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Principal Leadership and Student Academic Achievement

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Principal Leadership and Student Academic Achievement
by
B. KARIN MANNS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Principal Leadership and Student Academic Achievement

By B. Karin Manns

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Signature  B. Karin Manns
Date  9/15/2020
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Elio Ricciardi. You share my passion for bringing equity and excellence to our schools and you inspired me to reach for my dreams. Your encouragement, curiosity, and love have made this journey possible, and I thank you with all of my heart.
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Abstract

This case study is an analysis of the relationship between principal leadership and student academic achievement. This research is based upon two dominant leadership theories from the past four decades, namely transformational leadership, which has been studied extensively by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio among others, and instructional leadership, which has been researched most notably by Philip Hallinger and colleagues. More recently, several researchers have proposed that transformational leadership and instructional leadership may be related to increases in student learning when used simultaneously by a school leader. This case study is an examination of the leadership style of a principal in a school that experienced substantial and sustained increases in student academic achievement after he was appointed to the role. The teachers’ view of the principal’s leadership style and the impact that the teachers perceive that this style had upon their attitudes and performance are researched. A review of school leadership through the lens of concurrent use of transformational leadership and instructional leadership, including analysis of the interplay of the two styles, is provided.

Keywords: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez faire leadership, instructional leadership
Chapter One

Introduction

The quest for equity and excellence in education spans generations in United States history (Jennings, 2015). A review of policy and initiatives on this topic is framed by the conceptualization of equity by the leaders of the time and the merit of the definition must necessarily be judged by the various perspectives at stake, given that racial and socio-economic inequities have woven through the fabric of our nation since its inception.

Efforts to bring equity and excellence to public schools began early in the history of the United States. One such effort emerged from the work of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies (National Education Association of the United States. Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, 1894), which published a report that was used for leaders to identify the common learning goals for all high schools. The report included an outline of important knowledge in each identified area of study. The committee sought input from teachers and declared unanimously that regardless of the future plans of each student or the number of years the student would stay in school, each subject in the secondary school should be taught in the same way and to the same extent. Basically, each student in secondary school should be taught equally.

A year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration shepherded legislation and the president signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The stated purpose was “to strengthen the educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation’s elementary and
secondary schools” (Jennings, 2015, p. 30), with funding distributed to districts according to the number of students in poverty in each school district.

Improvement of schools continued to draw attention and notably so in 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* (1983), an open letter to the American people that addressed perceived failures of the educational system and a call to higher standards in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This publication included recommendations in the areas of teacher preparation, time for learning, college admissions, and specifically curriculum, noting that standards must be raised, textbooks should be published that fully reflect the rigor of the disciplines, and that standardized tests should be used to ascertain student achievement and provide information regarding additional supports.

Since the publication of the impactful report, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), policy and initiatives at the national, state, and local levels have focused upon improving education for students. The approaches have been legislated at the national level through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) and then reinforced through the national Race to the Top Initiative (2009). These policies have been formulated into state level requirements and directives, which in turn are then implemented through a variety of planning approaches at the district and school levels (Dunaway, Kim, & Szad, 2012).

By the early 1990s, professional organizations began developing standards for their academic areas of focus. Alexander (1993) commented at the time that it would have been unimaginable to consider a push for national education standards in the early 1980s. However, after a decade of reform, the emphasis had shifted from “…fixing
schools to breaking the mold” (Alexander, 1993, p. 9). In 2009, the Common Core State Standards movement emerged from the work of the professional organizations and emphasis upon standards for achievement. State school chiefs and governors collaborated to launch the Common Core State Standards to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for career, college, and life. The standards provided consistency and were based upon real life learning (Common Core State Standards, 2016).

While these initiatives translate into top-down requirements for school districts in a nation in which education is not under federal control, the impetus behind these goals is that districts and schools will translate the policies into meaningful change within the local context. Despite these efforts, however, a review of current literature clearly indicates that our nation’s schools are still far from achieving equity and excellence (Hinchey, 2008; Kozol, 2005; Spring, 2016). As these authors describe, many of the students in the United States languish in terms of educational opportunity and attainment of academic achievements.

In determining how to translate the intention of equity and excellence into reality for all of our nation’s students, it makes sense to examine the work that happens at the school level since that is where teachers and their students do the actual work of teaching and learning. When examining learning, the most explicit connection is found in the interactions between the student and teacher. However, numerous researchers have also studied the effect of the principal, since these school leaders oversee the work that occurs at the school level (Sergiovanni, 2006; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Sergiovanni (2006) noted that direct instructional leadership by principals makes a positive contribution. He also shared that the indirect effects of principal leadership may be even
more important than direct, especially when viewed from a long range perspective. As he described, students’ academic performance increases through indirect leadership when principals create the conditions and means for teachers to learn.

Efforts to understand how some schools are able to improve student learning and move toward greater equity and excellence in learning leads to questions about the role that the principal plays, both directly and indirectly. An exploration of the “how” of effective principal leadership brings to light an analysis of the principal’s leadership practices in terms of the theoretical foundations.

Numerous theories about leadership have been developed and researched over the years. One leadership theory in particular shows promise in explaining how a leader both navigates complex change that is buffeting the organization, as well as how the leader creates and sustains change that is conducive to meeting the organization’s goals. This leadership theory is referred to as transformational leadership, which to be understood fully, must also include consideration of the related dimensions of transactional and laissez faire leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973).

Another leadership theory that has been used to explain the relationship between the principal and teachers describes the ways in which the principal works with teachers to establish a shared purpose, set goals, and attain the technical expertise to increase student learning. This leadership theory is referred to as instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005).

Numerous studies have been conducted and articles published that examine the indirect and direct effects of transformational leadership upon student achievement (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015; Finnigan, 2012; Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi,
Many studies are focused upon the relationship between transformational leadership and the elements of the school environment that have been shown to be related to student achievement through other research (Dou, Devos, & Valke, 2017; Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2013; Geijsel et al., 2003; Hauserman, Ivankova, & Stick, 2013). Included among these conditions for learning are the concepts of organizational commitment, culture and efficacy, and effective change. Likewise, multiple studies have been conducted to research the relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement (Hallinger, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Prior research (Effelsberg et al., 2013; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Kieres, 2012; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; May & Sanders, 2013) was focused heavily upon transformational leadership or instructional leadership. Some of this research examined the relationship between the selected leadership style, either transformational or instructional, and the conditions that lead to student academic achievement through indirect effect. Another body of research studied the effect of either transformational leadership or instructional leadership upon student academic achievement through direct effect. Several authors have connected the two leadership styles (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014), posing questions about efficacy of an integrated approach that would incorporate both styles. These authors identify that the work of leadership draws from elements of both leadership styles, as principals are called upon to respond and to drive change, while also guiding the technical work of teaching and learning.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe how principals with high levels of student achievement lead their schools in relation to the theories of transformational and instructional leadership. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher focused upon identifying themes that can be of importance to principals and programs preparing principals to provide school-level leadership that aligns with the constructs of transformational and instructional leadership. Presented in this study are emerging themes related to two types of leadership. The following themes are related to transformational leadership: 1) Builds Trust (formerly Idealized Influence – Attributes), 2) Acts with Integrity (formerly Idealized Influence - Behaviors), 3) Encourages Others (formerly Inspirational Motivation, 4) Encourages Innovative Thinking (formerly Intellectual Stimulation), and 5) Coaches & Develops People (formerly Individual Consideration). The following themes are related to instructional leadership: 1) Defining the School’s Mission, 2) Managing the Instructional Program, and 3) Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate, as identified by interviews of principals at a school with high levels of student academic growth.

Key Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez faire leadership, and instructional leadership. The terms are defined below.

Transformational Leadership: Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders connect with followers and guide them in movement forward to goals through identification with values, emotions, ethics, standards, and long-term planning. Followers
experience transformation and they are able to perform at a higher level and achieve more than they thought they would be able to do (Northouse, 2004).

*Transactional Leadership:* A transactional leader manages the follower’s actions by linking the behaviors with either rewards or punishments (Bass, 1985). Two types of approaches are used by the leader to shape and sustain desired behaviors. One approach is “contingent reward,” which is a more positive approach and the other is “management by exception,” which is a more negative approach.

*Laissez Faire Leadership:* This leadership approach addresses a leadership style in which the leader is not involved with followers, exhibits a “hands-off” approach, and seems distant and is not engaged with the purpose, participants, and goals (Bass, 1998).

*Instructional Leadership:* This theory of leadership encompasses the leader guiding followers in developing and applying effective instruction for the purpose of attaining goals. Instructional leadership theory includes the following components: defining the school’s mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 2005).

**Research Questions**

This study was designed to examine how the leadership of principals in schools with high student academic growth aligns with transformational and instructional leadership theory. The author explored the experience of principals and teachers as they sought to improve student learning, relating their experiences to the constructs of transformational and instructional leadership. The two questions that guided this study were as follows:
**Research question one.** How do teachers in a high performing school view the principal’s leadership style with regard to transformational and instructional leadership theories?

**Research question two.** How does the principal’s leadership style impact teacher attitudes and job performance?

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. In Chapter One, introductory background is included that leads to the purpose, key definitions, research questions, and organization of the study. Included in Chapter Two are the constructs of transformational and instructional leadership, history of the theories, a review of the literature, and an overview of several related research studies. In Chapter Three, the use of case study is discussed, including the rationale and limitations. In Chapter Four, the findings from the study are presented, including the emergent themes from the interviews. Included within Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings, analysis of the collected data, and information related to the research questions based on the data that was collected.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

In Chapter Two, the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership and instructional leadership are discussed through a review of qualitative and quantitative research. This chapter provides a conceptual framework for the dissertation study.

The Problem: School Leadership for Equity and Excellence

We are witnessing a rapid rate of change in United States society as our country increasingly becomes interconnected with nations around the world. As described by Hargreaves and Shirley (2012), we are experiencing global economic turmoil, political shifts, climate changes, and impacts from advances in technology, which cause ramifications around the globe. Corporate competition extends beyond national borders. These shifts impact conversations about optimal delivery and outcomes for K-12 education.

Furthermore, Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) explained that in addition to these broader shifts in society in general, public education is also increasingly impacted by the influence of large corporations and non-profit organizations that provide generous funding, for-profit assessment and curriculum development firms, and technology firms that shift delivery to personalized online learning. While public education is buffeted by these external and internal changes, it is simultaneously expected to prepare students for action within the international sphere. Federal legislation, state initiatives, and local school boards develop policy and create mandates to redesign schools to provide equitable and excellent education for all students (Jennings, 2015).
As discussed by Hauserman, Ivankova, and Stick (2013), the principal is often the most visible school professional and frequently the reputation of the school is based upon the characteristics and actions of that individual. These authors pointed to numerous researchers who have identified the increasing need to understand the dynamics of school leadership and to develop a model that can be used in the wide variety of settings and circumstances currently in existence (Hauserman et al., 2013). Basing their thinking upon writing by other prominent researchers in the field (Hallinger & Heck, 1996), Hauserman et al. (2013), also noted, “…the most important factor in school effectiveness is the principal” (p. 39).

Kelley et al. (2005) commented that educational leadership “…is possibly the most important single determinant of an effective learning environment” (p. 7). They described that school leaders must be able to envision the future of the organization and to create the conditions that allow for organizational improvement.

Smith and Piele (2006) offered several assumptions about leadership, including the following: “Leadership involves a leader or leaders, a follower or follower, and the interaction of their personalities, knowledge, skills, and moral predispositions” (p. 5). The authors also noted that leadership involves a group or organization with its own history, culture, resources, and structure. Given the large number of variables at play, the authors concluded that flexibility is key.

**History of Leadership Theory**

Over the past decades, numerous writers and researchers have identified many leadership styles. As described by Bennis and Nanus (1985), research on leadership over many years has yielded more than 350 definitions of leadership. As the authors
explained, leadership was once considered to be innate and attained through birth. This conception of leadership gave rise to the Great Man theory (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). As researchers found that this conception of leadership did not explain reality well, they shifted to a conception of leadership as a product of leaders’ responses to great events. Among others, leadership theories include situational, psychoanalytic, political, and humanistic (Bass, 1990).

After review of all articles on educational leadership published in four major administration journals between 1985 and 1995, Leithwood and Duke (1999) articulated six leadership constructs: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent. While each conceptualization of leadership contains merit and would be worthy of further investigation, this work encompasses two primary leadership styles, namely transformational leadership and instructional leadership. More specifically, as Bass and Avolio (1994) described, transformational leadership can be viewed on a continuum that ranges from a laissez faire (lack of leadership) to transactional (rewards and punishments based upon performance) to transformational. As Bass and Avolio (1994) further explained, transformational leaders also use transactional leadership as a component of their leadership approach. For a full understanding of transformational leadership, it is important to briefly acknowledge and describe the related styles of transactional and laissez faire leadership constructs, and for this reason, this dissertation focuses upon transformational leadership, and the two ancillary styles of transactional and laissez faire, along with instructional leadership.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) commented that leadership is fundamentally about human interactions. They expressed their view, that the higher the rank of the leader, the
greater the percentage of their day that is focused upon interpersonal relationships. In light of this supposition, the relationships between leader and follower take on importance in terms of research of substance and outcomes.

Woven through many of the theories of leadership, although sometimes not identified explicitly, is the role of power and how it is used by leaders (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bass (1990) discussed the sources and use of power by leaders, recognizing that leaders tap into various sources of power, whether at the conscious or unconscious levels. Bennis and Nanus (1985) recognized that effective leaders tap into what seems to be “magic” in using power to support followers in finding significance in their work. Smith and Piele (2006) noted that “…power is the currency of leadership, an essential commodity for accomplishing anything” (p. 274). The authors recognized a form of power that grows from a deeper relationship between the leader and followers in which they mutually lift one another to a higher level of purpose.

During complex situations and in times of turbulence, transformational leadership can be viewed as a style with potential relevance. This work reviews the history and development of transformational leadership, along with the two related approaches, namely transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. Transformational leadership describes the influence that the leader exerts upon the followers’ sense of purpose, engagement, and desire to attain the shared vision.

Transformational leadership has been applied to the school setting, given the relationship between principal and teachers in accomplishing the work of educating students. However, in the school setting the technical expertise of teaching and learning is also essential. This technical expertise can be explained through the construct of
instructional leadership. Discussed in this dissertation are the history, theories, and application of both transformational and instructional leadership.

This dissertation begins with a history of both transformational and instructional leadership styles as they developed as theory throughout the years, both within and outside of the field of education, as applicable to this work. Research examining these styles is reviewed, highlighting the impact on followers, organizational commitment, and relevance through change processes. Then the leadership styles are explored in terms of their relationship to student engagement and impact on the culture of the school learning environment, and then ultimately upon student achievement.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) posited that in order to measure leadership, initially leadership is viewed as a social construction by individuals who are experiencing leadership, referencing in their writing the work of several authors in the field (Bass, 1985; Reitzug & Reeves, 1992). The exploration and discussion of leadership in this dissertation presumes that leadership is a social construct that can be identified, measured, and analyzed through examination of the individuals experiencing leadership as related to the outcomes of such leadership.

**Transformational Leadership**

As Bass and Avolio (1994) identified, the concept of transformational leadership was first described in Downton’s sociological book on rebel leadership (1973). Downton described leader-follower relationships, identifying three types of leadership: transactional, charismatic, and inspirational.

During this time, Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership independently from Downton. Burns provided terms and definitions for both
transactional and transformational leadership. He explained that transactional leaders achieve goals through exchanges between leader and follower, while transformational leaders bring their leadership to a higher level that encompasses deep connections, morality, and true commitment.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) offered descriptions of what they term transformative leadership, describing that it is collective in that there is a subtle harmony between the followers’ needs and wants and the leaders’ ability to understand the collective dreams and hopes. They also noted that leadership can cause followers to tap into deeper needs and to lift to higher levels of consciousness, such as working toward liberty, justice, and self-actualization. These authors recognized that the leaders and followers develop a relationship in which deeper needs and higher aspirations merge, with the result that leaders, followers, and their work are elevated.

House (1971) discussed a concept similar to transformational leadership, terming it charismatic leadership. Bass (1990) noted that Weber (1947) introduced the construct of charismatic leadership early in the twentieth century and that it quickly drew interest. Bass (1985) described that sociological, psychoanalytical, and political commentators engaged in discussions around the role of charisma, but that House was not able to identify empirical results on this topic. Bass commented that this lack of research on charisma may be one of the reasons why critics complain that the massive quantities of research on leadership does not provide guidance to the practitioner.

Bass (1990) explained that the study of leadership must be expanded to encompass charisma. He linked charisma with transformational leadership, noting that charismatic leaders identify the needs and dreams of followers and then build upon these
hopes. Bass commented that charisma is not essential for a leader to meet with success, but that charisma can support attainment of success. Bennis and Nanus (1985) also explored the relationship between charisma and leadership. They expressed that charismatic leadership may not be a construct on its own, but consider that charisma may be the result of effective leadership.

Bass (1985) recognized that many of the prior emphases upon leadership style involved what he considered to be first-order change, describing leadership as a process of exchanges. Bass recognized transformational leadership as an expression of second-order change. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) described first-order change as one that fits existing norms, values, and ways of doing things. In contrast, second-order change is of a deeper, more substantive level in that it is not immediately obvious why the change is needed, it may conflict with prevailing beliefs or ways of doing things, and it may require acquisition of knowledge and skills. Bass (1985) noted that while much of the past research was conducted using tools that examined the effects of leadership on first-order change, he recognized the value of conducting research that would examine more fully the effects of leadership on second-order change.

Bass (1998) applied Burns’ conceptual ideas regarding transformational leadership to the military and conducted numerous studies with that field. Additionally, he conducted research on transformational leadership in the private and public sectors. As Bass posited, the principles of transformational leadership are foundational and are relevant to many different settings including a variety of work environments, athletics, education, and even to family life.
Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders connect with followers and guide them in movement forward to goals through identification with values, emotions, ethics, standards, and long-term planning. Followers experience transformation and they are able to perform at a higher level and achieve more than they thought they would be able to do (Northouse, 2004). This leadership style can work with large groups of followers and can also be experienced through a one to one exchange. While the leader launches the transformational experience, both the leader and the followers are closely connected through the process (Northouse, 2004).

Transformational leadership theory explains the relationship between leader and follower. Initially the leader and follower may have come together for different reasons that are unique to each. However, through the process of transformational leadership, the purposes of the leaders and followers become interconnected through engagement (Steinwart & Ziegler, 2014).

Transformational leadership theory articulates that the values and the goals of both leader and followers are enhanced by the practices of transformational leadership. Leithwood and Sun (2012) described that transformational leadership theory encompasses a relatively small number of behaviors and that these practices are able to increase followers’ commitment and effort toward attainment of the goals of the organization when adequate support is in place. The researchers explained that the goals become motivational because the process of transformational leadership connects these goals with the followers’ values, or values in which they come to believe, and subsequently the process of working toward goal attainment becomes inspiring to the followers. As Leithwood and Sun claimed, transformational leadership theory describes
the internal states that are critical to performance at higher levels and provides the leadership moves that are most likely to shape these internal states for followers. The researchers noted that transformational leadership enhances both leaders and followers’ values and aspirations (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Bass (1985) described that the transformational leader is one who can motivate followers to do more than the followers ever expected to do. Bass explained that transformation occurs in one of three interrelated ways: 1) raising the level of consciousness about the value of reaching specific outcomes, 2) motivating followers to transcend their own self-interest for the team, organization, or policy, and 3) changing the level of need, as related to theories of hierarchy of needs defined by Maslow (1987). Bass commented that his conceptualization expands the construct articulated by Burns in that it encompasses the possibility that the transformational leader may not only change the level of need, but could also expand current needs and wants.

In applying this concept to the educational setting, a transformational leader would connect the improvement work of the district and school with an ethical and moral purpose, subsequently motivating and engaging both leader and followers to engage through their values at a higher level than simply completing their work to attain rewards or to avoid sanctions. The work itself would take on a sense of mission and uplift all participants in accomplishing more than they would have believed themselves capable of attaining. In comparing transformational leadership to a lack of leadership, Bass described that the transformational leader communicates parameters and expectations for followers, and then provides supports for the followers in the ways that promote growth and attainment of goals (Bass, 1998).
Bass (1998) recognized that the power of transformational leadership could potentially be misused in its application to accomplish aims that were not in the best interest of others. Bass noted that in Burns’ (1978) writings, Burns hypothesized that transformational leaders must be morally uplifting to be considered true transformational leaders. In earlier writings, Bass (1985) explained that he believed that even a morally depraved leader, such as Adolph Hitler, could still be considered a transformational leader because Germany was transformed through Hitler’s actions, although the leadership was immoral, brutal, and costly in terms of life, liberty, and more. However, Bass (1998) described that over time, he began to agree with Burns. As Bass explained, these leaders with a warped sense of purpose deceive followers by using strategies that exploit followers’ beliefs and unwittingly manipulate them toward evil ends. Unlike true transformational leaders, who should be morally uplifting, these pseudo-transformational leaders are self-absorbed and exploitative with a distorted sense of morality and human relations. These pseudo-transformational leaders prey upon the values and potential of followers. They create and manipulate internal state of readiness that allow the followers to believe in and commit to a higher purpose, but rather than leading the followers toward these lofty goals, they lead the followers toward a negative end. In contrast to pseudo-transformational leaders, true transformational leaders transcend their own interests to lead their followers, themselves, and their organizations to a preferred and positive future.

**Transactional Leadership as a Component of Transformational Leadership**

Transactional leadership is related to transformational leadership, although various researchers describe multiple conceptions of this relationship between leadership
styles. A transactional leader manages the follower’s actions by linking the behaviors with either rewards or punishments (Bass, 1985). Two types of approaches are used by the leader to shape and sustain desired behaviors. One approach is “contingent reward,” which is a more positive approach and the other is “management by exception,” which is a more negative approach. In the contingent reward approach, the leader works through goal-setting with the follower and then positive reinforcement is provided when these goals are attained. In the management by exception approach, the leader monitors actions and when performance does not align with expectations, then the leader administers negative reinforcement.

In comparing transactional leadership with transformational leadership, Bass (1985) noted that the “…transactional leader works within the organizational culture as it exists; the transformational leader changes the organizational culture” (p. 24). He also commented that transformational leaders are more likely to be proactive than reactive in their thinking; more creative, novel, and innovative in their ideas; more radical or reactionary than reforming or conservative in ideology; and less inhibited in their ideational search for solutions. Bass remarked that the transactional leaders may be just as intelligent as the transformational leaders, but that they are more focused on keeping the system running smoothly and working within the existing constraints of the organization.

Bass (1985) reflected that “systematic differences” (p. 105) may be identified between transformational and transactional leaders when considering intellectual approaches. The transformational leader may not be satisfied with things as they are or
with only partial solutions, instead striving to find innovative solutions. In contrast, the transactional leader may be focused on efficiency and minimizing risk.

Bass conducted research on transformational leadership in a variety of fields, including business, military, education, and more (Bass, 1985). Although greater gains are achieved through transformational leadership, all leaders use transactional leadership to some degree as part of their leadership repertoire (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In other words, although transformational and transactional leadership styles can be defined in distinct ways and differences between the two styles can be identified, leaders classified as transformational also utilize transactional leadership approaches.

Given that transactional leadership connects actions with rewards and consequences, this style of leadership can serve as a foundation for an approach that moves followers toward attainment of goals. As followers receive positive reinforcement for their actions, they are more likely to continue these moves. Likewise, as followers receive negative reinforcement for missteps, they are more likely to avoid these types of behaviors in the future. While this transactional leadership approach can shape and move followers toward goals, the followers are likely to experience greater commitment and job satisfaction when a leader augments transactional leadership with transformational leadership because this leadership style connects personal motivation and higher purpose with the goals at hand. Additionally, the transformational leader has the opportunity to create a culture in which higher levels of risk taking and innovation through utilization of a transformational leadership approach are fostered (Bass, 1985).

Bass (1985) noted that Burns (1978) viewed transactional and transformational leadership styles as opposite ends of a continuum. In contrast, Bass expressed his belief
that leaders demonstrate varying patterns of transactional and transformational leadership. Bass (1985) explained that “…while conceptually distinct, transformational and transactional leadership are likely to be displayed by the same individuals in different amounts and intensities” (p. 26).

Likewise, Hauserman et al. (2013) expressed their view that transformational and transactional leadership are not opposite ends of a construct continuum. Instead, these researchers also posit that all leaders exhibit some elements of each style. In their conceptualization, the differences refer to the varying degree to which each of the styles is expressed in a leader’s approach. By extending the thinking of these authors to imagine that a leader could demonstrate varied levels of each of the styles, depending upon the situation, this discussion of leadership could segue to further study of situational leadership, as researched by authors such as McCleskey (2004). However, a deeper study of situational leadership is beyond the scope of this dissertation that focuses on the transformational and instructional leadership styles of school principals.

As a result of continued study of the topic, Bass (1995) introduced an augmentation construct to explain the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership. According to Bass’ research, he proposed that transformational leadership should account for “…unique variance above and beyond that accounted for by active transactional leadership” (Bass, 1998, p. 10).

The full-range leadership (FRL) model (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998) expressed this construct as a model in which leaders utilize all of the styles and the degrees to which each is used relates to the effectiveness of the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Hauserman et al. (2013) agreed with Bass (1995, 1998) in that the FRL model provides a way to view
these styles that seem contradictory in an augmentation construct, rather than a
dichotomous construct.

**Laissez Faire Leadership as the Absence of Transformational Leadership**

As mentioned previously, Bass (1998) also introduced a laissez faire leadership
model, which basically encompasses a situation in which a leader is present, but
leadership is absent. In this model, leaders appear not to be involved in what is occurring
in the organization and they seem to avoid handling any issues. In contrast to
transformational leadership, in which the parameters, goals, expectations, and support are
provided, the leader exhibiting laissez faire leadership appears not to care about the
followers, does not provide any direction or guidance, and is not involved with the
followers or work in progress. In comparison to transformational and transactional
leadership, laissez faire leadership is the style that is the most inactive and also is the
most ineffective, according to almost all research investigating this topic (Bass & Avolio,
1994).

Hauserman et al. (2013) commented that laissez faire leadership may be
demonstrated when the leader does not place value on the goals for the organization nor
the tasks that need to be completed. The authors identified that the style might be
appropriate in situations when the result of the leadership does not negatively impact the
performance of others. For instance, one could imagine that a manager of a highly skilled
and self-directed team of employees might choose not to provide parameters and
guidance so as to empower the team to engage in creative problem solving and self-
motivated application of ideas to development of a new product. In contrast, Hauserman
et al. (2013) described the application of laissez faire leadership to the work of a principal
within a school. When the school leader does not provide the guidance, then the teachers may form cliques and the team may fractionalize, and ultimately such lack of leadership can negatively impact students and their learning. The researchers describe that a school leader demonstrating this style “…might be viewed as a caretaker rather than a motivator or visionary” (p. 38).

**Instructional Leadership**

The model of transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership provide a lens through which to view the work of the school principal in guiding teachers toward attainment of goals. Transformational leadership encompasses the sense of inspiration provided to the educational staff members to lift above everyday challenges to connect with inner motivation and to join with others in accomplishing purposeful gains.

As discussed by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), while transformational leadership can create the conditions that are conducive to student achievement, teachers may still use pedagogical practice which is not best suited for the student or learning at hand. Subsequently, the importance of instructional leadership comes to light. Emerging from the effective schools movement and based upon years of research, positive relationships have been identified between instructional leadership and student learning (Hallinger, 2003).

A principal who engages in instructional leadership is guiding teachers in developing and applying effective instruction for the purpose of attaining goals. Phillip Hallinger (2005) recalled that the effective schools movement resulted in “…institutionalization of the term ‘instructional leadership’ into the vocabulary of educational administration” (p. 221). His review of research on principal leadership
(Hallinger, 2000), conducted twenty years after the start of the effective schools movement, led Hallinger to conclude that the instructional leadership construct has become evident in research, policy, and practice. Furthermore, Hallinger (2005) recognized that the increasing global attention to accountability since the start of the twenty-first century has resulted in renewed emphasis upon instructional leadership. He commented that with growing international attention to performance standards, principals are increasingly and explicitly expected to serve as instructional leaders.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) conducted several meta-analyses reviewing research in schools. Hallinger (2005) described this review, noting that the research in his studies spans over 25 years and was conducted in North America, Asia, and Europe. This extensive review led Hallinger to conclude that instructional leadership was the leadership model that was studied the most frequently during this time span.

Hallinger (2005) commented that the definition for instructional leadership that he and Joseph Murphy (1985) developed is the one that has been used most frequently in empirical research. This model of instructional leadership includes three dimensions: 1) Defining the School’s Mission, 2) Managing the Instructional Program, and 3) Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger, 2005). These dimensions describe that instructional leadership entails guiding followers in developing and applying effective instruction for the purpose of attaining goals.

Within this instructional model, the first dimension, Defining the School’s Mission, includes two functions, namely, Framing the School’s Goals and Communicating the School’s Goals. As Hallinger (2005) described, this dimension encompasses the principal’s work in determining the purpose and direction of the school.
The principal works with staff to establish “…clear, measurable, time-based goals focused on the academic progress of students” (p. 225). Hallinger commented that it is not important whether the principal determine the goals on his/her own or in collaboration with staff. Instead, it is critical that schools move from a state of poorly defined or vague goals, to a state in which schools have academic goals that are compelling, clear, embedded into daily practice, and fully supported by all staffs.

Hallinger (2005) delineated the second dimension, Managing the Instructional Program, as comprising three leadership functions, which include Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, Coordinating the Curriculum, and Monitoring Student Progress. Within this dimension, Hallinger (2005) explained that principals must be actively engaged in “…stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school” (p. 226).

The third dimension in the instructional leadership model, Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate, encompasses the following functions: Protecting Instructional Time, Promoting Professional Development, Maintaining High Visibility, Providing Incentives for Teachers, and Providing Incentives for Learning. Hallinger (2005) noted that this broader dimension encompasses use of “academic press” through 1) the development of high standards for teachers and students, 2) a culture of continuous improvement with rewards connected with purpose and practice, and 3) a focus upon developing the climate and supporting continuous improvement by modeling values and practices that lead to the desired (Hallinger, 2005).

In reflecting upon these decades of research on instructional leadership, Hallinger recognized that the area in which the principal can best influence change is through
developing the school mission (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger noted that this finding is useful in that it is substantiated by findings regarding the importance of vision/mission in research outside of education. He commented that in addition to the leverage that principals can achieve through focus on mission/vision, a secondary way to impact positive change is through alignment of the school structures, such as academic standards, time for each areas of study, curriculum, and culture, with the mission of the school.

Based upon a review of literature, Hallinger (2005) recommended that the focus of the instructional leader should be upon the following priorities: 1) creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, including clear goals focused on student learning, 2) fostering the continuous improvement of the school through cyclical school development planning that involves a wide range of stakeholders, 3) developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture aimed at innovation and improvement of teaching and learning, 4) coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student learning outcomes, 5) shaping the reward structure of the school to reflect the school’s mission, 6) organizing and monitoring a wide range of activities aimed at the continuous development of staff, and 7) being a visible presence in the school, modeling the desired values of the school’s culture.

Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, and Thomas (2007) proposed what they term a new version of instructional leadership that is data driven, engaging staff in collecting, acquiring, and storing data, as well as reflecting upon data, using it to develop interventions, and then generating practices based on their learning. In this model, a social and technical system provides the support that allows school staff to link
summative achievement data with formative data that can be used to improve teaching and learning.

Instructional leadership is a construct that encompasses the guidance that a principal provides to the teachers that addresses the core work of the school. It is a construct that emerged from the effective schools movement and has been widely studied. Variations of instructional leadership theory are being developed, yet these all share the same basic characteristics in that they involve the school leader, the principal, providing the direction and support for a team of teachers to attain the desired goals through an emphasis upon the professional practice of the educators.

While numerous leadership styles have been proposed and studied over the course of the past decades, for the purposes of this work, the focus is upon two specific constructs. The first leadership style to be studied in this dissertation is transformational leadership and the related styles identified as transactional and laissez faire leadership styles, which address the relationship between leader and follower in terms of psychological elements, such as rewards and sanctions in the transactional approach and inspiration and self-actualization in the transformational approach. The second leadership style to be studied in this dissertation is instructional leadership, which addresses the relationship between leader and follower in terms of the technical elements of the work of schools. An examination of the application of these leadership styles through the body of research currently available will follow, with particular focus upon the relationship of the leadership styles to the followers’ commitment to the organization, the process of change within the organization, and the academic performance of students.

**Leadership and Organizational Commitment**
In the realm of public and private K-12 education, the relationship of the leader with follower naturally takes place within the organization of the school. The school is an organization which both shapes and is shaped by the leader, followers, and the nature of the leadership at play. Toprak, Inandi, and Colak (2015) commented that in reviewing literature on the importance of leadership in organizations, some scholars in the past voiced dispute toward the construct of leadership as a strong force in organizations. However, the researchers identified that a common agreement seems to be emerging that does view leadership as an active force in the direction of organizations.

The relationship between leadership and organizational commitment is included in this literature review for several reasons. As described previously, transformational leadership has been linked with development of specific aspects of school culture (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and school culture has been linked with staff practices and student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). A relationship between transformational leadership and staff’s willingness to exert additional efforts has also been identified (Effelsberg et al., 2013). Since leadership can contribute to establishing conditions that lead to student learning, a brief review of related literature on the relationship between leadership and organizational commitment is included here.

Transformational leadership contributes to an organization’s efforts to innovate and improve, even when those in the organization do not explicitly recognize that transformational leadership is playing a role (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In light of multiple developments and changes, including increasing diversity, leveraging of technology, global competition, shifts in employees’ perceptions toward work, outsourcing, and others, it becomes important that schools rethink educational systems and apply
transformational leadership to schools and systems to guide change that will support students’ preparation for work and life.

One way to understand the application of transformational leadership to schools and systems that are navigating change is by examining leadership’s relationship to the development of school culture. As Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) described, “A school’s culture consists of meanings shared by those inhabiting the school” (p. 5). The researchers explained that the aspirations of school reform cannot be attained through the traditional culture of school that is characterized by working independently and in isolation.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) explained that a collaborative culture causes dissonance as staff must negotiate meaning and work through challenges to their practice and values. Once this disequilibrium and challenge have been successfully navigated, the opportunity for true collaboration can lead to what Bass (1994) termed as a transformational culture. This purely transformational culture offers an environment of safety and openness, in which all organizational members are able to identify gaps and solutions, working together with time to think innovatively and to plan subsequent actions. Within this culture, colleagues recognize the higher moral values that infuse the work and willingly transcend individual needs for the greater good.

Examining the interactions between transformational leaders and their followers provides a window into the relationships that undergird the organizational culture. Hauserman et al. (2013) designed a qualitative study to examine the perceptions of teachers working with transformational leaders. They found that teachers who worked with principals exhibiting high levels of transformational leadership qualities expressed
very positive perceptions of their principals’ leadership and the school culture, while teachers who worked with principals exhibiting low levels of transformational leadership qualities expressed frustrations about their principals and the school culture.

Effelsberg et al. (2013) conducted a study to test “transformational leadership’s capacity to enhance followers’ willingness to engage in selfless pro-organizational behavior” (p. 131). They found that transformational leadership could be used to predict followers’ engagement in pro-organizational behavior. Subsequently, they recognized that this result challenged existing negative assumptions about human motivation and desire to attain self-serving ends.

Through numerous studies, Kieres (2012) identified a link between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. She researched the impact of transformational leadership behaviors on teachers’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Her correlational study identified significant and direct correlations between all dimensions of transformational leadership behaviors and the outcome variables in her study, which included teachers’ intrinsic job satisfaction, extrinsic job satisfaction, general job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Her study also identified that transformational leadership behaviors augmented transactional leadership behaviors. For example, transactional leadership behaviors such as setting clear expectations and then providing rewards and sanctions are augmented by transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, which then accounts for most of the variance in teachers’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment. While basic managerial functions lead to smooth operations, a transformational leader
who is a role model for ethical behavior, instills confidence, and inspires trust and respect, supports followers in moving to higher levels of performance.

Aydin, Sarier, and Uysal (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the effect of leadership style, specifically laissez faire, transactional, and transformational, on teachers’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The authors identified a positive effect size for transactional leadership and job satisfaction at 0.56, with the contingent reward dimension affecting job satisfaction most significantly. The average effect size of transformational leadership was 0.86. The study concluded that aspects of transactional leadership are necessary to support organizational commitment, but transformational leadership is necessary to bring job satisfaction and this commitment to higher levels.

Dou et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between principal leadership and school climate and teachers’ self-efficacy. This study also researched the relationship of the principals’ role in school autonomy reform. The authors reported that principal leadership influences teacher outcomes through school climate and teacher efficacy in a significant, yet indirect, manner.

Toprak et al. (2015) studied the relationships between leadership style and health of organization. The researchers defined organizational health as comprising the sub-dimensions of organizational leadership, organizational cohesiveness, organizational identity, and environmental interaction. They found a significant relationship between school principals’ leadership styles and the health of schools, noting that school principals influence the health of the schools. Transformational leadership was found to
be closely related to healthy school organizations, while transactional leadership styles have a negative effect on the health of the school organization.

In earlier writings, Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) concluded, based upon evidence from research, that “…variation in schools’ cultures explain a significant proportion of the variation in staff practices and student outcomes across schools” (p. 29). The authors expanded upon this thinking as they discussed the necessity for significant capacity development for individuals and schools during school restructuring efforts (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The researchers designed a study to explore the effects of transformational leadership on various aspects of the school, including organizational conditions. The authors explained that while school leadership does not necessarily have a direct effect on academic achievement, school conditions can have direct effects on students, and subsequently the authors identify value in exploring leadership as mediated by organizational conditions. The researchers found that transformational leadership has strong, significant effects on organizational conditions.

Griffith (2004) researched the direct effects of principals’ transformational leadership style on school staff turnover and school performance, as well as the indirect effect through school staff job satisfaction. Among other findings, Griffith identified that transformational leadership behaviors were positively and significantly related to the school staff’s job satisfaction, which in turn showed a moderate, positive and significant relation to the school achievement progress. Additionally, Griffith found the schools in which the gap between minority/non-minority achievement was narrowed were schools in which teachers were more satisfied and that these schools were the ones in which principals exhibited transformational leadership styles. Griffith noted that the results of
his study add to the evidence that transformational leadership describes effective leadership in a variety of settings, including educational settings.

Leadership is related to several aspects of the organization, including shaping of culture, working conditions, and follower efficacy. Transformational leadership positively relates to followers’ sense of job satisfaction and levels of commitment to the organization and its goals. These results indicate that a principal exhibiting a transformational leadership style can indirectly contribute to development of a school culture that enhances efficacy and ownership, which in turn can generate higher levels of commitment to attainment of goals by teachers.

Leadership and Change

As businesses in the United States are transitioning into a highly competitive global arena, leaders are recognizing the need to reinvent their organizations (Geijsel et al., 2003). As the authors noted, public sector organizations, including public schools, faced these challenges somewhat later than their corporate counterparts, but leaders in this sector are also experiencing the pressure for transformation. Additionally, as described previously, our public K-12 systems have been engaged in numerous change efforts, imposed from both beyond and within the school districts and schools. In many cases, such change is driven by legislative mandate, with the imperative to ensure equity and excellence for all students (Jennings, 2015). External and internal changes impact schools and also require changes from them in order to support students in attaining learning goals. Since change is inextricably linked with the work of schools, this literature review includes a brief examination of the relationship between leadership and change.
To facilitate change in schools that leads to higher levels of achievement for students within an equitable framework of opportunity and results, new approaches have been instituted in schools, mirroring the transitions in business, government, and non-profit sectors. Included in this list of precursors to change are the following: improved selection and development of staff, ownership of results, initiation of collaborative teams, improvement of communications, and cooperative relationships with associations and unions (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These changes involve focus on both structural and behavioral elements of organizations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Such transformation at the individual and organizational levels require leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

According to Lamm, Lamm, Rodriguez, and Owens (2016), leadership programs often focus on change as a result of leadership or leadership style, but not much attention is paid to how leadership style can influence the change process. However, as the authors commented, leadership style can play a role in how followers perceive change and subsequently how they react to it. These researchers designed a study to examine the engagement of leaders in a large-scale national change initiative. They found that leaders with a transformational leadership style positively and significantly predicted levels of engagement in change, while transactional leadership style negatively and significantly predicted levels of engagement in change. Leadership style accounted for 28% of the variance in engagement. While the effects on followers clearly were not examined in this study, it stands to reason that those leaders demonstrating transformational leadership styles would serve as role models through their active participation in the change initiative.
Northouse (2004) explained that the transformational leader launches followers’ engagement with a significant change and then guides the followers through the process. The transformational leader serves as a role model and helps build confidence in the followers by showing his or her solid moral values in action through decisions and behavior that are competent. The leader often creates the vision by listening to the followers and drawing their hopes and dreams together in a way that expresses the vision and identity of the organization. The leader guides the followers through present uncertainty to the future desired vision, similar to a guide leading people through the wilderness to a destination. As Northouse described, the transformational leader serves as social architect, as they are actively engaged in the culture while leading the change in a visible manner (Northouse, 2004).

Leithwood (1994) recognized that the work of school leadership includes the emerging need to navigate their schools through change process. He recommended developing transformational leadership skills of principals due to these requirements that are emerging in the field. He described that transformational leadership is well suited to guiding followers through the change process and that improvement of schools necessarily includes change, so subsequently transformational leadership can be intellectually linked to school improvement. He also correctly foreshadowed the continuing emphasis upon change in public education in moving forward into the twenty-first century.

Geijsel et al. (2003) noted that teacher commitment has been a theoretical focus for conceptual understanding of transformative leadership, but that teacher commitment also has been recognized as a key component in reform and renewal of schools in
research from the 1960s and onward. The researchers conducted similar studies in the Netherlands and the United States, and the results were compared. The authors concluded that this study confirmed previous similar research in non-school contexts, in that the vision-building aspect of transformational leadership has an important effect on extra effort. Overall results led the researchers to conclude that the model has “significant explanatory value for the extra effort variables” (p. 249).

Evans, Thornton, and Usinger (2012) explored theoretical frameworks to guide school improvement. They highlighted shared vision as the third component of effective learning organizations, building upon the work of Senge (2006). A focus upon development of a shared vision is an aspect of transformational leadership and implicit in development of shared vision is the recognition and engagement of followers in the work of shaping the future of their school. The authors emphasized the importance of grounding school level improvement into a theoretical framework as it “provides leaders with comprehensive structure to view organizational evolution and suggests appropriate options to positively impact the process” (Evans et al., 2012, p. 169).

Myers (2014) highlighted practices that effective leaders employ during times of change. As he noted, the school organization no longer functions at a simple level, but has become increasingly complex. Myers conducted a qualitative study to examine leadership in the midst of turbulence and change. The researcher found that the effective principal was able to navigate the flux in the organization and inspire confidence and trust in those who worked with him. Myers linked observed practice with descriptors from research on transformational leadership, commonalities between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence, authentic leadership, and charismatic leadership.
The author concluded that the practices aligned with the theoretical base of identified leadership style supported this leader in effectively navigating the turbulence and change inherent in schools today.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) commented that the use of transformational approaches to leadership when the leader is working on restructuring an organization is viewed as productive. They replicated a previous study (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998), investigating whether the use of transformational leadership actually results in the desired change and outcomes. Transformational leadership has a significant effect upon school conditions, which in turn, have an effect on classroom conditions. However, the authors recognized that leadership is not a one-way action, but instead a reciprocal process between leader and follower, and as such, call for additional research to explore this theoretical concept more fully.

Penava and Šehić (2014) explored the topic of utilizing a transformational leadership style when undergoing large-scale organizational change, noting that evidence points to this relevance in the literature on transformational leadership and organizational change. The authors found that transformational leadership by a leader charged with moving the change process forward reduced the employees’ resistance to the change, both directly and indirectly. The authors explained the direct negative relationship between transformational leadership and resistance to change by employees in the following way: when the leader motivates and inspires followers and makes work meaningful and challenging, this leadership approach supports followers in thinking more positively about the change and subsequently they are less likely to engage in negative actions directed at the change. The indirect negative relationship between
transformational leadership and resistance to change by followers was explained by the researchers in the following way: the leader who is more attentive to followers’ needs can articulate the change in a way that followers can understand that it is needed, which subsequently reduces a negative cognitive interpretation of the change. The authors commented that in their study, some of the presumed effects of transformational leadership were not identified in the organization utilized for the research. However, they also noted that the organization selected for this study was a bureaucratic and centralized organization that required standardization and routine approaches, and the researchers believe that the relevance for transformational leadership in the change processes would be higher in decentralized organizations with the latitude or culture for a more entrepreneurial approach.

Mette and Scribner (2014) provided a case study of a turnaround school, discussing the implications of utilizing a transactional leadership style as opposed to a transformational leadership style in navigating change. In describing the unfortunate consequences of the application of transactional leadership to guide the school through change in this case study, the authors cautioned readers to examine the pressure to apply transactional rather than a transformational approach to leadership when in a high pressure and high stakes situation that requires change. They drew upon the insight and emphasis of Burns (1978) by comparing the two leadership approaches and commenting that transformational leadership drives authentic change because it addresses the underpinnings of a democratic school system, including social justice and equity.

As our nation continues to grapple with the transition to becoming globally intertwined with countries around the world and works through the ramifications of
worldwide competition for corporations, non-profit organizations, and educated students, the corresponding need for change will continue to buffet our schools. Federal and state reform efforts, as well as local imperatives for equity and excellence, require transformation from our public schools. In this context, a review of research examining the relationship between leadership and change efforts indicates that transformational leadership may be positively correlated with the needs of organizations and staff to undertake the required transformations.

**Leadership and Academic Achievement**

An examination of the history of the founding of public education, leads to the conclusion that the purpose for education is to support students in their learning, whether the focus be on academic gains, development of citizenship disposition and skills, preparation for further education and career, and/or the development of the child’s potential (Ellis, 2004). The role of the teacher is to support this learning and growth, while the role of the principal is to lead the effective practice of the teacher.

Naturally, there are many variables which influence a student’s learning and growth, both within school and beyond the walls of the school house, including socio-economic factors, family dynamics, and more. Additionally, the line between a principal’s leadership, teacher performance, and student learning is not direct, yet it is valuable to examine relationships between the leadership style and student achievement in the quest to understand more fully the dynamics at play within the school context.

To that end, researchers have examined the connection between transformational leadership and academic achievement for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) commented that research examining the direct connection
between school leadership and student achievement typically indicates weak relationships, but those studies that include mediating and/or moderating variables often result in identification of significant relationships. Those mediating and/or moderating variables can include purposes and goals, school structure and social networks, people, and organizational culture.

In seeking to understand and compare the relationships between teacher and principal leadership to school improvement, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) identified student engagement as a mediating variable. Drawing upon Jeremy Finn’s article, “Withdrawing from School” (1989), they explained that students who identify with school have an internalized sense of belonging and that they value school-relevant goals, recognizing that this engagement “…has been found to mediate a wide range of achievement and behavioral outcomes among students…” (p. 685).

In their 2005 meta-analysis, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) reviewed 32 empirical studies of transformational leadership that were published between 1996 and 2005. The authors found that transformational leadership has significant, although often indirect, effects upon student achievement and student engagement. They noted that the effects were mediated by school culture, teachers’ commitment, job satisfaction, and a few other variables.

Allen et al. (2015) conducted a correlational study to examine the relationship among transformational leadership, school climate, and student achievement. The authors discovered that all five factors of transformational leadership were significantly and positively related to the seven dimensions of school climate. The authors noted that when teachers believe that their principal exhibits desired transformational leadership traits,
then they are better able to identify with their leader and they feel more positive about the school climate.

However, Allen et al. (2015) did not identify a direct correlation between principals’ leadership style and academic achievement. Drawing upon the writings of other researchers, including Hallinger and Heck (1996), the researchers noted that transformational leadership has an indirect influence on student achievement. The authors (Allen et al., 2015) commented that when the leader generates trust and treats followers in a professional manner, then teachers can perform at high levels and can use their knowledge and skills to ensure that all students receive excellent instruction.

Furthermore, Allen et al. (2015) did not identify a significant relationship between school climate and student achievement in math and reading. The authors discussed this finding in light of other research addressing the link between school climate and academic achievement. They recognize that Choi and Chang (2011) determined that school climate had a significant effect upon achievement in mathematics and identify that the inclusion of student surveys may have made a difference in results. Additionally, they explain that Webster and Fisher (2003), recognized that achievement in mathematics was influenced by teachers’ instructional strategies, which in that study was a reflection of the perceptions of school climate. The authors synthesized findings of the various studies by commenting that teachers in schools with a positive climate are more satisfied and that their satisfaction with their ability to provide better instruction impacts the achievement levels of their students.

May and Sanders (2013) also examined the relationship between transformational leadership and school climate. The authors posited that school climate may be a leading
indicator of “…future growth of lagging indicators such as test scores, and should be considered benchmarks in the transformation process” (p. 42). The authors reference multiple research studies that support this claim, including an in-depth report by Jennifer McMurrer (2012).

McMurrer (2012) studied the implementation of federal School Improvement Grants (SIGs). She noted that federal SIG guidance recognizes the importance of “…establishing a school climate conducive to learning…” (p. 1). Following the federal guidance and direction of state and local officials, schools participating in the case study “…took strong steps to improve school climate as a way to spur dramatic changes in performance” (p. 14). McMurrer recommended that gains in students’ test scores not be used as the sole measure of improvement, but that the findings from the case studies suggested that improvements in climate should be factored in at the federal and state policymaking levels when making decisions about funding, drafting new law, and designing programs of improvement for schools.

In Hallinger and Heck’s (1999) synthesis of their research on the topic, they concluded that leadership enhances school effectiveness. However, they noted that the effect of school leaders is indirect in that they influence the teacher and classroom environment – factors which impact student learning. They also identified that the influence of school leaders upon the effectiveness of the school is not a one-way process, but that the leaders are also influenced by the school conditions and culture. Subsequently, these researchers note that school leaders do not operate as heroic figures who change the schools, but that they work collaboratively with staff at the school to
provide motivation and influence that foster development of a culture and practice conducive to student learning.

As described previously, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of research studies related to transformational leadership in schools from 1996 to 2005, with one component of this analysis reviewing the effect on mathematics, literacy, other areas of the curriculum combined, and/or an aggregate of school performance. The authors noted that the results from the nine studies focusing on this aspect of transformational leadership are mixed, but they concluded that the results lean toward the conclusion that transformational leadership is positively correlated with student achievement. In 6 of the 9 studies, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between transformational leadership and some measures of student achievement.

Quin et al. (2015) designed a study to examine the differences in leadership style between principals in high and low achieving schools. The researchers found that principals in high achieving schools used transformational leadership practices more consistently and with more effectiveness than principals in low achieving schools. Specifically, the greatest differences in leadership styles were identified as “inspiring a shared vision” and “challenging the process.”

Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003) conducted an international meta-analysis that reviewed the relationship between transformational leadership and student performance. They identified a small relationship in studies focused on the United States, but not in the Netherlands, and also only at the elementary, not the secondary, school levels.
In their study of principal leadership and school autonomy, Dou et al. (2017) recognized that previous research has focused on transformational leadership on school autonomy reform and that currently researchers are identifying the importance of also including instructional leadership. They stated that the results of their study support the concept of integrating instructional and transformational leadership approaches to attain goals.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) explored the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers’ practice in a large scale reform project. The authors found that transformational leadership had a significant and positive effect on teachers’ classroom practice. However, such a relationship between transformational leadership and student achievement was not identified. The authors recognized that according to their findings, the use of transformational leadership can affect changes in teachers’ pedagogy, but these changes may not be those that are needed to impact student learning. The opportunity to affect practice opens a possibility to utilize another style of leadership, namely instructional, to ensure that the new pedagogical practices are those that will positively impact student learning.

Boberg and Bourgeois (2016) studied the effects of an integrated model of transformational leadership on student achievement. An integrated model of transformational leadership includes monitoring of instructional practices together with the behaviors typically aligned with transformational models of leadership, including empowering and distributive strategies. As the authors recognized, leadership is not anticipated to affect student performance directly, but principal leadership does affect teacher motivation and behaviors, which then in turn influence student learning. Their
findings support the importance of including transformational leadership in the work of leading for improvement of learning as these behaviors align with increases in collective teacher efficacy and commitment. As the authors commented, transformational leadership on its own has not been widely linked with improvements in student learning. However, when a leader engages in transformational leadership while also managing schools by monitoring for instruction and learning, then their study indicates a positive effect on student achievement.

While the transformational leader attends to motivation and culture, instructional leadership focuses upon the technical aspects of the work of educators, as the principal guides and supports teachers in shaping pedagogy. As Hallinger (2003) described, historically, instructional leadership emerged from a top-down construct of leadership with attention to first-order change. In contrast, a shift to transformational leadership that focuses on second-order change arose in response to decades of top-down leadership that focused on instructional leadership through the effective schools movement. Hallinger (2003) identified similarities between the two styles, including the following: creating a shared sense of purpose, developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture focused on improvement of teaching and learning, shaping reward structure to reflect goals set for staff and students, organizing and providing intellectual stimulation and development for staff, and being a visible presence and modeling values that are being fostered. Hallinger also identified the differences between the two styles: 1) target of change (first- or second-order), 2) the extent to which the principal uses a coordination and control strategy vs. one of empowerment, and 3) the degree to which leadership emanates from an individual or is shared by the leader and followers.
At the time of writing the referenced article, Hallinger (2003) commented that it may be time to use the two styles in an integrated fashion and reflected on the merit of the writing by Marks and Printy (2003). As Hallinger noted, it is challenging for a principal to provide instructional leadership as the sole leader of the school and a solution may be to use transformational leadership to invite teachers to share instructional leadership with the principal.

Clearly the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement is not direct. Multiple factors have mediating and moderating effects. However, research has identified links between leadership style and factors considered as important precursors or contributors to student learning, including school climate. While some studies have identified a correlation between transformational leadership and student academic performance, some researchers are identifying a stronger relationship between leadership style and higher student achievement when both transformational and instructional leadership styles are utilized.

**Empirical Research**

This literature review consisted of analysis of books, articles, and descriptions of research on the theories of transformational leadership and instructional leadership from inception of the constructs to present day. Five representative studies are presented here to highlight and analyze more deeply the empirical research that provides the foundation for this dissertation study.

**Leadership Practices as Perceived by Teachers in Relation to Attitudes and Job Performance**
Hauserman et al. (2013) conducted a mixed methods sequential explanatory study focused upon teachers’ perceptions of principals’ leadership qualities in terms of how this leadership affects their attitudes and job performance. The study was conducted in public schools in the province of Alberta, Canada. In analyzing the quality of the study, it is clear that the researchers selected the design, statistical techniques, and tools to align effectively with the research questions. Use of a mixed method approach allowed the researchers to group principals through quantitative analysis, which focused efforts when proceeding to the qualitative phase. The themes represented theoretical constructs of transformational leadership and were used for both the quantitative and qualitative phases.

In the quantitative phase, selected teachers completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and other open-ended questions to determine transformational leadership scores for their principals. The qualitative phase was completed through phone interviews of teachers at schools at which principals were identified in the highest \((n = 5)\) and lowest \((n = 4)\) quartiles of transformational leadership qualities. The qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and the phone interviews allowed the researchers to conclude that teachers preferred principals who “…displayed transformational leadership characteristics in the areas of idealized influence, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation” (Hauserman et al., 2013, p. 35).

The teachers in schools with principals with low transformational leadership scores reported in their interviews that their principals had marginal influence on their schools. In contrast, the teachers in schools with principals with high transformational leadership scores reported in their interviews that their principals engaged in many
behaviors that were viewed as positive by the respondents, including setting high expectations, fostering collaboration, empowering staff, and were “…honest, trustworthy, transparent, professional, and not ego driven” (Hauserman et al., 2013, p. 52). Teachers in schools with principals in both the highest and lowest quartiles of transformational leadership expressed desire and appreciation for principal leadership behaviors that align with transformational leadership characteristics. Teachers’ empowerment led to higher levels of organizational commitment. The authors posited that the connection between highly transformational principals and more enthusiastic teachers “…would likely lead to increased fulfillment and enhanced student learning” (p. 55).

**Leadership Practices in Relation to Engagement in Change**

As referenced above, a study was conducted by Lamm et al. (2016) to explore how transformational and instructional leadership style impacts level of engagement in change. Participation in a national project provided the context and online surveys were used to gather data. The 14-item leadership scale developed by MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Rich (2001) was used to gather data about transformational leadership and a 5-item scale developed by Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, and Huber (1984), was utilized to gather data about transactional leadership. Multiple linear regression was used to examine the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership style and engagement in the national change process.

In analyzing the data, the researchers (Lamm et al., 2016) identified that when controlling for transactional leadership, transformational leadership was a significant positive predictor of engagement in change. When controlling for transformational leadership, transactional leadership was a significant negative predictor of engagement in
change. The researchers concluded that “…the less an individual expressed a transactional leadership style, the greater their extent of engagement in the change process” (p. 7). The model that the authors developed was significant and accounted for 28% of the variation in the extent of engagement in the change process.

Lamm et al. (2016) included information about reliability of the two existing tools that were used. They also included in their study some researcher-developed items, which were reviewed by a panel of experts with expertise in survey design and educational programming. As noted by the researchers, the small sample size was appropriate for an exploratory study, but limits generalizability.

**Leadership Practices in Relation to Academic Achievement**

Quin et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between transformational leadership qualities and academic achievement of students. The researchers used Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) online survey to gather data from teachers from 10 school districts in Southwest Mississippi. To compare the differences in scores from school identified as high and low performing, the authors state numerous times that multiple t-tests were used, while the data table is labeled ANOVA Analysis of the 5 Leadership Practices (Quin et al., 2015, p. 79). Upon examination of the data and recognition that t-tests are not recommended for multiple tests of means (Field, 2013), this researcher concluded that Quin et al. (2015) used an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the study.

The leadership practices that were measured through the online survey included the following: (1) modeling the way, (2) inspiring a shared vision, (3) challenging the process, (4) enabling others to act, and (5) encouraging the heart. The ANOVA indicated
a difference in the leadership styles of the principals in the two groups, namely high and low performing schools. A significant and positive difference was found in comparing principals on all five dimensions of transformational leadership. The greatest difference was found was in the dimensions of inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process (Quin et al., 2015).

Shatzer et al. (2014) developed a study to compare the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement. The study included a sample of 590 teachers in 37 elementary schools in the Intermountain West of the United States. Teachers rated their principals on one of two measures, either the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire for transformational leadership or the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale for instructional leadership. Student achievement was the independent variable and was measured by scores on a criterion referenced test. Two separate multiple regressions were used to analyze the data. The researchers controlled for school context and principal demographics. Instructional leadership accounted for a large and significant amount of the variance in the criterion reference raw scores $[F(10, 20) = 4.31, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .52]$ and transformational leadership accounted for a proportion that was non-significant, but larger than control variables $[F = (8, 22) = 1.42, p = .24, \Delta R^2 = .26]$. While these results represent students’ raw scores, analysis of student progress scores also resulted in similar findings, with instructional leadership explaining more of the variance than transformational leadership, and each of the leadership styles explaining more variance than the control variables on their own. The researchers concluded from the results that instructional leadership has a slight advantage over transformational leadership in explaining differences in student performance. Additionally, the authors
comment that “…principals contribute to the outcome of student test scores in unique and meaningful ways” (Shatzer et al., 2014, p. 456).

Marks and Printy (2003) also designed a study to examine both transformational and instructional leadership in relation to student achievement. The researchers used data from the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, which had conducted a national search for public schools that had made strong progress in reform efforts. Both quantitative and qualitative data were examined. Dependent variables included pedagogical quality, assessment tasks, and academic achievement, while independent variables included leadership.

This study (Marks & Printy, 2003) used quantitative and qualitative data that was collected as part of the School Restructuring Study (SRS), a project conducted supported by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted under the direction of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the Center on Organization of Schools that was designed to identify schools that had made substantial progress with reform efforts. The researchers selected to use data that included teacher perceptions of practice and the organization, evaluation of instruction by trained evaluators, and student work samples that were rated by trained researchers and practitioners. The process of developing case studies, coding, and eventual peer review of each case study was well-articulated and thorough. Leadership was not a primary focus in the original SRS research, so Marks and Printy (2003) provided attention and information regarding their efforts to ensure construct validity in terms of transformational and instructional leadership.

To analyze the relationship between shared instructional leadership and transformational leadership, the researchers (Marks & Printy, 2003) used a scatterplot
analysis. With overlay of a quadrant on the scatterplot, the researchers were able to situate schools in relation to high or low on each of the two leadership styles. They then constructed a categorical variable to represent the schools’ quadrant positions, for example, a school may have been high on one form and low on the other, low on both forms, or high on both. They compared means using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and then utilized hierarchical linear modeling to analyze the effect of leadership on the two dependent variables, pedagogical quality and student achievement.

The researchers (Marks & Printy, 2003) found that transformational leadership was a necessary condition for quality teaching and student learning, but that it was insufficient on its own. The schools with integrated leadership, in which both transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership were present, were found to have an average pedagogical quality of 0.6 SD higher than other schools. The model explained 26% of the between-school differences in pedagogical quality. Similarly, in schools with an integrated leadership approach, academic achievement was close to 0.6 SD ($p \leq .01$) higher than in comparison schools. The authors concluded that in schools where transformational leadership coupled with instructional leadership was regularly practiced, teachers’ pedagogy was of higher quality and students achieved to higher levels than in schools where these two constructs of leadership were not both evident in practice.

These five research studies provided a foundation for the study that is the topic of this dissertation. This review of research and theoretical articles in Chapter Two grounded this researcher in the history and study of the theories of transformational and
instructional leadership as related to the work in schools, which provided the context for
design of the dissertation study, which is to follow.

**Conclusion**

This review of literature began with a history and review of research articles, books, and meta-analyses related to transformational leadership and instructional leadership, then examined the relationship of leadership style with organizational commitment, engagement in change processes, and student achievement. An integrative approach to leadership encompassing both transformational and instructional leadership was explored. Finally, empirical research on these topics was reviewed and presented. This review of literature provides the foundation and context for the research methodology that will be presented in Chapter Three.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

In Chapter Three, the research methodology that was used to investigate the research questions is addressed. This chapter includes the two research questions, the research design, setting and participants, sampling process, discussion regarding validity and reliability, data collection, the analysis process, and the limitations of the research design and study.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to investigate the relationship between principals’ leadership styles and student achievement. Specifically, the researcher examined how a principal in a high performing school and selected teachers in that school viewed the principal’s leadership style as related to the theories of transformational and instructional leadership and how this leadership style was perceived to impact teacher attitudes, teacher job performance, and student achievement. The two research questions are as follows:

**Research question one.** How do teachers in a high performing school view the principal’s leadership style with regard to transformational and instructional leadership theories?

**Research question two.** How does the principal’s leadership style impact teacher attitudes and job performance?

Research Design

This is a qualitative study that used case study as the approach. As described by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research begins with assumptions and theoretical
frameworks that inform the study, then researchers use an emerging qualitative approach that is both inductive and deductive, sensitive to people and places, and a data analysis that identifies patterns and themes. Vogt and Johnson (2016) described a case study “… as a way to gather and analyze data about one or a small number of examples as a way of studying a group, place, issue, or other phenomenon (p. 53).

The topic of this dissertation was the interaction of principal leadership with teacher followers in service to student learning. Qualitative case study was selected as the design because the focus of this investigation occurred in the natural setting of a school community. In this research study several data points were utilized. To select the school of interest, the researcher reviewed student achievement data in the form of state assessment results over time. Specifically, the researcher identified a school that fit the following characteristics: 1) it had underperformed relative to other schools in the state, 2) a new principal was selected to lead the school, 3) after the arrival of the new principal, scores on the state assessments began to rise, and 4) the principal was still at the school and sustaining the improvements. In this case, the school also began garnering consistent annual recognition as a “school of distinction” from the state in subsequent years. The study itself consisted of interviews of the principal and teachers, as well as examination of evaluation scores for the principal and teachers. The evaluation scores were in the form of state-mandated evaluations that were aligned with the district’s selected instructional model for teachers and the district’s selected principal model for principals. The continuum of scores on each evaluation framework include “unsatisfactory,” “basic,” “proficient,” and “distinguished” on each dimension of the framework.
Setting and Participants

This study was set in a public elementary school in Snohomish County, Washington that serves students in Kindergarten through fifth grades. For the purposes of this study, this school will be referred to as Brookside Elementary School. This school was selected because it meets the characteristics of interest for this study, namely that students had underperformed on state assessments for a number of years, then demonstrated improvements in achievement as measured by the state assessments after the hiring of a new principal. Services at Brookside Elementary School include various programs traditionally housed at public schools, including transitional bilingual instruction and a continuum of services for students with learning and ability differences. The school serves a population of children from a variety of racial and socio-economic backgrounds.

At Brookside Elementary School, the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) was historically lower than the state average. The school was identified under the Elementary Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act as a "Focus School" based upon the 2011, 2012, and 2013 performance data for the categories ‘English Learners’ and ‘Students with Disabilities.’ Focus schools were schools performing in the lowest 10% of schools in the state for their identified underperforming students. As identified by coaches working with state improvement, the school had significant organizational and instructional challenges. Since the principal arrived in 2014, the scores have shown a steady increase.

Participation was voluntary and included the principal of the school and four teachers. The number of participants met the recommended sample size for case study
research of four to five (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). Teacher participants represented a cross-section of staff members based on gender, age, position, and years of experience. Since evaluation documents are contractually designated as confidential and information provided by the principal and teachers may have an effect upon future actions, staff members were identified by pseudonyms in the study (American Psychological Association, 2010; Yin, 2009).

**Sampling Process**

Case study includes a wide range of procedures to develop a comprehensive picture of the case. These procedures may include the following approaches: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009). This case study included focused interviews and document analysis. The focused interviews were conducted as conversations guided by the researcher, rather than as inquiries in the form of a structured survey (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The document analysis consisted of review of the annual evaluation reports of the principal and participating teachers from the past three years. Evaluation forms from the previous three years were selected to provide a comprehensive view of performance and to align with the evaluation of school performance, which is measured in terms of three year trends by the state.

**Measures**

Two data collection measures were selected for this study: interviews and document analysis. Interviews were identified as one of the data collection measures because of the recognition that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 2009). Interviews provide critical and valuable content for the
case study. Document analysis was selected as one of the data collection measures because it is a relevant component of every case study topic and the content obtained can be used to corroborate details from other sources (Yin, 2009).

The researcher developed semi-structured interviews to investigate evidence of principal leadership related to teacher attitudes, job performance, and student achievement as viewed through the constructs of transformational and instructional leadership. This type of an interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to develop and ask questions that are designed to understand the participants’ actions and experiences from the perspective of theoretical constructs, yet also to respond fluidly in conversational manner as participants’ share information that can be enhanced through additional questioning (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As described by Robert Yin (2009), the interviews proceeded on two levels, following both the line of inquiry reflective of the study protocol and asking the actual questions in an unbiased way that also supported the needs of the case study. The principal was interviewed first and the responses analyzed to inform development of questions for the teacher interviews. All interviews were designed to be completed within 15 to 30 minutes. Based on the literature review, the researcher developed interview questions designed to gather information about the principal’s leadership and the teachers’ perceptions and practice relative to the theories of transformational and instructional leadership. Responses were recorded to ensure an effective interview process.

Document analysis was used as another measure. The principal and teachers permitted access to the evaluations that were developed as part of the statewide process of annual requirements for educator evaluations. In the case of the principal, the
Association of Washington School Principals (2014) framework informed the structure of the evaluation. In the case of the teachers, the Danielson framework (The Danielson Group, 2013) informed the structure of the evaluation. The researcher analyzed the results of the evaluations in relation to the theoretical constructs and increases in student achievement.

**Validity and Reliability**

In qualitative research, it is important to approach the issues of reliability and validity carefully, attending to the approaches used in framing the case study, then gathering, analyzing, and presenting results. Yin (2009) described tactics to address construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. To address the issue of construct validity, Yin offered three tactics, namely, using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and having key informants review the draft case study report. All three of these tactics to address construct validity were utilized in this study. To support internal validity, Yin described four possible approaches for the data analysis phase. In this study the technique of explanation building was used, which is a special type of pattern matching, another approach for data analysis. To support external validity, this dissertation study followed Yin’s recommendation to use theory in the case study design.

Reliability within a study refers to the consistency or stability of a measure internally or from one use to the next (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). In this study, a case study protocol was used throughout the data collection process (Yin, 2009). Specifically, the researcher used the following means consistently: a purpose statement, communication, protocol for interviews, interview questions, and schedule. The purpose statement framed
the entire research project and expressed what the author intends to accomplish (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Communication included all correspondence with participants and their organization, highlighting specific permissions, timelines, and agreements regarding access. The protocol for interviews included all details regarding the manner in which the interviews were to be conducted, a location that was distraction free, consent, and a guide that included the questions and space for recording responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview questions consisted of five open-ended research questions that were general and focused upon deepening understanding of the central purpose of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The schedule listed specific dates and timelines, as well as the outline for the study (Yin, 2009).

**Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee should be reviewed and made explicit (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This researcher is employed in a public school district within the same region as the case study. The researcher’s personal experience as a teacher, principal, and evaluator of principals could impact assumptions and bias in conducting the research. To mitigate any effects of the researcher’s perspectives, the study was conducted transparently and in alignment with the identified strategies to support validity and reliability.

**Data Collection**

The interview portion of the case study began with a pilot test of the interview questions. After completion of the pilot phase, the researcher prepared the interview phase to maximize adherence to consistency. The principal was invited to participate, the protocol and questions provided in advance, and the interview scheduled. The questions
were asked in a one-to-one setting, recorded by permission, and follow-up questions were asked as appropriate. The principal was provided with a transcript of the interview to review for accuracy. The principal provided a list of teachers who had worked at the school for at least the past three years. These teachers were listed and numbered, then a random number generator was used to identify the teachers who were invited to participate in interviews. Interviews of the teachers were conducted in the same way, with the structure of the interviews consistent for each teacher, including using the same introductory materials and asking the questions in the same order.

The document analysis phase of the case study consisted of review of confidential materials. The principal and teachers granted access to copies of the evaluation forms from the past three years. The researcher elected to view forms reflecting three years of evaluations because analysis of multiple years provides a more comprehensive view of performance and because school performance is evaluated by the state in three year trends. The researcher gathered scores relative to the dimensions of each framework.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study utilized Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral process to organize and analyze the data. As discussed by the authors, data collection, data analysis, and report writing are interrelated and often proceed simultaneously. The process includes the following steps (p. 185):

1. Data collection
2. Managing and organizing the data
3. Reading and memoing emergent ideas
4. Describing and classifying codes into themes
5. Developing and assessing interpretations

6. Representing and visualizing the data

The researcher began by compiling the transcripts into an inventory and reading each. The researcher then coded the responses in each transcript by identifying small categories of information, then assigning a label to each (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once the transcripts were coded, the researcher then developed themes referencing the theories of transformational and instructional leadership. The themes connected several of the codes with common ideas into synthesized understanding related to the research questions. To address reliability, the transcripts were independently reviewed by a second trained researcher to establish interrater reliability (Yin, 2009). In the interpretation phase, the analysis moved from a descriptive identification of coded themes to a more generalized examination of evidence related to theoretical constructs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis of data concluded with presentation of the findings.

Limitations

A case study possesses limitations, including the recognition that implementation of the research design is time consuming, difficult to replicate, and that researcher bias may influence the results. This researcher committed to identify and mitigate to the greatest extent possible any potential limitations. To that end, the researcher attended to potential assumptions and biases through transparent analysis and reporting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). Participants were asked to review their interview responses for accuracy (Yin, 2009).
Chapter Four

Results

This study was an investigation of the relationship between principal leadership and student academic achievement through the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). The case study was focused upon a school in which the academic achievement of students, as measured by the state achievement tests, increased substantially since the arrival of a new principal. The researcher explored the leadership actions on the part of the principal, as perceived by the principal and teachers, and through state-mandated annual evaluations of the principal and teachers. These leadership actions were analyzed in terms of their relationship to the theories of transformational and instructional leadership.

As a part of this case study, semi-structured interviews and review of evaluation forms were conducted with the principal and four teachers. The principal is a White male, 60 years of age, and with 33.5 years of experience in education and 27 years of experience in educational administration. The teachers included four White females, ranging in age from 36 to 58 years of age, and with experience ranging from 13 to 25 years in the field of education. All teachers had served at the school since the arrival of the principal. Staff members were identified by pseudonyms in this study because evaluation documents were included, and these documents are contractually designated as confidential and include information that may have an effect upon future actions (American Psychological Association, 2010; Yin, 2009).
The interviews of the principal and teachers focused upon the participants’ perceptions of the principal’s leadership style in interacting with teachers to support increases in student achievement. Three themes emerged that are related to the theory of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2004), namely, 1) idealized influence, 2) intellectual stimulation, and 3) individualized consideration. Two themes emerged that are related to the theory of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005), namely, 1) managing the instructional program and 2) promoting a positive school learning climate. These themes are summarized in Table 1, along with the sub-themes.

Table 1

*Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes with Representative Quotes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Respect</td>
<td>“I trust his judgement on my teaching so much more than our previous principal” (Christine, 46-47).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>“And everyone feels that they are valued and protected by him”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Kylie, 73-74).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes and Dreams</td>
<td>“So my focus was on how, this is my fifth school, how do I make this the most positive school that I possibly can” (Joe, 15-16).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“So my focus was on how, this is my fifth school, how do I make this the most positive school that I possibly can” (Joe, 15-16).

**Modeling**

“…when he’s leading a meeting, it’s never a stand and deliver type of situation. He gives us topics, we get to chat about it, which is what he expects in our classrooms as well. And I think those kinds of things have led to an increase in student achievement because then we’re doing it in our classrooms” (Kylie, 20-23).

**Intellectual Stimulation**

**Questioning**

“He has conversations with us about our new writing curriculum or the K-3 reading curriculum. How is it working? Is it working? Now we’re kind of at a stalemate with the math curriculum. Why is that not working? Why are we not seeing growth right now? We’re all going, wow. He’s asking these, digging in, and asking why do we think. So, he’s always asking, why is it, why is it, why is it” (Sara, 88-92).

**Creativity**

“I mean, we knew we needed to do some new things, we knew we needed to be innovative, … and he was just … a guide on the side” (Emily, 12-13).
Individual Consideration

Interest

“And he’s also helped me with my son. Parenting is a whole ‘nother issue (laughter) and having him here at school and having him support [my son] and his learning. I don’t worry. I know that he’s going to be fine. I have a principal for him that supports him and that just takes that off me too” (Emily, 74-77).

Attention

“And he was so wonderful with that and really helped me to get to a place that I understood that it wasn’t anything I had done and I’m a great teacher and he appreciates me” (Kylie, 66-68).

Managing the Instructional Program

Supervision

“But he also doesn’t really judge and say, ‘That was bad, that was good.’ He asks a lot of questions. He makes us think about our own practice by asking those questions, thinking about what it is that we need to do (Christine, 52-54).

Curriculum

“He’s very supportive about curriculum, if it’s not quite working for us, to, you know, go up, he’s purchased stuff that we can use for supplemental pieces (Emily, 86-88).
Monitor Learning

“What am I going to do with my ones? What am I going to do with my twos? Not that they’re numbers, but thinking about how am I moving them up, but also how am I moving my fours up because just because they’re fours doesn’t mean that they don’t need learning too (Sara, 52-54).

Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate

Time

“I needed to make a lot of changes in a relatively… fast pace, and I had to take a lot of risks to get to the place where we were going to be. Because it was things like how long recesses were, how Special Ed, LAP, ELL were scheduled… how the calendar operated… the number of assemblies…” (Joe, 57-61).

Professional Development

“Yes, because there is less of a focus district-wide about professional development regarding that, Joe puts a huge emphasis on doing that work in teams during our professional learning time on Fridays. So, …the entire last year we spent on ELA standards, picking out which standards we were going to address in the next two weeks of our instruction and how we were going to assess those standards” (Kylie, 125-129).
“Yeah, he’s… in our classrooms all the time” (Emily, 83).

**Idealized Influence**

All of the participants expressed the importance of idealized influence. They described their principal in very positive terms, recognizing that they trusted him and that they are trusted by him. The teachers explained that their principal has helped them to feel like professionals who can together attain their shared dreams for their students. Idealized influence included the sub-themes of *trust and respect, dedication, hopes and dreams*, and *modeling*.

**Trust and respect.** All four of the teachers commented that they feel that their principal demonstrates trust and respect toward them. In each case, teachers noted that trust and respect are critically important to their success. Emily explained the launch of the improvement process by noting that their principal demonstrated trust in their ability to identify the priorities based upon their extensive data analysis. She paraphrased Joe’s directions to the team by saying, “You know, you guys really know your kids the best, where do you need to focus your energies? And some of us focused on math and some of us focused on literacy” (Emily, 25-26).

The teachers also described ways in which the principal conveyed this trust and respect through the systems within the school. A building leadership team was developed and grade level teams were supported to develop goals and plans, “…he has organized our decision-making model into a building leadership team” (Kylie, 48-49). Even the use
of resources entailed trust and respect, as the principal shared decision-making for the building budget (Christine, 70-75).

Sara explained that it was a change for the teachers at the school to experience a principal who would trust the teachers and help them to refocus their energies from self-doubt to productive action. She commented, “I feel like Joe, he put a lot of trust back into his teachers. And he really just reminds us that we are doing what is right” (Sara, 13-14).

While the trust and respect conveyed by their principal helped the teachers focus energies on improvement, Kylie noted that the principal engaged the teachers in self-reflection toward growth within the safe feeling created by trust and respect. As she commented, “I feel that he really trusts teachers to make good decisions. He backs us up, um, one hundred percent of the time, while still asking us questions. ‘What do you think about that? Do you think there’s another way you could do that?’ … he kind of assists in the reflection process” (Kylie, 68-71).

When asked to describe how the principal changed the culture to support student learning, Christine commented that, “…he just really trusts his staff. And treats us with respect. And I feel like that is the number one thing that he did that changed our culture” (Christine, 19-20). Christine also pointed to her principal’s trust as a foundational component of his influence upon student learning:

You know,…I think one of the things Joe sees is that he knows that we are the best resource on what our kids need as teachers. Um, sometimes, it seems like there are outside forces or the government or another principal or administrator, no, this is what you need to do to teach your kids. But they’re not in there every day with the kids, seeing what those needs are, so one of the things I really
appreciate about Joe is the way, is that he relies on us as kind of the resource on what our kids need. He knows that we are professionals and he knows what they need, what kind of help we can offer them to get to where they need to be (Christine, 27-34).

In addition to the trust and respect that the teachers felt from the principal, they also described the trust and respect that the students felt for the principal based upon his actions:

I remember several years back we were doing a series of meetings with our sixth graders at the end of the year to prepare them for middle school. And Joe was leading them, Joe was leading those meetings, so we had all of the sixth graders piled into the library, it was crowded, they’re all sitting on the floor. Whenever he was talking, you could hear a pin drop in that room because so much respect they have for him, you know, I don’t want to say this, but he’s like a god to them. It’s like, you know, they really, truly respect him because of the time he’s put [into] it (Christine, 91-97).

**Dedication.** All five participants detailed the importance of the principal’s dedication to the staff. Alongside the trust and respect that teachers experienced from their principal, they also described his dedication to them from several perspectives. Foundationally, teachers commented that they felt this dedication at an emotional level. As described by Kylie, “And everyone feels that they are valued and protected by him” and “….there’s a comfort in knowing that he’s here. I think it’s a comfort. It gives us confidence” (Kylie, 79-80).
The teachers explained that the principal’s dedication was represented by his active presence and willingness to step in to help. In providing an example, Emily stated, “… if he’s just walking by, like this morning, I said, ‘Hey, Joe, I have a student issue.’ He goes, ‘Okay, I’m on it. Roger Dodger, I’m on it’” (Emily, 85).

Teachers described that their principal’s dedication extended to them as professionals and as people beyond the classroom. Sara shared some challenges about parenting and the support that she has received for her son since he enrolled as a student. Referring to her principal, Sara commented, “… I mean, he was, is, monumentally a leader for me in my life in both personal and education” (Sara, 73-74).

While teachers detailed ways in which their principal showed dedication, Christine noted that this dedication empowered teachers and she drew an analogy to the work that teachers were trying to do with students, “And he gives a lot of power back to us, he’s not going to take over for us. Just like we do with kids, taking responsibility for their issues, but that’s been major” (Christine, 117-118).

The principal illustrated his dedication to students, staff, families, and the community through structures and communication that made it possible for all voices to be heard. Joe’s description of his visits to classrooms highlighted dedication from a practical point of view, “I go in and visit every substitute to check in, I also go in and if everyone ever emails me I go in and talk with them, and I do it face to face, and I make sure I’m rotating through the whole school all the time so I don’t get into bad habits and just talk to certain people” (Joe, 164-167).
The participants all referenced the role of hopes and dreams in their experiences. The principal and teachers used similar, easily accessible language to describe the hopes and dreams that appeared to be shared.

Joe stated right at the start of the interview that his mission upon arriving at the school was to answer the question, “How do I make this the most positive school that I possibly can” (Joe, 16).

Each of the teachers referenced this hope and dream in a language that matched her practice. For instance, Christine commented, “And, we’re all kind of working to do what’s best for kids” (Christine, 108).

The teachers recognized that growth is inherently a component of these hopes and dreams. As Kylie described:

I think that, to put it really simply, is that the kids and the teachers want to come to school every day and that they’re comfortable from growing from wherever they are. That we’re comfortable sharing where we are and reflecting on that, and then moving forward in whatever capacity that may be. For the kids who, you know, have more challenges than the others, they may not move as far, but they’re still growing, and for the kids who are above grade level, that they’re growing too, even though they are above where we would want them to be (Kylie, 25-30).

As a teacher with a long history at the elementary school, Emily explained that part of the change upon the principal’s arrival was that the hopes and dreams took on a sense of the immediate. As she commented, “…it’s now, we need to do it now, the sense of urgency” (Emily, 13-14).
Several teachers spoke to the sense of elevated expectations as a component of the hopes and dreams for the school. Some commented that the work was not about the state standardized test, but about student growth and learning. Sara felt that bringing these hopes and dreams alive was one of the most important leadership moves by her principal and that these hopes and dreams were encompassing, “I think he means that we’re going to be the best teachers we can be, we’re going to be the best students that we can have, well not have, but we’re going to make our students the best that they can be. And just, I don’t know, rising to that thinking, okay, what are we going to do every day to be better, to be the best” (Sara, 29-32).

Modeling. The principal shared history of his family and powerful role modeling by his own mother. He described multiple instances of stepping into the modeling role with his own staff, families, and district leadership, then drew upon his family’s legacy in education by saying, “So we are an education family, that’s what we do” (Joe, 353).

Kylie provided an example of the way in which the principal modeled expectations for communication in the staff meetings that then would be used by teachers with their students, “…and we focus a lot on speaking together in groups, social kind of speaking and listening skills which is exactly what we want to do with our kids” (Kylie, 18-19).

Emily noted that their principal modeled a stance that has helped all of the stakeholders to join together for the sake of their students, “The community is welcome, teachers are welcome, kids are welcome” (Emily, 136-137).
Sara perceived increasing trust by parents for teachers and she believed that the cause of this positive change was due to the modeling provided by the principal, “And so I think the parents here, the community, trusts us. Because Joe does” (Sara, 123-124).

Christine pointed to the principal’s modeling of a growth perspective toward attaining the shared hopes and dreams:

I think that he really sees the potential in all students and all teachers and he really wants to push us all to be the best that we can. He doesn’t see that anyone is not going to reach that potential, he knows that we can keep pushing farther and farther, regardless teacher, students, whatever race, whatever ability” (Christine, 121-124).

Intellectual Stimulation

The principal and teachers described their perceptions of a culture that promoted risk-taking and intellectual growth in the name of student success. Intellectual stimulation includes the sub-dimensions of questioning and creativity.

Questioning. The principal described his efforts to promote teachers’ questioning of practice, including the use of the adopted curriculum. As he states, “…right now I’ve talked with all of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers, trying to get a handle on math and now I’m trying to look back at the data to say, is how they’re feeling, does the data match that” (Joe, 264-266).

Kylie provided a tangible example of the principal’s approach with this observation, “And I have had conversations with him before where I say, ‘I don’t feel that this curriculum is meeting the needs of the kids,’ and he says, ‘Then why are you doing it?’” (Kylie, 13-15).
Christine described the principal’s efforts to promote and accept questioning from his staff, “But he also doesn’t really judge and say, ‘That was bad, that was good.’ He asks a lot of questions. He makes us think about our own practice by asking those questions, thinking about what it is that we need to do. He doesn’t really tell us what the right action is, but he gives us that power to take it” (Christine, 52-55).

The teachers explained that the principal assumes a “guide on the side” role in fostering a climate conducive questioning. As Emily described, “He has really just been a person that off to the side, encouraging, and having the conversations, starting the conversations, or participating in the conversations” (Emily, 149-150).

The teachers described that their principal fostered a willingness to ask questions, even when those questions are directed at him or the school district. As Sara explained, “I think he just took that fear away of knowing we were in staff meetings or whatever, we could disagree with him and there wouldn’t be problems. Um, or, if we questioned something about what he was thinking or what the District was thinking, he didn’t take that personally, you know, he just took it as an open question, ‘Why are we doing something like this if it’s not working? What can we do to change it?’” (Sara, 145-149).

Creativity. Again, all of the participants spoke to the role that creativity played in their success. The principal described an intentional effort to develop an environment in which teachers work in a creative manner to improve practice and results. As Joe described, “So, the important thing to say is that wasn’t me and I didn’t think about it and I didn’t go to the conference and I didn’t plan it beforehand, but they did and they came up with the idea. So my job is to figure out how do I create an environment where it’s theirs and they can carry it out” (Joe, 306-309).
Christine elaborated on the application of creativity to design the most effective strategies to meet students’ needs, “I appreciate is that while the District may have a curriculum that they’ve purchased or things like that, um, he doesn’t restrict us to that. He knows that we’re going to know the best way to teach our kids, and if the district curriculum is not it, he allows us to make those changes or whatever” (Christine, 56-59).

Kylie explained that her principal intentionally designed ways in which the teachers receive support to be creative. She pointed to the meetings set up by Joe, saying, “And I think that those conversations are really powerful, and, he wants honesty from teachers, he wants to hear what they have to say” (Kylie, 15-16).

In addition to creating safe spaces in which teachers could think creatively, teachers observed that their principal coached teachers in thinking creatively. As Sara commented, “I see that math is not working very well, what are we going to do to support you” (Sara, 151-152).

The teachers perceived that these efforts to foster creativity also contributed to their conception of themselves as competent and professional. As Emily described, “You do have your own wherewithal to use your professional judgment to make changes. So you feel like a professional” (Emily, 158-160).

**Individualized Consideration**

All of the participants referenced the principal’s individualized consideration, recognizing that this individualized consideration encompassed teachers, support staff, students, and families. Individualized consideration includes the sub-dimensions of interest and attention.
**Interest.** The principal’s first move upon hire was to set up a series of meetings with the teachers. At the heart of the questions, a commitment to the teachers’ interest was conveyed. As Joe described, he asked teachers individually, “…what is it that you’re really proud of, you want to make sure that I help you continue, what is something that you’d like me to change and take care of for you” (Joe, 37-29).

Emily described Joe as “totally supportive” and shared her observation that Joe is “…definitely very concerned about you as a person and you as a teacher” (Emily, 132-133).

Christine discussed the relationship that Joe developed with each of the students. She then compared that interest that he provided to all students with a similar approach to the relationships with teachers. She said, “I think that's also true with our teachers, that he knows us as teachers” (Christine, 89-90).

In addition to this foundational interest in all students, Kylie explained that her principal helped her move through and past an emotionally challenging experience in her previous school. She shared:

And he listened to me my first year here and we figured some things out because I was really struggling with trying to decide if I wanted to keep teaching. And he was so wonderful with that and really helped me to get to a place that I understood that it wasn’t anything I had done and I’m a great teacher and he appreciates me. And I feel that personal connection was huge (Kylie, 64-67).

Likewise, Sara confided that she is able to let go of worry because her principal was concerned about her as a professional and as a parent, and simultaneously expresses this interest to all students, including her own son. As Sara described, “I don’t worry. I
know that he’s going to be fine. I have a principal for him that supports him and that just takes that off me too” (Sara, 76-77).

Attention. Four of the five participants described the principal’s use of attention in ensuring that all voices were heard and that everyone was involved. As mentioned previously, Joe’s first move at the school was to provide an opportunity to listen to each teacher. As he stated, “So the first thing I do and I do it in every school that I go into is that I offer individual conversations between June and August” (Joe, 35-36).

Consistent presence is one of the ways in which the principal ensured that he was able to provide attention to students and teachers. As Christine noted, “He is in our classrooms and out at recess all the time” (Christine, 37).

Kylie referenced the principal’s ability to discern the specific needs of each staff member. She noted, “He helps us figure out where our goal is, but it may not be the same goal for everyone” (Kylie, 33-34).

Sara described her principal’s ability to give her the attention that she needed to move from self-doubt to a professional stance toward teaching. In her words:

That took the stress off the top for me and that made me able to focus on teaching and doing what’s best for the kids, instead of always worrying, oh, I’m not good enough, I’m not the best, or I’m not doing enough after school, those kinds of things. And so when he just did that, it was like, “Okay, I’ll do anything for you” (Sara, 69-73).

Sara adds that, “I think that is part of just being successful as a school, is having a principal that cares about us and knows what’s going on in our classrooms” (Sara, 175-176).
Managing the Instructional Program

The principal and teachers all provided examples of a systematic approach used by the principal to manage the instructional program.

Supervision. The process of supervision and evaluation of instruction was discussed by each participant. The principal stated, “Well, I think that evaluation is a part of the game, and it’s a small part of the game. But it’s a huge part of my job. So, like, I don’t look at that as being the thing that drives school improvement alone. But, it’s the formal part of the process” (Joe, 178-179).

Christine compared the current process of evaluation with the manner in which the former principal conducted this work. She expressed increased trust in the process due to Joe’s presence and his active involvement in her practice, saying:

I trust his judgment on my teaching so much more than our previous principal because she would do a couple of formal observations and you wouldn’t really see her in your classroom. So, I had a hard time, even though my evaluations weren’t bad, it’s just that I didn’t know what she was judging me on because it would be such short periods of time that she would be in my classroom. He comes and spends a minute, spends twenty minutes, he’s just out there all the time, he sees what I do, so I really trust anything he’s saying to me as he’s knowledgeable in what I might need to work on (Christine, 50-52).

Sara described the supervision and evaluation process as a conversation, explaining:

Yeah, so, you know, you break it down. We talk about what leadership roles are you or how are your kids growing. So those kinds of things and we can talk about
specific examples from the year or the year before, what could go better, what
could we change (Sara, 98-100).

Kylie recognized the process as “ongoing” (Kylie, 83) and commented that the
principal used the evaluation process as a way to differentiate and support growth for all,
“He helps us figure out where our goal is, but it may not be the same goal for everyone”
(Kylie, 33-34).

When describing supervision and evaluation, Emily noted that the focus is
consistently upon student learning. She commented:

How do we know that the kids are learning and what are we going to do about the
ones that aren’t learning? What interventions can we apply? So, he was always
curious about, who’s our fours, who’s our ones. Do we have those covered? And
then the classroom teacher really does focus on giving those twos to be a three,
you know what are those supports? And then getting our outside supports for our
ones and fours to keep them going (Emily, 76-80).

Curriculum. Each participant provided examples of ways in which the principal
engaged with the teachers in coordinating the curriculum. The principal reflected upon
current work in coordinating the curriculum by commenting:

Right now, I believe the math is our really big challenge area because two years
ago we brought in a new ELA curriculum. Our math curriculum I don’t believe
we ever looked at as a district to say did we get the improvement that we should
about it? Which then puts me into a place where I need to be careful, I don’t want
to be negative, but we really need to look at it, because our formative assessments
are not showing that we’re making the progress that we should. Um, but we have
also filled up our bandwidth with a writing curriculum, an ELA curriculum (Joe, 254-260).

Sara explained that she felt supported by the principal in making the curriculum work for her students. She noted that Joe would say, “‘Okay, you guys want to do that? How can I support you?’ Or, ‘I see that math is not working very well, what are we going to do to support you?’” (Sara, 151-152).

Kylie described the principal’s efforts to elevate the teachers as professionals while engaging them in higher-level thinking about their practice, “We have really engaging discussions that he facilitates about what is best for kids, um, what role curriculum plays in teaching, and also what role it doesn’t. And he allows us to have those conversations and figuring out what is going to be best for kids” (Kylie, 10-13).

Christine described the challenges of multiple split classrooms at a grade level, describing the principal’s role in empowering teachers to conduct analysis and then asking questions to encourage reflection and identify needs. She commented:

One of the challenges right now in our fifth and sixth grade group is that we are all kind of teaching separate things because we have splits, and we have the four-five-six highly capable, so none of us are teaching exactly the same, so that’s a challenge right now. But, um, we do have a lot of time to plan things together and to work things out together. He will come in and ask us questions, kind of understand where we’re at and what we need (Christine, 65-69).

In Emily’s reflections upon how the school first began the improvement efforts, she pointed to the principal’s guidance that led to the identification of specific strategies and monitoring of progress. She commented:
We really focused it on math vocabulary, things like could you read the story
problems and did some strategies around story problems, like underlining the text
and circling questions and highlighting the vocabulary. And that first year bump
really seemed to come because of that. That was the big bump of the, they were
just being able to understand a story problem and identify which operation they
needed to use, and um, and as well as some intense interventions, such as math
strategies, math facts. And so we took a couple of different things, we just
focused on that. It wasn’t a full encompassing, just three or four strategies that we
were going to be intentional about (Emily, 34-41).

**Monitor learning.** The principal and teachers all referenced frequent monitoring
of student learning. The principal described one of the first conversations with his staff
related to the commitment to monitor learning on an ongoing basis. He remembered
saying to the staff: “And I said, “No, we really need to know that our kids aren’t doing as
well as they should be and we’re going to do this together,’ which is the basic message”
(Joe, 80-82).

As tangible evidence of this ongoing work, the principal shared a heavily used
clipboard with a thick stack of papers identified by content area, class, student name,
performance level, and growth (Joe, 220).

Christine confirmed that the principal was actively and continuously monitoring
students’ academic performance, behavioral growth, and social emotional learning by
stating, “He knows who they are and he knows what they’ve been dealing with and he
knows them from the time they started at school” (Christine, 86-87).
While Kylie wasn’t at the school prior to the principal’s arrival, she noted that since his tenure, higher performance standards were set for the students, “…there’s elevated expectations for what the students are capable of doing and also what they should be able to do” (Kylie, 41-42).

Emily described the process that the teachers and principals use for monitoring students, which was evidenced on the clipboard that the principal shared. As Emily explained:

And the other thing that Joe was always cognizant of is the data that we collect in the classroom. How do we know that the kids are learning and what are we going to do about the ones that aren’t learning? What interventions can we apply? So, he was always curious about, who’s our fours, who’s our ones. Do we have those covered? And then the classroom teacher really does focus on giving those twos to be a three, you know what are those supports? And then getting our outside supports for our ones and fours to keep them going (Emily, 75-80).

Sara’s explanation of the process of monitoring students was similar to Emily’s description. Sara also described that the process of shared focus upon monitoring students was another way to understand the trust that had been placed upon teachers. While the standardized test scores played a role, and were used to identify the school as a School of Distinction, the focus was upon the ongoing monitoring of student learning. As Sara described their process:

…And even down to like the student names. These are the students that are at the ones. What are we going to do to bump them up? So I think that is what focused
us more on what is, just tracking kids and names, because we all care about kids.

So that made it a little more real for us (Sara, 16-19).

**Promoting a Positive Learning Environment**

The principal and teachers described their school as becoming a positive learning environment, both for their students and for themselves. The sub-dimensions of promoting a positive learning environment include *time*, *professional development*, and *visibility*.

**Time.** The principal described the need to address the use of instructional time right from the start. He commented that he needed to look at “…how Special Ed, LAP, ELL were scheduled, how guidance team and taking care of, uh, learning challenges was organized, how the calendar operated, uh, number of assemblies” (Joe, 59-61).

Christine noted that the principal “…gives us the time to get what we need done” (Christine, 121-122).

Kylie referenced the principal’s actions in protecting instructional time from the perspective of working productively with initiatives from the district office. She commented, “So we’ll say this is coming down the pike, we’re going to use that, and shift our focus so we’re addressing that, but we’re also going to keep our focus on kids, rather than just being passing along information from our administration offices (Kylie, 146-149).

Emily observed the principal protecting instructional time by engaging staff in vetting practices to ensure that they continue to be sound investments of time. As she described:
For instance, the schedule wasn’t working for kids, it wasn’t working for teachers. It was one of those things we had always done. So we just kind of dismantle the things we had always done and reinvent it. What’s going to make sense? What’s going to work? That’s just a small example (Emily, 149-152).

Another way in which teachers viewed the principal as protecting instructional time was through handling behavioral issues so that time in class could be focused upon learning. As Sara described, “…he’s out at every recess to prevent problems because the problems come into the classroom and then we lose time for school or for learning” (Sara, 163-165).

**Professional development.** The principal and teachers described many instances related to professional development. The principal often returns to the theme of empowering teachers, even when planning and facilitating professional learning. He provided a recent example regarding new learning that had been implemented:

So, the important thing to say is that wasn’t me and I didn’t think about it and I didn’t go to the conference and I didn’t plan it beforehand, but they did and they came up with the idea. So my job is to figure out how do I create an environment where it’s theirs and they can carry it out (Joe, 306-309).

Christine described the time that was provided and the opportunity to guide the learning according to the teachers’ needs. She explained:

And so, there’s a lot of time in our district through professional growth Fridays and the two hours we get every Friday that is technically meeting times and under our previous principal a lot of that would be whole group meeting times which were not as valuable. Um, we are given back a lot of that time as teams to
determine how we can best use that in our teams. And I think that’s been really valuable (Christine, 13-18).

Teachers commented that professional learning occurred through their professional learning teams at the school. As Kylie described, “… because there is less of a focus district-wide about professional development regarding that, Joe puts a huge emphasis on doing that work in teams during our professional learning time on Fridays” (Kylie, 125-127).

Emily also explained that the teachers identify learning needs through their grade level groups and then:

…as soon as the needs are identified, he follows up. So, for instance, the Love and Logic book study that we’re doing now, that came out of our teacher leadership team. So, hey, we’re still needing support with common language with the kids or strategies for tough kids or their behavior, so we’re doing the book study (Emily, 59-62).

Throughout all of the discussions, the teachers consistently returned to the theme that student learning is their focus. As Sara commented, “…we took off the focus off the test and onto students learning and made that our focus of all our PGF times, our professional Friday times, and our professional meetings, it was always back to student learning” (Sara, 14-16).

Visibility. All of the participants recognized that this principal maintained high visibility. As he described, “First of all, I meet the buses every single day and look every kid in the eye and give him a high five, I go to every recess, I’m in every classroom every single day” (Joe, 161-163).
All of the teachers noted Joe’s high visibility. In the words of Christine:

He is in our classrooms and out at recess all the time. He spends very little time in his office, so I think that’s huge, that he, I mean I’ve had moments where I’m like, I need to call the office because I need Joe’s support and randomly he just walks in at that moment (laughter), you know there’s the sixth sense that he needed to be there that day, or whenever. Um, I mean you can find him walking around, he’s always available to help if you need help with behavior or something else. If he, um, needs to be present at a parent meeting, he’ll be there. He’s at recess and he knows the kids and he knows the teachers (Christine, 37-43).

Emily described the impact of high visibility on the students, which in turn helped the teachers to feel supported:

So his focus his first couple of years was just getting a handle on kids and respectful behavior, making it safe for kids and staff to be around, um, and his focus really was to be in the classroom. He was out on the playground, he still is, riding his bike or his scooter, playing games, and making those connections with each and every kid (Emily, 46-50).

Sara discussed the principal’s presence in the classroom and that students’ observation of his high visibility. She commented:

There was a day last week and he didn’t come into our classroom at all. And my kids were like, ‘We haven’t seen Mr. Clark today.’ And I was like, ‘You’re right, he hasn’t come in.’ Because he’s always in and out. And so that’s, I think that for the kids to see that he is never sitting in his office, he’s always out, he’s out at
recesses, even though it’s miserable. He’s in our classrooms, he engages when he’s in there (Sara, 165-170).

Kylie spoke to the impact of high visibility on the quality of her evaluations, “When he does my evaluation at the end of the year I feel like he knows me because he’s there every day and some days are better than others, as you know (chuckles) (Kylie, 136-138).

This qualitative case study was used to investigate the relationship between principal leadership and student academic achievement as viewed through the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). Three themes related to transformational leadership emerged, namely 1) idealized influence, 2) intellectual stimulation, and 3) individualized consideration. Two themes related to instructional leadership emerged, namely 1) managing the instructional program and 2) promoting a positive school learning environment. This chapter provided a synopsis of the findings from the study within the five themes and 14 sub-themes related to the theories of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005).
Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

In this qualitative case study, the researcher examined and described how a principal’s leadership style impacts teacher practice in a school that has demonstrated substantial increases and sustained improvement in student academic achievement beginning with the third year of the current principal’s tenure in the position. The leadership style of the principal was investigated in relation to the theories of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005), using a review of the principal’s and teachers’ annual evaluation forms from the past three years and interviews with the principal and four teachers conducted in January and February 2020. The principal’s tenure began in 2013 and he continues to serve as principal at this school. He is a White male, 60 years old, with 33.5 years of experience in education and 27 years in administration.

Recommended sample size for case study research includes four to five participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009), so in addition to the principal, the researcher determined that four teachers would be interviewed. The principal provided a list of teachers who had worked at the school over the past three years. The teachers were each assigned a number from 1 to 17, and then the teachers associated with the first four numbers generated by the random number generator were approached with an invitation to participate in the study. All four of the teachers who were invited to participate agreed to do so. The teachers included four females, all White, ranging in age from 36 to 58 years old, and with experience in education ranging from 13 to 25 years. All of the...
teachers had served at this elementary school for the past three years, with years of experience at this elementary school ranging from 5 to 20 years.

The researcher aimed to answer the following two research questions through this study: How do teachers in a high performing school view the principal’s leadership style with regard to transformational and instructional leadership theories? How does the principal’s leadership style impact teacher attitudes and job performance? Specifically, the researcher investigated the impact and influence of principal leadership upon the collective and individual practice of teachers, described this practice as perceived through interviews and evaluation forms, then examined the practice through the lenses of transformational and instructional leadership.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews and a review of annual evaluation documents for this case study. The first interview question used for the case study was designed to elicit a general perception of the principal’s role in the school’s substantial improvement, the second and third interview questions were used to gather perceptions of the principal’s influence and support of teachers’ efforts to improve student learning, the fourth interview question focused upon the use of the evaluation tools in the improvement process, and the fifth interview question provided a prompt to identify other aspects of the principal’s leadership that contributed to student success. Clarifying and follow up questions were also used as part of the semi-structured interview process.

The researcher reviewed three years of annual evaluation documents of the principal and teacher. The information that the researcher gained was analyzed and compared with the results from the semi-structured interview, using a process to analyze for converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009). The content of the evaluation documents was
coded in relation to the themes of transformational leadership and instructional leadership, and the description of activities and progress were compared with the responses provided by participants in the interviews. Additionally, each individual’s evaluation document was analyzed in relation to the individual interview responses. The findings in this analysis of evaluation documents aligned with the findings of the analysis of the interviews with participants.

Through analysis of the semi-structured interviews and review of evaluation documents, several themes emerged that are related to the theories of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). The themes related to transformational leadership theory are 1) idealized influence, 2) intellectual stimulation, and 3) individualized consideration. The themes related to instructional leadership theory are 1) managing the instructional program and 2) promoting a positive school learning climate. Fourteen sub-themes were identified within the larger themes. These themes and sub-themes, in relation to the two research questions, are discussed in the following sections of this chapter, along with reflections regarding implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

**Principal leadership descriptions.** The first research question investigated how teachers in a high performing school view the principal’s leadership style with regard to transformational and instructional leadership theories.

Through analysis of the review of evaluation documents and interviews with the principal and four teachers, the researcher identified aspects of the principal’s leadership that align with both transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) and instructional
leadership theory (Hallinger, 2005). These aspects were codified into the following themes related to transformational leadership: 1) idealized influence; 2) intellectual stimulation, and 3) individualized consideration. Within these three themes, responses by the principal and teachers aligned into eight sub-themes. Six of these sub-themes were discussed by each of the participants, namely, the importance of the principal’s idealized influence through development of trust and respect, dedication, hopes and dreams, and modeling, the provision of intellectual stimulation as identified through encouraging questioning by the teachers and fostering creativity, and individual consideration for the teachers, as exemplified by showing interest and providing attention to all voices. All of the teachers provided responses that were related to all eight of the sub-themes, but the principal did not talk about the teachers’ trust and respect of him nor did he explicitly discuss his attention to all voices, although this demonstration of trust, respect, and attention for and from teachers was implied through his responses.

Additionally, responses by all five participants were coded to both of the instructional leadership themes: 1) managing the instructional program and 2) promoting a positive school learning climate. Within these two themes, responses by the participants were coded into six sub-themes. All of the sub-themes were discussed by the principal and all four teachers, namely the management of the instructional program through supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress and promoting a positive school learning climate through protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, and maintaining high visibility.

The teachers all discussed their principal’s leadership style in terms of transformational leadership theory. Each of the teachers expressed trust in their principal,
with two describing ways in which their principal helped them overcome personal challenges related to their past experiences and doubts about their efficacy as teachers. All of the teachers also felt respected by their principal, as they described that his interactions caused them to view themselves as professionals. Northouse (2004) described the transformational leader as one who works with followers in ways that transform them and that followers can subsequently attain higher levels of performance than previously envisioned. In this case, at least two of the teachers experienced significant transformation of their identity as educators, and all of them articulated the importance of trust and respect in their work to bring students to higher levels of academic achievement.

The principal and teachers articulated their hopes and dreams in similar language, focusing upon wanting everyone, staff and students alike, to grow, and to become the best that they could be. Leithwood and Sun (2012) stated that transformational leadership explains a relationship between leader and follower and that through this relationship goals become motivational because they are connected with internal values. The hopes of all of the participants were closely intertwined, while evidence of students’ progress provided emotional satisfaction and recognition that progress was being made toward the attainment of these dreams.

Comments about intellectual stimulation were woven throughout participants’ responses and appeared to play a role in the transformative process of moving from a place of doubt and blame to a recognition of capacity and professionalism. As described by Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership supports an organization’s efforts to innovate and improve, even when the individuals involved are not aware that
transformational leadership is at play. The principal described that he created structures and an environment in which teachers felt safe to question the status quo and to use their creative powers to design effective solutions. The teachers explained that with time, they felt increasingly safe to identify when a strategy or program was not meeting students’ needs, to question this practice within their team and with the principal, and to design solutions to meet needs. As the teachers saw students moving from one level to the next academically, this behavior was reinforced by peers, their principal, and the results themselves.

Northouse (2004) articulated that the transformational leader serves as a role model, drawing upon solid moral values to guide the way. The teachers all recognized that the principal served as a role model for them, both in their interactions with others and in their work with students. Teachers noted that the principal had set expectations that all issues would be addressed directly and that negative talk behind colleagues’ backs would be eliminated. The principal structured ways to model teachers listening to one another and using discussion to build ideas, and teachers articulated that now they were bringing these practices to their classrooms, modeling the work with students through use of approaches that their principal was using with them.

All of the teachers felt that their principal was interested in them as individuals, that he provided attention to their needs, and that he showed interest in the voices that were less confident in their expression. Teachers felt that the principal truly cared about them. Teachers explained that this interest and attention manifested itself in support for their own growth and fostered collaboration with colleagues, along with creating a social
environment in which teachers enjoyed collaborating on school work and socializing together beyond the workday.

The teachers also all discussed their principal’s work in terms of instructional leadership style. As Hallinger (2005) explained, principals must be actively engaged in “…stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school” (p. 226). All of the participants described the actions of their principal in ways that aligned with two instructional leadership themes: managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate.

Participants in this case study described a process of supervision and evaluation, within the theme of managing the instructional program, that entailed empowerment of teachers to look closely at student needs, evaluate use of current strategies and programs, then work collaboratively to identify improvements. This was an iterative process guided and shaped by the principal through structured meetings designed for analysis, planning, and evaluation.

Per state requirements, the school district had adopted the Danielson evaluation framework, one of the three options available. While the framework was clearly used for reporting evaluations each year and guiding conversations, it appears that the principal utilized the framework to guide supervisory practices that were best suited to the situations at hand. This approach aligns with the research by Hallinger (2003), who explained instructional leadership in terms of guiding teachers in developing and applying effective instruction for the purpose of attaining goals.

Likewise, the process of curriculum coordination and monitoring student progress, both sub-themes within the theme of managing the instructional program
(Hallinger, 2005) involved an ongoing focus upon each students’ current performance level and his or her progress in learning. In relation to curriculum coordination, the principal engaged the teachers in monitoring the effectiveness of adopted materials and provided the stimulation and safety to question, revise, and supplement the use of materials to meet students’ needs. Financial resources were allocated for this purpose and teachers were supported in making decisions about the use of these resources.

Monitoring student progress was used as a complementary process to supervision and evaluation, as well as for curriculum coordination. Monitoring student progress provided a means for ongoing connections with the students and their learning. The findings from the analysis were used to design the next steps and to evaluate the effectiveness of selected strategies and resources.

The principal and teachers described the principal’s efforts to protect instructional time, a sub-theme within the theme of promoting a positive school learning climate. In analyzing the participants’ discussions, multiple instances of protecting instructional time were identified, including the following: supporting positive recess experiences so that children could return to class ready to learn, handling behavioral concerns productively so as to minimize disruptions, adjusting schedules for intervention programs, and making decisions about the quality and quantity of assemblies. In essence, the principal’s efforts both realistically and symbolically cleared the way for the entire team to focus on the hopes and dreams of supporting everyone to become their very best.

All participants also clearly spoke to the importance of promoting professional development, the second sub-theme of promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 2005). As the principal had stated, “My job is build an environment where
you are learning with other teachers and you want to learn,” (Joe, 119-120). Teachers described that professional development was scheduled through multiple ways within each school week. When analyzing the content of professional development, the researcher found that the focus of this learning was determined through efforts related to supervision, coordination of the curriculum, and monitoring student progress, all sub-themes of managing the instructional program (Hallinger, 2005). Clearly, the two themes of managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate were highly intertwined.

The participants all spoke highly of the principal’s maintenance of high visibility, the third sub-dimension (Hallinger, 2005) related to promoting a positive school learning climate. The principal met students with high fives as they emerged from buses in the morning, joined them at recesses and lunch, and visited classrooms daily. The principal’s active engagement with students and staff was linked with numerous of the other sub-themes, including nurturing trust and respect, modeling, showing interest and attention to followers, and supporting active monitoring of student progress, which then contributed to the effectiveness of instruction, curriculum, and professional development.

The principal and teachers described their principal’s leadership in terms that align with both the theories of transformational and instructional leadership. The facets of transformational leadership supported the work of improvement in several different ways. At a foundational level, transformational leadership moves allowed the teachers to transition from a place of resignation, fear, and doubt to a stance in which they were able to trust in their leader and function as confident professionals. The hopes and dreams for the school, students, and staff were articulated and became real for teachers as they
realized that they were simultaneously accepted and appreciated at their current level of performance and that they would be supported with their ongoing growth. As explained by Burns (1978), who referenced Maslow (1987), the teachers were able to move up in their hierarchy of needs, and as the teachers described, they could focus their energies on improvement rather than dealing with unproductive emotions.

The hopes and dreams for the school, students, and staff then became a tangible guide to the work of the team. All of the teachers explained that they worked collectively to ensure that all students could become their very best, recognizing that each was starting at his or her own level, and that even the top students deserved to be challenged to grow. This process aligns with the explanation that Northouse (2004) provided regarding the process in which the transformational leader engages followers in significant change, serving as a role model, building confidence, and weaving hopes and dreams together in a way that articulates the vision and identity of the organization.

While the principal created the conditions for change, he drew upon instructional leadership for the work of improving teaching and learning. Instructional leadership provided concrete steps that guided and monitored teacher practice in terms of improving student achievement. While exhibiting instructional leadership strategies, the principal simultaneously drew upon transformational leadership strategies that worked hand in hand. For example, while the principal used instructional leadership to guide teachers through supervision and evaluation, through coordination of the curriculum, and by monitoring student progress, the principal simultaneously used transformational leadership to foster an environment that encouraged questioning and creativity. Both creativity and questioning were critical to the effective use of supervision and evaluation,
coordination of the curriculum, and professional development. Likewise, while the principal sought to protect instructional time, developed professional development, and maintained high visibility, these instructional strategies supported the principal’s development of trust and a focus on the dreams and hopes for the students and school.

**Impact of the leadership style on teacher attitudes and job performance.** The second research question focused upon how the principal’s leadership style impacted teacher attitudes and job performance. As noted previously, the teachers described that they grew in confidence and in their perception of self as a professional through their work with the principal. They expressed an individual and collective sense of efficacy about their work in improving learning. In alignment with the findings of Hauserman, Ivankova, and Stick (2013), the teachers articulated positive perceptions of their principal’s leadership and the school culture.

As discussed previously, the principal identified the teachers who had been at the school for at least the past three years and then participants for the study were identified randomly from this list. While all of the participants necessarily met the requirement of tenure at the school for at least the past three years, 3 of the 4 teachers had worked at the school prior to the principal’s arrival. The principal discussed his need to make changes to the school, which can be difficult for existing staff. However, analysis of the interviews and evaluations indicate that all of the teachers engaged in pro-organizational behavior for the sake of serving students well. This observation is similar to the findings articulated by Effelsberg et al. (2013).

The school has experienced dramatic improvements in student learning. When asked about the teachers’ role in student learning, the principal and teachers all identified
the teacher as the primary influence. However, the teachers quickly moved to a
description that attributes their effectiveness to factors related to transformational and
instructional leadership. Teachers noted that the principal empowered them to really
know their students, to identify their needs, and to deepen their understanding of how to
meet those needs, on an ongoing basis, an approach which references the heart of
instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). The teachers explained that they could proceed
in this way due to the trust that had been established with their principal as well as his
encouragement for them to trust themselves and to collaborate with colleagues. This
description aligns with identified outcomes of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

Limitations

This case study included only five participants from one public elementary school
in Snohomish County in Washington State. Teachers were representative of the staff, but
all were White females. As with all qualitative research, the results are limited to a gained
understanding and are not generalizable.

Areas for Further Research

The researcher used this case study to investigate the leadership style of a
principal in a school that experienced growth in student achievement since the principal’s
arrival, connecting perceptions of the principal’s leadership style with the theories of
transformational and instructional leadership. Additionally, the case study was structured
to allow for examination of the impact of the principal’s leadership style on teacher
attitudes and performance. The researcher concluded that in this case, the principal used
both transformational and instructional leadership styles, with the result that teachers
grew in confidence and practice, and the school experienced increases in student
achievement over time, along with increases in the number of families requesting to transfer to the school.

It would be beneficial to study additional cases in which a principal has arrived at a school and student achievement scores have increased over time, focusing on schools in other locations, including rural, suburban, and urban settings. Future studies would also benefit from ensuring the inclusion of diverse educational staffs and a variety of family socio-economic levels.

This study was structured to investigate the application of both transformational and instructional leadership from a qualitative perspective. For the future, it would be valuable to engage in a mixed-methods study that also includes survey instruments for quantitative analysis. Additionally, a multi-year study would allow for analysis of change over time.

**Conclusion**

The researcher used this case study to investigate the leadership style of a principal at a public elementary school that experienced substantial and sustained gains in students’ achievement. The principal and four teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and three years of the annual evaluation forms of the participants were analyzed. Analysis of the data formed a converging line of inquiry that aligned with the theoretical constructs of both transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005).

The data was codified into four broad themes: 1) idealized influence; 2) intellectual stimulation, 3) individualized consideration, 4) managing the instructional program, and 5) promoting a positive school learning climate. The five broad themes
were further codified to include 14 sub-themes. The researcher examined this data through the two questions for the study, first examining the principal’s leadership in relation to transformational and instructional leadership theories and then analyzing the impact of the principal’s leadership style on teacher attitudes and job performance.

The interviews of the principal and teachers were based upon the same five questions, with clarifying questions asked of all participants, and some additional questions included for teachers. The responses of all participants are strikingly similar and well-aligned with both theories of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). The principal’s description of the why and how was reflected by the teachers’ experiences, expressing not only similar concepts, but even using almost identical language at times.

Most teachers had been at the school prior to the principal’s arrival and one had joined the school after he assumed leadership, but all explained the transition in style from the previous to the current principal in similar ways, with the relative newcomer referencing the history through stories that she had heard. The principal discussed some difficult moves that he needed to make early in his tenure, and while these actions were challenging for staff at the time, the historical narrative did not include the reference to the discomfort of change, but instead focused upon the positive aspects of the transition.

Washington State placed considerable emphasis upon each district’s selection of one of three instructional models that are used for evaluation, yet it is interesting to note that the actual tool appeared to be of less importance in the improvement process than the process of personalized and ongoing coaching by the principal of the teachers. From the teachers’ perspective, their principal eliminated the fear, allowing them to focus on their
individual professional growth steps. Their principal’s presence, knowledge of their practice, and facilitation stance supported the teachers’ growth in a differentiated fashion, and in some cases, allowed teachers to experience emotional changes as they overcame fear, worries, and self-doubt to become confident and competent professionals.

The information gathered in this case study provides insights that warrant further reflection as leaders seek to bring equity and excellence to our public schools. In this case, the principal arrived at a school that had languished in the lowest 5% in terms of student achievement on state assessments, and after a couple of years of focused action, was able to lead the school to attain award-winning growth for four consecutive years. Three of the four teachers who were interviewed were at the school prior to the change and another arrived as the growth was beginning. All of the participants identified key elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005).

At the heart of the leadership work, the principal brought a transformational leadership style (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) that resulted in a transformation of culture and performance, but also of staff’s sense of their own professionalism and efficacy. This school became a place where all were welcomed and in which children and adults were accepted for their current performance, while supported to become the best that they could be. Additionally, the principal used instructional leadership moves (Hallinger, 2005) that clearly identified key strategies related to improvement of learning, as evidenced by the principal’s well-worn clipboard with pages of color-coded student names and data, and the highly aligned descriptions that teachers provided of the process of monitoring student growth, identifying needs,
using curriculum strategically, and learning together to improve their effectiveness as teachers.

In thinking about the nexus of leadership theory and practice, several observations regarding the next steps come to mind. The teachers attributed the changes in culture, achievement, and their own development, personal and professional, to the leadership of their principal. While the causes of the increases in student learning cannot be established through a qualitative case study design, themes related to transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005) can be discerned in the principal’s work and appear to be of benefit to the overall functioning of the school, even if we are not able to correlate these actions to student achievement. For instance, the principal created acceptance for current reality and pushed for attainment of shared dreams simultaneously, which would appear to be a paradoxical approach, but by creating trust, followers described experiencing transformative change in their lives. The principal discussed creating an environment or culture conducive to growth, and teachers explained that they experienced and responded positively to this opportunity. This environment for adult learning appeared not only to encompass the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but elevated the teachers’ sense of their own professionalism. At the same time, the principal provided clear strategies for data-based cycles of improvement at the school, and supported the development of strategies for effective use of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As the principal engaged in transformational leadership moves, the teachers explained that they were better able to attend to improvement of instruction, and then, in a reciprocal fashion,
while the teachers attended to the improvement of instruction, their confidence, agency, and school culture improved.

Several researchers (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006) have suggested that the use of both transformational and instructional leadership styles may be the optimum way in which a leader can positively influence student learning. In this case, the principal used both transformational and instructional leadership together, and the styles functioned in an interrelated, reciprocal manner. Throughout this process, teachers’ individual and collective efficacy grew. Current staff wanted to stay, new staff wanted to transfer in, and the school grew in enrollment as increasing numbers of families from neighboring districts requested transfers to the school. The school has experienced dramatic improvements in student academic achievement over the past four years. As new opportunities and challenges arise, the principal and teachers have committed to the continuous process of being the best school possible.

While the findings of this case study are not of a correlational nature, those entrusted with developing aspiring principals or guiding growth of principals currently in the schools may identify insights from this study to support their work. It may be helpful for principals to recognize that the work encompasses two intertwined dimensions, namely leadership for the heart and spirit, or transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004), as well as leadership for the professional practice of education, or instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). Especially in schools facing a need for change, whether imposed from internal or external sources, transformational leadership becomes especially important. Instructional leadership
reflects the work of the profession and, as such, would be expected at any time and in any place.

Principal development based upon the premises of this study would incorporate the importance of cultivating personal attributes, including trustworthiness, the ability to listen to heart and mind, and caring. This development would also support principals in fostering a culture conducive to growth, intellectual curiosity, and efficacy of staff and students alike. Additionally, specific approaches for instructional leadership from within the research-based profession of education would be key to the learning plan for principals. While not stated explicitly in the literature about transformational leadership and instructional leadership, analysis of the theories in relation to this case study illuminates the importance of the principal’s ability to engage with the work from the stance of a learner committed to the best for the students and staff.

The researcher focused this study upon the relationship between transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2004) and instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005) with student achievement. The research was conducted through case study in one public elementary school that demonstrated significant and sustained improvements in student achievement that began in the third year of the principal’s arrival. Themes were identified that could be explored further through additional research in other settings and with other research designs. While the study was necessarily not correlational in design, insights from the study may be helpful in the design of principal development for aspiring school leaders and ongoing learning and coaching for those currently in the field.
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https://doi.org/10.1086/461445


Dear (Teacher),

Congratulations on the great work that your school is doing in improving student learning! As one of the teachers who has been working at (School) for at least the past three years, you have been instrumental in making positive change.

I am a doctoral student at Seattle Pacific University who is working with your principal, (Principal), to study the excellent work at your school as part of my dissertation. You have been randomly identified as one of the three to four teachers I would like to interview for fifteen to thirty minutes to learn more about your principal’s leadership as it relates to teachers’ work and student achievement. I am also interviewing (Principal). I hope that you will consider participating, and if so, (Secretary) will help us to find a time that is convenient for you to meet at your school. We envision that the opportunity to learn from your experience will support principals and teachers in our state and nationally to experience successes similar to those that you and your team have made possible at (School).

Attached is the paperwork that provides more information. If you are willing to participate, I’ll proceed in working through (Secretary) to set an appointment, most likely late January or early February. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this invitation together.

Thank you,

Karin Manns
Investigators:
Principal Investigator: B. Karin Manns, Ed.D. Doctoral Candidate Student, 425.785.6400, mannsb@spu.edu
Sponsor: John Bond, Ed.D. Educational Leadership Chair, 206-281-2554, bondj@spu.edu

PURPOSE
You are invited to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between principal leadership style and student academic achievement. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are either the current principal or a teacher in a school that was identified for underperformance by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction until the current principal stepped into the role, after which your school has demonstrated sustained increases in student academic achievement. It is anticipated that the four to five staff members, namely the principal and teachers, will participate in the study.

PROCEDURES
Protocol
1. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate the leadership style of a principal as related to student academic achievement.

2. The Principal Investigator will recruit a principal in a school that has demonstrated strong gains in student academic achievement since the principal's assignment to this position. The principal will provide a list of teachers and a random number generator will be used to identify the three to four teachers who will be interviewed.

3. The one-on-one interview location and date will be set with each interviewee individually.

4. The duration of interviews will be 15 to 30 minutes and will be digitally recorded.
5. Field notes will also be taken during the interview. The field notes will include some of the participant's responses and any non-verbal responses.

6. Participant confidentiality will be assured by asking participants to sign an informed consent agreement form and by providing them either a paper or electronic copy of this form. Participants will be verbally informed that their affiliation and name will not be disclosed to anyone outside of the study unless otherwise explicitly granted by the interviewee. To ensure confidentiality, all participants will be referenced in the study by use of a pseudonym, which will be tracked on a master list. All materials associated with the study will be secured and accessed only by the Principal Investigator or faculty sponsor for purposes directly related to the study.

7. To ensure that participants are able to attend fully in a comfortable manner, the following considerations will be made: 1) Selection of a location that is convenient for the participant, 2) Attention to environmental factors including use of a space that is free from distraction and physically comfortable, and 3) Attention to physiological factors, including availability of water and snacks.

8. The interview questions will be asked in the order listed along with any additional questions that are prompted by participants' responses through the semi-structured interview approach.

9. During the same time frame as the interviews are conducted, the Principal Investigator will review three years of the annual evaluation forms of the principal and three to four teachers. The principal will take notes while reviewing the forms.

RISKS and DISCOMFORTS
Participants may feel discomfort when asked to reflect upon their work at the school if the question triggers memory of an experience that was not pleasant. Participants may refuse to answer or request to skip one or more questions during the interview process. For all other participants, the proposed study poses no known psychological or physical risks to participants.

BENEFITS
This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, the contribution of participants could potentially inform supervision or professional development for principals at the state and national levels. Therefore, there may be indirect benefits to participants, such as satisfaction of their contribution to the field of educational leadership and school improvement.

PARTICIPATION AND ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. During participation in the interview you may also refuse to participate or request to skip a question without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.
CONFIDENTIALITY
Your privacy is of the utmost importance. Therefore, no identifying information about you will be shared with anyone outside of the study. The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.
Your de-identified data may be used in future research, presentations, or for teaching purposes by the Principal Investigator listed above.

COMPENSATION
There will not be compensation for participation in this study.

SUBJECT RIGHTS
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, B. Karin Manns, at 3307 3rd Ave W Room 300 Seattle, WA 98119 and 425.785.6400. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the SPU Institutional Review Board Chair at 206-281-2201 or IRB@spu.edu.

CONSENT
Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate in this study. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

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Copies to: Participant Principal Investigator
Appendix B

Interview Questions

Principal Interview Questions

1. What do you consider your leadership role in moving your school from performing at the "Focus School" level to being recognized repeatedly as a "School of Distinction?"

2. What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your leadership been an influence?

3. What aspects of your leadership do you sense teachers find supportive to their role(s)?

4. In what, if any, ways do you utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your leadership?

5. Is there anything else you would add related to your role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What do you consider your current principal’s leadership role in moving your school from performing at the "Focus School" level to being recognized repeatedly as a "School of Distinction?"

2. What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?

3. What aspects of your principal’s leadership do you find supportive to your role(s)?

4. In what, if any, ways does your principal utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your leadership?

5. Is there anything else you would add related to your principal’s role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?
Could you please state your name and acknowledge that you give permission to be recorded?

Joe Clark, yes

Thank you for the opportunity to interview you. As you’ve read in the consent document, the purpose is to learn more about the principal’s leadership as related to student academic achievement. So as you know, I’ll ask five questions, and I may ask some clarifying or follow-up questions along the way. We’re scheduled for 15-30 minutes and we’ll be using this device here that you have to record.

So, the first question is, “What do you consider your leadership role in moving your school from performing at the "Focus School" level to being recognized repeatedly as a "School of Distinction?"”

So the first thing is that that was never the goal. And was not even part of me accepting the job. So this is my seventh year here. And I learned about being a focus school after the school year started, and, but I did know, this is I believe this is my 27th year this year, I did know that the school had lots of needs and lots of challenges. So my focus was on how, this is my fifth school, how do I make this the most positive school that I possibly can. So that’s basically where it came from. We found out from the State and then immediately I went, okay, now how do I make this as positive as I can. And then I already been at extremely good schools and extremely good school districts, so my job was to come in and bring those experiences. And I think that when I was kind of thinking and preparing about this, it’s really important to know that in the five schools they’ve all needed a different style of leadership and that it is not true that you go in with your leadership style and apply your leadership style, but what really happens is that you need to go into the community and into the school and find out what they need and figure out how to meet their needs. And I think that’s exactly what happens with teachers. I think that’s exactly what happens with superintendents and with principals. And if, um, if your ego gets into it and you try to apply the same formula to school after school you will totally fail. Another thing I would say is that if I try to apply who I was seven years ago to the challenges of this community and this school right now I will also fail. So each time you have to be aware and listening and um, to all levels of the community, the teachers and the district, and that’s one of my favorite parts about being a principal.
Great. Can you tell me more about how you determine what you need to do. More about that listening…

So the first thing I do and I do it in every school that I go into is that I offer individual conversations between June and August, um, with teachers, and I have the same four questions that I ask, and now it’s been seven years so I don’t know if I can come up, but, what is it that you’re really proud of, you want to make sure that I help you continue, what is something that you’d like me to change and take care of for you, um, and then there are two other questions. But basically, I start by listening and I don’t take notes on a computer I take hand-written notes as I’m going through and then I try to get the big flavor for the school that way. And then the second thing is, is that I did a series of community meetings then I, um, then I said I don’t have a plan coming into this, I want to hear from the parents. It was basically the same format as it went through. And we had a lot of parents going to that meeting. And the reason we did is because it was both a problem at a community level and at a school level that was here that was pretty complicated and the district had been trying to deal with it over a period of time, repeatedly, and it had failed, and so it was trying to figure out what’s happening. I did exactly the same format when I moved from Lake Washington to, I’m sorry, from Northshore to Lake Washington, in a Blue Ribbon school, that no matter what, you have to learn what’s happening with the community, and not tell people what’s going to happen, but work with them on how you’re going to get improvement. At this school, um, I had to behave in a way that was really uncomfortable for me and that was not my leadership style, um, because what I learned is that a lot of the internal systems for how it was organized, um, those were the things that needed adjustment and change and it wasn’t the people and it wasn’t the community as much, so there was a good, solid teaching staff, good solid support staff, good community, but the systems that were around it didn’t match, um, the potential. That’s what I would describe more than anything else. So then it was, and I didn’t have the opportunity to have a year to just to look at it, I needed to make a lot of changes in a relatively, um, fast pace, and I had to take a lot of risks to get to the place where we were going to be. Because it was things like how long recesses were, how Special Ed, LAP, ELL were scheduled, how guidance team and taking care of, uh, learning challenges was organized, how the calendar operated, uh, number of assemblies, uh, how the school would be, uh, fixed and remodeled because it was an old building, so that had to do with how to interface with the district too, and then, I guess my example would be, when we’re looking out my window right now, those plants went over the top of the roof and everyone all the way through, and it was completely overgrown and you couldn’t see anything, it was dark. And if you look at the gardens now, even though they need to be trimmed again, and they always have to be as they go through, over time, working with the community and district, now you can see and it’s light, they’re the same exact plants, but you go in and take care of it a little bit at a time. It’s also kind of interesting, I had to make decisions to start, this is year seven, I couldn’t cut too much of the plants and I did a lot of the clipping when it started, but if I cut too much I would have killed it, and that’s exactly the leadership metaphor that I would use is, I had to clip real deep, which then created, I would rather start with culture and just make everything comfortable, but it was very clear, that a lot of things needed to change. And the interface with the district then also made it a challenge.
Because I think that the school reflected the basic values of the district, which was very relational, we want everyone to be happy, but, um, so I guess my example would be is, when we found out it was a focus school, both the superintendent and the assistant superintendent wanted to be the ones that came in and talked to my staff and I said, “No,” I’m going to be the one that does it. So they listened in the back, but they were not comfortable with it, because I think that their message they would have chosen would be, “Don’t worry about it, we’re going to be fine, we’re getting better.” And I said, “No, we really need to know that our kids aren’t doing as well as they should be and we’re going to do this together,” which is the basic message. And then, as it was ending, we had somebody run into the staff meeting and say, “Mr. Clark, Mr. Clark, there’s horses and mules out on the field.” So they had gotten loose from the farm, down there, so I went outside with the Boys and Girls Club person, and here’s the important thing is, um, horses follow mules. So we got the mules under control, which meant that the horses followed, and we got them down, and it was, um, an older lady who was there but she couldn’t take care of all of them and we got them in and we helped fix the fence, so I would say that was just kind of a metaphor for what the school was. You take what’s happening, I would never have predicted that at the start of the day that we would have been collecting mules and horses and the superintendent and the assistant superintendent watched as that happened, but that’s what the whole first year of being here was about. And I guess the other thing to say is, that because they brought me in as a really experienced principal, and the reason I came here is because a very close friend of mine that I worked with in Northshore and in Snohomish became the director of HR and so I came because of him, um, but the timing wouldn’t have been right at all. It was one of those points in my career when I just went, okay, I’m ready to do this, and, um, why did I say that? (pause) I think so, when I analyze what was happening, I was willing to take more risks than you can take in your first or second school. I don’t think it’s fair to look at someone who’s had a whole bunch of schools and is brought in and they already know that they’re good. Because it might not have worked at all and then it would have been a really bad deal for me at that point in my career and it ended up being a great one. So, I controlled who the coach was that came from the State, because here was my concern, coming in and taking care of it, I didn’t really feel like I needed a coach, but they assigned me, because I asked (Coach), because I worked with him in (District), totally trusted him, and we worked collaboratively, so it wasn’t him telling, it was very nice to have conversation with someone that I respected, coming back and forth and so one of the big challenges of, like, I mean we had like $20,000 extra given to us by the State, but we couldn’t get enough substitutes to do the release in order to be able to take care of it, so it really was the conversation that happened between xxx and I that, um, that allowed me to kind of think things through, it doesn’t change what would have happened, but working with somebody you respect and trust is really an important thing.

Thank you. What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your leadership been an influence?

Well first of all, it’s the absolute most important thing that can happen and they’re the ones who are really working with kids and it’s totally false to say that school improvement happens because of principals or any other reasons. It has to do with the
quality of teachers and, um, and it is also false to say that I’m the teacher of teachers and
that because I’m telling you something it’s going to improve. My job is build an
environment where you are learning with other teachers and you want to learn and that’s
way more powerful than saying that the principal is the expert and I’m going to teach you
how to do it. And in any school that I’ve been in, that’s what the strength of the school is.
And so the example I give, so, um, my foundation is DuFour and just like almost
everyone else’s is and we have a real building leadership team, um, I have teacher leaders
that, uh, rotate through, they make the choice, I don’t choose the people. I would say
probably ninety percent of our professional development days, and we have professional
growth Fridays, um, are professional development, and how we do our work is…
(interrupted by emergency call)...So for right now, they decided that we needed to have a
focus on how we’re dealing positively with classroom management and behavior and
things like that, and just have a look at it. And I don’t think there was really a problem, so
they decided to do Love and Logic. So as a group, the leadership team read it, we talked
about it, and now they’re leading five different times during the year conversations where
we talk about, okay, what does this mean? And so, we’re just getting ready for it. We do
two chapters at a time. And so those are the questions that are coming up in February and
I come up over those. So, while I’m in the room, I’m not the one who runs the
conversations or the curriculum maps or any of those other things. But I work with my
leaders, my leaders then carry that out. So if you walked in, it’s really teacher leadership
that’s the core of everything, which means that we’re always pivoting off into what
teachers believe, and so, I would say that they are very empowered we go directions
because it’s the right next step to do. And I have to stay then connected in order to
support them. It’s not just teachers though. So (Secretary), the education assistants, and
everyone who is in the office, (Secretary), who is my admin assistant, is the one who
does it. So if you really look at the core of this, she was my secretary in (District). So I
recruited her to come here afterwards. So a whole lot of the teachers are the most
important thing, you have to make sure you get the right teachers. So at this school, a lot
of what happened is I got my pick of anybody for a long time. So this is year seven, it
was probably the first five years they were all people that I knew or that I had worked
with. So I was cherry-picking for a long time because this is a less expensive place to live
than where I come from. To live here to start off as teachers. So if I go through, like a
third of my teachers were superstars where they were at. Now then, there becomes a time
where that stops and then people want to transfer in. Because this was the country school
that had problems and nobody knew about. Now for the last two years I primarily got
transfers in. So then you have to change your leadership style as you go through because
it’s not really me that gets to determine that. It’s like playing a game of cards. You play
the cards as you’re dealt. So the teachers I’ve gotten on transfer have been really good,
but they’ve been at different level. Like when I was able to choose whoever I wanted, I
could match the team and I knew what they had done where they were at. And when I get
a transfer, I’ve got to fit them in the best way that I can. You just go through different
times, both in your career and at your school.

That makes sense. What aspects of your leadership do you sense teachers find supportive
to their role(s)?
Well, the fun part of my jobs are also what’s been put into place in all my schools. I’ve had high-needs schools, I’ve had schools with no free and reduced lunch. First of all, I meet the buses every single day and look every kid in the eye and give him a high five, I go to every recess, I’m in every classroom every single day. If, um, if someone emails me, I’ve got a system for, that’s why I didn’t talk with you until 9:00. I go in and visit every substitute to check in, I also go in and if everyone ever emails me I go in and talk with them, and I do it face to face, and I make sure I’m rotating through the whole school all the time so I don’t get into bad habits and just talk to certain people. And that we had spelling bee winners, so I went to, that’s part of my classroom check-in, so those are the kids I talked to this morning that just won the spelling bee before it goes to the school. So I have a regular rotation so it’s the relationships and the communication and being available. I ride my bike every recess, about a third of the time, we have about thirteen and half acres, so I can get to every corner of the school and so anyway, I turn it into a game that I play.

Yes, that’s great. In what, if any, ways do you utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your leadership?

Well, I think that evaluation is a part of the game, and it’s a small part of the game. But it’s a huge part of my job. So, like, I don’t look at that as being the thing that drives school improvement alone. But, it’s the formal part of the process. So in general, we agree in the spring we agree in the spring what our goals are as a building leadership team, which means that they’re not making the decisions, they’re talking to the teachers. We have four or five goals a year. Then in general, I work with the BLT on their goals, so I have a five, six, so they have that. Then they tend to build their personal goals around that, which means that you’re lining up the evaluation tool that they agreed to do at the school improvement plan, to then we get thirty clock hours a year to do that, so then it all becomes one thing. And then, for instance, so we use an old-fashioned evaluation system, it’s in Microsoft Word, instead of a database system in other districts. Well I’m basically building my evaluations based on what we agreed to do in the spring, because we all agreed to do it together. Then I have a format so they’re not all exactly the same, but the core of it is that we all agreed to do the same things. So I wrote that in January, how the format is going to work. (Secretary) puts that into a template. Then I meet with each teacher and that’s how it gets customized at the end. So what it does is that it allows me every single year to connect back to what did we say we were going to do, and now, did we really do that, and that’s what I write about in the evaluation. And then at the end of it, it will be individualized, based on what they give me. We will have a staff meeting in March, where they will go through, and then they’ll give me the specific details of the classes they went to, the committees that they were on, uh, the two kids they’re happiest with their progress, the two they still struggle with. Those kinds of things. So that becomes our conversation. And I think it really all comes down to conversations.

Can you tell me how you make that system work, with Danielson, and with expectations from the district around evaluations?
Well, first of all, it’s really easy because this district has way fewer expectations than any place I’ve ever been. I mean in terms of defining, this district is much more like the 1970s and each individual school kind of creates its own map. There are district things. I mean we have Fountas and Pinnell, and we’re in our second year of doing that in K through 2 and in third grade it’s the first year of doing that. And we have a new writing curriculum. And so that guides a fair share of what we’re doing this year. But nobody’s telling me what to do, but the teachers take it that way anyway, because that’s the work that they’re doing. So it’s naturally coming from them. Um so what I would say is, I’m looking in the spring, trying to figure out what’s going to happen the next year, and then working with my boss continually saying, “You need to get it to me beforehand because once I launch, it’s hard for me to change.” And my boss is someone I really like, respect, and I knew before we got to this school district, and in general he’s motivated by the same thing. And he knows, if it’s not ready to go before we leave school, I’ll do it, but I can’t do it at the same level as if you do it before. And so I’m always trying to match the organization and use that with the leadership team, but probably fifty percent of everything is what we’ve decided we’re going to do. So, for this year, Love and Logic, and classroom management and discipline and not being controlling, the opposite. Because a lot of people look at Love and Logic as being controlling, but we’re looking at it exactly the opposite way because it comes down to relationships and getting to know kids and, and, showing see (shows clipboard) I carry this along because when I go into classrooms I do check-ups. So one of the things we’re doing is showing growth over time, in every area. So my counselor and I, who is new, so this is Social Emotional. This is level 1, level 2, level 3. Level 3 kids mean that they’re just regular in the classroom. If they’re red, because we started this last year, the teachers said that they were level 1. These kids right here, these kids were all level 1 kids last year. Okay? So those are the only level 1 kids that are left at the end of this year that started out. So we have nine kids. But probably fifteen kids moved up. The yellows stayed right where they are and then I can look. And I can look. And it’s by grade level. And it also becomes my cheat sheet. It also becomes my conversation sheet with my counselor when we meet to talk about, okay, what are we doing with these kids, what do we know about these kids. And my counselor, again, is someone I had worked with in (District), who had come over and so we have a really good relationship. Her job is relationship with kids and to know kids and to take care of kids. She was a high school counselor and she is just the most lovely person and somebody that the kids love to be with, and so, that’s kind of how that works.

That’s great.

We do that in all areas. So you can look at the same thing with these are SBA scores (clipboard). So level 1, 2, 3, and 4. Blue kids, they started out, um, they started out as level 4. But these kids moved from 3 to 4. The grey are kids who moved in. Okay, so have a few kids that went down. We have three kids who went down and at this grade level, the kids in red have stayed in red the whole year through. Well, we have as our major growth area. And basically they are either Special Ed or ELL. Our fastest growing area is ELL. And so we are, um, we have dramatically grown in number in ELL kids over the time that I’m here. So we really should be having more challenge and we’re kind of staying right about where we are.
Is there anything else you would add related to your role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?

Well, it’s my job, every single day so it’s way bigger than what we just talked about is what I would describe. And the challenges never end. So when I said if I’m the same principal now that I was seven years ago when I got here, and we will plateau, and things will go down, and there’s always a danger of that. Right now, I believe the math is our really big challenge area because two years ago we brought in a new ELA curriculum. Our math curriculum I don’t believe we ever looked at as a district to say did we get the improvement that we should about it? Which then puts me into a place where I need to be careful, I don’t want to be negative, but we really need to look at it, because our formative assessments are not showing that we’re making the progress that we should. Um, but we have also filled up our bandwidth with a writing curriculum, an ELA curriculum. A number of things, I have one teacher who got into a major car accident over Christmas, so then hasn’t been back since Christmas. Another one who fell on the ice and she had to have a shoulder surgery. So, when you’re taking care of those things, then those things come up. So the important thing about teachers is, stay connected, listen to them. Um, right now I’ve talked with all of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers, trying to get a handle on math and now I’m trying to look back at the data to say, is how they’re feeling, does the data match that? And I’m having some challenges with that, that’s a growth area, because I did that for a lot early, and now the State’s changed all their data software, the District’s changed theirs, and Renaissance changed theirs. I spent four hours on Monday and didn’t get close to getting to the place I wanted to be. And it would have taken me a half hour five or six years ago. So I have to grow again in that area because I let it go. Partly because we won the awards, I didn’t have to worry about it. And now I’m looking at it and going, yeah, we have both plateaued and we have new challenges, so that’s why one of the biggest things I want to say to you is that it doesn’t end. And if I retire, the next person is also going to have a challenge. And it never ends. All of it is continual improvement and if we ever get to the point where we stop growing, then we will get exactly what we should be getting, which is it will not be as good as it was. Not just when another person comes in and it’s not just the District, it could be me too.

Hmm, that makes sense. Thank you very much.

I don’t know if that’s what you wanted. I kind of went over and okay, what is it I think you need to know. Um, so on number three, um, about eleven years I went through Breakthrough training. So I mean, here’s the thing. That’s what I would attribute. That’s what puts me into classrooms and puts me into other places. I get my email to zero every day because of that. So, I didn’t create those things, and, (Secretary) runs the school, which allows me, because when you said I might be interrupted, not really, because in
general she’s going to control that. And she does the shared calendars. And she does the shared documents. She is the leader.  

That’s great.  

And on number five, for the anything else, I have a teacher leader who is a learning support specialist that the district put in for English Language Arts. Do you know who Mr. Shu is?  

I saw the bulletin board…  

A very famous Scholastic librarian now from Chicago and he just came in and did the most fabulous assembly you’d ever want to see. Partly what he did was very engaging book talks and then he gave out books and the kids went crazy. So the important thing is that the leadership move then is, instead of doing somebody else coming in, we’re going to do some, I think we’re going to be doing some assemblies where we buy four books for different staff members who share the book and then give them out. So we’re going to copy his model. I didn’t know we were going to go that way, I didn’t know in the spring, but (ELA Support Teacher) who is very famous published writer herself who goes to conferences, she took four of our teachers to a conference and they came back with the idea, which then led to a parent giving us $2,000 for classroom libraries, for equity, and our PTA, because of our good energy, did a fundraiser, and this is not a rich community, but they raised $40,000 and they’ve gotten better and better at doing that. So then all of a sudden what happens is that it builds upon itself. So, the important thing to say is that wasn’t me and I didn’t think about it and I didn’t go to the conference and I didn’t plan it beforehand, but they did and they came up with the idea. So my job is to figure out how do I create an environment where it’s theirs and they can carry it out. I’m encouraging us to take over and to copy him in the assemblies, but you’re on Day One of me trying to do that, so it will only happen if they’re excited about it. And so that’s the leadership move to try it out, and if it doesn’t build energy, to be okay with that and let it go. So there’s just lots of different things that are kind of like that. (Pause as reviewing the list of questions.) And the last one would be, when I came in, there was a very strong parent moving in from Chicago, who had been in charter schools who asked about our art program. And, um, so I was open to it, and she took over the ArtSmart program, which is the parent one, and so our PTA, which is called (School) Parent Organization, they’ve supported it now. We have enough parent volunteers, so every classroom has at least nine lessons a year. She ended up being so into it she went and became a teacher and so she graduated. That’s a bigger story that’s even more interesting than this, but she’s taken over for my LAP teacher who’s hurt her shoulder and she immediately hurt her leg, so she’s rolling on a cart right now. The bottom line is a parent who was questioning whether her kid should go to school because there were way more variances out than in, and I didn’t describe all of that, but we’re on the way positive side. We’re like seventy kids more variance in than out. When I got here we were the opposite way. Which means
that we were able to keep a lot of the younger teachers that I was able to bring in from the outside. And the boundary, if you look at those trees across the street, that’s (Neighboring District) and on the other side of the highway is (Neighboring District), so we’re in an area where we could either lose or get some. So when the District has its art fair at the high school each year, this little elementary school of ten schools, so we’re only 420 kids, we’re half of the total art that goes into the art fair. It’s the parents and it’s the community, and like when you go out, the community did the big murals outside and we’re known for our art now because the community built it up now. So it’s taking advantage of, it didn’t exist before, it’s when somebody brings up an idea, supporting them and getting out of the way. And there became the risk of when she went back to college, you’re losing your leader and you still need to continue.

How did you do that?

We got three people to take it over for a little while. By the end of the year there was only one left. But now that person is probably going to be the next EA I hire because she’s so awesome. So, in other words, looking at it and trying to build up the people that are going to continue having it go. So there’s all kinds of little stories that you normally wouldn’t think of, that has to do with how things really work. And then sometimes things have to go away and have to die. So we’ve always had a science fair, but nobody stepped up this year so it’s going to go away this year. So I tell the PTA, it’s okay, let it go, if people miss it, they’ll bring it back.

You can ask whatever you want. I kind of have fun doing this and it helps me reflect and think about it. My mom was the best teacher in the world and she would take us to school every year. She was a Seattle school teacher. And when I was young she taught the toughest behavior kids in Seattle in the inner city and they learned. And my dad was a teacher, too, so my brother is retired from Apple computer, he is now a math teacher for I don’t know, the last twenty five years. My sister is the best teacher you can imagine. She’s in (District). My daughter is a fourth grade teacher in (District). My son is a math teacher, although he ran businesses instead, but he is a math teacher. So we are an education family, that’s what we do.

Well, thank you.

Absolutely.

Teacher 1 [Pseudo name Christine]; Female; 36 years; 13 years of experience; 13 years of experience at this school; elementary teacher

02/04/2020; 8:35 a.m.; Interviewed by Karin Manns

Good morning. To start, could you please state your name and acknowledge that you give permission to be recorded?
My name is Caitlin and I know that I’m being recorded.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. As you know, the purpose of this interview is to discuss the relationship between principal leadership and student academic achievement. I’ll ask five questions and I may ask some clarifying or follow-up questions along the way. We’re scheduled for 15 to 30 minutes and obviously using this device to record your responses.

To start, what do you consider your current principal’s leadership role in moving your school from performing at the "Focus School" level to being recognized repeatedly as a "School of Distinction?"

I think part of what Joe does is he gives a lot of the ownership and power and time back to the teachers. Um, he guides us by asking us questions and giving us things that we might need to work on, but at the same time, he gives that time to us to help us figure out what we need. And so, there’s a lot of time in our district through professional growth Fridays and the two hours we get every Friday that is technically meeting times and under our previous principal a lot of that would be whole group meeting times which were not as valuable. Um, we are given back a lot of that time as teams to determine how we can best use that in our teams. And I think that’s been really valuable.

Good. Can you tell me a little bit more about what you would see as Joe’s vision or goal for the school.

I think that he really sees the potential in all students and all teachers and he really wants to push us all to be the best that we can. He doesn’t see that anyone is not going to reach that potential, he knows that we can keep pushing farther and farther, regardless teacher, students, whatever race, whatever ability.

Thank you. What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?

Um, I mean teachers have a lot to do with it (laughter). You know, we, I think one of the things -Joe sees is that he knows that we are the best resource on what our kids need as teachers. Um, sometimes, it seems like there are outside forces or the government or another principal or administrator, no, this is what you need to do to teach your kids. But they’re not in there every day with the kids, seeing what those needs are, so one of the things I really appreciate about Joe is the way, is that he relies on us as kind of the resource on what our kids need. He knows that we are professionals and he knows what they need, what kind of help we can offer them to get to where they need to be. Um, yeah.

Well, that’s good. Thank you. What aspects of your principal’s leadership do you find supportive to your role(s)?
He is in our classrooms and out at recess all the time. He spends very little time in his
office, so I think that’s huge, that he, I mean I’ve had moments where I’m like, I need to
call the office because I need Joe’s support and randomly he just walks in at that moment
(laughter), you know there’s the sixth sense that he needed to be there that day, or
whenever. Um, I mean you can find him walking around, he’s always available to help if
you need help with behavior or something else. If he, um, needs to be present at a parent
meeting, he’ll be there. He’s at recess and he knows the kids and he knows the teachers.

Good. In what, if any, ways does your principal utilize evaluation or feedback to inform
your teacher leadership or classroom practice?

Um, kind of like I said, he’s always out there. Um, I trust his judgement on my teaching
so much more than our previous principal because she would do a couple of formal
observations and you wouldn’t really see her in your classroom. So, I had a hard time,
even though my evaluations weren’t bad, it’s just that I didn’t know what she was
judging me on because it would be such short periods of time that she would be in my
classroom. He comes and spends a minute, spends twenty minutes, he’s just out there all
the time, he sees what I do, so I really trust anything he’s saying to me as he’s
knowledgeable in what I might need to work on. But he also doesn’t really judge and say,
“That was bad, that was good.” He asks a lot of questions. He makes us think about our
own practice by asking those questions, thinking about what it is that we need to do. He
doesn’t really tell us what the right action is, but he gives us that power to take it and I
think, um, going back to a previous questions, one of the things I wanted to say I
appreciate is that while the District may have a curriculum that they’ve purchased or
things like that, um, he doesn’t restrict us to that. He knows that we’re going to know the
best way to teach our kids, and if the district curriculum is not it, he allows us to make
those changes or whatever. Rather than being the kind of top down person who says,
“No, this is what the District said so we have to do it.”

Great, can you tell me more about his involvement with you about curriculum, or his
involvement with you about Danielson, the evaluation framework.

So, he leaves a lot of that up to us. I mean we get a lot of team time to do planning and
things like that. One of the challenges right now in our fifth and sixth grade group is that
we are all kind of teaching separate things because we have splits, and we have the four-
five-six highly capable, so none of us are teaching exactly the same, so that’s a challenge
right now. But, um, we do have a lot of time to plan things together and to work things
out together. He will come in and ask us questions, kind of understand where we’re at
and what we need. He allows us to use the building budget in the way that our team sees
fit. So he takes our budget as a school and splits it, he reserves what he needs for the
building, he splits up what’s left among the teams and says, “Here’s how much you have
to spend,” and then we can make that determination. If there’s something we need to
purchase to supplement what we’re teaching or whatever, we have access to that money,
we don’t need to go through him, we go through our team to decide how that’s spent.
Very good. When you think about the Danielson framework, there are some components, um, about the actual planning and the teaching, and so forth. Can you give me an example of the types of questions he asks or the direction he heads when he’s interacting with you.

I don’t know. It’s not coming right now.

That’s okay. That’s great. Is there anything else you would add related to your principal’s role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?

I think one of the biggest things with Joe, and I kind of already said this, but he is present. He, um, the kids respect him so much because he takes the time to build relationships with them. And when he does that, you know, when you have a kid who’s struggling or a kid who’s having a hard time behavior-wise, he’s already built the groundwork relationship-wise with him because he’s out at recess, he’s having fun with them, he knows who they are and he knows what they’ve been dealing with and he knows them from the time they started at school. So, when they’re having some kind of struggle, they are more apt to listen to him because he’s already done that groundwork of building that relationship. Um, so I think that’s huge. I think that’s also true with our teachers, that he knows us as teachers. You know, if he has something to share with us, he’s already built that groundwork, that relationship. I remember several years back we were doing a series of meetings with our sixth graders at the end of the year to prepare them for middle school. And Joe was leading them, Joe was leading those meetings, so we had all of the sixth graders piled into the library, it was crowded, they’re all sitting on the floor. Whenever he was talking, you could hear a pin drop in that room because so much respect they have for him, you know, I don’t want to say this, but he’s like a god to them. It’s like, you know, they really, truly respect him because of the time he’s put it.

That’s great. And if you were to describe the teacher’s relationship with him, how would you describe that?

The same, I mean, we respect his opinion. We know that we can go to him if we disagree with something too. And, there would be, under our previous principal, you would kind of talk with each other first, is this something that you could go to her with or is this something that you could not go to her with. I feel very free with him, that I express what I need, and know that he’s going to give me a very logical answer. Sometimes it’s no (laughter), that’s okay, but that he will back me up, but that he will also be reasonable in what he expects from me.

Can you tell me about the culture of your school?

I think we’re a very supportive school. We’re friendly with each other. We don’t have too much drama, which is nice (laughter). And, we’re all kind of working to do what’s best for kids.

What would you say Joe’s role is in building or sustaining that type of culture?
I remember one of the first things he did when he came in because there had been a lot of drama obviously. Our previous principal had left under not great terms. One of the things he said from the get-go is that, “If you have a problem with somebody you need to not be talking about it with your team and with everybody else, but that you need to go to that person and address it because that’s the only way you’re going to actually get resolution. Talking about that problem with somebody else is not going to resolve that problem.”

That’s something that he has pointed people back to at times when they needed a reminder. But just that’s part of our culture; if there’s a problem, we need to deal with it. And he gives a lot of power back to us, he’s not going to take over for us. Just like we do with kids, taking responsibility for their issues, but that’s been major.

If you were to describe Joe to someone else, say a teacher considering coming here, or a parent, how would you describe him, or describe his leadership style?

I would say he is supportive, he trusts and respects teachers, he gives us the time to get what we need done, he is present and there for students and for teachers, he’s going to back you up, um, he’s fun (laughter), but also knows that balance between fun and getting serious.

That’s great. Well, is there anything else that you’d like to share about your experience here in working with him and bringing your school to this excellent level?

I don’t think so.

Teacher 2 [Pseudo name Kylie]; Female; 39 years; 13 years of experience; 5 years of experience at this school; elementary teacher

2/04/2020, 9:10 a.m.; Interviewed by Karin Manns
conversations with him before where I say, “I don’t feel that this curriculum is meeting the needs of the kids,” and he says, “Then why are you doing it?” (laughter) And I think that those conversations are really powerful, and, he wants honesty from teachers, he wants to hear what they have to say. Um, I also feel like he is a great leader. He lets us have conversations about kids and about learning that are open and honest, where people feel okay being vulnerable and we focus a lot on speaking together in groups, social kind of speaking and listening skills which is exactly what we want to do with our kids. And so, when he’s leading a meeting, it’s never a stand and deliver type of situation. He gives us topics, we get to chat about it, which is what he expects in our classrooms as well. And I think those kinds of things have led to an increase in student achievement because then we’re doing it in our classrooms.

Right, that makes sense. What would you say his goal or mission is for your school?

I think that, to put it really simply, is that the kids and the teachers want to come to school every day and that they’re comfortable from growing from wherever they are. That we’re comfortable sharing where we are and reflecting on that, and then moving forward in whatever capacity that may be. For the kids who, you know, have more challenges than the others, they may not move as far, but they’re still growing, and for the kids who are above grade level, that they’re growing too, even though they are above where we would want them to be.

How do you feel about that goal?

I love that. I think it makes sense to meet people where they are and then say, okay now where do you want to go. He helps us figure out where our goal is, but it may not be the same goal for everyone.

Oh, good.

Yeah.

What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?

So I came, um, Joe had been here for three years. So I didn’t get to see before. But I’ve spoken to a lot of teachers that have kind of told me the differences. Uh, and it sounds like the biggest things is that there’s elevated expectations for what the students are capable of doing and also what they should be able to do. And that’s definitely, I know it’s a conversation that started with Joe, but now I feel like the teachers are able to have that conversation too. You know, basing it on standards, which our district, I would say that there’s a lack of professional development based around standards, so it’s nice to have Joe here who is kind of a proponent of that. “Let’s look at the standard and then let’s go from there.” Um, I think that another impact for teachers is that there’s a huge focus on collaboration, um, within teams and vertically among grade levels. Um, we do, and stop me if someone has already described it, he has organized our decision-making
model into a building leadership team. There’s one representative that represents two to three grade and that one person comes to a meeting once a month and we’re responsible for delineating information to the rest of the group, of our colleagues. And then if they have an issue, or something they want to discuss, they bring it to us and we then bring it to building leadership. Um, and I feel like in that way, there have been some great conversations that wouldn’t have happened otherwise. Everyone gets the same information and there’s kind of an open-door policy when it comes to issues or things that aren’t going as well because everyone’s willing to listen. And then the other thing I was reflecting on is that our SIP goal always has something to do with teaching strategies. So as part of our SIP goal the other year we focused on questioning, levels of questioning, or positive acknowledgement, we wrote postcards home to kids who made positive achievements and that little piece helps kids so much. Gradual release was another of our focuses.

What aspects of your principal’s leadership do you find supportive to your role(s)?

So my number one is that he has an open door policy and is very open to talking about personal challenges or things that make my job difficult. Before I came here I worked in (District) and I had a really bad experience with a principal there. And he listened to me my first year here and we figured some things out because I was really struggling with trying to decide if I wanted to keep teaching. And he was so wonderful with that and really helped me to get to a place that I understood that it wasn’t anything I had done and I’m a great teacher and he appreciates me. And I feel that personal connection was huge. Um, he also, I feel that he really trusts teachers to make good decisions. He backs us up, um, one hundred percent of the time, while still asking us questions. “What do you think about that? Do you think there’s another way you could do that? That kind of, he kind of assists in the reflection process. Um, and the other thing that I think is so important is that he never speaks ill about any staff member to another staff member, there’s a cohesion here. And everyone feels that they are valued and protected by him.

Wow, that’s great.

Yeah, it’s a good feeling.

You mentioned that he trusts you. How would you say that the staff feels about him?

The same. On days when he’s gone, like this morning when he’s at his meetings, it’s hard. And it’s not necessarily that we can’t do it, but there’s a comfort in knowing that he’s here. I think it’s a comfort. It gives us confidence.

In what, if any, ways does your principal utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your teacher leadership or classroom practice?

I think it’s a constant, it’s an ongoing discussion, um, because he’s so open to having conversations, he talks about it all the time, and he focuses on what we want to do, but also he always teases everyone here, “When you become a principal, when you become a
principal,” and even in saying that, part of it is a joke, we all go, what is it that we want to
aspire to. Then we talk about it in our evaluation meetings and other meetings too.

So, I know you use the Danielson framework, and he’s in your classroom watching, can
you tell me a little about the conversations that come up about your instruction related to
evaluation or the framework?

Yes, so we do a pre-assessment every year in August, based upon the framework. And
one thing that I really love is that he has us use the exact the same form every year. So I
need to look back two years ago and see where I was with respect and rapport, um, and
do I think I grew? Or we have a lot of conversation about depending on the class of kids
you get sometimes you actually slip back when you’re challenging yourself. And I like
those open conversations. Um, and then at the end of the year we revisit and we think
about, okay, did I grow? Did I do this thing and how did I grow? And I know our end of
the year evaluations he’ll say, “What areas do you think you grew the most? He also asks
us, and I don’t if this answers your question, but he also asks us, um, to pick two kids at
the end of the year that we feel like grew the most. And it can be related to academics,
social emotional, and we talk about why and what we did for those kids or what we’re
really proud of. It’s really positive.

That’s great.

When you’re looking at how you grew, what would you say his role is in that, from the
pre- to the post?

I think it’s less evaluative. I actually feel it’s more of the facilitator so I can recognize
how much I grew, rather than him saying well I think this is what you grew in. So he asks
great questions, um, we look at the indicators, you know, within one piece of Danielson,
and say do we feel like, he’ll say I saw this in your classroom, well yeah, I was trying to
do that or not.

So I have a follow-up questions for what you had said earlier. You talked about his role
with curriculum. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Yeah, so, um, he also came from other school districts, Lake Washington and Northshore.
And this is just a very different place so we do not, I mean, there hasn’t even been a
reading curriculum adopted here yet, um, for fifteen years or something like that. So
there’s definitely some areas that are lacking in curriculum, so he’s been a huge
proponent of us finding our own way to meet the standards, um, when there is no
curriculum, but also when they did adopt a curriculum, my first year they adopted a math
curriculum, and we had a lot of conversations that were open about it not working for the
set of kids I had that year or it was my teammate and I, and so he allows us to be honest
about that and to come to him and maybe I’m doing it wrong, but it’s not working for us.
And in that conversation, he said, well, he’s like, then let’s figure out something that is
going to work. If you feel it’s not working I trust you on that, let’s figure something out.
So we were able to work together to supplement and find other ways to make it work for us.

And then also when you had talked about the principal being an influence on student success, you talked about standards. Can you tell me a little bit more about that work?

Yes, because there is less of a focus district-wide about professional development regarding that, Joe puts a huge emphasis on doing that work in teams during our professional learning time on Fridays. So, um, the entire last year we spent on ELA standards, picking out which standards we were going to address in the next two weeks of our instruction and how we were going to assess those standards. Things like that, which coming from a district where we did a ton of standards work, it was shocking to me that this district was so different. So it felt great to have those conversations again and to keep focused on what we’re supposed to be teaching.

Is there anything else you would add related to your principal’s role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?

Yes! He is in classrooms every single day, all day long, and at recess. Um, I mean, it’s rarely a day goes by that he isn’t in my classroom at least one time, which makes the students feel that he is there and he is around and he’s a big presence. It also makes me feel supported. When he does my evaluation at the end of the year I feel like he knows me because he’s there every day and some days are better than others, as you know (chuckles). Um, he also builds the schedule, so that, um, so that teachers, the entire staff eats lunch together at the exact same time, which is huge. I see primary teachers that I’ve never seen before at my previous schools because we always had alternating lunch schedules. But he really makes a priority to have us socialize and be together, which is huge. Um, we also, our teams have planning times together, so, at least two people on a team have planning time at the same time every day so that we can work on planning, or you know, or collaboration, or grading, and we have another person to support us. He kinds of acts like a filter for the District. He protects us from things that don’t matter right this second, or let’s see what else I wrote, he keeps the focus on kids. So we’ll say this is coming down the pike, we’re going to use that, and shift our focus so we’re addressing that, but we’re also going to keep our focus on kids, rather than just being passing along information from our administration offices. And then, he really is open to addressing challenges that we’re having. And not blaming teachers, but saying, how can we make it better, how can we involve parents, you know, he’ll ask us, what can I personally do to help, which is huge. And that makes all the difference. I feel like he really wants teachers to feel supported and when we feel supported, then we do a better job at our jobs. And, yeah, so it filters down to kids.

If you were to describe him to a colleague who was thinking of transferring here, or to a parent, what would you say?

Oh, gosh, um, I think he loves being a principal. He loves his job. And he loves supporting teachers and kids. He loves watching people grow and so he makes it fun and
the positive environment that you want to be a part of, while still being focused on the things we have to do. And the things that are important.

And you mentioned that it’s a fun place. Can you tell me a little about the culture and what his role is in building that culture or sustaining it?

Yeah, he is the, I don’t know what you want to call it, he is the leader of our culture, he brings the atmosphere in. I don’t know, even in the office they play tricks on each other, um you know, he’ll come into our rooms and completely get the kids off task on what they’re doing, but it’s all in good fun and it’s, you know, learning is supposed to be fun, and he makes it that way. He’ll do little contests for the kids, you know, whoever can make up the best recess game that he’s never seen before. That group of kids, whoever is playing the game, gets ice cream or something silly. Um, but then, yeah, there’s just so many little things. He recognizes people when they do a great job of, in front of other people. And is constantly talking to me about my teammates and what they’re doing and the great things they’re doing, which at first at first was off-putting because I thought, oh my gosh, am I not doing enough? And then in talking with them, he’s speaking that way about me to them. So builds that really great rapport where everyone feels really great about what they’re doing. Um, and how, and knowing that he’s speaking really positively about you behind your back is always nice. (chuckles)

Is that specific enough?

That’s great. And how does that make you feel?

So great! I really, I love it here, I really do. And I love it here because of him. If it was someone else, I don’t think I’d feel the same way, um, about this school.

Is there anything else that we haven’t talked about that you’d like to share?

I don’t think so. Just that I think that I was in a pretty bad place in my other school district and, um, and, in coming here, he figured out what is was, well he asked me, we talked a lot about things that had gone on. And I’ve just grown so much in my confidence and feeling good about teaching, which I wasn’t feeling great about at the time. Which is totally different, I’m sure, than what he worked on with other people because, you know, we’re all working on different things. So I think the fact that he can help us all grow in our own way is incredible. And then of course the kids too, then it all sort of trickles down to the kids. And him making a priority for the teachers to grow on their own also then gives us permission to promote everyone growing in their classroom at their own pace. Which is great!

Oh, that’s wonderful.

Yeah, it’s a good place.
To start, could you please state your name and acknowledge that you give permission to be recorded.

I’m Emily and I do give permission to be recorded.

Great, thank you. And thank you for the opportunity to interview you. I’ll ask five questions and additional clarifying and follow-up questions along the way.

To begin, what do you consider your current principal’s leadership role in moving your school from performing at the "Focus School" level to being recognized repeatedly as a "School of Distinction?"

Yeah, his role was, um, well he came in when we were kind of at the point where we knew we needed help. But we had done a whole lot of investigation, we had looked at data, we kind of knew where our weaknesses were. And then when Joe came, it, uh, it became serious, I mean, we knew we needed to do some new things, we knew we needed to be innovative, um, and he was just, uh, a guide on the side. He led to think, you know, it’s now, we need to do it now, the sense of urgent. We looked at data, we knew where our pitfalls were, and which groups of kids we needed to focus on. So, uh, we just kind of took that data that we had prior to, and then, uh, with Joe’s help, just kind of started the process of really delving into which kids we needed to focus on.

Can you tell me a little more about that process of he led you through as a guide on the side?

Sure, so we were looking at the data from our test scores, for, uh, our classroom test scores, the state, and the district ones, and then he brought us in, he started the leadership team, and he brought us in, um, and said, “Where do you guys want to focus? What is it that you want to focus on?” So we, if I’m remembering this right, we decided a couple of areas of focus that we thought would benefit most kids. Kind of looking at the ones that were almost meeting standard and delving into those guys. So I think we worked on, you know, some of us took different areas, but I think Joe really said, you know you guys really know your kids the best, where do you need to focus your energies. And some of us focused on math and some of us focused on literacy. Yeah, I’m remembering that right. But he kind of left it up to the leadership team to decide where’s your area of focus? Because our test scores across, everything we felt what interconnected. Um, you know, math is being affected by their lack of reading skills. So, we kind of took, a full approach to it. (laughter)

And then past that identification, what happened next?
Teacher groups, by grade level, pretty much, we formed our little, our co-op, our cooperative groups and we just went and focused on whatever strategies and skills we were working on. For instance, I know, I was in third and fourth grade at that time. We really focused it on math vocabulary, things like could you read the story problems and did some strategies around story problems, like underlining the text and circling questions and highlighting the vocabulary. And that first year bump really seemed to come because of that. Was the big bump of the, they were just being able to understand a story problem and identify which operation they needed to use, and um, and as well as some intense interventions, such as math strategies, math facts. And so we took a couple of different things, we just focused on that. It wasn’t a full encompassing, just three or four strategies that we were going to be intentional about.

Excellent. What would you say Joe’s vision or goal was when he came in and has that stayed constant?

It has. I think one of our biggest concerns in the overall building was, we had a discipline problem with our children. And everybody was kind of doing their own thing. And everybody had the best of intentions, but there was nothing from K-6 going on. So his focus his first couple of years was just getting a handle on kids and respectful behavior, making it safe for kids and staff to be around, um, and his focus really was to be in the classroom. He was out on the playground, he still is, riding his bike or his scooter, playing games, and making those connections with each and every kid. And he was very good at, we had some pretty hard kids, and if we called and said, “Hey, Joe, I need some support,” he was right there. He backed up the teachers one hundred percent. Then we had some conversations about what is the strategies, what are the steps that need to happen. You know we came to the conclusion every kid is, it’s hard to have something in place, for every kid for every situation. Um, so he was he was kind of the intermediary between the teacher and kid, kid and parent. He took a lot of that burden off the teachers. So there was, and a lot more communication happening with the families.

What do you think he is trying to do at your school? What would you say his vision is?

He’s very much into teacher leadership groups. Delegating what you teachers see as a big need. Then as soon as the needs are identified, he follows up. So, for instance, the Love and Logic book study that we’re doing now, that came out of our teacher leadership team. So, hey, we’re still needing support with common language with the kids or strategies for tough kids or their behavior, so we’re doing the book study.

What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?

Well, I, you know, I’m kind of biased, but I think teachers have the most influence on the kids. And I think Joe has given us the leeway to, each teacher has their own style, each teacher can deal with the kids as they see, but I think a big change we had too was making those personal connections with each kid. I mean something unique about them. Being able to speak pretty clearly about how they are as a student, what, you know, their
home life is like. In this community we know all the families, we can kind of know what
their home situation is, what their parents are like, what their expectations are. And
there’s a good cross conversations happening. So I think that’s a big part of it. I’m sorry
what was the question? (laughter).

So, clearly teachers have, in your words, the most impact in the learning that happens in
the classroom. How does your principal influence teachers?

And the other thing that Joe was always cognizant of is the data that we collect in the
classroom. How do we know that the kids are learning and what are we going to do about
the ones that aren’t learning? What interventions can we apply? So, he was always
curious about, who’s our fours, who’s our ones. Do we have those covered? And then the
classroom teacher really does focus on giving those twos to be a three, you know what
are those supports? And then getting our outside supports for our ones and fours to keep
them going.

That’s great. Thank you.

What aspects of your principal’s leadership do you find supportive to your role(s)?

Well, his whole day is about teacher support. Yeah, he, uh, he’s in our classrooms all the
time. Uh, if he’s just walking by, like this morning, I said, “Hey, Joe, I have a student
issue.” He goes, “Okay, I’m on it. Roger Dodger, I’m on it.” (laughter) So he knows, we
know, there is communication. He allows grade levels to work on aspects that they want
to work on. He’s very supportive about curriculum, if it’s not quite working for us, to,
you know, go up, he’s purchased stuff that we can use for supplemental pieces. He has
conversations with us about our new writing curriculum or the K-3 reading curriculum.
How is it working? Is it working? Now we’re kind of a stalemate with the math
curriculum. Why is that not working? Why are we not seeing growth right now? We’re
all going, wow. He’s asking these, digging in, and asking why do we think. So, he’s
always asking, why is it, why is it, why is it? You know, deferring to the classroom
teacher. Yeah.

In what, if any, ways does your principal utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your
teacher leadership and classroom practice?

So evaluation of …

Like you. Like the Danielson framework.

Right, yes, so we do all of that. We have conversations, um, several times a year. He does
pull up data that’s readily, easily pulled up. We do make, you know, publicly, posters and
charts of which kids we’re working on. Who’s growing? Who made need a little
intervention? Our data is pretty public and we do talk about it. And I think that’s one of
the big things of why our school did grow because no longer were we just like, afraid to
share data. And I think that was a big cultural shift for us. These are all, and taking
responsibility for all of the kids.

Oh, yes. So within the Danielson framework itself, there are parts about planning, parts
about instruction, so forth. Um, can you tell me at all his interactions with teachers
around components of the evaluation framework?

Well, honestly, that framework comes out at the beginning of the school year. We have
several days of looking at it, thinking about, evaluating ourselves, and then having a
conversation with Joe. Um, and it’s usually around back when we come in and have a
conversation about our goals, it’s around that Danielson framework. Does that align with
what we really need to be working on.

Okay, great. Can you tell me a little bit about the culture of the school and Joe’s role is.
You’ve been here a long time; did it change when Joe came?

It did! Prior to Joe we had another principal, who, uh, had personality conflicts with some
of the staff, not the whole staff. Enough to make some divisions. And we were, you were
a little fearful of putting yourself out there, for fear of if I say the wrong thing, if I do the
wrong thing, you know, it will be, it won’t be her fault. And so some people were very
leery about being honest, what was said, their concerns. And they kind of felt that they
weren’t being backed up with parents. And backed up with what you’re doing in the
classroom. Like your professional judgement was being questioned, a little bit. So Joe
never questioned, you know, professional judgement. In fact, he encouraged you to be,
you know make professional judgements. Um, it was just a little different culture, but I
think by the time Joe got here, we had gone through the rough patch, and the teachers had
some talking together, so there was a lot of healing that already started. It had started.
And so when Joe came in, teachers were ready to say, you know what, we’re going to put
the personality stuff aside. Let’s just focus on the kids, I know our test scores are not
great, what are we going to do? And then we, at that point, kind of knew we could share
what’s going well, say what’s not going well, and be very public and open about it.
Nobody was going to question you. So it became a very safe place after that. You know
Joe, you never felt you were being judged. It was like, oh, that’s a problem, let’s figure
out a way to fix it.

That’s great. So if a teacher were interested in coming to the school, transferring over,
how would you describe Joe to that teacher?

Totally supportive, fun, goofy kind of guy, light-hearted, definitely very concerned about
you as a person and you as a teacher. You know there’s two different things. And he’s
always like, take care of yourself, take care of your family. Um, you know things come
up, but we’re definitely in the people business here. People first and then the work kind
of follows second. So, you know, I think he kind of sends that message. The community
is welcome, teachers are welcome, kids are welcome. And I think that the kids really
know that Joe likes them. He learns all their names. High fives them. Thinks of fun out
there, on his bike and scooter and helmet, playing games, so um, but then when he has to
be a principal, they know he means business, as well. Yeah. Um, but I think for teachers, if were going to describe it. The teachers love working together. We plan together, um, we go out and socialize together, so it’s really definitely a family. People like it here.

Well, you’ve described change in culture and how it is now. Can you identify any ways in which Joe helped that culture to become what it is now?

I think he just took that fear away of knowing we were in staff meetings or whatever, we could disagree with him and there wouldn’t be problems. Um, or, if we questioned something about what he was thinking or what the District was thinking, he didn’t take that personally, you know, he just took it as an open question, “Why are we doing something like this if it’s not working? What can we do to change it?” For instance, the schedule wasn’t working for kids, it wasn’t working for teachers. It was one of those things we had always done. So we just kind of dismantle the things we had always done and reinvent it. What’s going to make sense? What’s going to work? That’s just a small example. But he’s open to change. Okay, try it, if it doesn’t work, we’ll try something else. And, he doesn’t always make you feel that you have to toe the District line, they have you have to lockstep this, if it’s not working, why are you lock-stepping yourself into it?

Right. Is there anything else you would add related to your principal’s role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?

Um, I think that’s about it. That he’s just, you just know that he’s supportive of you. You do have your own wherewithal to use your professional judgement to make changes. So you feel like a professional.

Great. Is there anything else that you’d like to say?

I’m proud of [our school]. We’ve come a long way over several years and I’m thinking this year I’m feeling a plateau happening, so again, we’re going to start diving in and seeing where can we make some changes. Yeah.
Teacher 4 [Pseudo name Sara]; Female; 34 years; 6 years of experience; 1 year at this school; elementary teacher

2/07/2020, 9:10 a.m.; Interviewed by Karin Manns

Well, good morning. Could you please start by stating your name and acknowledging that you give permission to be recorded.

Sure, it’s Sara, and sure you can record me.

*Great, thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. As you read in the consent document, the purpose is to learn more about principal leadership in relation to student achievement. I’ll be asking five questions and then some clarifying or follow-up questions.*

*So to start, what do you consider your current principal’s leadership role in moving your school from performing at the ”Focus School” level to being recognized repeatedly as a ”School of Distinction” ?*

I feel like Joe, he put a lot of trust back into his teachers. And he really just reminds us that we are doing what is right. And we took off the focus off the test and onto students learning and made that our focus of all our PGF times, our professional Friday times, and our professional meetings, it was always back to student learning. And even down to like the student names. These are the students that are at the ones. What are we going to do to bump them up? So I think that is what focused us more on what is, just tracking kids and names, because we all care about kids. So that made it a little more real for us. And he just really trusts his staff. And treats us with respect. And I feel like that is the number one thing that he did that changed our culture.

*Good. If you were thinking about the vision that he brought, or the overall goal for the school, how would you describe that?*

Um, I feel like his goal is really just to make our school the best that it can be. Um, and that kind of sounds cheesy, but he just wanted us to be a great school. And he didn’t come in saying, like, this is my mission statement or this is what we need to change. He just said, “We’re the best school. What are we going to do? What are we going to do for these kids?” And so I think that is really the only thing he brought with him.

*What do you think he would include when he says to be the best school?*

Um, I think he means that we’re going to be the best teachers we can be, we’re going to be the best students that we can have, well not have, but we’re going to make our students the best that they can be. And just, I don’t know, rising to that thinking, okay, what are we going to do every day to be better, to be the best.

*That’s great.*
Does that make sense?

*It does make sense.*

Good, I’m like am I talking circles?

*No, that really makes sense. Thank you.*

*What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?*

Well I think teachers are like an obvious, direct, we are in contact with those kids all the time. And I think if we just assume that they’re going to be their best, they’re going to rise to that. I know that Joe has given me personally a lot of, what’s the word, kind of boosting my confidence. Like, “You are a great teacher. So, you are doing the right things.” So, I think pointing that out to me directly reflected to my kids because I had more confidence in myself. I wasn’t always second-guessing myself or maybe I’m not doing the right thing. That didn’t answer your question; what was your question?

That was helpful. I’ll repeat it anyway. *What do you perceive as the impact of teachers on student success and how has your principal’s leadership been an influence?*

Okay, um, yes, so I think as just as knowing as a teacher I’m doing what’s best for kids and I’m looking at each student, I’m watching them grow. I think knowing that has impacted my teaching which impacts their learning. Just keeping them in mind when I’m planning, when I’m doing everything. What am I going to do with my ones? What am I going to do with my twos? Not that they’re numbers, but thinking about how am I moving them up, but also how am I moving my fours up because just because they’re fours doesn’t mean that they don’t need learning too. And just having that always, that support of the school system, has always helped me to move my kids along and that helps their learning.

*Well, that’s really well explained.*

Good, because I thought I was talking in circles.

*It’s very clear. Thank you.*

*What aspects of your principal’s leadership do you find supportive to your role(s)?*

Um, Joe has helped me a lot as a teacher. He came what, five years ago, so I was fifteen years in. But I was always second-guessing myself, not thinking that I was the best teacher even though teaching is a very natural thing to me, which I know is very lucky. Um, he’s, he just came in and said, “You’re doing all the great things. Just to hear that from my leader, from my principal, was like, “Oh, yeah, I am! I am a leader in the school district or in the school building.” So for me, just for that, to like recognize that I’m doing
great things, was like, “Oh, yeah! I am doing great things.” It kind of took the stress level down, to always worry about being judged. And always, before, I always felt like I was being judged, and I wasn’t doing enough, and I wasn’t doing enough, then to have somebody say, “You are. You’re doing it,” was like, “Oh, okay!” That took the stress off the top for me and that made me able to focus on teaching and doing what’s best for the kids, instead of always worrying, oh, I’m not good enough, I’m not the best, or I’m not doing enough after school, those kinds of things. And so when he just did that, it was like, “Okay, I’ll do anything for you.” Even, because, I am doing what’s best. So that for me was, I mean, he was, is, monumentally a leader for me in my life in both personal and education. And he’s also helped me with my son. Parenting is a whole ‘nother issue (laughter) and having him here at school and having him support (son) and his learning. I don’t worry. I know that he’s going to be fine. I have a principal for him that supports him and that just takes that off me too.

That’s excellent.

Yeah, he’s been a great. He has been great for me.

Did I answer the whole question?

You really did. I’ll also have some follow questions for you too. You really did. That was perfect.

Okay (laughter)

So, thank you. In what, if any, ways does your principal utilize evaluation or feedback to inform your teacher leadership or classroom practice?

Like the formal state evaluation?

Yes, like the Danielson framework.

I feel like we use it as a conversation starter. But I feel like what I’m grateful for is that we don’t go line by line and talk about every single thing. We look at it in the fall and we look at it in the spring. And we use it as a conversation about what I’m doing well, um, what I could, I always try to really take notes to what I could add to my plan in the fall in the spring. So, I’m like, “Okay, what could I do better?” Um, but I think it’s not the framework that helps me with those conversations, I think it’s just the conversations. Sitting with him for twenty minutes, saying, “Okay, this is what I’m seeing. This is where you’re growing.” I think that conversation is professionally most valuable to me. Hmmm, I’m not sure it’s the framework, but it starts the conversation.

So when you have those conversations with him it sounds like he is really looking at specific parts of your teaching?
Yeah, so, you know, you break it down. We talk about what leadership roles are you or how are your kids growing. So those kinds of things and we can talk about specific examples from the year or the year before, what could go better, what could we change. Um, and personally, I’ve been really stressed out, so he’s like, you need to take off some of those extra roles that you have. So just to lower my well-being, to focus more on teaching. And he doesn’t say, “You have to do this,” it just makes it in my head like, “Oh, I could work on that part because I’m not great at that or I’m not as good at that. So that is the conversation.

When you think about the culture of the school, can you tell me what the culture is currently like and then a little bit about how it changed if in any ways after Joe arrived?

Um, the current culture is just, we kind of joke about it, it’s just a little country school. And, it kind of reminds me of my elementary school experience. We still celebrate the holidays, we’re still respectful of all holidays, but we celebrate the holidays, we laugh, we, you know, we have fun events, we have traditional events, so I think we just call it this little country school, which sounds hokey, but that just makes it feel like a family. This is the kind of school that I want my son to grow up in. I don’t want it to be focused on testing. I don’t want it to say that everything is about that test in May. Because that would stress me out and that would stress the kids out. So I think just having that attitude of being a country school kind of let’s everyone else kind of like we’re just going to school, we’re going to learn, we’re going to do our best. And I think that is really the culture, it’s just a country little school. Before our principal was (long pause) a little bit more, I’m trying to think of the right word, (long pause) structured, more uptight about it, so our culture was very tense and very like, what are we doing wrong? And like I said before, “It’s you guys are doing awesome, what can we do to make it better?” Where before it was, “You guys aren’t guys aren’t doing X, Y, and Z, and A, B, and C, and all the alphabet. And so then it was just more stressed out all the time, and more tense, and I think that whatever the teachers’ and the principal’s attitude is toward the school, that influences the parents and the kids, and everything else. So that tense and stress kind-of goes into more higher maintenance. And so I think the parents here, the community, trusts us. Because Joe does. And he talks about, like, at the beginning of every assembly, he always like, “We have the greatest school, we have the greatest teachers,” and he always says that out in public, which influences the parents they seem him as our leader, and so I think that the culture of just being that country school and we’re all here to do our best, I think that just helps it run a little smoother than having stress and tense all the time.

That makes a lot of sense. So it’s interesting that your former principal was very concerned the test scores and after Joe arrived for a few years, then the test scores started rising to the level of being a School of Distinction. So if you were reflecting on that change, because your former principal was really focused on the test scores and he’s a different approach, what do you think made that change that you rose so dramatically?

I think it honestly goes back to that trust and that community. I know that Kindergarten teachers are doing the best that they can, and first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth
grade, fifth grade, all the way up until they get to me in sixth grade, or fifth grade, whatever they are, I think that having that trust that we are doing everything we can here and that builds up to whatever level you’re teaching, I think that trust is just all that, I think that’s what clicked it on. And I don’t know. I really honestly think that could be the only thing. I mean as a district we’ve gotten some new curriculum, but not really, but that wouldn’t be influencing those. I think it’s just that trust and going back to that focus of kids, by name. These are the kids that are in the one category, and how are we moving them up, and seeing them move up, is like okay. And having my son on that list, too, okay, watching that growth, all the way through. So I think it’s just that, being focused on student learning and having that trust within our building. And our principal has trust in us.

"It sounds like you’re growing every year as a staff. Can you tell me more about his role in improving your practice or the work with the students?"

He seems to know every single student, everything about every single student. I don’t know how he does it. He has really just been a person that off to the side, encouraging, and having the conversations, starting the conversations, or participating in the conversations. And being a support. “Okay, you guys want to do that? How can I support you?” Or, “I see that math is not working very well, what are we going to do to support you?” And he always goes to bat for us. There’s never a time that he doesn’t go to bat for us. If we’re wrong, he tells us in private. And he also goes to bat for us with the District. “No, this isn’t right. This is what they need. This is what they’re going to do.” And so that part just kind of takes another stress off us. We don’t have to battle for what we know is right. He does that for us. And I think he does that for the kids too. He knows what’s right and he’ll battle for them, like for my son, helping me with the struggle of getting him into Special Ed. Not struggle, as with the process, but struggle as, is this the right place, does my son need it or not. Just having that faith in every student. He cares about every single one. And I think without that, we wouldn’t make that much growth.

"Oh, that’s wonderful. Is there anything else you would add related to your principal’s role in supporting teachers and promoting academic success of all students?"

Um, I don’t know. (pause) I think he just is active in the school. Um, you know, he’s out at every recess to prevent problems because the problems come into the classroom and then we lose time for school or for learning. And so, I think he’s just active. He’s everywhere. There was a day last week and he didn’t come into our classroom at all. And my kids were like, “We haven’t seen Mr. Anderson today.” And I was like, “You’re right, he hasn’t come in.” Because he’s always in and out. And so that’s, I think that for the kids to see that he is never sitting in his office, he’s always out, he’s out at recesses, even though it’s miserable. He’s in our classrooms, he engages when he’s in there. Um, and so I think, and he goofs around with us. I think they really feel, the kids and teachers, we feel like he cares. Because he’s here. He’s here, he’s with us, he’s in the room with us, he’s at the assemblies with us. He’s everywhere. So it always feels like, okay, he’s just, he’s part of it. He’s not the guy in the office. He’s not the guy you go to just when you’re in trouble. You know, he’s the guy you can go to when, you know, you want to
tell him a joke, you want to goof around a little bit, he will. And so I think that is part of just being successful as a school, is having a principal that cares about us and knows what’s going on in our classrooms. I’ve heard him talk about my classroom before, to a parent, and I’m like, “Oh, oh, yeah, that’s, that’s me! Wait, how did you know?” You know, it’s because he knows and he cares and he wants us all to be successful, students and teachers. So I feel like that family connection almost, always having him around is what makes the difference. So I don’t think that I have anything else.