, the principal identified two skills and the teachers identified an additional skill. The teacher and principal rated the principal highly in manages change and transitions. The principal self-rated highly in manages conflict among adults, which had the most ratings of not-observed by the teachers. This may be due to the observed confidentiality that is kept when managing personnel matters. Additionally, the staff identified the skill of developing a shared purpose for learning as a high skill for the principal.

With the leadership skills listed above in mind, the qualitative data was analyzed to demonstrate examples of the skills in action. The findings represent daily activities that have had an impact on the principal's ability to bring about change in his school through the use of broad-based leadership and skillful participation in the work of leadership. The

first theme shows how the principal created a leadership team within his school beginning with his philosophy of leadership and then exploring specific practices to develop this critical component of leadership in the school. Within this theme, a sub-theme identifies teachers as leaders and how they are taught to be skillful in their participation in the work of leadership.

"Leader Ship." Northouse (2012) reminds leaders that each individual is unique and displays their own distinct talents for leadership. Furthermore, Burke (2011) argues defining leadership is like trying to define love, which is nearly impossible to do when trying to describe a feeling into words. In our face to face interview, I asked the principal to define leadership in his own words. When asked to reflect on his definition of leadership, the principal expressed his philosophy as,

> The word leadership…You are the ship out in front of other ships. If you turn around, and there are no more ships behind you, you're not the leader ship anymore. You have to be able to develop a following. You have to be able to get the people who are supposed to be following you to follow. I don't believe an organization can be successful without that.

The principal's description aligned with Smith's (1995) assertion that more progressive leaders want to help others realize their own power and impact the next generation of learners. While in theory, we may understand this is what we are to do the question for many may still be: How? The principal discussed this later in the interview explaining,

> But the job is to really grow that commitment group. When you turn around and look at the ships following behind you, who do you put right behind you, how do you build that next tier behind you as the leader ship? Who is that? Are they the right people? If they are not, are you making the right changes as you go?

The principal built the leadership team one stage at a time. Through discussions during the site visits, the principal shared that he has served as a vice principal in the elementary school in the district and taught in the elementary school prior to becoming principal of

the primary school. He had time to meet with his staff and get to know them prior to formally assuming his role and school principal. In that time, he realized he knew very few of them and could trust only a small number of staff within the group he knew. The principal recalled in the interview,

> I needed to build capacity in the staff on one hand, but also develop a trust for them. I think that is one of the things I have learned that others don't fully understand about leadership…we need to trust the people that we have helping us lead.

The principal began with a small group of like-minded individuals that included the literacy coach and one of the grade level coordinators. Establishing his following began with two people.

The principal's resolve for accomplishing a core number of priorities aligns closely with Fullan's (2011) leadership framework. Fullan (2011) encourages leaders to focus on a core number of priorities, stay on message, and develop others toward the same end. Furthermore, being resolute also affords principals the time needed to build the systems needed for an effective instructional environment (Ma, 2004; Senge, 2000).

The principal stated when a new leader enters the role of principal, you have to know and understand that building your team "will take time." He encourages other principals to be "deliberate in your actions." For example, this principal took the time to sit with individuals and small groups of teachers prior to the official start of his tenure as principal. He engaged teachers in conversations and reflected upon the notes he had kept and the feelings that emerged from listening to their perspective to identify likeminded individuals. In doing this work, he was able to begin slowly positioning his teachers into roles that would primarily achieve his vision, but where they would also be successful. The principal said, "begin with those that are like minded, trust them to spread your

message with fidelity, and then be patient. Allow others to prove they believe in your message." The principal cautions future principals by stating, "… that the proof is in the evidence, not in telling you what you want to hear. The evidence is found in your observations, daily walkthroughs of the building, and conversations. All of this takes time." Taking time to properly diagnose areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, then adjust structures to positively impact student learning, are key components to developing a strong theory of action for instructional leaders (Earl & Katz, 2006).

The teachers in the school discussed at length how the principal developed the leadership throughout the building during the focus group. They expressed, "no principal can do it alone. Shared leadership is necessary." When asked about what this looked like when the principal assumed his role, they articulated there was a "domino effect." A few of the staff began working closely with the principal and within the work was his vision. "Buy-in occurred one after another," once success was found in the instructional work. "Buy-in was evident because decisions were based on a collaborative and researched approach," shared a member of the focus group. As buy-in was developed so too was the leadership team. The leadership team was informed of "the vision" and they were "empowered to take on roles that developed them as the experts." Fast forward five years and the focus group shared, "roles are created in the school so everyone has a leadership role and is empowered to share their expertise." New principals can sometimes feel that they need to know it all. The principal in this case study demonstrated that by having confidence in your own leadership and working deliberately allows you to empower others to rise up as leaders by becoming experts in instructional areas that not only have a

direct impact on student performance in their classrooms, but also a significant impact on the overall performance of the school.

Weaved throughout the discussion with the focus group was what the group identified as "reciprocal trust" with their leader. While the principal shared the importance of trusting the teachers that are in leadership roles within the school, the teachers also conveyed the sentiment about trusting their principal. The group emphasized that the principal "regularly demonstrates his belief in his staff." The group identified three examples of how the principal demonstrates his trust for the staff: 1) the principal "leverages his conversations with staff through the discussion of instructional methodology and practices that are in the best interest of students;" 2) the principal compliments staff publicly and has created a culture of "collaboration, confidence in each other, supportive, and honesty;" and 3) a teacher added, "I am way more confident and competent as a teacher because of the support of my principal." As reciprocal trust is further established in the school, the principal continues to move along Fullan's (2011) framework of leadership. The areas described align with motivating the masses and collaborating to compete or in other words forming a guiding coalition with an aim for collective and individual capacity building.

Teachers as leaders. The principal conveyed during the interview,

> ...if we really want to see change in some of these really difficult places then if we try to enable people do this work we're not going to see change, but if we try to empower them to do this work…that is how you see change.

The empowerment of teachers and the emphasis on curricular work was magnified through the document review. Figure 3 demonstrates the role teacher leaders have within the infrastructure of leadership.

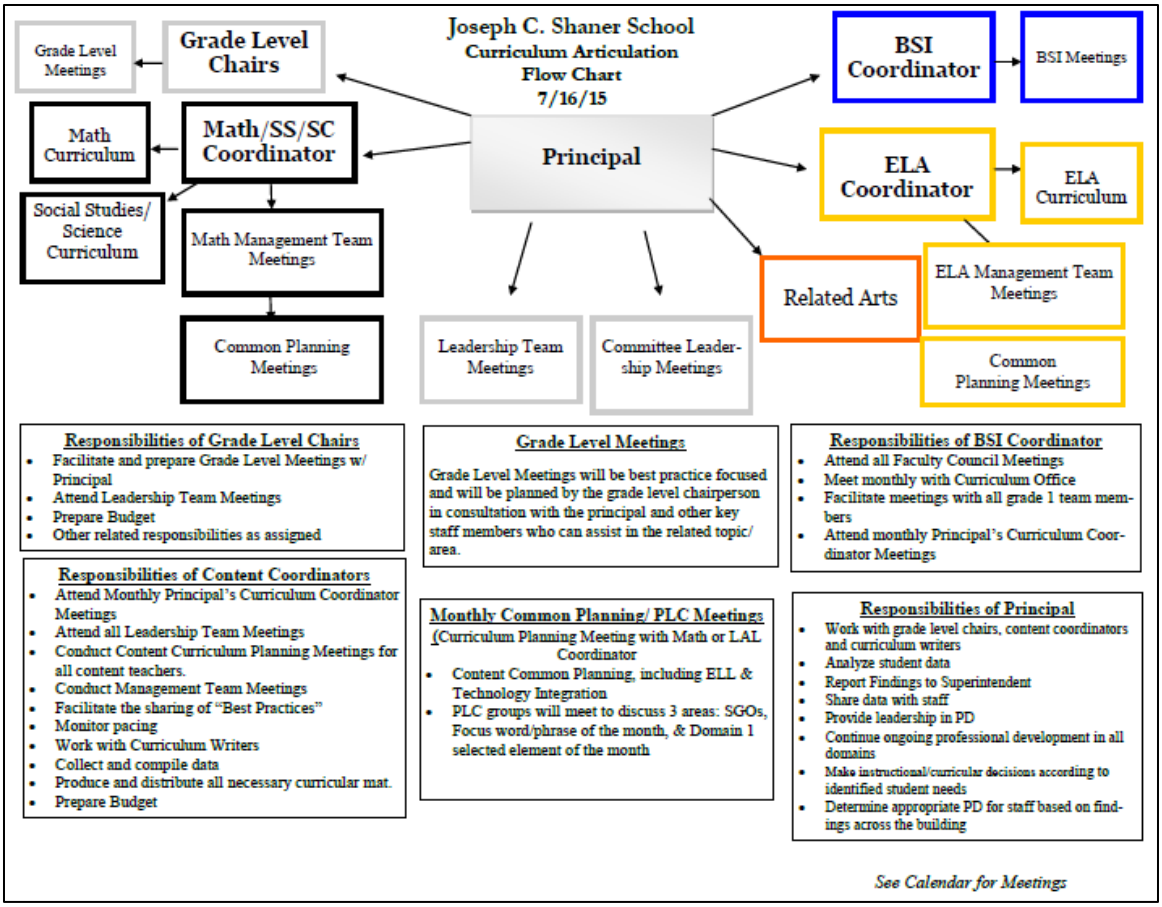

Figure 3: Teacher leadership flowchart

The teacher leadership flowchart in Figure 3 amplifies how the principal has built his team. In reviewing the document, an important aspect of the document is the first tier of leaders that work closely with the principal includes: the grade level chairs, Math/Social Studies/Science Coordinator, and the BSI Coordinator and ELA Coordinator (one person is filling these roles currently). Through the observations and field notes collected of the meetings listed in Figure 3, it is evident that the principal meets with these individuals during the leadership team meeting as well as individually to ensure they are prepared to handle the meetings that they run and take care of the curricular aspects that may also be associated with their positions. In addition, the principal meets

regularly with the committee leadership. A document review of the leadership team structures the principal shared found that the following committees exist in the school. A brief description is also included. The committees are:

1. Technology Committee: The committee looks at the best use of the school data base system as well as programs and software that is purchased in the school, ensuring the best use of these resources.

2. Sunshine Committee: The committee works to support staff that may have a personal need (i.e. death of a family member, birth of a child).

3. PBIS Committee: The committee addresses positive behavioral supports for students, including working with staff to improve their approach to behavior in their classrooms.

4. Box Tops Committee: The committee ensures there is a collection of Box Tops and creates incentives for families to participate.

5. Safety Committee: The committee addresses safety needs throughout the school environment.

6. Shark Committee: The committee creates incentives for both students and staff.

7. Garden Committee: The committee works to create opportunities for students to engage in maintaining the gardens on the school grounds.

8. Bulletin Board Committee: The committee ensures that the hallway bulletin boards are changed monthly and/or seasonally and provide meaningful information to students.

9. PTA Committee: The committee works in concert with the PTA to ensure grants and funding for programs. They support the work with parents to ensure the activities are meeting the needs of families.

10. Green Team: The committee works to ensure the school is functioning in a "green" manner, including recycling and conservation practices.

The committee structure supports the theme of teachers as leaders and the idea that all teachers can participate in some way as leaders in the school as each of these committees is led by a teacher and comprised of teachers that volunteer to meet the goals of the committee. The goals of the committee are established by the committee and approved by

the principal to ensure that all committees are working to meet the current needs and goals of the school. In this case study, each of the committee works to meet the goals of increasing student achievement both academically and in social and emotional facets of the learning environment. Establishing this model of teacher leadership aligns with Fullan's leadership framework of motivating the masses to be more effective, thus creating an environment where teachers will want to serve as leaders for future initiatives. This committee structure also serves to engage students in the social and emotional aspects of education, providing systems for every educational practice within the school (Ma, 2004).

Furthermore, there is a specific manner in which information is disseminated in the building. The document review of the calendar of monthly staff activities and meetings revealed the staff has a monthly articulation schedule that includes morning meetings prior to the arrival of students. A different meeting occurs each morning and the staff tied to that work meets with their respective leader. The grade level, content areas, and committee leaders also play an active role in the faculty meetings, as found through the visitations and document review. This created infrastructure further enhances how the principal empowers his teachers as leaders to communicate key information to ensure understanding of the curriculum, grade level needs, and the work the committees have identified to enhance the school environment.

The infrastructure or system created of teachers as leaders has developed an integral aspect in the flow of information. By building a skillset of leadership or theory of action within his teachers, the principal ensures that the information is getting out clearly (Earl & Katz, 2006). What happens when it does not? The principal spoke to this after an

observed leadership team meeting. The principal and I debriefed after the leadership meeting to discuss my observations. The principal discussed with me his concerns about the message that one of the members was disseminating. Over the past year, he has noticed that she is not staying the course and believes that there is no intentional malice, but due to her impending retirement is "telling people what she believes they want to hear" or "is not contradicting her colleagues when they are stating how they would like to do things in their classrooms. The principal voiced that he is going to address this with her and couch the conversation as "it is time to start transitioning your successor into your position." The principal communicated that he will be deliberate and thoughtful about her replacement on the leadership team, ensuring that the replacement is someone he can trust and believes in his vision. The principal indicated he has several options for the specific role on the team due to the domino effect of buy-in and his view that all teachers have the potential to be leaders. In essence, the principal has created a system to "sustain simplexity" or ensure the checks and balance process to foster effective leadership among his faculty.

Roles and Responsibilities Reflect Broad Involvement & High Student Achievement

The quantitative data revealed the principal and teachers both rated the principal high in the skill: own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession. The principal also rated himself highly in the skill: observes and is sensitive to indicators that participants are performing outside traditional roles and gives feedback to participants regarding the benefit of the changes. Additionally, these skills were found to tie into the work the principal was doing in regard to improving student achievement. The principal self-rated high in two of the high student achievement skills;

while the teachers identified two additional areas, totaling four of the six skills within the domain. The principal's two identified areas include: designs, teaches, coaches, and assesses authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure that all children can learn; and redesigns roles and structures to enable the school to develop and sustain resiliency in children (i.e. teacher as coach/counselor/mentor).

The teachers identified: works with members of the school community to establish challenging and human expectations and standards and provides systematic feedback to children and families about student progress as key skills the principal can teach others. These skills were also highlighted in the review of the qualitative data. Qualitative descriptions to support the principal's skills in the leadership domains were compiled into three themes: the community's principal, child-centered, and servant leadership through advocacy.

The community's principal. When considering the skills identified in the leadership domains of broad involvement and high student achievement, the theme of the community's principal emerged in the qualitative findings. According to Lambert (1998) broad involvement includes the community participation in the school and using this participation to cut across boundaries that once inhibited student learning. Community involvement and understanding of changes within school have been found to improve student achievement faster than when the school attempts to act alone (Lambert, 1998).

Embracing the community and affording active participation can also assist in the leadership work to improve social justice within schools. Through a deconstruction of past practices in which the school doors were closed to outside community involvement,

the principal has been able to remain true to his core leadership values and encouraged those around him to do the same (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005). The principal identified his role as:

> I'm here to help parents, the primary educator of each child. They're sending their children for us to help them in that work. My job is to support them in that. I have a great relationship with this community, partly because I have taught 4,000 children within the community.

However, the principal has also immersed himself into the community, through coaching sports, even though he does not live in the community. He wanted the community to see him in a different light. The principal shared:

> I have become the community's principal. I want to continue to grow as a principal in their eyes. I want to be someone they can depend on in their child's life and within the school community. I am invested heavily having been here for 16 years. My desire is to grow in their eyes.

The principal's approach to his leadership through developing a rapport with the community enhances the parents' participation in the school thus working to improve student achievement at a faster rate than if he worked with his staff to accomplish the goals in isolation. Examples of this work with parents to build collaboration were discussed during one of the visits to the school. The principal has been purposeful in his work with parents to build this bridge of collaboration. The principal discussed,

> During my time in the school setting, I was able to bring in the programs of: iMom, All Pro Dad, Reggie Dabbs visit, parent classroom visitations to observe the instructional practices of their children's teachers, and workshops for parents that help support the work in the classroom as well as parent workshops when shifts in philosophy occur (i.e. standards based report card grading).

Another example increasing the community's involvement in the principal's vision included the school leadership team meeting. While observing the school leadership team meeting, the team discussed how they could continue to expand the

knowledge of their families as well as develop families as partners in the work they are doing. The meeting indicated a list of opportunities that the parents have had leading up to this point in the school year. The team discussed that it was still important for families to have more opportunities to grow in the work as well. The team planned a significant morning of events for parents that had never been done in the proposed format:

8:00-8:45: iMom (a program to build discussions between moms and their child)

8:45-9:30: Mom's meeting with the principal (an open question and answer)

9:30-10:30: All parents invited to visit their child's classroom to observe literacy

10:30-11:15: Parent Training with the Literacy Coach on effective read-aloud techniques

By creating the schedule listed above, the leadership team was able to orchestrate a number of events for parents in a consolidated time. When the day arrived, I was able to observe the events and sit with parents during the events. Many of the parents remembered me from my time as the elementary school principal and engaged in informal discussions. Through these conversations, the parents indicated that this helped them to take off from work for the morning, identify childcare, and maximize their own personal time while also remaining involved in their child's school. Organizing the events in this manner allowed the school community to increase their communication of the changes in academic and parental involvement that the school expects.

While observing the events, I took attendance in each of the events. Having been a member of this community, I found it important to take attendance because there were more parents in attendance than in events held in previous years. I also noted the engagement on the part of the parents during my observations. They were actively

engaged in the activities. The iMom event was attended by approximately 90 individuals. The meeting with the principal included 35 parents. Over 100 parents visited their child's classroom and observed literacy instruction, while the teachers also coached parents in the techniques they were using. The concluding event with the literacy coach included 49 parents who learned about effective read-aloud techniques to use with their children. The literacy coach also discussed information about writing development and the impact reading every night can have on your child's academic progress. Parents engaged with their children, asked key questions of the principal and literacy coach, and could be seen learning alongside their children in the classroom. This level of engagement is an increase in the community's involvement in understanding the changes that are impact the increased rigors of their children's academic involvement.

Child-centered. An additional theme emerged from the qualitative findings that corresponded with the skills identified in the leadership domains of broad involvement and high student achievement was the theme of being child-centered. A child-centered approach to education strives to identify the current and on-going needs of the child and create purposeful programs or interventions to meet their needs (Caldwell, 2000). Additionally, educators within a child-centered environment look at each child as an individual and create learning opportunities that meet children where they are, build upon their interests, and develop their skills to grow their academic achievement (Caldwell, 2000). The principal communicated that he uses a conscientious approach to the impact his role has on the daily experiences of his students. The principal shared in the interview:

> Being the lead voice behind all the voices that kids are hearing all day long…this about how you [the principal] are successful. I get on the intercom every day and

> talk to the kids about how to act. Honestly, I'm not speaking to just the kids when I'm making those announcements. I am talking to the people that are working with those kids too and sending a constant message.

During the data collection process, I collected field notes of exact language the principal used when the principal addressed students each morning over the loud speaker. The principal addressed topics of expecting the students to "work extra hard today to make up for the snow day missed," "being kind to those even when they do not know it is you" (in reference to a can food drive prior to the holidays), reminding students to "continue their acts of kindness outside of school," and being "kind to those who may be struggling with their behavior." Additionally, when the principal met with students about their behavior during a fire drill, he spoke to a 5-year-old boy about how men admit their mistakes and grow from them and how as men we do not ever kick or hit a girl. The principal refers to these techniques as "speaking life into the children." The principal's efforts to meet his students where they are, increase their awareness of the world around them, and improve the social and emotional learning environment for students has added to a culture of learning confidently in the school. By creating an environment that everyone can learn confidently creates a growth mindset within the school environment (Fullan, 2011).

This approach also has a significant impact on the teachers. Through the focus group, one teacher discussed the routine of the morning message. She stated:

> Each morning the children are waiting for their principal's message. The sound in the room is silent. Each child thinks he is speaking to them individually. But I know he is speaking to me. His message gives me the inspiration to be more kind to the students in front of me, to work harder to meet goals with my students, and to be patient with my colleagues.

The reflection of the teacher adds to the finding that the principal has created a school environment with a growth mindset (Fullan, 2011) because the teachers indicated

throughout the focus group they are working to do better in not only the areas of academic achievement but in the social and emotional growth of themselves, their students, and their colleagues. This growth mindset among faculty and teachers was described to have a positive impact on the principal's efforts to create systems to look at student achievement and the theories of action that teachers create in their own classrooms (Earl & Katz, 2006; Ma, 2004). Focusing on student achievement, responding to the needs of students, and developing a belief that students can achieve were all areas described during the data collection period as having an impact on creating a child-centered environment in the school.

Discipline was also a regular conversation during the data collection period in terms of the most socially and developmentally appropriate ways to respond to children and their mistakes. The addition of the PBIS committee demonstrated the level of commitment the principal has made to ensure the conversation of how to meet the needs of students is happening regularly. Through the observations, I was able to observe a conversation about the appropriateness of recess detention in first grade. The evolution of this conversation began with the staff's mentality of questioning the proposal in their words as "this is how we've always done it" to those same staff offering suggestions for how change this practice in their school. The staff made suggestions for those students who did not earn free play by offering a walking club during recess and providing a counseling group that through play would focus on the skills the children needed to correct their transgressions in the classrooms.

The role of the principal in this dialogue of creating a child-centered approach was evident when reflecting upon the field notes collected during the observation. The

principal used questioning techniques with the staff. He didn't tell them why or how to solve the problem. He listened, asked questions, and listened some more. The outcome of this topic was generated by the staff: a walking club would be created with a small group of the committee organizing the logistics. The decision was made with the students in mind because the committee discussed the need for students to get outside, exercise and expend energy, as well as the alignment of staff that are trained to provide discussions about appropriate behaviors while they walked the pond course behind the school. This is another example of how the school continues to transform as a community that learns and grows together as well as shares in the decision making while remaining committed to core values and results (Connelly, 2008; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Finnigan, 2012; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005).

When I asked the principal to share documents for a document review that he found important to his leadership and the changes that have occurred in his school, he included the Teacher Induction Plan. The principal in this study leads this effort in the district. Weaved throughout the document is the philosophy of developing teachers as leaders to address their roles as advocates for students and to enter the district with a child-centered philosophy. Examples of a student-centered philosophy include monthly topics that the mentor addresses with the mentee including formative data assessment, attending to student behaviors appropriately, discussing student progress, and the various learning styles of students. Additionally, the use of collegial coaching as a technique to put philosophy into action includes an opportunity for mentors to observe their mentees and vice versa emphasizes the principal's approach to developing a culture of child-centered teaching.

As a final point, the principal voiced this sentiment, "We don't come to a school for the adults, we come to school for the children." During the observation process, I noted a sign displayed above the principal's desk, which stated, "WARNING: This principal is going to ask what's right for kids-" thus providing a visual support of his assertions regarding his beliefs about the purpose of schooling. When asked how this tied into his philosophy and his practice, the principal shared, "I don't keep that [the sign] there because I think it is a neat saying. It's what I absolutely live by. I am going to be an advocate for them [the students]." The principal's assertions about his advocacy for the students establish a tone for the importance of the topic of a child-centered approach to accomplish student achievement (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Fisher et al., 2012; Fullan, 2011).

Servant leadership through advocacy. In reviewing the field notes and data found in the interview, a final theme of servant leadership through advocacy emerged. This theme directly ties to the skills identified in the domains of broad involvement and high student achievement. Lambert (1998) asserts authentic relationships with children include the teacher as facilitator, mentor, coach, and advisor. Additionally, parents are seen as pedagogical partners, for they have deep knowledge about how their children learn (Lambert, 1998). During the interview with the principal, he described how he enhanced broad involvement by serving as the lead voice to engage parents as partners with the teachers during the past few years in particular when the school was experiencing a restructuring of learning standards and instructional approaches and focused the staff on high student achievement:

> …the leadership of change specifically the change that we have been going through here… I believe required much more than just a good set of leadership

> skills. It required advocacy. It required a commitment to on-going growth even in myself and also being the lead voice for the work that we're doing.

The principal demonstrated an advocacy for students during each observation at the school. The principal walked the halls of the school at least twice a day, checking in on all the staff within the building. He indicated that this is a regular routine for him because "the work to be done [during school hours] isn't in my office." While observing his walkthroughs, the principal checked on specific students and checked in with teachers about specific items that were on-going. Some examples from the observations included: following up with the two students mentioned earlier that were involved in a discipline infraction during the fire drill, following up with the grade level coordinator about a concern that arose within the delivery of curriculum, checking in with the autism classroom due to the absence of paraprofessionals and stating a concern about how the children were adjusting to the new staff, and working with the school resource officer and custodial staff to prepare for an upcoming community event within the school to ensure the safety protocols for students that day. In each instance observed, the principal demonstrated his expectations for meeting the needs of the students.

In addition, the principal spends a lot of time in classrooms. Completing more than 70 required formal observations and a self-imposed weekly walkthrough in each teacher's classroom, the principal regularly observes the teachers, monitoring student performance, and discussing how he can better meet the needs of the students. The continuous reflection on his role was found in the review of meeting agendas, observations of meetings with staff, and in the reflection process the principal has established for himself through note-taking, journaling, and observed collegial conversations with colleagues. With the additional demands of ACHIEVENJ, the

principal can be found observing in classrooms daily. One example observed was a walkthrough or informal observation of a teacher who teaches students with autism. In the room were four students who were engaged in trial work. The principal communicated with me:

> I have a desire to learn how trials meet the needs of students with autism, how I can learn to provide better feedback to the teacher, and ultimately how I can advocate for more inclusion of these students into the activities offered for all students.

The principal on another day could be observed talking with the teacher about her work and asking how he could help her be better in her role. On another day, the principal was following up on this topic with the PBIS committee through a discussion about how the crisis team uses Non-violent Crisis Intervention techniques when responding to students with autism. He communicated he would be following up on bringing specific training to the crisis team. Each element of the findings over several weeks of observations, noted a consistent, servant leadership through advocacy approach to meeting the demands of his school. The principal worked to further enhance his understanding of student needs to ensure that he was creating an environment that further developed the authentic relationships not only for himself and his students, but by adding to his understanding so that he could lead initiatives that would also provide the authentic relationships for his staff and their students (Lambert, 1998).

Reflective Practice/Innovation as Norm

Argyris and Schön (1974) and Lambert (1998) assert many forms of reflection must become an integral part of practice and in this case the school environment: reflection on beliefs, assumptions, and past practice; reflection in action, in practice; collective reflection during dialogue and in coaching relationships. The domain of

reflective practice/ innovation as norm identifies six leadership skills. The principal identified two skills: demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks; and practices and supports innovation without expectations for early success. Two teachers indicated in their survey results a disparity in the result of practices and supports innovation without expectations for early success by selecting infrequently performed in this skill area. The teachers identified an additional skill of ensures that the cycle of inquiry and time schedules involve a continuous and ongoing reflective phase.

The two skills identified as having a high score in the quantitative findings also emerged from the qualitative findings in the theme of "purposeful change, continuous maintenance." Purposeful change, continuous maintenance means that there is a vision for the change that is to be implemented. This vision is created based on the data findings within the school or a systems theory approach to leadership (Ma, 2004). While purposeful change is important, it is the latter that needs the attention: continuous maintenance. In this setting, the continuous maintenance called for staying true to the vision and goals established and working to grow in this domain while not adding unnecessary change to the work. With a strong systems approach to the vision for the school, the goals that needed to be accomplished are substantial enough to last a lifetime, therefore, allowing the staff to continue to learn and outgrow their skillset and adjusting their approach to meet the needs of the students in front of them. Continuous maintenance can also be thought of in terms of Fullan's (2011) idea of sustaining simplexity or doing each step within the framework effectively in the school.

Also in this theme may be the reason while two teachers indicated that the principal infrequently performs practices and supports innovation without expectations for early success. It is evident in the convictions shared through the interview and during the observations that the principal is serious about the work in his school. This seriousness could be construed as having high expectations and little room for mistakes.

"***Purposeful change, continuous maintenance."*** If the work the school is engaged in this year could have a theme, it would be the theme of "purposeful change, continuous maintenance." The principal indicated that the change work began in the school five years ago. In his fifth year as the principal of the school, he continues to follow through with the change work by spending time focusing in on the maintenance of the work. The maintenance of the work is also known as leading the teachers to be true to the vision of the school as a student-centered environment and implementing the curriculum and instructional practices with fidelity.

An example of continuous maintenance efforts of the principal that was observed during the research period included a faculty meeting where the role of the teacher during upcoming conferences was discussed. The principal reminded the teachers to "be an advocate for the work we are doing." The teachers were reminded that parents are "also learning" and it is important that the teachers act as "agents of the school" and to bring conversations back to the child and how they are demonstrating to the parents that "they are the BEST teacher for THEIR child." The teachers were reminded that parents should leave the conference knowing that you know their child and that they have confidence in your instruction. The focus group discussed that at every faculty meeting, their principal

is “engaged in some type of coaching of his staff.” They expressed this provides “another opportunity for them to grow within the vision of the work they are doing as a school.”

Another example is the way the principal looks at staffing in the building. There are several unique uses of staff over the years. Through the district budget, the principal is afforded a certain number of staff in the school. He has used the allotment of staff to meet the needs of his students and to advance the instructional work of the students. The principal uses one staff member, whom is slated as a basic skills teacher and is certified as a reading specialist, to serve as the literacy coach in the school. In addition, she serves as the ELA and BSI coordinator on the school’s leadership team. While the literacy coach works with children on a regular basis through a time per week model, this has freed the coach up to push into classrooms and provide teachers with job-embedded professional development. She models lessons for teachers or works with the teacher and a specific student to coach the teacher how to be better in meeting the needs of their students.

The principal also used this model to create a Teacher of Social Success (TSS) position. According to the document review, this teacher is “a social skills instructor who assists teaching staff with the social skills development of their students.” The TSS can be found providing “in-class support, lunch/recess support, bus support, mentoring, and non-violent crisis intervention support.” Over the past few years, this person has worked intensely with students and parents to provide the social support to students so they are ready to academically learn. This position directly meets the vision of the school: a child-centered approach.

Through a systems theory approach, the principal has created opportunities for school leadership teams and individual teachers to reflect on their actions and determine

collaboratively the next steps to student-achievement (Earl & Katz, 2006; Ma, 2004; Spillane, 2015). Through a continuous maintenance approach, the faculty is focusing on creating capacities of their organization to engage in continuous improvement (Fullan, 2007). This approach allows the faculty to continuously reflect upon the current needs of their students and strive to enhance their skillset to meet those needs.

Inquiry-based Use of Information

While the principal did not identify a skill in the domain of inquiry-based use of information that he "can teach others," the teachers did identify a skill: engages with others in a learning cycle (reflection, dialogue, question posing, inquiry, construction of meaning, planned action). Lambert (1998) defines this domain as school leaders creating opportunities for teachers to reflect on practices as well as try out new techniques based on those reflections. As I reviewed the field notes, it was evident that the principal does do this work. Most of this work is done through the development of the school's literacy coach and her work with teachers in their classrooms, professional development, opportunities for staff to try new roles, as well as the partnership with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

During the focus group, the staff discussed the role of the literacy coach. They stated that prior to the literacy coach and the principal's arrival, little support was provided in the work of literacy instruction. The teachers stated that their principal "began to chunk the information for them." As he chunked the work and modeled it, he would "quickly compliment them on any growth they made." He leveraged buy-in by "not being a jerk about it" and "emphasizing his stake in the work." Once the literacy coach was shifted into her role at the building, the "work took off."

The engagement in the learning cycle of best instructional practices was provided an even more formal structure when the principal allocated funds as indicated by the Title I plan to become a project school with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. The staff engaged in regular job-embedded professional development days, as indicated by the document review. Clear techniques for learning about instructional practices became part of the norm and have continued among the staff as evidenced through the observation of book studies, model lessons, the role of the literacy coach, and the time spent dialoguing about instruction with the principal. These practices help the faculty to improve their theories of practice and develop strong individualized educational programs for students (Earl & Katz, 2006; Ubben et al., 2001).

Conclusion

Lambert (1998) asserts the role of the principal is to assert authority using a wide variety of the leadership skills represented in the survey. When the principal uses a variety of the leadership skills, the school is on a road toward building leadership capacity in all of its stakeholders (Lambert, 1998). Instructional leadership encompasses a number of leadership skills from articulating a vision, to setting high expectations, and monitoring performance (Earl & Katz, 2006; Finnigan, 2012; Fullan, 2011; Ma, 2004). With Lambert's (1998) guidance in mind, the quantitative and qualitative data were merged to identify themes of skills that were particular to the leader in this case study and attributed to the success found in his school to implement the change initiatives mandated by the State while maintaining the fostered and cherished values of the principal.

This commitment to a child-centered environment has provided the opportunity for the principal to couple his vision with the mandates from the State. The principal has

created a vision for his school and used the mandates as a vessel to bring about the change needed in his school to improve student and teacher achievement (Fullan, 2009; Spillane, 2012; Steinhauer, 2015). The principal uses ACHIEVENJ as a catalyst to monitor the fidelity of implementation for instructional practices and curriculum mandates. He coupled his vision for increased achievement in literacy with the work of the Common Core to demonstrate that rigorous standards are attainable by even their youngest learners. The standards are currently being met by more than 85% of the total student population as found in the document review of student performance in reading using Fountas and Pinnell benchmarking. The message of innovation and continuous growth has been coupled with future state initiatives proving to teachers in the school that their efforts align to the idea that as a staff they will be ahead of the curve.

As an instructional support, the principal actively supports day-to day instruction and programming by modeling desired behaviors, actively participating in professional development, and consistently giving priority to instructional concerns (Marzano et al., 2005). In this study, the principal cautions other principals from "entering blindly" and recommends principals take on a philosophy of "principal as learner." To accomplish his vision and meet the mandates of the State, the principal actively engages in professional development opportunities. He learns side by side his teachers and is not afraid to take on a leadership role in the work. The findings of the study demonstrated that he actively leads training sessions, teaches in classrooms, and leads parents in their understanding of the school's initiatives.

The research was able to identify how the principal's espoused beliefs align with the leader's theories in action when leading change in their school. The findings share a

number of practices, behaviors, and skills that the principal employs when bringing about change in his school. The findings also shared with principals how to consider their students when developing their vision for the school, the curriculum, and the instructional practices. Using a child-centered approach, the findings indicate how servant leadership through advocacy is a skill successful principal uses when leading change in his school. While change leadership is not enough, the findings share the need for "purposeful change, continuous maintenance." Just making change happen was found to not be enough. Attention and time needs to be paid to ensuring the maintenance of the change for the change to have long-lasting effects.

Unique to this principal is his ability to take multiple theories of leadership, instructional practices, models of professional development, and internal structures and systems and develop a systemic viewpoint of his role as the principal. His work is intentional in meeting the expectations of mandates while also keeping at the forefront what he believes is the most important work of an educator—meeting all students where they are and moving them to a higher level of achievement. The principal is committed to the profession and works to build upon effective practices, accomplishing what many believe is impossible in a diverse, suburban, low-economic community with large number of students: high student achievement as evidenced by the 85% rate of on-grade level reading by the conclusion of grade one.

The final chapter will provide further clarity by discussing the major findings, interpretations of the findings, making recommendations for practice, policy and research, and addressing the implications of the study.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The study was designed to research the techniques an effective instructional leader, specifically a principal, has employed when implementing change in their schools. With the number of State initiatives in New Jersey, including PARCC, Common Core, and the teacher evaluation system known as ACHIEVENJ, it is necessary for leaders to implement the behaviors of coupling, establishing a vision, becoming a principal-learner, broad-based leadership, creating child-centered environments, innovation through inquiry, and reflection in their practice to ensure their success in the role of principal, which has a major impact on both teacher and student performance. The study examines how these practices align with the principal's espoused beliefs and theories in action. The findings also provided rich narrative examples of the principal's leadership practice, the internal leadership structures within the school, and how the principal and teacher leaders broke down the autonomy in the school to improve student achievement. A key goal of the study was to provide new principals techniques they can use to develop their abilities as instructional leaders and establish a child-centered school culture.

The research questions that guided the study are:

1. How do today's instructional leaders address educational reforms in their role as principal?

2. How do a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leaders actions when bringing about change in their school?

3. How can new principals use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices as instructional leaders?

Delimitations

Yin (2015) discusses craft rivals and rival thinking to be whether the events or actions are as they appear to be in research. This study sought to confirm the principal's espoused beliefs in two ways: confirming his beliefs with his behaviors in action as well as using teacher input through the survey process to further support the skills the principal had identified. With only twenty-two percent of the faculty participating in the survey, it is important to underplay the importance of the teachers' completion of the survey. The principal's completion of the survey was a beginning point for looking at his behaviors. When considering the outcomes of this study, more weight was placed on the qualitative research methods to confirm his behaviors and discuss these behaviors in context for other administrators and demonstrating the practices which improved student achievement.

Confirming/Disconfirming Literature and Extending Knowledge in the Discipline

The findings of the study confirmed many of the key concepts in the literature review. The study supported the argument that the success of implementing state initiatives, specifically those tied to instructional practices and student achievement, is grounded in a site-based management approach and can be significantly impacted by an individual principal (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Eilers & D'Amico; Provost et al., 2010; Fullan, 2007; Marzano et al., 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992; and Ubben et al., 2001). The study demonstrated how a principal with significant capital including time in district and respect from staff could improve practice, but the study also struck down the idea that those with limited capital are not successful at improving practice (Ishimaru, 2013). The study shared effective ways for principals that are new to a specific school can build

capital to implement effective change. In the findings, the principal discussed how he was able to identify like-minded individuals at the inception of his tenure as principal. These individuals comprised his leadership team and as time progressed became instrumental in developing the principal's followers to accomplish the vision of the school.

The importance of internal leadership structures was confirmed and specific ways were also identified (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Purkey & Smith, 1993 as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge, 2000). Principals can consider the leadership structure outlined in Figure 3 and the creation of the committee structure as frameworks to consider when organizing teachers as leaders. In addition, the principal was able to create broad-based community participation in the leadership of the school, which afforded parents the opportunity to also become leaders in the instructional work with their children. The leadership structures and parental training and participation opportunities created provided the chance for the principal to create additional leaders within the school community, creating a shared leadership approach.

The study also confirmed a number of professional development techniques that were cited in the literature review that connect the daily practices of teachers to job-embedded professional opportunities. The teachers are provided the opportunity to work with a literacy coach that conducts real-time coaching during their lessons, models lessons for them, and provides them with one-to-one support when working with individual and small groups of students. In addition, the principal serves as an instructional leader coaching teachers throughout the day in a non-evaluative manner and providing constructive feedback in their evaluations to improve student achievement. The

principal's effort to coach teachers and provide them constructive feedback positions the principal at the core of the work schools are charged to do: educate children.

Additionally, the principal in the study confirmed the importance of social justice leadership, shared leadership, servant leadership, and the importance of developing a skillset as a change leader that were cited in the literature review (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Fullan, 2011; Goleman, 2004; Greenleaf, 1995; Marzano et al, 2005; and Spillane, 2015). The skills identified in this study that align to these leadership theories included the principal's ability to:

1. Organize the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members;
2. Manage change and transitions;
3. Engage with others in a learning cycle (reflection, dialogue, question posing, inquiry, construction of meaning, planned action);
4. Own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession;
5. Ensure the cycle of inquiry and time schedules involve a continuous and ongoing reflective phase;
6. Demonstrate and encourage individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks; and
7. Design, teach, coach, and assess authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure all children learn.

Instrumental to the success of the principal is his attention to instructional practices, fostering effective change through his management of these issues, and providing staff with the opportunity to reflect upon the work at hand. It is a hands-on approach grounded in critical understanding of current instructional practices that are the key skills that principals should focus on in their practice.

The research extended the understanding of theory of action, systems theory, and Fullan's leadership framework into practice within the discipline of educational leadership. Through the research, it was found that the theories in isolation are

meaningful, however, when considered in a systemic manner and coupled with educational initiatives, leaders are able to reconfigure instructional practices and organizational systems to effectively improve student achievement. The theories identified and how the principal assembled them into a shared leadership infrastructure to create his vision can further assist practitioners in understanding the potential of systemic, instructional leadership that is grounded in leadership philosophies, specifically, social justice and servant leadership.

Conceptual Framework

Throughout the findings, the principal's practices as identified through Lambert's survey and through the qualitative findings of observations, document review, interviews, and the focus group were aligned to the leadership, action, and systems conceptual framework presented in Figure 2 (Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2011; and Ma, 2004). The theory of action uses large scale reform policy agendas and the use of data to diagnose areas of strength and needs improvement to improve structures that will enhance student achievement (Earl & Katz, 2006). Additionally, Ma (2004) reminds leaders through systems theory the importance of creating a web of interrelationships to improve educational practice. Lastly, Fullan's (2011) leadership framework reminds leaders to be reflective in order to be resolute in their vision, improve collaborative opportunities to motivate faculty, and maintain an environment of continuous improvement.

The leader examined the practices in his approach to leadership as well as the work of the staff to create a working philosophy of child-centered instruction. Demonstrating how traditional approaches (i.e. stand and deliver, anthology based texts, and a one size fits all curriculum) to instruction are obsolete when preparing a diverse

school community of students for 21st century standards was the foundation for creating a child-centered environment. This approach to leadership was grounded in a working theory that the principal referred to as "purposeful change, continuous maintenance" or in other words implementing change with a commitment to continuously building upon new understandings of student learning and instructional practices to ensure the school community was moving forward in their work and not resorting back to old understandings of the traditional approaches to instruction listed above. The principal's work in this area was clear through his assertions during the interview when he stated,

> …the literacy expectations are asking your kids to do things that are reasonable, attainable, and perfectly appropriate. If your kids can do these things, they are going to be more advanced than we were when we left Kindergarten and first grade. We are finding year after year that our kids can do it and the students leaving Kindergarten and first grade are more and more prepared for second grade.

Additionally, the principal maintains continuous improvement and collaboration through the commitment the principal has made for his school to be a project school of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. The principal discussed this partnership in the interview by stating,

> We were working toward those goals prior. We were partnered with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project who was sitting with the Common Core writers before they were written…We were moving our staff and teaching to standards based thinking, helping teachers recognize even with the standards based report card project that we did…helping them recognize that our instruction is to meet goals for children and to move them to a specific place. That's what the Common Core has clarified. It pushed down high standards to Kindergarten and not as unreasonable as teachers first thought. Their very reasonable and attainable and our kids are doing it.

By implementing these practices and paying consistent attention to the development of teachers in their instruction, the principal's work is a demonstration for other principals to view and consider when overcoming the challenges they are faced with when

implementing multiple State initiatives or any change that may need to implemented in their schools. In other words, the core of the work administrators are charged with relative to State initiatives is ensuring that teachers have the skills to improve student achievement. Therefore the principal must be in with the teachers to understand their instructional practices, modeling appropriate techniques, and ensuring that the students are growing in their achievement.

This chapter contains three major sections. First, a discussion of major findings from the data collected and shared in Chapter 4. The discussion is organized by prevailing themes that emerged from each of the research questions and will discuss in what ways the findings of the study confirms many of the key concepts, discerns and extends the knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has been found in the literature review and provides an analysis and interpretation of the conceptual framework of the study. Second, an examination of the implications of the findings relative to the leadership practices, educational policy, and research in related topics occurs. Lastly, the recommendations for policy, practice, leadership, and future research are shared.

Discussion and Interpretation of Major Findings

Finding 1: Ways Principals Can Address Educational Reforms

The research specifically looked at the practices an effective instructional leader uses to address education reform in their role as a principal. Data was collected through an interview with the principal, full day observations of the principal in the field over several weeks, document analysis, and exploring the leader's practices and subsequent changes through a focus group of teachers. Through the coding and analysis of the

qualitative data, three major themes emerged: vision, coupling, and the principal as learner. The three major themes are then discussed to demonstrate the principal's ability to systemically plan.

Vision. While interviewing and observing the principal in action, it became evident that the principal had established a vision for how his school would function to become a more child-centered environment that was focused on students' social and academic achievement. The principal identified a workshop approach instructional philosophy through the school's work with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

While this instructional philosophy was chosen, the principal also began assembling and fostering his school leadership team and school committees. The teachers involved in this work weaved the idea of shifting the work from a previously evident adult-centered environment to one that was identified as more conducive for focusing on student achievement. The principal emphasized in his interview,

> If we're not taking children's concerns seriously, what are we doing? Why are we working with children if that's the case? If a child is demonstrating difficulty with their academics, reading, writing, whatever, our job as a primary school is to jump on that right away.

The principal's vision for this school can be characterized as a community of educators whom are relentless in their efforts to create a child-centered school environment. The success of the school is grounded in the principal identifying his responsibility to change his school to improve the students' achievement.

Principals in all schools must challenge their school environment to break through fixed student achievement results and internalize the belief that previous instructional approaches in schools are no longer good enough. Principals must engage staff to ensure

their instructional practices are cutting edge enough to ensure that all children are improving and that no sub-group is marginalized in the process. Together, they ensure through a systems approach that instructional practices, social emotional supports, professional development, and parent events held at the school are all focused on creating student achievement and responding to the various needs of their students. The findings showcased these efforts as exampled through the morning of events created for parents including, iMom, classroom visitations, and a parent workshop on new literacy practices occurring in the classroom undergirded by the school's leadership team driving these initiatives to expand involvement to a broad-based community approach.

This study proved the importance of improving the culture of the school to shift from adult to student needs. Many principals may say that they have created a child-centered environment. They may say…We ARE a school after all. However, when you pull back the layers of the school and begin to critically look if the decisions made by the principal are truly for students, you may often find that decisions are made to keep teachers happy and to stay conservative in our practices as to not disrupt the expectations teachers have when coming to work. The ultimate success of a principal can be found in their tenacity and confidence in pushing the envelope to advocate for what they believe is right for students. The principal in this case study does just that. His commitment to creating an environment that "asks what's right for students" is the practice that drives the theory for the school community's success at improving student achievement. While there is risk in challenging the adults in the environment, when a vision is implemented systemically, the pay-off in student achievement results can exceed original expectations.

The principal's vision played a major role in how, as a leader, he influenced his faculty and the reactions to his leadership. With the faculty's confidence in his leadership and role as principal within the school, this effective leader was able to transform his school into a community. This community represents a faculty that learns and grows together. Through a shared leadership approach that balances power and decision-making through the school leadership team, the teacher leaders remain committed to core values and results.

The culture established within the school directly aligns to the principal's vision and is consistent with putting students first. This culture was established by the principal learning side by side with his teachers during school hours through a job-embedded coaching approach, providing them the opportunity to join him in New York for training sessions, and the principal taking risks to teach the students himself so that he fully understood what he was asking his teachers to do. This level of vulnerability allowed him to lead his staff through change by leading through an example that was focused on students.

In turn, the faculty became reassured in their ability to successfully meet the demands of students. This feeling of confidence played a significant role in accomplishing the vision because the teachers did not feel that they would be criticized for their attempts to change their instruction as indicated by the faculty present in the focus group. The faculty members shared that their principal "leads the coaching of literacy in content area meetings as well as in our classrooms." This approach has brought success to many of the teachers as they indicated they feel that they "are way

better teachers than we were before" due to the principal's ability to lead the instructional initiatives in the school.

The principal's tenacity and endless pursuit to maintain this culture cannot be underestimated. Through the visitations to the school, several field notes and reflections regarding the observations uncovered several moments where it would have been the easier route to allow a staff member to not follow his vision or the instructional philosophy set forth. However, in the effort to uphold the vision created for the school, the principal was a true leader. He redirected staff when needed; he used every opportunity when meeting with staff to ask how (as a team) they could all be better for all kids, and shared with others his knowledge (i.e. developing rapport with students, creating independence in the classroom so that there would be independence in the homework) in how to meet the diverse student needs within the school. The principal used his role to foster new understandings and beliefs about meeting the needs of diverse learners by creating opportunities for both teachers and students to find success in their efforts. This could be observed during the faculty meeting that allowed various staff to communicate initiatives within the school as well as during a grade level meeting when he led a discussion that was a course correction at the start of a unit when he noticed through his classroom walkthroughs that the students were not doing the type of work required of the current writing unit. Each time observed, the principal could have taken an easier option of teaching the way they had for years, but he challenged the teachers to do what was intended and what could provide the students with an opportunity to engage in appropriate, rigorous expectations.

Coupling. Coupling is the practice of using an education reform to advance school level goals, including vision, improving student achievement, and preserving or increasing the building culture. During the study, the theme of coupling became evident when considering how the instructional leader in this study addressed educational reforms in his role as the principal. In the initial interview with the principal, the principal shared how he was charged with changing the school's instructional practices. He soon realized that he would have to deconstruct the philosophy of the school and systemically change the instructional practices, core values, and systems of the school.

Shortly after his start, the three major mandates came down from the State: ACHIEVENJ, Common Core, and PARCC assessments. Through the case study it was found that the effectiveness of initiatives in this school was due in part to a direct connection to the broader school goals. The principal assessed the requirements of the mandates and worked to tie these initiatives into his vision for the school. For example, the Common Core was used to implement the rigorous standards found in the curriculum created by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Without the implementation of the Common Core, the principal indicated that the teachers believed that the standards were too rigorous. Additionally, when implementing these standards, the principal was able to use the teacher evaluation system (ACHIEVENJ) to hold teachers accountable for implementing the curriculum and instructional practices that support the curriculum with fidelity. Through the capacity-building supports and building level autonomy (the principal as instructional leader), the required mandates were able to meet their intended goal of improving student achievement.

During the interview with the principal, he indicated that he has been leading in an "evolutionary manner," responding to the students and their needs by identifying best practices and implementing the practices as needed. The evolutionary manner is approached through analyzing student data. For example, the teachers administer a reading benchmark to each student in the school individually. Through these findings, the team of literacy teachers meets to review how the reading skills should be taught, how students can be grouped, and which students may need more time on task whether through additional instruction from the literacy coach or through summer learning opportunities.

The principal intentionally tied the mandates to meet the needs of his school and to convince those that challenged his vision to create a rationale for the change thus improving student and teacher achievement. With the initiatives seen as part of the work the faculty was already doing, teachers were not overwhelmed by the intricacies of the initiatives but rather saw them as an opportunity to continue to be exemplars of what the initiatives sought to accomplish.

Previous research studies argue principals need to create a culture and climate that embraces and respects evaluator feedback (Fisher, Frey & Pumpian, 2012; Marzano et al., 2011; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Senge et al., 2000). The principal identified his vision as focusing on the needs of students and matching instructional practices to meet these needs. The principal indicated his work to increase instructional practices was significantly influenced by "inspecting what you expect" and having tough conversations with teachers when needed. As indicated by the principal, ACHIEVENJ has helped take his vision of this work to "a new place." Regular visits to classrooms afforded the

principal structured opportunities to improve the practice of his teachers and monitor the learning of students. Through my observations of the principal, I noted that principal takes exact notes on the teacher's actions. He then deconstructs the notes, emphasizing both areas of success and areas of growth for the teacher. He then ties these notes to the progress of the students in the room as indicated by both their participation and their benchmark data. This process of walkthroughs provides the teachers with more frequent feedback that is specific and timely, since the feedback is sent immediately in an electronic format. The principal then follows up with conversations when needed, either when he or the teacher requests to meet.

The principal in this study took coupling to a deep level of implementation. Districts throughout the State of New Jersey were required to select an evaluation framework that best matched the work their school was doing as well as the vision they had for instruction. The district in this study selected the Marzano Instructional Framework. The framework can be used in isolation to create a common language about instruction. However, the principal in this study made sure the workshop model was not seen as separate from the evaluation tool. The principal took the time to embed the workshop model within Marzano's Framework creating alignment for teachers to visualize how the two were synonymous. If the workshop model was seen as separate from the evaluation tool, the ramifications would have been an elimination of the workshop model, thus negatively impacting the principal's vision for instruction in his school. Coupled together, the instructional framework and workshop model became the theory of action for faculty and positively impacted student learning and enhanced student achievement.

The principal carefully took the time to demonstrate to the staff and district administrators how the workshop model aligned with the evaluation model. This resulted in a coupling of practices and created a common language for instruction. Evidence of this work was observed during the discussions the principal had with other administrators about expectations and ensuring that their observations were consistent with that of the principal. In the conversations with administrators and trainings with teachers, he consistently demonstrated how the workshop model aligned with the evaluation tool. Contrary to the findings in Derrington and Campbell's (2015) study, the principal in this study demonstrates a deep understanding of the evaluation tool and effectively implements the demands of the new teacher evaluation model. His use of the model has accomplished the goal of the mandate and further supported his vision, which is to improve teacher instruction thus improving student achievement.

Principal as learner. In the beginning of the principal's time in this school, the teachers within the school challenged the rigor the principal's vision relative to curriculum standards. Through a partnership with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, the principal has identified rigorous standards for the students and has aligned increased expectations with the appropriate training for teachers to meet these goals. This work required teachers to give up some of the activities once thought appropriate (i.e. various arts and crafts or seasonal projects, requiring students to write to a prompt, and only engaging students in books that were read aloud by the teacher) and shift their work to students identifying topics for writing they are interested in and choosing books that are not only readable for them but also spark their interest. With much of the Common

Core focusing on rigorous products for students, the principal coupled the Common Core expectations with his vision for instruction, ensuring the work is student created work.

Additionally, the principal responds by ensuring that teachers have access to professional development that addresses these topics and the instructional resources that are matched to each student. The principal also identifies key areas that the teachers need to ensure their readiness for students and builds upon this work year after year. For example, teachers have learned the steps to deliver a mini-lesson five years ago, however this year; the focus is on enhancing the explicit modeling of the skill by the teacher. The principal deconstructed the mini-lesson for teachers and identified an area that could be improved upon so that their teaching would "stick" with students more. This approach ensures that the topic is a tangible success for staff and that he provides regular feedback on this topic through his daily walkthroughs of their classrooms.

Systemic planning. The three themes of vision, coupling, and principal as learner were used in a layered approach to build a resilient school able to meet the needs of their students. Instructional leadership in this study encompasses a number of leadership areas from articulating a vision, job-embedded coaching of staff, monitoring performance, and allowing for a reflective cycle of inquiry. Keeping this in mind, the culture within the district and the principal's vision in this study were found to be instrumental in staying ahead of the curve. The principal created a culture that embraces a philosophy of continued growth and collaboration within and among teachers. The structures the principal has created for articulation and on the job professional development has created a group of teachers that are ready for any mandate focused on improving their practice and increasing student achievement because they are already in that mindset. The

principal used these mandates as a stepping block to enhance his vision and accomplish teacher buy-in faster than first believed.

The principal's approaches to addressing educational reforms align to Earl and Katz's (2006) theory of action:

> The "theory of action" underlying large-scale reform policy agenda…is that once schools have the necessary data, educators will be in a position to diagnose areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. They will then adjust structures and practices in ways that will impact positively on student learning and this, in turn, will lead to enhance student achievement for all students. Thus, the capacity requirement underlying such policies is that educators know how to use data in order to make the necessary consequent decisions (p. 7).

Through the school leadership team's regular use of data and their review of the school's progress each spring, the team is able to identify key areas of focus and tailor professional development opportunities to ensure teacher readiness. The principal's ability to ask questions of his faculty (i.e. how can we share more information with parents, how can we meet the new students' needs, and how can we improve based on last year's students performed), rather than providing answers, added to a deep analysis of student and teacher achievement outcomes.

Finding 2: Alignment of Espoused Beliefs and Theory in Action

The second area the research explored was how a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leader's actions when bringing about change in their school. The analysis of the findings using Lambert's (1998) Leadership Capacity Survey identified seven leadership capacities that were identified as skills the principal can teach others. Through a review of the qualitative and quantitative findings, specific actions coded in the qualitative findings were aligned to the principal's skills identified in the leadership capacity survey.

Argyris and Schön (1974) define espoused theory as a theory of action that a person is committed to and communicates to others about behavior. The goal for leaders is to become more effective in their interactions and be reflective of their theories in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974). The principal in this study was able to maximize interactions among his members by creating a school leadership team to help manage change and transitions within the school. Additionally, the principal has been able to focus his own role to include attention in the classrooms and on professional development that supports the needs he identifies when completing both formal and informal observations in the classroom. His collaboration with the literacy coach confirms his findings in the area of literacy as well as his collaboration with the teacher of social success/skills when considering programing in the school. Other principals can use the findings as opportunities to reflect on how they can improve their leadership capacities to include the leadership structures that are established within their schools, use of observational data to inform decision making, and improve the overall school community through a collaborative approach to leadership.

In the following sections, the seven capacities of the principal's leadership are condensed and defined. The definitions are followed by further discussion to expand the understanding of how the principal's capacities are related to his practice. Additional knowledge of each discipline is then offered for principals to reflect upon.

Broad-based participation and skillful participation in leadership. Lambert (1998) describes these two capacities as being the essence of leadership. The capacities involve creating the structures and processes for participation and opportunities for others to become skillful participants (Lambert, 1998). The capacities that were identified

through the survey by the principal and correlated by the teachers' responses within these two domains include: organizing the school to maximize interactions among members and managing change and transitions.

When considering your role as a principal, you must first ask yourself, "What is my ultimate vision of a school?" Some principals ask themselves, "If my child were to attend my school, what would I want it to be?" Thinking about these questions begins to create your vision for your school. The principal in this study began with his vision, but also grew this vision by working collaboratively with staff members whom he identified were "like-minded." The vision for this school was to create a child-centered environment that continuously shifts to meet the needs of the student.

The principal evaluated how he could use the teachers' skills to achieve the greatest results. The first step in this evaluation was identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the staff. The principal asked himself based on his analysis of the teachers, what were individual teachers good at…what were their strengths in instruction? In first grade, these teachers were organized into content specialists or departmentalized for those who may be more familiar with secondary education. Organizing teachers in this manner allowed the school leadership team to analyze student data at a deeper level since there were less teacher variables to consider (rather than fourteen teachers teaching language arts, there were now seven), and then target professional opportunities because they were able to assert teacher pedagogical needs based upon student performance relative to curricular standards. When principals and leadership teams can identify root causes, the potential to close student achievement gaps becomes more realistic.

Thinking of teachers as content area specialists established the need to consider how articulation, professional development, and school structures would occur. These considerations produced the Leadership Flowchart in Figure 3 or infrastructure of leadership. The principal was able to consider whom he was going to identify as teacher leaders or skillful participants and what the structures and processes for participation would entail. Identifying leaders within the school (i.e. school leadership team, committees, grade level coordinators, literacy coach, and content area coordinators) and creating a clear delineation of articulation inherently creates systems for ensuring the principal can articulate his vision and expectations. This also provides the leadership with the opportunity to ensure that there is an opportunity for reflection in a systems theory approach. Ma (2004) posits systems theory is based on the idea that the world is a web of interrelationships with complex dynamics. Leading a school is creating a web where the interrelationships of the decisions made have a significant impact on the ultimate outcome: student achievement. The systemic thinking in leadership decisions process is shared in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Systemic thinking in leadership decisions
Note: All systems are represented as equally important.

Annually revisiting each aspect of the systems that are in place and reflecting on the progress allows the leadership team to maintain true to the mantra among the staff, "purposeful change-continuous maintenance." The changes to come in the future will be based on how the students are achieving. Through this systems approach, the principal is creating the opportunity for his school leadership teams to reflect on their actions and collectively determine the next steps to improve student achievement. The continuous maintenance ensures that the changes are experienced in an evolutionary manner moving forward, rather than experiencing a complete revolution throughout the school community.

Roles and responsibilities represent broad involvement and collaboration. Lambert (1998) discusses this leadership capacity as developing the opportunity for

growth in individual capacity that brings about a change in self-perception and one's own role. As the roles change, new behaviors emerge and old responses no longer matter (Lambert, 1998). Teachers in this type of environment will no longer see themselves as responsible for their own classroom, but the success of the school as a whole (Lambert, 1998). In this study, the principal's own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the overall education profession. The principal regularly models lessons for teachers. He provides opportunities for teachers to grow in his presence, practice on their own, and then demonstrate later through observations and walkthroughs how they are implementing the changes and attending to student achievement.

Furthermore, teachers are performing dual roles within the school, acting as leaders and experts within their own school environment. For example, a teacher has become the literacy coach, another teacher became the teacher of social success, and several other teachers serve as grade level chairs, content leaders, and committee chair people. The creativity the principal demonstrated in thinking about staff affords the opportunity to change previous ideas of traditional primary school settings and create an environment of growth mindset aimed at improving student achievement.

Reflective practice/ innovation as norm. Lambert (1998) contends that reflection must become an integral part of a school and include: a reflection on beliefs, assumptions, and past practice; reflection in action, in practice; and collective reflection during dialogue and in coaching relationships. The principal indicated that he performs highly in the area of providing his teachers access to outside networks, resources, personnel, and time. This was found through the principal's commitment to engaging

teachers in the work with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, creating partnerships with outside presenters in the area of social emotional learning, and developing partnerships with nearby schools to share practices and reflect on the growth of the school.

These partnerships have created opportunities for teachers to perform outside of traditional teacher roles such as the teacher of social success, the literacy coach, and the creation of positive behavioral supports in schools committee. The principal supported each of these areas of reflective practice and innovation and everyone involved was provided latitude to grow within their role and develop models for best practices over a five-year period of time.

The principal indicated that the purposeful change aspect of the school's work has been completed, but the continuous maintenance is where they are; indicating that individuals are still growing in their work. This philosophy also creates a belief that growth is purposeful, intentional, and never-ending. The principal indicated that it is important that when establishing this type of culture that teachers are able to attempt practices, collaborate with one another, and receive feedback without fear of evaluation from their principal or other district administrator. The principal indicated his role becomes vital when creating enough isolation for staff from outside interference. Additionally, the principal discussed the need to grow in his own knowledge through professional development that included learning side by side his teachers to be able to support teachers in an autonomous manner.

High student achievement. Lambert (1998) posits "the central focus of any school must be teaching and learning" (p. 23). Furthermore, the learning needs to be

viewed as authentic, based on real tasks that have a relationship to work and life in society or in the family (Lambert, 1998). The principal indicated that he can teach others to design, coach, and assesses authentic curriculum and instruction so students can learn. Furthermore, he has redesigned roles and structures to sustain resiliency in children. Evidence in the study indicated the principal has articulated a child-centered instructional philosophy, removed a "textbook mentality" from his school, monitors benchmark data, and created opportunities for teachers to become content experts and deliver instruction as such. The content expert component of instruction delivery challenges traditional philosophies of early childhood education, but provides teachers with the necessary skillset to ensure that children are mastering more rigorous curriculum standards than once believed. While this philosophy may not be suitable in all school settings, the school leadership team voiced their ability to think outside of traditional theories is the ultimate skillset that helps them to identify how to create theories that meet the needs of their unique region, school, students, and staff.

Finding 3: Behaviors and Skills for New Principals

The research investigated a final area of how new principals can use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices as instructional leaders. A checklist was created for principals to use when establishing and refining instructional leadership practices (Appendix F). Using qualitative data findings from the interview with the principal, observations in the field, document analysis, and focus group, the theme of the principal as the "leader ship" and creation of a school leadership team will be discussed. An additional theme of creating a child-centered school will be discussed through the lens of leadership techniques to bring about these changes. Finally,

developing the principal's role to be seen as the community's principal and the benefits of expanding the principal role, as a collaborator with the parents will be discussed.

"Leader ship." The principal shared his philosophy of leadership as the ship out in front of other ships. The principal also discussed the importance of developing a following or in his words a "commitment group." As he reflected upon his commitment group, he emphasized the importance of a principal taking their time developing this group to ensure that they have a leadership capacity as well as the capacity to understand the work at hand. The principal's final sentiment was ensuring those that you identify as your next tier of leaders all share your vision for the work and are comfortable and capable of delivering the message with fidelity.

This philosophy of leadership teaches us that leadership is thoughtful and focuses on building relationships that are grounded in respect for individual, respect for school, and respect for collaboration for a common good. When a principal is intentional about the work and is committed to putting in the long-term work needed to improve the school's system, the teachers within the organization should benefit. Once the course is chartered, the principal is expected to be the captain or leader. The teachers indicated that their feeling that their principal will stay the course or be the last to go down with the ship has made them more likely to take the risks necessary to complete a successful mission.

School leadership team. The principal has developed a school leadership team that is comprised of teacher leaders and is an extension of him. Represented on the school leadership team are the grade level and content area coordinators. Serving as the only administrator on site, the need for the teacher leaders is necessary to ensure that the staff

of 85 teachers, counselor, nurse, child study team and related service providers understands the expectations at any given time. Leaders that establish systems within a school find success because they created an infrastructure of communication, fidelity to the vision, and systems to ensure the focus on student achievement are not lost.

The principal indicated that the development of the school leadership team has also been instrumental when bringing about change to the school. When the principal took over, he was charged to change the instructional and curricular philosophies within the school. In doing so, much of the internal structures needed to change or be created to develop purposeful action to increase student achievement. The internal structures included a clear chain of command that teachers can find out information, a specific teaching philosophy that targets differentiated instruction, and the creation of positions that support students in the classroom.

Meaningful leadership incorporates multiple layers of commitment groups that ensure the various perspectives of stakeholders are involved in effective change and the maintenance of the work. The principal indicated his belief of developing a commitment group otherwise known as the school leadership team and committee chair people. The principal indicated that by working collaboratively and having multiple individuals to deliver the message while also working to refine the message and practices allows multi-faceted, systemic changes possible in a short period of time. Additionally, the principal's ability to embrace the insights of practitioners helped to refine the determined theories of action to meet the unique needs of students.

Furthermore, transformational leaders develop a deep commitment within their organization by motivating and rewarding others to work collaboratively and

interdependently toward a goal. The principal's use of the school leadership team structure has positively influenced a culture of engagement that through my observations and review of the new leadership structures did not once exist. The staff has become willing to take instructional risks, partner with one another to improve student achievement, and ensure their ability to meet the needs of their diverse student population.

A child-centered environment producing higher student achievement. When serving as the principal of the elementary school in this district, a major concern I had centered on the student achievement results, specifically in reading. Reading benchmark data showed that less than 40% of exiting first grade students could read on grade level. Reviewing the benchmark data shared at the beginning of this study, the school currently exits students from grade one reading on grade level at a consistent rate of 85% and higher, depending on the year. By transitioning the school's philosophy and instructional practices to a child-centered approach, the principal indicated he and his teachers have been effective at improving student achievement.

The school implemented systemic change in their approach to instruction in their school. Five years ago, the teachers were using a textbook, workbook, and worksheet approach to their instruction as indicated through the document review. The curriculum was specifically detailed and included pacing guides that did not allow for much teacher choice. Today the instruction throughout the building represents a workshop model approach as demonstrated in the focus group. This approach to instruction has created a structure for teachers to provide differentiated instruction to their students through the use of leveled, authentic story books and text sets, as well as, authentic student created

written work. In other words, the work students are doing is generated by their interests and delivered at their level through the use of continuums. Furthermore, the teachers deliver instruction as a content expert. This means the teachers are departmentalized to target professional development, PLCs, and collaboration/planning opportunities. Collectively, the principal's work to ensure teachers understand their content rather than relying on a textbook, ensuring student choice in the work, and affording primary school teachers the opportunity to become content experts has increased student achievement.

The school has had a history of being a Project School with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. They have worked with a senior staff developer to create a climate of learning between teachers that includes a labsite approach or job-embedded professional development that showcases teachers in their classrooms and then coaches visiting teachers on the spot. In addition, the principal models lessons for teachers in their classrooms, coaches them daily, and "inspects what he expects" by regularly examining the student products. Furthermore, there is a monthly articulation schedule within the structures of the school that affords teachers on a daily basis to engage in topics relative to curriculum, instructional practices, and student achievement. The sum of the principal's efforts is affording teachers professional development opportunities that are focused on instructional techniques and understanding the developmental expectations of students. By creating an environment that focuses on instructional practices and developmental expectations, rigorous instructional practices can be implemented regardless of the curriculum and textbooks chosen. The principal believes that this intrinsic approach to change will have everlasting results within each teacher, rather than only an impact while he is present.

In addition to attending to the curricular and instructional needs of the school, the principal also engages staff to attend to the social and emotional needs of the students. While students experienced a shift in their academic experience when the principal began his tenure, the focus on social and emotional needs has been able to also gain traction. The students engage in morning workshops with their parents through iMom and AllPro Dad, several evening workshops that focus on parenting, and learning side by side their parent in the classroom. The principal identifies the combination of this work as advocacy. His voice, commitment to change, and continuous presence in each classroom has created an opportunity for the principal to advocate for the needs of all learners.

The principal shared he believes his role is to help parents, the primary educator in their child's life. The principal has immersed himself in the community. Part of this immersion comes from being committed to the school district. The principal has spent all fifteen years of his career in this district. Beyond the time in the district, the principal volunteers his time to give back to the community as a coach. Furthermore, the principal shares his philosophy and the changes occurring within the school at various parent meetings. The high volume of parents attending events within the school has demonstrated that parents have bought into the principal as their leader. By establishing a system for communicating with parents and creating opportunities for them to have input into their own children's learning, the principal believes he increasing the opportunity for students to come to school better prepared and ready to learn. If the school attempted to do the work of educating diverse students alone and did not focus on creating a child-centered environment, the overall student achievement results would mirror the previous results.

Overall, the systemic approach to implementing the principal's vision is yielding the high student achievement results. It is not parents, instructional practices, leadership and communication systems, professional development opportunities, or unique use of staff in the school in isolation that is yielding higher student achievement results. It is the principal's ability to orchestrate this work to interact with each component that is yielding the improved results.

Findings and Extension of the Knowledge in Discipline

While it may seem as though the findings only offer to confirm the literature, I found that this is actually an extension of the knowledge in discipline. The literature review and the conceptual framework offer isolated suggestions for leaders to consider when embarking upon their role as a principal. It is the thoughtful, systematic implementation of the various theories that sets this principal apart from his peers and can be a further consideration of "how to" establish a leadership framework that attends to the various needs of a school.

When considering a systems theory approach, principals first understand that every educational practice is a system and that schools are a web of interrelationships with complex dynamics (Ma, 2004). The principal began by positioning himself in the core of the instructional work as evidence in Figure 3. From there, he considered how he would create a leadership team through a shared leadership approach that believed in creating a culture of taking risks to meet the demands of their diverse student population (Finnigan, 2012; Spillane, 2015). The leadership team was able to identify the important areas necessary for their work to improve the achievement of their students (Earl & Katz, 2006; Senge, 2000). These areas included: instructional practices including

departmentalization and content experts, an emphasis on meeting students at their current academic levels, the inclusion of job-embedded professional development, building level autonomy in curricular and programming decisions, aligning teacher evaluation systems to the instructional work, aligning state and federal initiatives to this work to ensure financial support for implementation, and ensuring on-going reflection and improvement within the work (Calkins, 2012; DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Fisher et al., 2012; Fullan, 2007; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; and Putnam et al., 2009). With each area, the principal and teacher leaders aligned these practices to the steps in Fullan's (2011) leadership framework ensuring that their work was implemented in such a way that it would be purposeful and endure the continuous changes of future state initiatives.

The principal in this study extended what we already know about the discipline of instructional leadership by demonstrating how to implement this work. It is one thing to understand each of the theories in the conceptual framework or the literature review in isolation. It is a completely different expectation of principals to take the number of theories and orchestrate them in a way that provides for an interconnected web of best practices and an on-going attention to outcomes that improve student achievement. In short, if the principal relied on one area of theory, he would not be able to transcend the limitations of the theory and would fail to meet the many needs of students required when truly establishing a child-centered school environment.

Implications of Findings

Principals/ Future Principals

As new principals enter the field of educational leadership, they are entering a climate of high accountability and concerns of public trust in the educational environment. A novice administrator's transition to the principal's office will be as challenging as ever. Novice leaders will need to understand the depth of their responsibilities and have the ability to conceptualize the relationship between instructional and administrative practices as the principal in this study was able to achieve. In order to be effective at this challenging work, novice leaders will need to align themselves with transformational leadership behaviors and understand how the importance of these practices have on teacher motivation--a teacher's belief that they could improve student performance in the face of accountability practices. It will be the principal's ability to orchestrate the following elements identified into a vision that considers the ideas presented in a systemic fashion (understanding that no one area can be forgotten or less attended to) that will positively impact the school environment, faculty, families, and ultimately our students' achievement.

School Culture

The principal has created a school culture that embraces a child-centered philosophy. This culture requires a "continuous maintenance" philosophy approach. When considering the work of administrators, they are consistently balancing the needs of their students and staff. In some school cultures, when the principal takes a position of putting the child first, the ramifications with their staff can be quite negative. However, this principal has found success with both teachers and students because the principal's

belief in his teachers proved to be a source of encouragement for the staff and resulted in a whatever it takes philosophy that garnered student academic achievement.

The culture created by a principal must be deeply rooted. The findings in this study indicate that while principals can put practices into place such as school leadership teams or literacy coaches, it will be how the principal acts and follows through that will be emulated by the faculty. Therefore, it is the work of reflection on the part of the principal to ensure they are walking the walk of the culture they demand. They must ask themselves often if they are meeting the expectations that they have for others. One way to engage in the practice is to reflect with a colleague about recent decisions. The principal in this study could be regularly seen reflecting with other administrators as well as the teacher leadership within the committees and overall school leadership team.

It is up to the principal to maintain the trust of their teachers for the change to be successful and for a culture focused on student achievement to occur. The principal in this study has worked side by side with teachers to understand exactly what he was asking them to do. It would be easy for the staff to say that what was being asked of them was impossible, but the principal's commitment to the work, engagement in professional development, and allocation of resources to efforts that afford teachers to continuously grow is what is making an impact on the progress within the school. Thus the role of the principal becomes vital for creating the culture within the school. When a principal can develop their confidence for this work, the change in the school's culture will have positive, lasting effects that carry over into the classroom and transcend the difficulty some may find in the rigors of teaching in the 21st century.

Leadership Structures

This research study outlined several ways for principals to create the leadership structures within their schools. The principal uses a school leadership team and committee structure to further his vision, instructional philosophies, and school culture. The most important reminders for new principals are: be thoughtful and take your time when establishing your leadership team; monitor that your message is delivered appropriately by watching the leaders in their own classrooms and when the leaders are engaged with other faculty; and do not be afraid to change members of the leadership team when the message becomes askew as found in this study.

When creating a committee structure, principals have the opportunity to embrace the skills and gifts of their staff. While committee chair people are important, they are not as critical as your school leadership team. This is an opportunity to provide upcoming leaders with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and for the principal to evaluate if they could be a future member of the leadership team.

When principals are confident in their own skillset and role within the school, they can resist a natural instinct of having to do and lead it all. When multiple leaders are allowed within a school, the positive change at the school will become change plans that are shifted out of philosophy and include the how-to details that teachers need to be successful. In addition, teachers will feel embraced within the process thus more receptive to work collaboratively with their leaders.

Professional Development

When principals are considering professional development, the findings suggest that principals consider creating systems that engage their teachers in professional

development that are job-embedded, focus on specific teaching strategies, and are connected to student achievement outcomes. Principals also need to consider an important aspect to professional development practices: collaboration. An environment of collaboration begins with the principal. Teachers need to feel comfortable to take risks without consequences. Once the teachers in this setting felt comfortable to learn and take risks, they indicated they had a passion to improve their practice. Creating a collaborative culture opens up opportunities to engage in job-embedded professional development with groups of teachers rather than on an individual basis. Furthermore, teachers become trainers themselves as they develop their expertise in the desired practices. With a collaborative culture, the "new experts" become comfortable to share their classroom practices with others. Teachers within the study stated they are far better teachers now that their principal is their leader because they now have a passion for learning and outgrowing themselves.

In this study, the principal has created a variety of professional development opportunities. The teachers meet weekly within their professional learning communities. The professional learning community work is centered on learning new practices, rather than talking. Teachers can be found providing turn-key trainings and then reviewing student data results to indicate the success of their work or to identify areas of additional professional growth.

Professional learning communities are coupled with meetings with content area coordinators each week. The content area coordinator ensures that they work with staff to communicate the academic goals and instructional practices to meet the new rigorous standards. Additionally, teachers engage in follow-up meetings throughout the month that

focus on preparing lessons and ensuring their understanding of the appropriate student outcomes.

Through the use of a literacy coach, the principal has created labsite days for teachers. The labsites afford teachers the opportunity to learn teaching techniques and the depth of the curriculum expectations in a job embedded approach. Additionally, teachers throughout the school have begun to host the labsites based on areas of their expertise and have trained their colleagues to grow in these areas. When a growth-mindset is created in schools, the growth in teacher capacity will transcend to students. Like the teachers in this school, teachers with principals that can accomplish this type of change will have the opportunity to push past the muck of thinking students can't learn and will develop a renewed passion for students and their potential.

Student Achievement

The principal has been able to improve student achievement in this study by ensuring that students are met at their current academic levels. The instructional practices implemented follow a workshop model that affords a specific framework for differentiation. The principal did not just tell teachers to differentiate their instruction, but he sought out a framework with sound instructional practices that guides teachers in a specific way to meet these expectations. Through a gradual release model, the students are responsible for their learning, increase their achievement of concepts, and develop independence as a learner, at the youngest of school years: Kindergarten and Grade 1.

As new leaders take on the ultimate responsibility of the role of principal, they will be faced with pressures to conform to a test prep attitude among many educators. However, one of the implications of the findings in this study will be challenging new

principals to maintain a child-centered philosophy. Ensuring the protection of our students to be children and met at their developmentally appropriate stages in our accountability driven society should be seen by principals as a foundational social justice priority. When principals stay the course to meet students where they are, schools have the potential to produce better long-term outcomes rather than short-term gains that test-driven mindsets sometimes produce.

Policy

While state mandates may be implemented across the country, departments of education cannot mandate a culture within a school. The mandates can emphasize student achievement, improvement of teacher practice, and tools to monitor student attainment of rigorous academic expectations, but for these mandates to truly be successful, principals whom see themselves as instructional leaders are vital to the success of the mandate. This study demonstrated how a principal, whom is an instructional leader, embraced these mandates and made them a part of his vision, but without his emphasis on a child-centered culture, the success sought in the mandates is going to vary from school to school.

When developing policies, departments of education should consider capacity building among its leaders just like principals are encouraged to develop capacity among their teachers (Honig & Coburn, 2008). Included in the roll-out of the initiative should be further work with leaders to ensure that the intention of the department of education becomes the espoused belief and theory of action of its educational leaders throughout the state. When the departments of education can work in this manner, the potential for success of such mandates may result in better results of putting theories into practice.

Recommendations

Knowing what I now know is true; the following sections will outline my recommendations for principals in their daily practices as instructional leaders. The first set of recommendations will focus on specific practices to accomplish a child-centered environment. The second set of recommendations will discuss establishing systems to create an infrastructure that principals should create to carry out their vision and commitment to advocacy for children.

Practice

The following are recommendations for improving principal practices when working to accomplish child-centered environments:

1. A child-centered environment will not be accomplished without a vision and commitment on behalf of the principal to accomplish this goal. New principals in districts should develop strategic plans with their school leadership teams that are grounded in this philosophy. Several times throughout the year, the school leadership teams should acquire data from stakeholders and monitor the implementation of this work in their school environment.
2. The hiring of new principals should discuss the commitment of developing a child-centered environment. Potential principals should be required to demonstrate their experience with breaking down adult-centered cultures and explore their commitment to this philosophy when faced with adversity. When principals with no administrative background are hired, mentoring relationships focused on the how-to of this work should be established within the district.

3. While principal evaluations address culture and student achievement, often superintendents evaluate these skills in isolation of one another. The principal in this study has demonstrated how a school's culture can directly impact student achievement. It is recommended that when using internal evaluation tools, superintendents couple these two areas as having an impact on one another. The scores in these areas on the principal evaluation tool should be dependent on the other and feedback provided to the principal should address both aspects to demonstrate for the principal how to accomplish this goal.

4. A main barrier to being successful when accomplishing a culture that is child-centered are the adults. It is recommended that principals reflect upon their practices and identify moments when decisions were made in favor of the adults (i.e. removing a child from their classroom into another classroom). When these areas are identified, the principals should develop a plan for improving the teachers' instructional and social and emotional learning practices.

Leadership

The following are recommendations for, new principals to consider when implementing leadership frameworks within their schools:

1. Principals are encouraged to consider the configuration of their leadership team. They should ask themselves how they intend to deliver their vision in a systemic manner that ensures a shared leadership approach. Responsibilities for teacher leaders should be explicitly detailed in the plan. This recommendation will ensure a shared leadership approach as illustrated in Figure 3.
2. Once a shared leadership configuration is created, it is recommended that

principals consider the role of reflection in achieving the vision and goals identified for their school. The reflection and then future planning should include a systemic approach to this work as illustrated in Figure 4.

3. As an instructional leader it is important to consider how you will build capacity in others to carry out the work you envision. It is recommended that teachers are trained in a job-embedded fashion. As found in the research, the use of coaches, labsite training, and the development of teachers as collaborators are examples of accomplishing this recommendation.

4. Principals should seek partnerships with universities as a collaborative method with experts in the instructional practices, curriculum development, and data discussions as a means to improve student achievement. This collaborative work can then continue with other school districts in a consortium fashion to provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own practices, share their practices with others, and grow from one another.

Policy

The following are recommendations for education policy:

1. Policies could be created to include a certain portion of personnel funding to attend to the creation of positions that are beyond classroom teachers. When considering models of professional growth and development, teachers could benefit from the professional development other professions have that include labsites or rounds such as doctors where options for instruction are explored. Additionally, many students can benefit from the role of teacher of social success that supports them in the social and emotional growth as they mature. The

positions mandated through policy could include coaches for both staff and students.

2. At the publication of this paper, the Governor has removed the mandate of the Common Core. However, many districts have maintained this work in their schools due to the millions of dollars spent on the conversion of curricula. It is recommended that when implementing policy changes that have a significant financial and instructional impact that a protective safeguard is built into the policy to allow the change to be in place for a minimum amount of time.

Research

Considering the findings, discussion, and limitations of the study, the following are recommendations for future research studies:

1. Additional quantitative studies may need to be conducted to determine the effect of child-centered cultures in an accountability driven climate in education. For example, additional case studies could be completed so the results can be tied to this study. The results may further support the use of the strategies posed in this study. The studies could also assist principals whom may be struggling with the implementation of the initiatives in their schools.
2. The schools in the State of New Jersey have participated in a series of reforms over the past five years that were interconnected. With the first results of the PARCC released in January, 2016, a series of studies should occur to reflect upon the impact the Common Core, Teacher Evaluation, and PARCC Assessments have had on student achievement, teacher practice, and the culture and climate of schools. Schools that have done well with

implementation could be selected as case studies to impact the next steps decided in the New Jersey Department of Education. Determining the root causes of their success with implementation could further improve New Jersey schools and therefore be used to improve schools across the country (Honig & Rainey, 2012).

Conclusion

This study demonstrated a number of ways for principals to implement State mandated initiatives to ultimately improve student achievement, including developing a vision, coupling your vision with the mandates, creating shared leadership opportunities for teacher leaders, the impact of a school's culture, and improving instructional practices through transformational leadership practices. The practices shared can help principals conceptualize the relationship between their role and the instructional practices that occur in each classroom throughout their school building. Those intending to be principals can consider how to develop their own skillset, just like this principal did when he was a vice principal, to ensure they are ready to assume the ultimate responsibility of the principal position. Additionally, the study confirmed the impact principals have on a teacher's motivation and belief that they can take risks to outgrow themselves as practitioners and therefore have a positive impact on student achievement. The climate a principal creates for such work is vital to the success of all students.

In light of the findings, the most important aspect of consideration is for principals to reflect on how their work in the areas discussed focuses on the changing needs of their students. If the children with whom we are charged to serve are at the center of our work, principals will find that because they are ensuring the school is

responsive to their student's needs, the school will always be evolving, ahead of any mandates the State could create, and continuously improving student achievement.

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Appendix A

Research Design Steps & Research Question Alignment

Research Design Steps & Research Question Alignment			
Step	***Research Technique***	***Activity***	***Research Question Alignment***
Step 1 Quantitative	Survey	• Leadership Inventory Completed by Principal	• What does the leader espouse? • Research Question 2
Step 2 Qualitative	Interview Field Notes	• Interview Protocol established after review of the leadership inventory. • Use of Swivl to capture interview.	• How does the principal address educational reforms? • Research Question 1 • What are his dispositions/ characteristics or style? • Research Question 2 • What are best practices to be shared with new principals? • Research Question 3
Step 3 Qualitative	Observation Field Notes	• Shadow the principal throughout the course of two days.	• How do the principal's actions align with his espoused beliefs? • Research Question 2 • How is he addressing educational reforms in his role as a principal? • Research Question 1

Step 4 Qualitative	Document Analysis Field Notes	• Documents to be explored are meeting agendas, minutes, professional development planning, review of curricula work, infrastructure configurations, and teacher leader job descriptions. • Copies of key documents will be collected as artifacts.	• How do the principal's actions align with his espoused beliefs? • Research Question 2 • How is he addressing educational reforms in his role as a principal? • Research Question 1
Step 5 Quantitative	Survey	• Teachers will be surveyed using a tool created based on the findings in the previous four steps.	• How do teachers view the leader? Do they align with the data collected from the data collected in the first four steps? • Research Question 2
Convergence of Data			
Step 6 Qualitative	Participant Observation Field Notes	• Shadow the principal throughout the course of two days. • Use of Swivl to capture faculty meetings or interactions with staff in office.	• How do the principal's actions align with his espoused beliefs? • Research Question 2 • How is he addressing educational reforms in his role as a principal? • Research Question 1 • Based upon my experiences as a participant researcher, what areas would I

			include in guiding new principals? • Research Question 3
Step 7 Qualitative	Focus Group	• Through survey results and identification of teacher leaders through observations, a focus group will be established to discuss the behaviors and actions of their leader. • Use of Swivl to capture participants interactions and agreement to other participants.	• How have teachers grown with their principal as an instructional leader? • What specific beliefs do they believe all principals should espouse? • Research Questions 1, 2, 3
Step 8 Qualitative	Interview Field Notes	• Using the results of the focus group, questions will be generated to create a discussion with the principal about their practices and beliefs.	• How do their followers' perceptions influence their behaviors as a leader? Do these perceptions influence the leader's actions when bringing about change in their school? • Research Questions 1, 2, 3
Step 9 Qualitative	Participant Observation Field Notes	• Shadow the principal throughout the course of two days.	• How do the principal's actions align with his espoused beliefs? • Research Question 2 • How is he addressing educational reforms in his role as a principal? • Research Question 1

			• Based upon my experiences as a participant researcher, what areas would I include in guiding new principals? • Research Question 3
Convergence of Data			
Step 10 Qualitative	Interview Field Notes	• Using the data collected, review with the principal the anticipated outcomes of the research. • Allow principal to add and refine the outcomes of the research.	• Does the principal agree with the findings of the research? • How would he contribute further? • Research Questions 1, 2, 3

Appendix B

Leadership Capacity Survey

Leadership Capacity Survey

This is an assessment of leadership dispositions, knowledge, and skills needed to build leadership capacity in schools. It may be completed by a staff member or by a colleague who is familiar with the work of that staff member. The items are clustered by the characteristics of schools with high leadership capacity. To the right of each item is a Likert-type scale:

NO= not observed
IP= infrequently performed
FP= frequently performed
CP=consistently performed
CTO=can teach others

A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership					
1. Assists in the establishment of representative governance and work groups.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
2. Organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
3. Shares authority and resources broadly.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
4. Engages others in opportunities to lead.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
Total numbers					
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership					
5. Models, describes and demonstrates the following leadership skills					
a. Develops shared purpose of learning;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
b. Facilitates group processes;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
c. Communicates (especially listening and questioning);	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
d. Reflects on practice;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
e. Inquires into questions and issues confronting your school and community	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
f. Collaborates in planning;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
g. Manages conflict among adults;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
h. Problem solves with colleagues and students;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
i. Manages change and transitions;	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
j. Uses constructivist learning designs students and adults.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
6. Communicates through action and	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO

words the relationship between leadership and learning.					
Total numbers					
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice					
7. Engages with others in a learning cycle (reflection, dialogue, question posing, inquiry, construction of meaning, planned action).	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
8. Develops plans and schedules for the creation of shared time for dialogue and reflection.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
9. Identifies, discovers, and interprets information and school data/evidence.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
10. Designs and implements a communication system that keeps all informed and involved in securing and interpreting data.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
11. Participates with others in shared governance processes that integrate data into decision making.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
Total numbers					
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration.					
12. Own role includes attention to the classroom, the school, the community, and the profession.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
13. Observes and is sensitive to indicators that participants are performing outside traditional roles. Gives feedback to participants regarding the benefit of these changes.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
14. Develops strategies for strengthening the new relationships that will emerge from broadened roles.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
15. Develops mutual expectations and strategies for ensuring that participants share responsibility for the implementation of school community agreements.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
Total numbers					
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm					
16. Ensures that the cycle of inquiry and time schedules involve a continuous and ongoing reflective phase.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
17. Demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time and outside	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO

networks.					
18. Practices and supports innovation without expectations for early success.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
19. Encourages and participates in collaborative innovation.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
20. Engages with other innovators in developing own criteria for monitoring, assessment, and accountability regarding own individual and shared work.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
Total numbers					
F. High student achievement					
21. Works with members of the school community to establish challenging and human expectations and standards.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
22. Designs, teaches, coaches, and assesses authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that ensure that all children learn.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
23. Provides systematic feedback to children and families about student progress.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
24. Receives feedback about family learning expectations.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
25. Redesigns roles and structures to enable the school to develop and sustain resiliency in children (i.e. teacher as coach/counselor/mentor).	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
26. Ensures the learning cycle within the school includes evidence from performance-based assessment, examination of student work, and research.	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
Total numbers					

Scoring of Leadership Survey			
Domains	NO/IP	FP/CP	CTO
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership			
B. Skillful participation in the work of leadership			
C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice			
D. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration			
E. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm			
F. High student achievement			

Leadership Capacity Survey adapted from Lambert (1998).

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol

Ethical Assurance Review

This focus group has been convened after consent from each participant has been acquired. There will be a series of questions that will be asked. You only have to answer the questions that you feel comfortable with. All answers will be kept confidential or in other words will never be tied to a specific participant. When the results are used in my paper, no identifying characteristics will be tied to what you share today.

While the session will be video recorded, the researcher will be the only one to view the video. The purpose of recording the session is to assist the researcher in gathering non-verbal cues for the purpose of citing agreement between participants (i.e. nodding your head in agreement).

Please feel free to ask for clarification when a question is presented. While these are only guiding questions, additional questions may be asked for clarification purposes.

Guiding Principles/ Review of Definitions of Key Terms

The purpose of this review is to be able to establish a common language with the participants that are consistent with the terminology used in this research.

Instructional Leader: An instructional leader in this context is a building level administrator that develops the curricular, programming, and instructional philosophy of their school as well as leads the implementation and monitoring of all initiatives.

Servant Leadership: A philosophical foundation for the instructional leader is the belief of working with and for the teachers, faculty, students, and families of the school.

Shared Leadership: Instructional leaders understand the importance of working collectively with others to investigate, plan, monitor, and achieve goals for success.

Systemic Planning: Within this framework, school leaders develop change with a big picture in mind; specifically how the potential change will impact all aspects of the organization.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: The leader will guide teachers (and in turn students), parents, and other stakeholders in the use of data, drawing upon data to support the success or lack thereof implementation has had on the organization. Data-driven decision-making is defined as teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing data to inform a range of decisions aimed to improve the performance of students and schools.

Questions to Guide the Focus Group

1. Five years ago the school had a change in leadership. Can you describe the changes that have occurred over the past five years relative to school goals? Instructional practices? Shared leadership experiences? Student achievement? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

2. What practices relative to leadership were in place prior to ACHIEVENJ, Common Core, and PARCC? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

3. How has your principal coupled the current State policies with previous practices? Are there any areas that have leveraged the principal's vision for your school? If so, which ones and how? (Research Questions 1 and 3)

4. Can you describe the culture of your school relative to instructional practices? Shared leadership experiences? Student achievement? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

5. What would you describe as your principal's philosophies relative to leadership? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

6. How does he exhibit these philosophies in your daily interactions with him? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

7. Are there behaviors and skills that you have seen in your current principal that are unique to him? To the current policy initiatives? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

8. How has your principal's role in your school impacted your teachers? Students? And community? (Questions 1, 2, and 3)

Appendix D

Principal Interview Protocol

Ethical Assurance Review

This interview has been convened the principal has completed Lambert's Leadership Capacity Survey. There will be a series of questions that will be asked. The principal will determine the extent to which responses are compiled based upon his comfort level. All answers will be kept confidential. When the results are used in my paper, no identifying characteristics will be tied to what you share today.

While the session will be video recorded, the researcher will be the only one to view the video. The purpose of recording the session is to assist the researcher in gathering specificity to the responses shared.

Please feel free to ask for clarification when a question is presented. While these are only guiding questions, additional questions may be asked for clarification purposes.

Guiding Principles/ Review of Definitions of Key Terms

The purpose of this review is to be able to establish a common language with the participants that are consistent with the terminology used in this research.

Instructional Leader: An instructional leader in this context is a building level administrator that develops the curricular, programming, and instructional philosophy of their school as well as leads the implementation and monitoring of all initiatives.

Servant Leadership: A philosophical foundation for the instructional leader is the belief of working with and for the teachers, faculty, students, and families of the school.

Shared Leadership: Instructional leaders understand the importance of working collectively with others to investigate, plan, monitor, and achieve goals for success.

Systemic Planning: Within this framework, school leaders develop change with a big picture in mind; specifically how the potential change will impact all aspects of the organization.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: The leader will guide teachers (and in turn students), parents, and other stakeholders in the use of data, drawing upon data to support the success or lack thereof implementation has had on the organization. Data-driven decision-making is defined as teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing data to inform a range of decisions aimed to improve the performance of students and schools.

Questions to Guide the Interview

1. When completing the survey, are there any areas that you found you self-scored highly within? What are examples of your practices that you believe align to these areas? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

2. When completing the survey, are there any areas that you have not considered or believe are areas that you would like to focus upon? Do you believe any of these areas are not important to your role as a principal and why? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

3. What practices relative to leadership were in place prior to ACHIEVENJ, Common Core, and PARCC? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

4. How have you coupled the current State policies with previous practices? Are there any areas that have leveraged your vision for your school? If so, which ones and how? (Research Questions 1 and 3)

5. Can you describe the culture of your school relative to instructional practices? Shared leadership experiences? Student achievement? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

6. What would you describe as your philosophies relative to leadership? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

7. How do you exhibit these philosophies in your daily interactions with him? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

8. Are there behaviors and skills that you have employed that you believe set you apart from the other principals in the district? To other principals implementing the current policy initiatives? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

9. How do you believe your role in your school has impacted your teachers? Students? And community? (Questions 1, 2, and 3)

*Additional questions will be added or revisions will be made based upon the results of the survey prior to the use of this protocol.

Appendix E

Triangulation Table of Data Themes

Research Question	Theme	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3	Finding 4
1 How do today's instructional leaders address educational reforms in their role as a principal?	*Vision*	Focus Group	Principal Interview	Observation	Document Review
		"When he took over as principal, we were reminded often of the vision. He led us by being the example. He modeled what he wanted and made it very clear that every step we were going to take would be all about the children."	"We were on a learning journey." "A journey that would ask what was right for kids." "How can we make ourselves ready for kids?" "The vision I said to the staff from the start…Don't ever think we're good enough…the mindset of continued growth is really the vision we have as a staff. Decay is certain, growth is intentional. IF we are not growing, we are decaying." Also add in quote, "If you just take it from the perspective of	Conversation with staff: "We are child-centered." "This is a child centered environment." "We were once in a child centered school and that vision is no more." Discussion during visit about CST referrals.	Shaner 7

			adult centered versus student centered…" "I think one of the things that helps me recognize that we have made progress in the right direction is when someone new comes on board…" "At our last I & RS committee…" Parent conversation about "how much they love the school." "Your school is all about the kids. I can see it. I can feel it. I know it. I see what it has become." Partnership with TCRWP & Addressing Reforms "If we're not taking children's concerns seriously…." Reforms "were in place prior" but the		

			State added a "formality to the process."		
1	*"Do Not Enter Blindly*"	"leads the coaching of literacy in content area meetings" "are way better teachers than they ever were before"	"So one example, the literacy work. I was not a literacy teacher and even prior to coming here, the work that I had to do to learn…lead advocate in the literacy work for our kids." "The staff shared openly with their grade level the following: "Dan's been inviting…" "For the staff really to change they needed me to not just say this is how we're going to do it…come along with me."	"do not enter blindly" Include background of principal Principal's attendance at TCRWP Principal Kafele, Reggie Dabs, Geoffrey Canada	Book Studies: 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Whatever It Takes, How Children Succeed, End of Molasses Classes, The Art and Science of Teaching, Teach Like a Pirate
1	*Coupling*		"I was charged with…changing the school's instructional practices. The core work required me to	Creating buy-in with staff was shared during discussions.	Leadership Infrastructure

			look through the lens of how do I systemically change an entire structure of a school."		
1	*AchieveNJ*	Conversations w/ Principal about Instruction through Observations.	"ACHIEVENJ has driven a lot in terms of trying to drive the conversation about instruction. Our conversations after an observation, ACHIEVENJ has taken it to a new place."	Principal & Supervisor of Preschool- discussion about supervisor's observation. Co-observation and post-conference	Workshop Model Documents
1	*Common Core*	Expectations of rigor in instruction. Discussion of student achievement and progress toward on grade level performance.	"We were working toward those goals prior. We were partnered with TCRWP…" "…the literacy expectations are asking your kids to do things that are reasonable, attainable, and…"	Observed Parent workshops. Teacher Meeting about literacy curriculum.	Partnership w/ TCRWP Parent Workshops Benchmark Data
1	*PARCC*		"Has PARCC had any influence on the PK, K, 1 environment?"	Morning meeting with Staff about instructional choice and student work on display…	

			"We've found ourselves, particularly me and the literacy coach…"	principal's comment… "course correction" "Fidelity of curriculum implementation" "best instructional practices" "Student-centered authentic work" "If we put the product before the process, we are out of line with our philosophy, and our curriculum. We must teach the writer before we teach the writing." (Literacy Coach)	
1	*Future State Initiatives*	"coaching is necessary for everyone" "we will learn together because we are in this together" "we are always ahead of the curve"	"A big part of the reason we are doing okay is because of the foundation was already laid…change in education."	Discussion about evolutionary change/ leadership Visit from another school district.	Email from Hammonton Labsite format "On behalf of the ECEC staff…" (from email) Focus Days

					Title I & IIA funding
2 How do a principal's espoused beliefs align with the leader's actions when bringing about change in their school?	**Theme**	**Staff Survey**	**Principal's Survey**	**Reflections**	
	Leadership Capacity Results	Insert Table 3: Teachers' Ratings of Principal Insert table 4: Scoring of Teacher's Ratings	Insert Table 1: Principal Self-Assessment Survey Results Insert Table 2: Scoring of Principal's Self-Assessment Can Teach Others: 1. Organizes the school to maximize interactions among all school and community members. 2. Shares authority and resources broadly. 3. Engages others in opportunities to lead. 4. Manages conflict among adults. 5. Manages change and transitions. 6. Own role includes attention to the classroom,	Where do the scorings align? Where are they misaligned? One participant scored principal low…why? Purpose of Survey is to reflect on areas of strength and determine what skills are unique to this principal.	

			the school, the community, and the profession. 7. Observes and is sensitive to indicators that participants are performing outside traditional roles. 8.Demonstrates and encourages individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, time, and outside networks. 9. Practices and supports innovation without expectation for early success. 10. Designs, teaches, coaches, and assesses authentic curriculum, instruction, and performance-based assessment processes that		

			ensure that all children learn. 11. Redesigns roles and structures to enable the school to develop and sustain resiliency in children (i.e. teachers as coaches/mentors).		
2	Merging Quantitative Results	Confirmation of Principal's Ratings	Can Teach Others		
2	Leadership in Action	Teacher's Survey	Principal's Survey	Field Notes	Document Review
		Use Ratings of Can Teach Others			
		Organizes School to Maximize Interactions Among Members		Content Area Teachers SLC	SLC Leadership Flowchart Committee Structures
		Shares Authority and Resources Broadly		SLC Literacy Coach PD	Grade Level Coordinators Content Area Coord. Change from Targeted Title I to School-Wide Title I, PD
		Engages Others In		SLC	GLC

		Opportunities to Lead	Literacy Coach GLC	CAC Committee Structure Focus Days Turn-Key PD
		Manages Conflicts Among Adults	Establishing Vision Purposeful Change…Continuous Maintenance Professional Improvement Plans Leading By Example Managing Conflict Swiftly	Establishing Vision
		Manages Change and Transitions	Vision Learning with Staff Communicating Vision Often PD	Strategic Plans PD Articulation Schedule
		Own Role Includes Attention to the Classroom, The School, The Community and The Profession	Modeling Lessons Observations Walkthroughs Vision Purposeful Change… Parent Meetings/Workshops Frequent PD for Self	PD
		Observes and Is Sensitive To Indicators That Participants Are Performing Outside of Traditional Roles	SLC Teacher Leader Roles Literacy Coach	TSS
		Demonstrates and Encourages Individual and Group Initiative By	Partnership with outside Presenters	TCRWP Project

		Providing Access to Resources, Personnel, Time, And Outside Networks		Book Studies	
		Practices and Supports Innovation Without Expectations for Early Success		Implementation of Workshop Model Literacy Coach PBS Team Parent Workshops Family Events	TSS
		Designs, Teaches, Coaches, and Assess Authentic Curriculum, Instruction, and Performance Based Assessment Processes That Ensure That All Children Learn		Implementation of Instructional Philosophy Move from textbooks to authentic work Developmental Approach to Interventions	Benchmark Data
		Redesigns Roles and Structures to Enable the School to Develop and Sustain Resiliency in Children (i.e. Teacher as Coach/Mentor)		Positive Behavioral Supports Committee Teachers as Content Experts.	TSS Positive Behavioral Supports Committee Teachers as Content Experts.
3 How can new principals use the behaviors and skills found in this case study to inform their daily practices	**Theme**	Focus Group	Principal Interview	Observation	Document Review
	"Leader Ship"	"No principal can do it alone" "Shared Leaders are Necessary" "Domino Effect"	"The word leadership…you are the ship out in front of other ships…" "But the job is to really grow that commitment group. When	Principal's previous role Transition to new role… 2 people were in the his group of trust	Infrastructure of Leadership Committee Structure Monthly

as instructional leaders?		"Buy-in occurred one after another" "Buy in was evident because decisions were based on a collaborative and researched approach" "the vision" "empowered to take on roles that developed them as experts" "roles are created in the school so everyone has a leadership role and is empowered to share their expertise" Reciprocal trust "regularly demonstrates his belief in his staff"	you turn around and look at the ships following…" "I needed to build capacity in the staff o one hand…trust the people that we have helping us lead." "Will take time" "Deliberate in Actions"		articulation schedule

	Sub theme: Teachers As Leaders	"leverages his conversation with staff through the discussion of instructional methodology and practices that are in the best interest of students" Culture of "collaboration, confidence in each other, supportive, and honesty" " I am way more confident and competent as a teacher because of the support of my principal."	"…if we really want to see change in some of these really difficult places then if we try to enable people to do this work we're not going to	School Leadership Committee meeting Field Note/ Debrief about SLC members and concerns "telling people what she believes they want to hear" "is not	

			see change, but if we try to empower them to do this work…that is how you see change"	contradicting her colleagues…" "it is time to start transitioning…"	
3	Child-Centered Sub Theme: Servant Leadership Through Advocacy	Speaking life into kids…actually speaking life into us as teachers … "I know he is speaking to me. His message gives me the inspiration to be more kind to the students in front of me, to work harder to meet goals with my students, and to be patient with my colleagues. "	"Being the lead voice behind all the voices the kids are hearing all day long… constant message" "We don't come to school for the adults, we come to school for children." "…the leadership of change specifically the change that we have been going	Speaking Life Into Students Examples from Field Notes Handling Discipline PBIS Committee – look at field notes— questioning techniques and listening on the part of the principal "Warning: This principal is going to ask what's right For kids" …. "I don't keep that there because I think it is a neat saying. It's what I absolutely live by. I am going to be an advocate for them" Reflection of field notes… presence of principal in	Teacher Induction Plan

	Sub theme: Purposeful Change, Continuous Maintenance	The principal is "engaged in some type of coaching of his staff" "another opportunity for them to grow with the vision of the work they are doing as a school"	through here…"	hallways, classrooms Visiting Jackie's room PBIS Committee work with NCI Faculty Meeting: "be an advocate for the work we are doing" "agents of the school" "they are the bet teacher for their child"	Literacy Coach TSS
3	The Community's Principal	Discussion with Gr. 1 Coordinator	"I'm here to help parents, the primary educator of each child. They're sending their children…" "I have become the community's principal. I want to continue to grow…" "During my time in the school setting, I was able to	Coaching in Community School Leadership Team Meeting… Proposed format for parent visitation (see notes) Notes about number of students and participation of parents.	Artifacts from events

			bring in the programs of…”		

Appendix F

Principal Checklist

There are times as a principal when the need to recalibrate your school to attend to the instructional practices and student achievement arises. Furthermore, new principals can use this checklist when establishing the structures within their school. Page numbers are listed in parentheses and reference the page numbers in the paper to learn more about these skills.

Stage 1: Developing Shared Leadership within Your School

- Build your leadership team, one stage at a time (p. 92-94).
- Establish trust within your leadership team and school (p. 94).
- Create an infrastructure for teacher leader communication (p. 95-96).
- Develop an articulation schedule that outlines all meetings and ensures that meetings are held on a monthly basis (p. 96).
- Create committees to tend to the details of the work, utilize teacher skills, and develop leadership within future leadership team members (p. 96-98).

Stage 2: Creating a Vision That Focuses on Children

- Build teachers from the start with a child-centered view (p. 106-107).
- Become a learner with your teachers (p. 130-131).
- Responding to discipline that focuses on developing the child (p. 103-104).
- Speaking life into children (p. 104).
- Follow through with your vision through being visible and walkthroughs (p. 107-109).

Stage 3: Parents as Partners & Becoming the Community's Principal

- Develop an understanding of the role of parents (p. 101).
- Create opportunities for parents to engage in your building's work (p. 101).
- Identify ways to increase parent participation (p. 101-102).

Stage 4: Reflection & Adding Supports to Enhance Your Vision

- Coupling reforms and desired practices to enhance your vision (p. 127-130).
- Systemic planning that reviews Stage 1 steps and prepares for evolutionary changes (p. 131-136).
- Create a learning cycle for teachers that support teachers in the classroom (p. 113-114).
- Purposeful Change, Continuous Maintenance (p. 110-111).
- Create positions that advance teacher practice and enhance student experiences (p. 112).